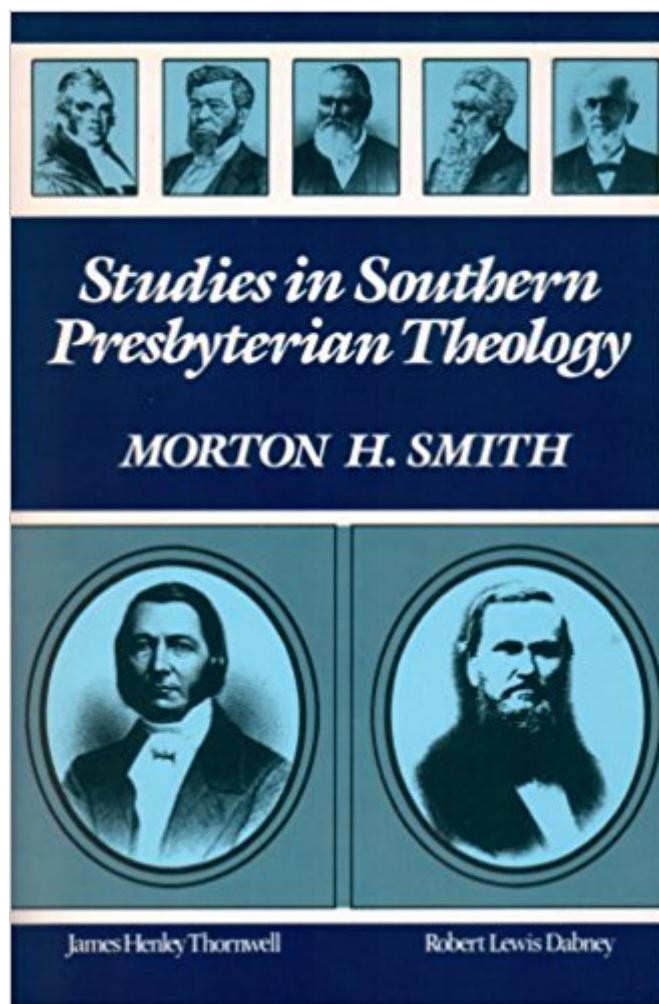


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# Studies In Southern Presbyterian Theology



## **Synopsis**

It has been said that a people who forget their history are a people without a foundation and without a future. Although the history of Presbyterianism in the South compromises a rich theological and ecclesiastical heritage, it is virtually unknown today. Morton H. Smith reminds us of the doctrinal roots of Southern Presbyterianism. Surveying the thought of James H. Thornwell, Robert L. Dabney, and numerous other key preachers and teachers, Smith highlights their views of biblical inspiration and divine election, as well as the doctrinal and constitutional distinctives of the Southern Presbyterian church. By learning from the church's past, Presbyterians of today can become better grounded for faithful living in the present and future.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Morton H. Smith is Stated Clerk of the Presbyterian Church in America. He was a founding professor both at Reformed Theological Seminary, where he taught systematic theology from 1964 until 1979, and at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, where he is Academic Dean. He received the Th.D. from the Free University of Amsterdam.

Being Old School Southern Presbyterians, we have found Dr. Morton's Smith's studies of these 'Southern Worthies' to be inspiring and uplifting recalling that our Southern theological heritage is rich indeed.

interesting read for former PCUS Presbyterians

Morton Smith is gold.....these southern Giants of the Presbyterian church is a super read!

This is a book I loved and hated. Its topic is wonderful and the scope and conception are great. It gives lots of detail on most all of the Southern Presbyterian theologians of Union (VA) and Columbia (SC/GA) seminaries. I appreciated Dr. Smith's sympathy for the figures he studies. His evangelical and Reformed commitments allow him to often see men like Dabney and Thornwell with great understanding. This is a reprint of Dr. Smith's doctoral dissertation from Free University, Amsterdam. P&R has packaged it very nicely. I don't know how I can possibly list all of the disappointing features of this book, however. The pickiest problem -- in 40 years nobody has bothered to catch all of the embarrassing factual errors in this text! For example, several pages are dedicated to William \*Swain\* Plumer (correct spelling \*Swan\*). There are literally dozens of these type of errors which undermine the credibility of the author. Far more serious is the poor approach to history that Smith takes. He has a chip on his shoulder and this makes him look, well, silly. He goes to huge lengths to try to show that the Southern Presbyterians were superior to the Old Princetonians. The evidence he gathers on this is really very, very weak. Further, he wants to argue that all the Southern Presbyterians were in lock-step agreement on full-subscription, no-exception belief in the Westminster Standards. Anybody who has spent any time at all reading them knows that this is not true. Yes, the major figures, at least, were all ardent Calvinists and did not waver on Biblical authority or the major doctrines. But they also reflected the diversity of any significant school of Reformed theology. Especially on secondary points of theology. Smith does not do these wonderful men a service by artificially restricting their very interesting theologies. Another problem is that Smith seems to have gathered very poor information on some of the minor figures. But this does not stop him from making conclusions which he has not demonstrated. Smith will state things like this (I'm making this example up): \*Dr. Jones taught at Union Seminary from 1902-04. He did not publish any articles. But we know he must have been an advocate of full subscription to the Westminster Confession and a 24-hour day creationist because he taught at Union. In addition, this author's uncle once took a course from him and commented that Dr. Jones was a fine conservative gentleman.\* Give me a break! Further, Dr. Smith lets his disgust for the Northern U.S. show every so often and this really doesn't help his case. This book did help me gain some insight into Dr. Smith's attitude in his denominational politics. I can see where the extreme rigidity comes from when he seeks to suppress good, solid, Calvinist zealots in his own denomination, simply because they may

have one or two very small differences with the Westminster Confession. Anyway, I did read this book cover-to-cover and even bought a second copy for my church office. I loved the topic, the orderliness of the book's arrangement, the Reformed theology, and the attractive packaging, but I found the scholarship to be extremely weak and the poor documentation to be very sad.

Enjoyed this book. Morton Smith is a treasure of the South. If you are looking to find the spiritual heart of the South, this book gives you a good history and will inspire you to read more on Dabney and Thornwell. This spurred me to do further reading. I'm fortunate to sit under the preaching of one of his students.

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