

**The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary,
Columbia University in the City of New York**

Union Theological Seminary Archives 1

Finding Aid for

Thomas Harvey Skinner, 1832-2005



Ambrotype portrait of Thomas Harvey Skinner, 1856. Credit to: UTS2: Faculty Portraits, the Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

Finding Aid prepared by: Rebecca Nieto, August 2017

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Summary Information

Creator: Thomas Harvey Skinner, 1791-1871
Title: Thomas Harvey Skinner Papers, 1832-2005
Inclusive dates: 1832-2005
Bulk dates: 1855-1868
Abstract: Founding faculty member, Union Theological Seminary; Presbyterian clergyman; professor and chair, Sacred Theology at Andover Theological Seminary, chair, Sacred Rhetoric at Union Theological Seminary; Davenport Professor of Sacred Rhetoric, Pastoral Theology, and Church Government, Union Theological Seminary.
Size: 1 box, 0.5 linear feet
Storage: Onsite storage
Repository: The Burke Library
Union Theological Seminary
3041 Broadway
New York, NY 10027
Email: burkearchives@library.columbia.edu

Administrative Information

- Provenance:** A bound volume of Skinner's writings was acquired by Linda and John Stroud of Stroud Theological Booksellers in 1984. This text, "The Theological Common-Place Book" and an accompanying file of lectures formed the foundation of the Skinner Papers. A 2005 addition was donated by Diana Lanier Smith, a descendent of Dr. Skinner. These materials are marked by their own subheading at the end of the papers. This collection was processed as part of a large group of materials that were organized in 2017 during an archival processing project funded by the Henry Luce Foundation and the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation.
- Access:** Archival papers are available to registered readers for consultation by appointment only. Please contact archives staff by email to burkearchives@library.columbia.edu, or by postal mail to The Burke Library address on page 1, as far in advance as possible. Burke Library staff is available for inquiries or to request a consultation on archival or special collections research.
- Access Restrictions:** The collection is unrestricted to readers. Certain materials, however, are in a fragile condition, and this may necessitate restriction in handling and copying.
- Preferred Citation:** Item description, UTS: Charles E. Bronson Papers, series #, box #, and folder #, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

Biography

Thomas Harvey Skinner (1791-1871) was born near Harvey's Neck, North Carolina on March 7, 1791. He was the son of Baptist parents (before their marriage his father had been an Episcopalian, his mother a Quaker), and was the seventh of thirteen children. He attended college at Princeton (then the College of New Jersey), where he graduated in 1809.

Skinner originally made plans to study law in Edenton, North Carolina. Two significant life events coincided with Skinner's studies that marked a divergence from this path. He was moved to conversion by the sermon of a traveling preacher and from the death of his brother. He left his studies and was ordained in the Presbytery of Philadelphia on June 10, 1813. During his spiritual transformation, he studied with Henry Kollock of Savannah, Georgia, and John McDowell of Elizabethtown, New Jersey. He then served as co-pastor in Philadelphia from 1813 to 1816, then as pastor in the same congregation from 1816 through 1832. Following his initial years in the ministry, Skinner became a professor of Sacred Rhetoric at Andover Theological Seminary, a position he held briefly from 1833 to 1835. Skinner's tenure at Andover was truncated when he joined the faculty and founding faculty member of Union Theological Seminary. There, he taught Sacred Rhetoric (the first professor to hold this post), Pastoral Theology, and Church Government from 1836 to 1840. He was promoted to the Davenport professorship at Union, a position he held from 1848 to 1871. He was director of this same program beginning in 1857.

According to obituary documentation and his descendants' testimony, Reverend Skinner married twice; first to Emily Montgomery, with whom he had four children, Maria, Thomas

Harvey Jr., Caroline, and Martha Ann. Following her death, he married Frances Louisa Davenport of New Haven, Connecticut, with whom he also had four children: Helen, James, Frances and Mary. Skinner predeceased his wife upon his death in New York City on February 1, 1871. Many of Skinner's peers spoke highly of him at his memorial, including Dr. Henry B. Smith, Dr. Adams, Dr. George L. Prentiss, and Dr. John Cotton Smith. During his lifetime, Reverend Skinner earned honorary doctoral degrees from Williams College (1826) and a LL.D. from Maryville College in 1855. In addition to these accolades, Skinner was the author of *Aids to Preaching and Hearing* (1839), *Religion of the Bible* (1839), *Hints to Christians* (1841), *Religious Liberty: A Discourse* (1841), and *Discussions in Theology* (1868).

Collection Scope and Content Note

The Skinner Papers are arranged into a single series, arranged by the nature of the material as they were acquired by the repository. The materials in this series are as follows:

- **Series 1: Sermons and Biographical, 1832-2005 (1 box, 0.5 lin. ft.)**

The first of these materials includes the "Theological Commonplace Book", which includes a "copious" index. A bibliographical description of the book reads:

Scholarly notations on such subjects as sin, grace, immortality, idolatry and doctrinal matters, with frequency references to classical and other writers, along with drafts of sermons and discourses. Interspersed throughout are highly personal autobiographical passages. In the longest, 11pp, Skinner reminisces openly about his early ministry. He tells how he first thought one mentor, James Patterson of Philadelphia, "light minded and... very eccentric" and how he felt his own early preaching harmed by the influence of Dr. Green of Princeton, "I could never feel myself at ease in his presence. Adopting Green's methods, "almost made a shipwreck of myself as a preacher". Skinner says his early preaching was extremely feeble but it was popular, explaining that his little knowledge of theology made him obscure and inconsistent on some points.

The Common-Place book contains a printed index in its front matter followed by a handwritten portion entitled "Preaching. Dipenters [sic]. Epocalypse. Eloquence. The Pulp [sic] Atonement". The Common-Place book is accompanied by lecture notes, a printed memorial brochure for Skinner's son, materials donated by Diana Lanier Smith containing Skinner's letters, including original ministerial and personal correspondence dating from 1844 to 1871, and additional correspondence and memorial pamphlets pertaining to Smith's life, death, and provenance of his papers.

Processing

Metal clips and staples were removed from materials and folded items were flattened. Materials were placed in new acid-free folders and boxes. Acidic items were separated from one another by interleaving with acid-free paper as needed. Any items in an advanced state of deterioration were placed in Mylar envelopes.

Further Sources

[Union Theological Seminary Alumni Catalogue, 1836-1936](#)

[NCPedia \(North Carolina Online Encyclopedia\) profile: Thomas Harvey Skinner.](#)

Contents list

Series 1: Sermons and Biographical, 1832-2005

Series	Box	Folder	Contents
1	1	1	Common Place Book (with accession note), 1832
1	1	2	Jas Quick [sic] Manuscript Notes on Lecture – Pastoral Theology by T.S. Skinner and Critical Exercise, 1855-1856
1	1	3	Memorial for Thomas H. Skinner (son of T. Skinner Harvey), 1892 Smith Donation
1	1	4	Chi Alpha Memorial [1871]
1	1	5	Accession Correspondence – Donor Family Lineage [2005]
1	1	6	Correspondence, 1841-1868
1	1	7	Correspondence Jan 7-February 19 (including letters of condolence), 1871
1	1	8	Correspondence -- February 12-April 16, 1871
1	1	9	Correspondence – July 1-December 1, 1899
1	1	10	Newspaper Clippings Relating to Skinner's Death, 1871