

What is New Divinity, New Haven & Oberlin Theology?

New Divinity was a rogue development of *New England Theology*, which was the pure Calvinism of the theologian Jonathan Edwards. It arose from Samuel Hopkins (1721-1803) and Joseph Bellamy (1719-1790) who introduced the governmental view of the atonement. Further deterioration continued under Timothy Dwight (1752-1817) when the power of reason and human will became prominent, diminishing man's depravity, alongside a new emphasis on law-work. Nathaniel Taylor (1786-1858) took the rationalistic erosion yet further and initiated what became known as **New Haven Theology** ('Taylorism' or 'New School Calvinism'). Teaching that man has free-will to do spiritual good; total depravity and the imputation of Adam's sin was abandoned; universal atonement and rejection of penal substitution was taught; predestination was denied. Man was seen as an innocent, free, moral agent with the power to sin or to save himself. Within a hundred years of Jonathan Edward's death in 1758, the strong Calvinism that had permeated New England had been reversed into works-righteousness.

Oberlin theology is closely connected to the teachings of revivalist CG Finney mixed with New Divinity and New Haven Theology. Finney was professor of theology at the newly opened Oberlin Collegiate Institute in Ohio (now Oberlin College) and later became president from 1851-1866. He taught many serious errors tantamount to Pelagianism, They include:

Moral Government (Grotianism), which denies penal substitution.

Man's ability to repent without grace.

Denial of the imputation of Adam's sin.

Denial of election.

Denial of the effectual call. The drawing of God was the human persuasion of Gospel preachers.

Man's ability to create a new heart (self-regeneration, regeneration is only a change in the will).

Denial of the imputation of Christ's righteousness to believers; thus a denial of Biblical justification.

Perfectionism; sanctification was the continuation of holiness by human effort.

Utopianism / Millennialism (working to create a perfect society; the human establishment of the Kingdom of God through conversions and social reform).

These systems deny Biblical justification by faith. Where the imputation of Adam's sin is denied there is erosion of total depravity and less cause to require a thorough atonement. These systems just teach a need for some kind of forgiveness of offences, or even just a natural change in will. Where the imputation of Christ's righteousness is denied, there can be no Biblical justification and no acceptance with God.

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