

IV.2.a
Theological
Defection

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Theological Defection would be, of course, absolutely necessary for the coming of unbelief as known in the churches of the last century. This theological aberration is witnessed in a number of points.

Renewed Arianism

Heavily witnessed in the Established church, Arianism presented itself not so much as a doctrinal formulation or expression as in the attitude the church took towards the person and work of Christ. The removal of necessity from absolute conviction in this area would produce the "unconverted ministry" of which Tennant and Whitefield were so smitten.

Revived Socinianism

The anti-trinitarian influence seen so plainly in some of the general baptist and congregational bodies at this time was merely a revived unitarianism not essentially different from the views of Servetus in the days of Calvin or the teachings of the Racov confessional bodies in Poland. One soon learns that ideas recycle more often than we would like to admit and it is no accident that Koheleth complains (or states) that there is nothing new under the sun.

Pelagianism

A departing humanism (departing from biblical principles) was prone to think of man as having the ability to save self through education, social change, and the like. This becomes a very pronounced theme in some aspects of the church and produces a works salvation that is really no salvation at all. Although not so present at the outset, it will quickly be seen in "ethical" groups like the Quakers and in the next century the Shakers, et al.

Continuing Calvinistic debates

The disruption that continued over the decrees, etc., tended to isolate Christian thinkers and to make the church less aware of the total dangers, possibilities and opportunities open to it. Continual strife will produce a weariness of warfare that will eventually let anyone or anything walk in. Hindsight is easy but the debating factions did a lot to prepare the way for an easy acceptance of wide liberalism in the century to come.