

# THE PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED REVIEW

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## I.

### THE TESTIMONY OF CHRIST TO THE OLD TESTAMENT.

**B**OTH Jews and Christians receive the Old Testament as containing a revelation from God, while the latter regard it as standing in close and vital relationship to the New Testament. Everything connected with the Old Testament has, of recent years, been subjected to the closest scrutiny—the authorship of its several books, the time when they were written, their style, their historical value, their religious and ethical teachings. Apart from the veneration with which we regard the Old Testament writings on their own account, the intimate connection which they have with the Christian Scriptures necessarily gives us the deepest interest in the conclusions which may be reached by Old Testament criticism. For as the New Testament dispensation presupposes and grows out of the Mosaic, so the books of the New Testament touch those of the Old at every point: “*In vetere testamento novum latet, et in novo vetus patet.*”

We propose to take a summary view of the testimony of our Lord to the Old Testament, as it is recorded by the evangelists. The New Testament writers themselves largely quote and refer to the Old Testament, and the views which they express regarding the old economy and its writings are in harmony with the statements of their Master; but, for various reasons, we here confine ourselves to what is related of the Lord Himself.

Let us refer, first, to what is contained or necessarily implied in the Lord's testimony to the Old Testament Scriptures, and, secondly, to the critical value of His testimony.

VIII.  
OBITUARY NOTE.

THE REV. PROF. THOMAS HARVEY SKINNER, D.D., LL.D.

THE Rev. Thomas Harvey Skinner, D.D., LL.D., died at his residence in Chicago, January 4, 1892. The son of a distinguished clergyman bearing the same name, he was born in Philadelphia, October 6, 1820. He was graduated at the University of Pennsylvania in 1840, and at Union Theological Seminary, New York, in 1843. He was the Pastor successively of several Presbyterian churches—in Paterson, N. J., New York City, Honesdale, Pa., Stapleton, Staten Island (Reformed Dutch), Fort Wayne, Ind., and Cincinnati. From Cincinnati, where he lived for ten years, he was called, in 1881, to the Cyrus H. McCormick Professorship of Didactic and Polemic Theology in the Northwestern (now McCormick) Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church. In 1890, owing to failing health, he resigned, and the Board of Directors, both to show their conviction of the value of Dr. Skinner's labors for the Seminary, and to provide the kind and amount of instruction he desired and felt able still to give, established a new professorship, called the Chair of Divinity, to continue in being only so long as he should live. For two years he performed its duties, lecturing during the first half of each seminary session on the "Rule of Faith." He delivered his lectures for the session of 1891-92 without interruption from ill-health, and when the Christmas holidays commenced he appeared stronger than he had been for several years. But he was smitten soon after with the prevailing influenza and, becoming weaker day after day, died just two weeks after the beginning of the attack.

Dr. Skinner became a Professor of Systematic Theology after he had passed his sixty-first year. The Theological Seminary had lost the majority of its Faculty by resignation. He found here only thirteen students. During the first year of his labors he wrote out in full and delivered to the classes two courses of lectures, one in Systematic Theology and the other in Church History. He labored hard and successfully for the growth of the Seminary and for its increased endowment, giving cheerfully to meet its immediate demands. The colleagues whom he found here and those who came soon after co-worked with him, and the family whose name the Seminary justly bears responded with great generosity to their appeals. He lived

only a little longer than ten years after he became Professor, but during that period the number of students increased fifteenfold—from thirteen to one hundred and ninety-eight; the old buildings were improved, new dormitories and dwelling houses for the professors were built and the general endowment fund was largely increased by Mr. McCormick and his family, who also, more than once, supplied the annual deficiencies which the rapid growth of the institution occasioned. Of Dr. Skinner's joy and pride in this swift movement in sympathy with the increase of the city and of population in the central and western portions of the country, no one needs to be told whom the Doctor conducted through the grounds and buildings. During the same period also the scholarship-fund was trebled, Dr. Skinner himself contributing to it ten thousand dollars.

Next to the Seminary, the institution that most engaged his affections was his church, the "Church of the Covenant." He had lived in Chicago only a short time before he was convinced of the need of a church near the Seminary, which would furnish a place of worship for the students, the professor's families and the growing neighborhood. He was active in all the movements for its organization. His were the largest subscriptions for the erection of the church-building, and he was always the largest contributor to its support. He felt amply repaid by its increase and its beneficent influence on the neighborhood, by the warm friendship between himself and his Pastor, by the great value to him and to the entire congregation of the Pastor's ministry, and by his profound joy in all the church's worship and activities. Its beautiful and spacious auditorium was a perpetual delight to him. The writer of this note was Dr. Skinner's next-pew neighbor and knows how warmly he loved the walls of the temple in which he worshiped God.

How charming a colleague he was all his colleagues will testify. He exaggerated the merits any of us seemed to him to have, and humbled himself that he might exalt us all. If we were in low spirits he cheered us. Out of every perplexity or difficulty he was confident that there was a way, and a way soon to be opened; and not seldom he opened it himself. A braver or more cheerful spirit I have never known, nor one who knew better how to communicate his bravery and cheerfulness to others. He was often in each of our homes, and was always welcome. He knew what members of our families were imprisoned by sickness and visited them. Nothing was a trouble to him, if it comforted or strengthened or cheered those who were dear to him. Nor did the circle of his colleagues exhaust his friendliness. He was a model neighbor. No one else in the neighborhood was so well known or so well liked. All sorts and conditions of men attracted him and were attracted to him; and all ages, too. The attachment between him and children was very beautiful. They loved him and were not afraid of him. There is growing up around this institution a generation of young people who know it only as Dr. Skinner's Seminary.

This friendliness did not terminate in the mere feeling, but issued whenever that was possible in most cheerful and generous giving—giving, too, that would have been impossible except for self-denial on his part.

Though Dr. Skinner began to teach theology late, he had long given to the subject special study. He belonged to a generation of ministers more accustomed than the present is to think theological subjects in a system. This habit was especially strong in him because he was the son of a father who took an active part in the theological discussions which interested the Presbyterians and Congregationalists of fifty and sixty years ago. The senior Dr. Skinner was a pronounced New School theologian. My colleague has often spoken to me of the conversations of ministers in his father's house during "Anniversary" weeks. The names of the interlocutors, Absalom Peters, Lyman Beecher, Leonard Bacon, Samuel H. Cox, William Adams and Albert Barnes, indicate both how theological was the atmosphere in which, when a young man, he lived, and the type of theology to which his family connection predisposed him. When younger he lived, for a time, in the family of Moses Stuart, at Andover. Though his views changed, Dr. Skinner never spoke to me of these men without revealing his affection for them. To Moses Stuart, Lyman Beecher, Albert Barnes and Edward Robinson he always spoke of himself as deeply indebted, and he loved to talk of them. He was a delightful recounter, and, as I had been brought up in the New School Church, he found me a most willing listener. I became his debtor for a better knowledge of many men whom I had never seen, but whose names were often mentioned when I was a child in my father's house in Harrisburg.

Dr. Skinner on becoming a clergyman could scarcely have avoided becoming specially interested in Systematic Theology. It was not long before his opinions on subjects in debate between the "Old" and "New" School Calvinists changed, and he became what, in those days, was called "a pronounced Old School man." This change of opinion deepened his interest in the subject, and he was known very early in his ministry as an exceptionally earnest and wide reader of the literature of Systematic Theology. His preaching from this time on was distinctively doctrinal preaching. I suppose few Presbyterian ministers read so much theological literature, or grasped so surely, or retained so much of, what they read, for he always read carefully and was never a mere "browser" or skimmer of books. He knew Athanasius on the Trinitarian controversy, and, though not so well, he knew, from having read Augustine himself, the North African theologian's doctrine of sin and his defense of it; he had studied Anselm; Calvin's *Institutes* and Calvin's Commentaries he enjoyed; and though he did not enjoy them, he had examined from time to time, when studying special subjects, the Reformed schoolmen of the continent. The authors he loved most and studied hardest were the great English divines. I am sure I do not exaggerate when I say that he

knew intimately the following: Richard Hooker, John Pearson, George Bull, Isaac Barrow, Daniel Waterland and Joseph Butler among the Anglicans, and Charnocke, Howe and Owen among the Puritans. He liked them better than the Reformed schoolmen of the continent, because, to use his own words, they were "less exclusively intellectual and more religious." He fed his soul on them. John Owen was his favorite theologian and sometimes he would talk about him so enthusiastically as to leave the impression that Dr. Skinner was "a man of one book." Nothing could be farther from the fact. He was well read in a large section of the literature of his department. Of course he knew well the later New England theology. It was the theology with which he began his ministry.

Dr. Skinner had a vigorous mind and was a man of strong convictions. His religious life was profound; his personal experiences were formed, as they should have been, upon his theology. Of the system he accepted he became one of the recognized defenders, long before he was called officially to teach the subject to candidates for the ministry; and his papers, always strong and clear, were gladly accepted by the editors of theological reviews.

Thus, though entering late into the Chair of Systematic Theology, he came to it well prepared. He knew the system he taught, for he had preached it, and lived it, and read widely of its literature. The first year of his professorship had not closed before he had written out a complete course of lectures. The form of this course he modified somewhat afterwards, but the course as at first written could not have been produced so rapidly in the stress of so many duties by any one except a very able and a very well-informed theologian.

I have not space to dwell on Dr. Skinner's remarkable knowledge of the language of the English Bible. He could repeat large sections of it, and had them always at command.

He was also a reader of general literature. He began early to cultivate his love of it. He liked poetry, and among the English poets confessed that Shelley was his favorite. He liked fiction and enjoyed most the elder Dumas among novelists. The great English reviews he subscribed for first when a young minister and continued a subscriber during his life, and he read with interest the most of each number of each review. The last time I saw him downstairs in his house, he was lying on his lounge reading the *Quarterly*, and trying to forget his excessive pain.

He published about forty-five occasional sermons, discourses and theological essays. They are all written with great simplicity and vigor of style. His style is at its best in his theological discussions. The last of these to appear in print was published in this REVIEW. Its title was "The Fatherhood of God."