

Dartmouth Arminianism And Its Impact on Hyrum Smith And the Smith Family

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Dartmouth Theology Lectures: Source of much Mormon Doctrine?

According to John Smith's widow, Susan Mason, John Smith's *Theology* lectures represent his opus magna, which he was preparing for publication at the time of his death. She states in a short biography of her husband attached to the almost complete manuscript of his theology lectures that he felt it was the most challenging of his various undertakings and required 17 years to prepare

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the original 34 lectures and another five years to reduce them to an edited manuscript.²³ These lectures trace his evolution from Greek classicist to ancient text specialist to Arminian theologian and are probably best summarized in 20 topics as follows:²⁴

- (1) Greek philosophy provided his concept of the Preexistence
- (2) Atonement Covenant was made before the earth was
- (3) Plan of Salvation was agreed to in the Preexistence
- (4) Father, Son and sons of men were together in the Preexistence
- (5) Spiritual death was man's condition after the Fall
- (6) Son's Church would exist in all ages after the Fall
- (7) Types and shadows of the covenant found in Scriptures
- (8) Oaths and covenants serve as Deity's legal structure
- (9) Light, borrowed light and the light of reason would guide
- (10) Melchizedek Priesthood is co-eternal with God
- (11) The Priesthood is the source of the Son's authority
- (12) Aaronic Priesthood promised to Aaron's descendants
- (13) Free Agency and the right to choose is integral to plan
- (14) Degrees of Glory is the structure of the Eternities
- (15) Consecration to Christ is required for highest exaltation
- (16) Revelation required to know ultimate nature of God
- (17) Spirit is a simpler form of matter
- (18) The prosperity cycle is the natural direction of history
- (19) Millions of peopled worlds
- (20) Father argues for justice and Son argues for mercy

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²³ Susan Mason Smith.

²⁴ DTL, John Smith.

²⁰ *Dartmouth Theology Lectures 1787-1809*, [hereafter DTL] John Smith, (Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH).