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JAMES PETIGRU BOYCE: SOUTHERN BAPTIST SOTERIOLOGY
IN THE REFORMED TRADITION

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Theology

by
Mark Barrington Hollingsworth
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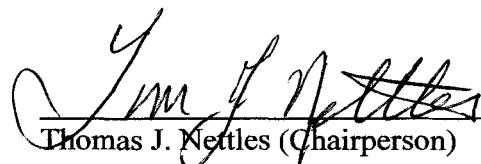
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JAMES PETIGRU BOYCE: SOUTHERN BAPTIST SOTERIOLOGY IN THE REFORMED TRADITION

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To Amanda,

the love of my life

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PREFACE

I have been a Southern Baptist for most of my life. In my early years, it was because of tradition--my family always had attended Southern Baptist churches. In more recent years, however, I have come to be a Southern Baptist by conviction. This change has been due to my interest in discovering how the Southern Baptist heritage has evolved. More specifically, as my theological understandings have taken shape based on study of the Scriptures, I have discovered that they comprise the same theology on which the Convention was founded. It is unfortunate, I think, that this theological history was not taught in the churches I grew up in, nor in many (perhaps most) of the churches that bear the name Southern Baptist today. Perhaps this brief work will go toward making some contribution in this area. It has been a personal journey for me.

The completion of this thesis could not have occurred without much outside help. I consider the opportunity to have studied at Southern Seminary among the greatest blessings of my life, if for no other reason than to be influenced by the professors in the department of Church History and Systematic Theology. David Puckett graciously guided me through the application process. Greg Wills, Shawn Wright, and Steve Wellum have taught me not just with their words, but with their Christian character. I appreciate Dr. Wright and Gregg Allison serving on my Thesis Committee, committing their time and expertise to this project. I am forever grateful to Tom Nettles, not only for serving as my supervising professor, but also for his vast wisdom and pastoral spirit.

Not only has my wife, Amanda, endured much time away from her husband over the last year, but she has done so willingly, joyfully, and with faithful support. She is truly a gift from God: the greatest wife, mother, and helper I could have ever dreamed of. We have, in the past year, experienced the birth of our second child, several hospital stays, two major surgeries (along with one minor), days and nights of separation from each other, all the adventures that go along with raising a toddler and an infant, but also a growing sense of peace, security, and love even as our family has grown and as the Lord has been so faithful. I am excited to walk through life together with Amanda, Jake, and Eli to face with joy all the plans that God has for us in the future.

Our financial struggles have been eased through the generous gifts of my grandfather, James Gatlin, Sr., my parents, Bob and Bonnie Hollingsworth, and the faithful and loving people of Colonial Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee. We are eternally thankful for their kindness.

I will be amazed for eternity at the grace of God. His undeserved faithfulness in helping me to see the glorious gospel and changing my heart to love and serve Him is the only way I could possibly do anything in His name. May He be pleased with my work and with my life.

Mark B. Hollingsworth

Louisville, Kentucky

December 2007

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

He is said by historians to have “distinguished himself as a statesman, a politician, and most of all, a theologian.”¹ This could well be said of innumerable men of the past, but perhaps not as many have been spoken of in the ethereal language used when reflecting on the life and character of James Petigru Boyce (1827-88). One of his closest friends and colleagues said of him, “A human life ordained to the honor of his God, set in the orbit that was accompanied by the revolution of the few years allotted to him, appears to my mind a creation sublimer than a star.”² One of his successors described him posthumously by saying, “He easily takes a place in the galaxy where shine Furman, Fuller, Manly, Poindexter, Jeter, and Taylor.”³ He was said to have been “the soul of honor,” yet “marked by true humility and modesty.”⁴ His epitaph seems to summarize all too briefly his contribution to the cause of Christ: “First President of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; to him, under God, the Seminary owes its

¹Emir Caner and Ergun Caner, *The Sacred Trust: Sketches of Southern Baptist Presidents* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2003), 18.

²John A. Broadus, *Memoir of James Petigru Boyce* (New York: A.C. Armstrong and Son, 1893), 346.

³John R. Sampey, *The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary: The First Thirty Years, 1859-1889* (Baltimore: Wharton, Barron and Company, 1890), 27.

⁴Broadus, *Memoir*, 357-58.

existence.”⁵

What was it about James Boyce that caused so many, far and wide, to hold him in such high esteem? As founder and first President of the first Southern Baptist seminary, his legacy consists of much more than simply occupying the first line in a list of his successors. Boyce was first and foremost a theologian. Indeed, at his ordination to the gospel ministry, when asked if he should like to be a preacher, he replied, “Yes, provided I do not become a professor of theology.”⁶ But he had already become a *student* of theology first, which never ceased, even after a long career as a professor. Boyce understood that the most diligent students of theology make the best teachers.

Yet there is one thing further that would seem to distinguish the best teachers of theology; that is, whether they live out what they teach. The one who would undertake the teaching of the Bible ought not do so hastily. The Word of God was not meant simply to be learned, memorized, or even taught, but to be lived as well. A man’s life cannot be divorced from his theology. This is what makes James Boyce worthy of study. This thesis will seek to examine his *Abstract of Systematic Theology* (among other works) in light of the broader Baptist tradition. In doing so we can be sure that we have an articulated theology that was not dry and dusty, inconsistent with the man’s life, but one that was for him the very soul of his being. As one of his former students remarked concerning Boyce’s *Abstract*:

He himself was greater than his book . . . It reveals the reverence in which his

⁵Hugh Wamble, “Boyce, James Petigru,” in *Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists*, ed. Norman Wade Cox (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1958), 1:184.

⁶Ibid.

innermost soul lived, and the certainty of his faith. It partakes of the largeness of his mind, its richness and fullness, its almost perfect orderliness, and its genuine honesty and humility. *Dr. Boyce was his theology incarnate*, and because of this he was a greater teacher than a writer.⁷ (emphasis added)

Boyce was unmistakably a Baptist. That is to say, he held to Christian orthodoxy, an evangelical belief, regenerate church membership, and a confessional identity.⁸ He was also unmistakably a Southern Baptist.⁹ Yet there was a theological tradition that existed before Baptists, at least in a denominational sense, came to be: the Reformed tradition. It was out of this tradition that James Boyce drew his theology. This thesis will examine Boyce's soteriology in the theological matrix that developed from the time of the Reformers, specifically concerning the doctrines of human depravity, election, and regeneration. It will find that this Southern Baptist statesman of the mid-nineteenth century placed himself directly in the theological tradition widely known as Calvinism. It will also find that Boyce, rather than being an anomaly in this regard, was representative of Southern Baptist theology in his day.

The thesis consists of four chapters. The first is an examination of the theological context out of which Boyce developed his theology. Beginning with the Reformation, the Calvinistic understanding of salvation is traced from the sixteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth century, from England to America, especially as it developed and remained within Baptist thought. A brief biographical sketch of Boyce

⁷Z. T. Cody, "James Petigru Boyce," *Review and Expositor* 24 (1927): 159.

⁸Thomas J. Nettles, *The Baptists* (Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2005), 1:35-50.

⁹This description is given in reference to the forming of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1845, of which Boyce was a part from his early adult years until his death. In this sense, technically speaking, there were no "Southern Baptists" prior to 1845.

concludes the chapter, noting specific influences on his theology.

Chapter two examines Boyce's soteriology, relying heavily on his major work, *Abstract of Systematic Theology*. Once his positions on election and effectual calling are detailed, an analysis of his understanding of depravity provides a complete picture of his doctrine of salvation. Chapter three follows with a more concentrated examination of particular influences from his own life as well as those who had gone before him. It will be seen that his particular understanding of salvation can be traced back to the time of the Protestant Reformation.

Chapter four offers thoughts on what happened to Boyce's theology in Baptist life in the years that followed. The thesis concludes with a discussion of the contemporary value of his theology.

The Background of Mid-Nineteenth Century Southern Baptist Theology

James Boyce found himself in a position of influence among Southern Baptists in the second half of the nineteenth century; in fact, he was quite possibly the “most influential theological educator in Southern Baptist history.”¹⁰ Perhaps the most vital influence he had was in the classroom, considering that he was first and foremost a teacher of systematic theology. No one can be purely objective in teaching Scripture, for it is truth that is arrived at by conviction. Naturally, all who teach theology are going to have some bias; that is, each will have his own understanding of the correct way to interpret the biblical text. Boyce was no exception. He did not arrive at his doctrinal

¹⁰Greg Wills, *The First Baptist Church of Columbia, South Carolina: 1809 to 2002* (Brentwood, TN: Baptist History and Heritage Society, and Nashville: Fields Publishing, 2003), 56.

positions in a vacuum. Therefore, the influences upon his thinking must be examined in a larger context.

Post-Reformation Beginnings

“Contemporary Baptists are a denomination of Christian believers that have their origins in the English Reformation at the turn of the sixteenth century,” according to Brackney.¹¹ Although it is unwise to be dogmatic about who the first Baptist was, most historians seem to give significance to John Smyth when it comes to Baptist beginnings.¹² Strongly Puritan in his convictions, he moved to a Separatist position from the Church of England in the first decade of the 1600s. The issue was religious liberty--Smyth held the conviction that a Christian church should be composed of visible saints only, and that there ought to be a disciplined congregationalism, things which he did not see in the Anglican Church. After moving to Holland in 1608, he added believers’ baptism to his

¹¹William H. Brackney, *Baptists in North America: An Historical Perspective* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 1.

¹²Although it is not the purpose of this thesis to examine Baptist beginnings in detail, the subject is not completely irrelevant. There is a train of thought which places Baptist origins with the Swiss Anabaptist movement during the time of Luther and Zwingli. This seems to be an effort on the part of some to distance their contemporary Baptist identity from that of the mainline Protestant Reformers. The “Anabaptist Kinship Theory,” as it has been called, though, is somewhat problematic. Most scholarship seems to be against it, mainly because there was such diversity of thought among Anabaptists with respect to things that are considered by Baptists to be essential doctrines. Not all Anabaptists taught believers’ baptism, a regenerate church membership, or the authority of the Scriptures. Torbet perhaps gave the clearest expression of most historians’ conclusions when he said, “With respect to the relationship between Anabaptists and Baptists, it is safe to say that the latter are the spiritual descendants of *some* of the former. No historical continuity between the two groups can be proved.” (emphasis in original) Robert Torbet, *A History of the Baptists* (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1950), 55.

convictions. Seeing no “true church,” he baptized himself,¹³ then a layman in his church, Thomas Helwys, and the two in turn baptized the rest of the congregation. By 1610, Smyth was advocating joining with the Mennonites, to which Helwys was opposed. This caused a separation, with Helwys and twelve others returning to England and establishing the first English Baptist church, just outside of London, although they still taught “baptism” by pouring or sprinkling.¹⁴ This was done at their own peril, as the climate for dissenters was much safer in Holland than in England. Helwys, like Smyth, did not hold to the Reformed doctrine of God’s sovereignty in salvation. But with the death of Helwys in 1616, new leaders among the fledgling Baptist movement emerged, such as John Murton, who succeeded Helwys as pastor, and Leonard Busher. Busher was a member of the Helwys congregation, but was a Baptist Calvinist who wrote on religious

¹³Historians disagree over whether Smyth, in fact, baptized himself. Ivimey concluded that he did not. Joseph Ivimey, *History of the English Baptists* (London: Printed for the author, and sold by Burditt [etc.], 1811-1830) 1:115. If he did, he certainly did so by effusion, not by immersion. Lee pointed out, “While the self-baptism of Smyth is doubted by early Baptist historians, later Baptists were more willing to accept the evidence.” He also asserted, “There are several contemporary testimonies that indicate that Smyth did baptize himself.” Jason K. Lee, *The Theology of John Smyth: Puritan, Separatist, Baptist, Mennonite* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2003), 72.

His baptism, whether self-administered or not, was certainly not a popular decision, even among Smyth’s Separatist friends, and led to the isolation of him and his congregation, which Bell postulated may have fueled Smyth’s being “carried away” into a kaleidoscope of beliefs, including mysticism, Arminianism, and radical political ideas. Mark R. Bell, *Apocalypse How? Baptist Movements During the English Revolution* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2000), 36.

¹⁴“Baptism by pouring or sprinkling” is actually contradictory terminology. The word “baptize” actually means “to dip or immerse.” It is significant that the English “baptize” is a direct transliteration (not translation) of the Greek *baptizo*. Even among Baptists, to speak of the “mode of baptism” in attempting to defend immersion is a redundant, if not nonsensical, phrase. The word itself defines the “mode” of immersion.

liberty.¹⁵ Others who held to Reformed soteriology constituted a congregation in 1616 in Southwark, known as the Jacob Lathrop Jessey Church (so named for its first three pastors), and the seeds of a specific stream of Baptist theology had been planted, that of the Particular Baptist variety. These Baptists held to the soteriology of the Reformers, including a view that the atonement of Christ was particularly applied to the elect, as opposed to General Baptists, who believed in a universal (or general) atonement.¹⁶

Around this time and for several decades following, General Baptists began to fall into relative obscurity¹⁷ even as Particular Baptists were developing more fully their understanding of baptism. Around 1638, a group of six members of the Jacob Lathrop Jessey congregation joined with the man who was by then the pastor, John Spilsbury, to

¹⁵Leonard Busher, *Religion's Peace: or A Plea for Liberty of Conscience* (London: Printed for John Sweeting at the Angel in Popes-head-alley, 1646), 1 [on-line]; accessed 27 August 2007; available from <http://eebo.chadwyck.com>; Internet. “The Scriptures do teach, that the one true religion is gotten by a new birth, even by the word and Spirit of God, and therewith also it is only maintained and defended.”

¹⁶John Saltmarsh, a prominent General Baptist after the death of Helwys, highlighted the sharp division between these two groups in his apologetic for general atonement in which he described those who held to a particular atonement as doing so “from their ignorance and sinful corruption.” John Saltmarsh, *The Fountaine of Free Grace Opened . . . , 2nd ed.* (London: Wing, 1645), 22 [on-line]; accessed 27 August 2007; available from <http://eebo.chadwyck.com>; Internet.

¹⁷Bell, *Apocalypse How?*, 41. In fact, Bell said they “became almost invisible.” Commenting on the discord that emerged among the General Baptists especially in the 1640s even as the Particular Baptists were growing, he said, “The General Baptists’ lack of a hierarchy and emphasis on the individual’s ability to interpret Scripture meant that divisions would almost inevitably occur.” Ibid., 45.

Nettles has suggested something similar in Baptist history: the notion of two competing paradigms for understanding Baptist identity. Although it has not always been manifest solely in General/Particular distinctions, there are those that reject adherence to confessions in favor of individual interpretations of Scripture (“soul-liberty”) over against those that hold strongly to a confessional identity (“coherent-truth”). Nettles, *The Baptists*, 1:11-34.

reject infant baptism altogether and state that the church ought to be built on the baptism of believers only. This congregation is viewed by many as the first Particular Baptist Church.¹⁸ By 1641 under the pastorate of Richard Blunt, the only recognized baptism had become that of immersion. From this church came other Particular Baptist churches, including those pastored by Samuel Eaton, Hansard Knollys, and William Kiffin.

The significance of their growth was not only, as Jonas admitted, that “the Particular Baptists were the first Baptists to baptize by immersion,”¹⁹ but also that their soteriology was thoroughly in the Reformed tradition. This was the tributary of the Baptist river that began to distinguish itself as both Baptistic and Calvinistic. It was also the one that experienced the most growth in those early days. As Brackney said, “The Particular Baptists would become numerically the leading group of Baptists in England, Wales, and Scotland by the end of the [seventeenth] century.”²⁰ In 1644 they produced *The London Confession*, outlining their Particular Baptist beliefs. It was not only consistent with orthodox Christianity in the Reformed tradition, but, as Lumpkin noted, was “the first Baptist confession to pronounce in favor of immersion as the proper mode of baptism.”²¹ It described a Calvinistic understanding of election and salvation, in

¹⁸William Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1959), 143.

¹⁹W. Glenn Jonas, Jr., “Defining a Tradition: A River Runs Through It,” in *The Baptist River: Essays on Many Tributaries of a Diverse Tradition*, ed. W. Glenn Jonas, Jr. (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2006), 7.

²⁰Brackney, *Baptists in North America*, 10. The author’s original words were “... by the end of the sixteenth century.” I am assuming this was an editorial oversight and have made the anticipated change.

²¹Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 146.

addition to the idea that the gospel was to be preached in all the world. Article XXI stated:

That Christ Jesus by his death did bring forth salvation and reconciliation only for the elect, which were those which God the Father gave him; and that the Gospel which is to be preached to all men as the ground of faith is, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the everblessed God, filled with the perfection of all heavenly and spiritual excellencies, and that salvation is only and alone to be had through believing in his Name.²²

Of particular significance is Benedict's observation concerning the Confession: "It was put into the hands of many of the members of parliament, and produced such an effect, that some of their greatest adversaries...were obliged to acknowledge, that excepting the articles against infant baptism, it was an orthodox confession."²³ This Calvinistic orthodoxy followed Baptists to the new world.

Migration to America

To seek religious freedom and to escape persecution from the state church, many from Great Britain began to make the move across the Atlantic throughout the seventeenth century. By the turn of the eighteenth century, Baptists in North America were small in number and somewhat disorganized.²⁴ There were those of both Arminian and Calvinist varieties.²⁵ Baptist churches came to be established most notably in Rhode

²²Ibid., 162.

²³David Benedict, *A General History of the Baptist Denomination in America, and Other Parts of the World* (Freeport, NY: Books For Libraries Pres, 1813), 199.

²⁴Ibid., 273. The author said of this period, "Thus, in almost 100 years after the first settlement of America, only seventeen Baptist churches had arisen in it."

²⁵In attempting to explain the practical difference, historically speaking, in these two theologies, Brackney has posited, "many confessional Baptists retreat from much appreciation of religious experience. For them Scripture is a sure, unchanging

Island and Boston. Influential figures were Roger Williams, Thomas Gould, and John Clarke. The primary issue for these early Baptists in the New England colonies was religious freedom. In 1707 five churches came together to form the first Baptist association in America, the Philadelphia Association, wanting to work together in advancing the gospel and to advise one another on church matters such as discipline. The Association was guided by a confession of faith written by Elias Keach that was ostensibly the same as the *Second London Confession* of 1689 with two articles added (one on the laying of hands on believers being baptized, the other concerning hymn singing). This Calvinistic document was officially adopted in 1742 and became known as the *Philadelphia Confession*. The importance and influence of this confession cannot be underestimated. Holifield said it “remained authoritative in Baptist churches for more than a century.”²⁶ Torbet concluded that it “became the pattern for most American Baptists.”²⁷ As Baptists moved further south, the Association was zealous in sending their own missionaries to strengthen what were often struggling churches, and these Philadelphia missionaries brought their Calvinistic doctrine with them.²⁸

authority in contrast with human experience that is variegated, capricious, and undependable. Most of these Baptists are heavily indebted to a Calvinistic influence in Baptist life. General Atonement or Arminian Baptists tend to create a balance between the authority of Scripture, the sovereignty of God, and human experience.” Brackney, *Baptists in North America*, 4.

²⁶E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 275.

²⁷Torbet, *A History of the Baptists*, 1950.

²⁸“The result,” Brackney said, specifically referring to the Carolinas, “was a transformation of the formerly General Baptist congregations to the Calvinistic position, the establishment in 1755 of the Kehukee Baptist Association, and an ongoing tie to the Philadelphia Baptist Association.” Brackney, *Baptists in North America*, 18.

Some have interpreted the construction of The New Hampshire Confession of 1833 as an attempt on the part of Baptists in the North to soften the hard edges of their Calvinism.²⁹ What is clear is that it was a reaction to the intrusion of Free Will Baptist doctrine into that region, so Torbet stated, “Its purpose was to offset Arminian teaching in New England.”³⁰ Probably more to the point was Nettles, who said,

Rather than interpreting the New Hampshire Confession as a gradual retreat from the Calvinism of former days, it is better to see it as an affirmation of the Calvinist position on particular issues raised by the presence and growth of Free Will Baptists in New England. The Calvinists did not jettison their distinguishing tenets but rather were saying, ‘We have a defensible and biblical understanding of the relation of man’s will and duty to the doctrines of God’s sovereignty.’³¹

The split between Northern and Southern Baptists, largely for non-theological reasons, was soon to come; nevertheless, Baptists in the South were content with their Calvinistic Philadelphia Confession of Faith.

Southward Expansion

The struggle in the north was over religious liberty. Puritan immigrants from

²⁹Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 360: “In point of fact, the theological views of Calvinistic Baptists in the New Hampshire area had been considerably modified after 1780 by the rise of the Free Will Baptists (later called Free Baptists) following the leadership of Benjamin Randall. The Free Will Baptist message was welcomed with enthusiasm by the great middle class in New England and its warm evangelism produced a revolt against the rigid theological system of some Calvinistic Baptists. The New Hampshire Confession thus sought to restate its Calvinism in very moderate tones.”

³⁰Torbet, *A History of the Baptists*, 475.

³¹Thomas J. Nettles, *By His Grace and for His Glory: A Historical, Theological, and Practical Study of the Doctrines of Grace in Baptist Life* (Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2006), xlivi.

the Old World wanted to remain within the Church of England and work for reform. Separatists had concluded that the best thing to do was to withdraw from the state church and seek to establish a true church on biblical grounds. A growing number of these Separatists held to a Baptist ecclesiology and so were included in the numbers who endured varying degrees of persecution for their convictions.³² Not all of these “dissenters” were Reformed in their theology, but the movement’s roots came from the Puritans, who in turn had their roots in the theology of the Reformers. The presence of persecution from the magistrate and the struggle for religious freedom began to push many dissenters, including Baptists, southward.³³ In the middle of the eighteenth century the Great Awakening in New England also made a significant contribution to Baptists in the South. Congregational churches lost many of their members as they sought a more experiential religion, and they became known as “Separates” due to their desire to establish separate churches. Many of these also held to believers’ baptism and so were termed “Separate Baptists.” Most of these were Calvinistic in doctrine,³⁴ and were especially prominent in Virginia and the Carolinas.

Therefore, as the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries progressed, Holifield

³²Benedict wrote, “Baptist principles soon began to prevail among the pedobaptist Separates. All their doctrine tended that way, and those who followed it whither it led embraced believers’ baptism. Many Baptist churches arose out of those Separate societies.” Benedict, *A General History*, 275.

³³This southward flow began with William Screven, who relocated his Kittery, Maine congregation to Charleston, South Carolina, establishing the first Baptist church in the southern colonies. “The seeds of Baptist faith and practice had been planted which were to make these peculiar and indomitable people the most numerous of the United States Protestants.” Orland Armstrong and Marjorie Armstrong, *The Baptists in America* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1979), 83.

³⁴Nettles, *The Baptists*, 2:131.

said, “Calvinism became the predominant Baptist dialect,”³⁵ due in no small part to the Philadelphia Association.

The *Philadelphia Confession* found a home in the Charleston (South Carolina) Association, which had been established in 1751. Adopted in 1767, the Confession “exerted extraordinary influence especially in the churches of the coastal section where Arminian sentiments had earlier been dominant.”³⁶ The leading church in the Association was the already well-established (since 1696) First Baptist Church of Charleston, of which Hamrick has said that the church’s earliest legacy was that of setting a foundation of Calvinistic theology “for most American Baptists.”³⁷ This foundation spread throughout the Baptist south well into the nineteenth century. Charleston was also the birthplace, and First Baptist was the boyhood church, of James P. Boyce.

One of the South’s most ardent Baptist defenders of Calvinism was John Leadley Dagg (1794-1884), a largely self-taught Baptist theologian and pastor. He served in Philadelphia and Virginia in addition to being President of Mercer University in

³⁵Holifield, *Theology in America*, 279. The author pointed out, further, that a “Calvinistic diversity” existed among Baptists. “By the mid-nineteenth century at least four varieties had emerged: (1) Baptist Edwardeanism, (2) a Fullerite Calvinism that was closely related to the Edwardean strand but not identical with it, (3) the Calvinism of the Philadelphia Confession, and (4) an eclectic populist Calvinism, influenced by the hyper-Calvinists but receptive also to other Baptists impulses” (282). Each, however, held to the soteriology espoused by Boyce.

³⁶Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 352.

³⁷John R. Hamrick, “Charleston, S.C., First Baptist Church,” in *Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists*, ed. Norman Wade Cox (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1958), 1:247.

Georgia from 1844 to 1854. He was widely influential in his writings,³⁸ producing among other works *A Manual of Theology* (1857), which Holifield has called “the most influential Baptist exposition of the Calvinism of the Philadelphia tradition.”³⁹ Cline called it “of abiding value” for its consistently devotional aspect.⁴⁰ In this work Dagg clearly articulated his Reformed view of election by saying, “All who will finally be saved, were chosen to salvation by God the Father, before the foundation of the world, and given to Jesus Christ in the covenant of grace.”⁴¹ To clarify further, he remarked concerning the basis of this choice by God:

Election is not on the ground of foreseen faith or obedience. On this point, the teachings of Scripture are clear. [The elect] are chosen not because of their holiness, but that they may be holy; not because of their obedience, but unto obedience The discriminating grace which God bestows, is not on the ground of faith and obedience previously existing, but for a reason known only to God himself. This unrevealed reason, and not foreseen faith and obedience, is the ground of election.⁴²

Dagg’s Calvinism is also seen in his understanding of effectual calling, which he equated with regeneration. He saw God the Holy Spirit as sovereign in the actual process of the new birth, as he said, “His power in creating the world was unresisted; and equally

³⁸Dever claimed that Dagg “was the first Southern Baptist systematic theologian to be read widely by Southern Baptists.” Mark E. Dever, “John L. Dagg,” in *Baptist Theologians*, ed. Timothy George and David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1990), 165.

³⁹Holifield, *Theology in America*, 285.

⁴⁰C. W. Cline, “Some Baptist Systematic Theologians,” *Review and Expositor* 20 (1923): 313.

⁴¹John Leadley Dagg, *A Manual of Theology* (Charleston, SC: Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1858), 309.

⁴²Ibid., 312. Dagg referenced Eph 1:4 and 1 Pet 1:2 in support of this position.

unresisted is the power by which he new-creates the heart.”⁴³ The articulation of this soteriology by this influential theologian illustrates the stronghold that Calvinism had established in the South.

Patrick Hues Mell (1814-88), another Georgia Baptist pastor and theologian, worked closely with Dagg at Mercer University when the former became President of that institution in 1844. Although he never produced a systematic theology, he wrote not a small number of pieces, including those that defended Calvinistic soteriology. One in particular arose as a response to sermons preached by Rev. Russell Reneau, who apparently vigorously attacked Calvinistic theology. There can be no doubt as to Mell’s Reformed understanding of salvation when he rebutted in his treatise,

The elect are chosen, not because God foresees faith and good works in them; but in part that they might have faith and might perform good works God’s act in electing some and not others is to be resolved into his sovereign will. He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth (Rom 9:18).⁴⁴

Mell, like Dagg, was comfortable with an element of mystery in the subject of predestination, and could say nothing other than what he believed the Scriptures to teach: that God had chosen a people for Himself, from eternity past, according to the freedom of His own will and purposes. And concerning the new birth, Mell was again consistent with the historic Reformed position when he said, “The elect are, by the influence of sovereign grace, made willing in the day of God’s power.”⁴⁵ The teachings of traditional Calvinism, those of man’s utter helplessness and depravity and the necessity of God’s

⁴³Ibid., 333.

⁴⁴Patrick Hues Mell, *Predestination and the Saints’ Perseverance, Stated and Defended* (n.p.: The Wicket Gate, 1850), 31.

⁴⁵Ibid.

absolute sovereign grace in salvation, were, for Mell, such part and parcel of the gospel that they were indispensable. In an essay delivered to a gathering of ministers in 1868, he said, “We should make these doctrines the basis of all our pulpit ministrations. If this be, indeed, the gospel system . . . every minister should be imbued with its spirit, and furnished with its panoply.”⁴⁶

There could be many more examples cited of significant Southern Baptist leaders from the days of, and just prior to, the public ministry of James Boyce that agreed with his Calvinistic soteriology. Even fifty years after the founding of Southern Seminary, the associating of Baptists in America with Calvinism was still strong enough for Presbyterian Charles Hemphill to observe, “The great Baptist denomination is and has been predominantly Calvinistic in theology.”⁴⁷ Kendall forcefully summarized the situation by saying,

Although the immediate purpose of the formation of the Southern Baptist Convention was not derived from a theological issue, the prevailing theology, Calvinism, was the governing theological perspective. Therefore the theological pendulum, which had a tempestuous history of swaying back and forth from Calvinism to Arminianism, was now solidly positioned on the Calvinist side. This writer can find no evidence at all that any key figure in earliest Southern Baptist life believed anything other than that which was essentially consistent with the Particular Baptist Confessions in England and the Philadelphia Confession of 1742.⁴⁸

Thus, the Calvinistic tributary of the Baptist river flowed from Protestant Europe all the

⁴⁶Patrick Hues Mell, *Calvinism: An Essay Read Before the Georgia Baptist Ministers' Institute at Marietta, Georgia, August 13, 1868* (Savannah, GA: J. H. Estill, 1875), 13.

⁴⁷Charles R. Hemphill, “Calvinism and Social Progress,” *Review and Expositor* 7 (1910): 39.

⁴⁸Robert T. Kendall, “The Rise and Demise of Calvinism in the Southern Baptist Convention” (M.A. thesis, University of Louisville, 1973), 64.

way to the American South over the course of three centuries and in 1845 contributed to the establishment the Southern Baptist Convention.

Boyce: A Theologian among Baptists

It was in July of 1856, while Boyce was a theology professor at Furman University, that he delivered his famous inaugural address, “Three Changes in Theological Education.” Present was A. M. Poindexter, Secretary of the Southern Baptist Convention’s Foreign Mission Board, who said it was “the ablest thing of the kind he had ever heard.”⁴⁹ Broadus called it “epoch-making in the history of theological education among Southern Baptists.”⁵⁰ Boyce was twenty-nine years old.

The address was a call to the newly-formed Convention to establish an institution of higher learning that would contribute to the education of its ministers. Boyce apparently felt that among Baptists, theological seminaries such as Rochester and Newton did not do an adequate job nor train an adequate number of ministers for Baptist churches.⁵¹ His primary concern, however, was theological. Boyce heralded the need for a Southern Baptist institution⁵² that would, among other things, stave off the influence of

⁴⁹Broadus, *Memoir*, 120.

⁵⁰Ibid., 142.

⁵¹Remarking on the state of theological education in Boyce’s day, Sampey said in 1929, “Before 1859 not one of the twelve Apostles could have secured admittance as a regular student in any of the standard theological seminaries of our country.” John R. Sampey, “The Future of the Seminary in the Light of Its Past,” *Review and Expositor* 26 (October 1929): 376.

⁵²Admittedly, this idea was not original with Boyce. As Dever stated, “Although not the first one to advocate the establishment of a central seminary supported by all Southern Baptists, Boyce became its champion while at Furman.” Mark E. Dever, “Representative Aspects of the Theologies of John L. Dagg and James P. Boyce:

false doctrine. In this address, he mentioned two in particular: Campbellism and Arminianism. In bolstering his argument for the need to adopt a confession of faith to which all professors would adhere, he said,

A crisis in Baptist doctrine is evidently approaching, and those of us who still cling to the doctrines which formerly distinguished us have the important duty to perform of earnestly contending for the faith once delivered to the saints. Gentlemen, God will call us to judgment if we neglect it.⁵³

Boyce knew of no other way to stem the tide of false doctrine than to steep students in true, biblical doctrine. As one of Southern Seminary's first four professors, and the one who "laid the groundwork for Southern Baptist education for generations to come,"⁵⁴ it is important to understand how his biblical doctrine developed.

Early Years in Charleston

James Petigru Boyce was born in 1827 to Ker and Amanda Boyce in Charleston, South Carolina. Young James had the distinct advantages of being born into material prosperity, his father being one of the wealthiest men in the South;⁵⁵ this would afford him unique educational opportunities when the time came. His mother was of Presbyterian background and was converted under the preaching of Basil Manly, Sr., then the pastor of the First Baptist Church in Charleston, about one year before James was

Reformed Theology and Southern Baptists" (Th.M. thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1987), 37.

⁵³James P. Boyce, "Three Changes in Theological Institutions," in Timothy George, *James Petigru Boyce: Selected Writings* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1989), 49.

⁵⁴Caner and Caner, *The Sacred Trust*, 18.

⁵⁵"His father controlled extensive holdings and was regarded as the wealthiest man in the city of Charleston." Robert Andrew Baker, Paul J. Craven, Jr., and R. Marshall Blalock, *History of the First Baptist Church of Charleston, South Carolina 1682-2007* (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press, 2007), 277.

born. The elder Manly was pastor of First Baptist, Charleston from 1826 to 1837, Boyce being ten years old when Manly left to assume the presidency of the University of Alabama. Interestingly, Boyce and Basil Manly, Jr. forged a friendship in those early years that was to last a lifetime. Upon the senior Manly's death in 1868, it was James Boyce who delivered the funeral sermon, during which he revealed the theology that guided the church during Manly's tenure: "In his doctrinal sentiments, Dr. Manly was a decided Calvinist."⁵⁶ This was the only pastor Boyce knew at First Baptist Church until he was ten years old.

Succeeding Manly as pastor of First Baptist, Charleston was the eloquent William Theophilus Brantly, who had pastored the historically Calvinistic First Baptist Church of Philadelphia for eleven years. He had served as a mentor to Manly, the two sharing the same birthplace in North Carolina, and Baker postulated that Brantly was "the key link that brought Basil Manly to South Carolina and helped mold the life of Richard Fuller and perhaps that of James P. Boyce by his teaching."⁵⁷ Brantly was pastor from 1837 to 1844, the year after Boyce began studies at the College of Charleston. Thus, while growing up in Charleston, Boyce was exposed to two pastors, both of whom were decidedly Calvinistic in their preaching.

Education

Boyce was blessed with a keen intellect, which became apparent as his studies at the College of Charleston commenced in 1843. After two years there, his mind turned

⁵⁶James P. Boyce, *Life and Death the Christian's Portion* (New York: Sheldon and Company, 1869), 68.

⁵⁷Baker, Craven, and Blalock, *History of First Charleston*, 259.

to preparation for a legal career and he enrolled at Brown University in 1845.⁵⁸ The President was the prominent Baptist Francis Wayland, “one of the most distinguished of all American educators, and who made a more potent impression upon the character, opinions, and usefulness of James Boyce than any other person with whom he came in contact.”⁵⁹ Boyce was converted in 1846, at least in some measure as a result of “being stimulated by Wayland’s evangelical chapel talks.”⁶⁰ It does not appear that Boyce’s Calvinism was significantly enhanced by Wayland,⁶¹ but the University president certainly had a profound impact on Boyce’s educational philosophy as well as his character.

Boyce studied at Princeton Theological Seminary from 1849-1851. It was there that his Calvinistic understanding of the Bible, commonplace among Baptists in the

⁵⁸This was also the year in which the Southern Baptist Convention was born, one year before James Boyce would experience the new birth.

⁵⁹Broadus, *Memoir*, 34.

⁶⁰Ibid., 9.

⁶¹Wayland’s sermons were decidedly evangelistic, but at times they also revealed his divergence from Calvinistic thought. For example, in a sermon on “Conversion,” he revealed his view of the atonement: “The Scriptures teach us that the atonement of Jesus Christ was made for the sins of the whole race of man. The whole of our apostate family is considered as one, and for all that family is the salvation provided.” Francis Wayland, “Conversion,” in *Salvation By Christ: A Series of Discourses on Some of the Most Important Doctrines of the Gospel* (Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1859), 192. The responsibility of the individual in conversion seemed to be heavily emphasized over against the sovereignty of God. While he acknowledged that in regeneration, “There are acts of the soul with God, and there are acts of God with the soul,” he nevertheless made these acts of God contingent upon the acts of the individual when he said, “God has made unchangeable promises: *when the soul believes*, he fulfills them, and by the power of the Spirit creates the soul anew in Christ Jesus.” (emphasis added) Ibid., 189. This view of regeneration is noticeably different from that of Boyce (see chap. 2).

South at that time, received its solid biblical and philosophical foundations.⁶² The lasting influence of the teaching of men like Archibald Alexander and Charles Hodge upon Boyce cannot be denied. In the next chapter, the soteriology he imbibed at Princeton will be examined.

⁶² Chronicling this period of Boyce's life, Holifield has observed that Boyce "studied under Wayland at Brown, where he learned about the New Divinity innovations, and under Charles Hodge at Princeton Seminary, where he learned that those innovations were dangerous." Holifield, *Theology in America*, 421.

CHAPTER 2

THE THEOLOGY OF JAMES P. BOYCE

Perhaps no aspect of a man's theology is more revealing than how he believes a person is saved. Therefore, and especially in light of this thesis, our focus in examining the theology of James P. Boyce will be his soteriology. This chapter will look first at his view of unconditional election, then effectual calling. However, to understand fully his positions on these two points, we must also look to his anthropology. Thus, the chapter will end with an analysis of his view of the total inability of man.

If there is one characteristic that marked Boyce's articulation of his theology in general and soteriology in particular, it would be clarity. Doctrinal uncertainty would not have been the result of having been his student. As Wayne Grudem, in the preface to his *Systematic Theology*, said,

I do not believe that God intended the study of theology to result in confusion and frustration. A student who comes out of a course in theology filled only with doctrinal uncertainty and a thousand unanswered questions is hardly 'able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to confute those who contradict it' (Titus 1:9).¹

In examining the writings of James Boyce, it would appear that he believed likewise.

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary began in the fall of 1859 with four professors and twenty-six students in Greenville, South Carolina. As part of its original

¹Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 15.

charter, the seminary adopted a statement² as one of its fundamental laws which required professors to adhere to and support the *Abstract of Principles* (hereafter referred to as *Principles*). Somewhat brief and based on the 1689 *London Confession* of English Baptists, which in turn was a Baptist adaptation of the *Westminster Confession*, it was the first confession of faith produced by Southern Baptists. Mueller seemed to credit both Boyce and Basil Manly, Jr. with its authorship. He pointed out that the *Principles* could be viewed at the time of its writing as representative of Southern Baptist beliefs. He said that Boyce and Manly “showed rare discretion and wisdom, for they excluded from this doctrinal statement with its mildly Calvinistic tenor those matters of belief on which Southern Baptists were in disagreement.”³ Boyce must have been in full agreement with the *Principles*; as one of Southern Seminary’s first professors and later its first president, he was required to uphold it. This is pointed out simply to establish the fact that although Boyce’s theology would have encompassed much more than the *Principles* stated, they may nevertheless be understood as representative of his theology. Article V states, “Election is God’s eternal choice of some persons unto everlasting life—not because of foreseen merit in them, but of His mere mercy in Christ—in consequence of which choice they are called, justified and glorified.”⁴ During Boyce’s tenure as professor, he not only

²William A. Mueller, *A History of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1959), 238: “Every professor of the institution shall be a member of a regular Baptist church; and all persons accepting professorships in this seminary shall be considered, by such acceptance, as engaging to teach in accordance with, and not contrary to, the *Abstract of Principles* hereinafter laid down, a departure from which principles on his part shall be considered grounds for his resignation or removal by the Trustees.”

³Ibid., 32.

⁴Ibid., 38.

supported the above article, but spent the next twenty-five years expounding upon it in his classroom.

Boyce's *Abstract of Systematic Theology* is the result of those twenty-five years of lectures. In this work, he gave a comprehensive discussion of not only the doctrine of election, but almost every aspect of Christian theology. Conspicuously absent, however, is any significant section on bibliology, and to a lesser degree ecclesiology. Broadus's explanation, considering the fact that Boyce's *Abstract* was basically a compilation of his classroom lectures, was that "in this Seminary those subjects are taught in other departments."⁵ It is quite unique for a systematic theology, making significant room for human reason⁶ and illustrations. There are copious citations from non-Christian philosophers as well as theologians of Boyce's past and present. It was a polemical work, intended to provide relevant answers for his own day, as he interacted with views he believed to be flawed along with those he believed to be biblically correct.

⁵ John A. Broadus, *Memoir of James P. Boyce* (New York: A.C. Armstrong and Son, 1893), 307.

⁶This is a point of criticism for some although Matheson, for example, pressed the point too far when he said of Boyce, "Reason received much more discussion in his theology than did revelation. So much province in his thought was given to reason that reason judged the evidences of revelation and decided whether the revelation was in fact from God. Reason was, it seems, an equal, if not a greater source of religious knowledge than revelation." Mark Edward Matheson, "Religious Knowledge in the Theologies of John Leadley Dagg and James Petigru Boyce, With Special Reference to the Influence of Common Sense Realism" (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1984), 206. Boyce actually devoted only one chapter of his *Abstract*'s forty-seven to "Reason and Revelation" (chap. 3). When viewed in light of his entire work, one cannot reasonably conclude as Matheson, who seemed to try to fit his theory of the influence of Common Sense Realism into too many areas of Southern Baptist life. Boyce was simply making the point that men's consciences reveal God's existence to them, nothing more.

Boyce came out of Princeton having been taught high views of God. There can be no doubt that this greatly shaped his thinking, and Charles Hodge probably had more of this influence than any other professor. As Broadus observed,

It was a great privilege to be directed and upborne by such a teacher in studying that exalted system of Pauline truth which is technically called Calvinism, which compels an earnest student to profound thinking, and, when pursued with a combination of systematic thought and fervent experience, makes him at home among the most inspiring and ennobling views of God and of the universe he has made.⁷

These high views of God certainly found their way into Boyce's soteriology.

Unconditional Election

Boyce "saw the heart of theology in soteriology,"⁸ demonstrated by his thorough treatment of the doctrine of election. In typical polemical fashion, he presented differing views carefully and fairly, refuting the more prominent theories on the subject before ultimately defending his own position, which was squarely in the Reformed tradition. Election, he said, was not the choice of "certain whole nations," but "of persons within a nation."⁹ Further, it was not the idea of certain individuals being elected "into the pale of the visible church," for the purpose of giving them the best chance of attaining salvation, although it is no guarantee that they will.¹⁰ Moreover, election is not simply the idea of God electing on the basis of "perseverance in foreseen faith," making

⁷Broadus, *Memoir of Boyce*, 73.

⁸Mueller, *History of Southern*, 55.

⁹James Petigru Boyce, *Abstract of Systematic Theology* (Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2006), 341. This was Boyce's analysis of "Nationalism."

¹⁰Ibid., 342.

"the salvation of individuals [a] result of their own choice and perseverance."¹¹

Boyce took this third (Arminian) theory and set it in opposition to his own, which he called "the Calvinistic theory of personal, unconditional, and eternal Election." He defined it in a carefully constructed, if not painstakingly lengthy, sentence. It is so complete that it deserves full citation:

God (who and not man is the one who chooses or elects), of his own purpose (in accordance with his will, and not from any obligation to man, nor because of any will of man), has from Eternity (the period of God's action, not in time in which man acts), determined to save (not has actually saved, but simply determined to do so), [and to save (not to confer gospel or church privileges upon),] a definite number of mankind (not the whole race, nor indefinitely a certain proportionate part; but a definite number), as individuals (not the whole or a part of the race, nor of a nation, nor of a church, nor of a class, as of believers or the pious; but individuals), not for or because of any merit or work of theirs, nor of any value to him of them (not for their good works, nor their holiness, nor excellence, nor their faith, nor their spiritual sanctification, although the choice is to a salvation attained through faith and sanctification; nor their value to him, though their salvation tends greatly to the manifested glory of his grace); but of his own good pleasure (simply because he was pleased so to choose).¹²

Boyce intended this explanation to emphasize the following distinguishing points:

1. Election is an act of God, not due to any choice of the elect.
2. This choice of God is one of individuals, not classes.
3. This choice of God was made without respect to the action of the individuals elected.
4. This choice is based entirely on the good pleasure of God.
5. This choice is with an eternal purpose.
6. This election is to salvation, not any external privileges.¹³

He constructed this argument in favor of the Calvinist position with an abundance of Scripture references and commentary for several pages. His focus was primarily those

¹¹Ibid., 347. Boyce's summary of the traditional Arminian theory.

¹²Ibid., 347-48.

¹³Ibid., 348.

passages that asserted God's sovereignty, for "this is after all the point upon which all that is important in this controversy turns." In Boyce's opinion, any opposition to the Calvinist position was really a refusal to acknowledge the absolute sovereignty of God, which must necessarily cause one to admit that his salvation is by grace alone. He saw God's sovereignty as the over-arching theme in all of Scripture. In fact, it was remarkable to him that anyone would be inclined to reject a notion of God's sovereignty in the matter of election (or anything else) when "scarcely any book of Scripture will fail to furnish testimony to the fact that in the acts of grace, no less than those of providence, God 'doeth according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth' (Dan 4:3-5)." ¹⁴ It was this high view of the sovereignty of God which determined Boyce's view of election: God, before the foundation of the world, chose those individuals that He would redeem to Himself (Eph 1:4). It was also this high view of the sovereignty of God that determined how Boyce thought of the new birth.

Effectual Calling

Having seen that Boyce's view of election was God bestowing saving grace in eternity past, we now look to his view of effectual calling, or how God grants salvation in the present. The Bible stresses the necessity of being "born again" (John 3:3,7), and Boyce upheld this emphasis. When he said, "The atoning work of Christ was not sufficient for the salvation of man," ¹⁵ he was in no way denying the absolute necessity of the work of Christ on the cross. He was merely emphasizing the necessity of the new

¹⁴Ibid., 353.

¹⁵Ibid., 367.

birth, or that the sinner “must be brought to accept salvation, and to love and serve God.”¹⁶ Although election may secure a person’s salvation in eternity past, it is the sinner’s responsibility, as Christ Himself urged at the beginning of His public ministry, to “repent and believe the Gospel” (Mark 1:15). Often the criticism directed toward those who espouse the Calvinistic understanding of election is that the view leads to a lack of motivation for evangelism.¹⁷ The thinking goes that if God determined to grant salvation to some in eternity past, and that choice cannot be changed, then salvation will come to those individuals whether God’s people are faithful in sharing the gospel or not. This was not the view of James Boyce. Quite to the contrary, in articulating his understanding of how a person comes to salvation, he said, “The first step . . . is to make known to man the gospel . . . under such influences as ought to lead to its acceptance.” Further, “The Gospel is, therefore, commanded to be proclaimed to every creature, inasmuch as there is in the work of Christ a means of redemption for every one. This,” he said, was “the external call of the gospel.”¹⁸

But the external call, incumbent upon Christians to bring to everyone, can never by itself result in regeneration for anyone, due to the corrupt nature of mankind.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Draughon said, “Boyce’s emphasis on the sovereign will of God, the passivity of man, the objectivity of the atonement, and particular election produces an inadequate platform for mission and evangelism. In Boyce’s doctrine of atonement, the Great Commission has no reasonable basis.” Walter D. Draughon, “A Critical Evaluation of the Diminishing Influence of Calvinism on the Doctrine of Atonement in Representative Southern Baptist Theologians James Petigru Boyce, Edgar Young Mullins, Walter Thomas Conner, and Dale Moody” (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1987), 239. Draughon did not explain how he arrived at this conclusion, nor did he explain Boyce’s evident evangelistic and missionary zeal.

¹⁸Boyce, *Abstract of Systematic Theology*, 367.

Boyce explained, “God, knowing that this is true, not only of all mankind in general, but even of the elect whom he purposed to save in Christ, gives to these such influences of the Spirit as will lead to their acceptance of the call. This is called Effectual Calling.”¹⁹

Scarcely a more Calvinistic understanding of regeneration could be uttered than when Boyce said, “The Scriptures . . . teach that regeneration is the work of God, changing the heart of man by his sovereign will.”²⁰ In support of this definition, he examined five New Testament terms that teach the concept of regeneration.²¹ From the text of Scripture one can readily see that regeneration is the work of God, but Boyce noted that many of those same passages teach a certain *result* from this regenerating work, namely, “union...with Christ through repentance and faith.”²² Although he viewed regeneration and conversion as two separate events, Boyce nevertheless saw them as inseparable; that is, one cannot occur without the other: “From the Scriptural teaching we see that the whole work of Regeneration and Conversion is included under the one term Regeneration.” This was “because God is operative from the beginning to the end, but

¹⁹Ibid., 368.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid., 374. The terms were: (1) *gennao* (“to beget”), used in John 1:13; 3:3,4,5,6,7,8; 1 Cor 4:15; Phlm 10; 1 John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1,4,18; (2) compound forms of *gennao* (1 Pet 1:23; Titus 3:5); (3) *apekuesen* (“to bear young”), Jas 1:18; (4) *ktisis* and *ktizo* (“to create”), 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15; Eph 2:10,15; 4:24; (5) and *sunezoopoiesen* (“to quicken together with”), in Eph 2:5; Col 2:13.

²²Ibid., 375. For example, Boyce said that Jas 1:18 with its emphasis on “bringing forth fruit which has been begotten, still . . . so nearly connects that idea with the begetting as to create doubt if the whole work may not be virtually involved.” And 1 Pet 1:23, “by the use of the compound of *gennao*, shows that all the work of the Spirit, including both the new heart and the leading of it to conscious faith, is properly to be spoken of by the same term as a mere change of heart.”

this does not prove that he does not operate differently in one part from what he does in the other.”²³

A key emphasis in any soteriology is the difference between regeneration and conversion, and in fact whether or not one makes such a distinction. Although Boyce dealt with both together (“Regeneration and Conversion,” chap. 32), for him regeneration necessarily precedes conversion. He acknowledged the two being “unquestionably so intimately associated that it is difficult to separate them and point out distinctions between them,” and that therefore “they are often confounded.”²⁴ But, he argued, “The Scripture teaching is that God operates immediately upon the heart *to produce the required change*, by which it is *fitted to receive the truth*, and mediately through the word in its *reception of that truth*.²⁵ (emphasis added) He was clearly saying there is no possibility that regeneration would *not* lead to repentance and faith unto salvation. God regenerates a person (“the required change”) in order that the person *will* (not might) receive the truth of the Word that saves (Jas 1:18; 1 Pet 1:23; Titus 3:5, et al.). In short, regeneration is always followed by conversion. As Boyce explained,

[Conversion] is the result of regeneration. The new heart is prepared to turn to God and does actually so turn. Without regeneration, the sinfulness of man keeps him away from God, causes him to set his affections upon self and his own pleasure, and to find gratification in things which are opposed to God and holiness. The regenerated heart has new affections and desires and is, therefore, fitted to seek after God and holiness.²⁶

²³Ibid., 374-75.

²⁴Ibid., 373-74.

²⁵Ibid., 375.

²⁶Ibid., 379.

Whether or not one agrees with his position, there can be no mistake concerning what Boyce's position actually was. He articulated clearly what he believed was the biblical teaching about the new birth. And there is a clue in the above paragraph that gives further insight into his view: "the sinfulness of man keeps him away from God." Therefore, to fully understand Boyce's soteriology, we must understand what he believed to be the biblical teaching concerning this sinfulness of man.

Total Inability

Southern Seminary's *Abstract of Principles* devotes one of its twenty articles to "The Fall of Man," containing the explanation that all men have "inherit[ed] a nature corrupt and wholly opposed to God and His Law, are under condemnation, and as soon as they are capable of moral action, become actual transgressors."²⁷ Boyce, in his *Abstract of Systematic Theology*, expanded this teaching, giving matters related to depravity three of his forty-two chapters: "The Fall of Man" (chap. 22), "Effects of the Sin of Adam" (chap. 23), and "The Headship of Adam" (chap. 24).

For Boyce, the state of man in his pre-fall condition was one of sinless perfection, at least "all the sinless perfection with which God can create an intellectual and moral spiritual being."²⁸ He rejected the notion that man was endowed with an equal tendency to choose right as to choose evil, a sort of morally neutral character. Man was granted a holy nature, "the whole tendency of which was naturally toward the good and

²⁷Mueller, *History of Southern*, 238.

²⁸Boyce, *Abstract of Systematic Theology*, 230.

the holy.”²⁹ This view was certainly consistent with the teaching of Genesis 1:26, “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness,’” and Genesis 1:31, “God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good.” The question then arises, “How could man fall?” It would be much easier to answer if one did not hold to the excellence of the nature of pre-fallen man, but Boyce was convinced by Scripture. He admitted that his attempts at explanation “may not be entirely satisfactory,”³⁰ but then one must consider that Scripture does not give many details concerning how the fall occurred either. It merely describes the events as they happened (Gen 3:1-7).

What Scripture does have much to say about, however, are the effects of the fall. Boyce employed the language of federal headship, in the traditional Reformed vein,³¹ to describe the effects of the curse. Adam being the federal representative of the human race, the consequences of his sin now affect all of humanity. Boyce said, “The evils thus threatened have not been confined to Adam and Eve, but have fallen also upon all their posterity. Whatever may be the connection between Adam and that posterity, it

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid. Boyce was content with giving “a possible explanation of a subject so completely environed with difficulties.” This explanation consisted of seven possible lines of thought, none of which contain any suggestion that any responsibility for the fall or sin lay with God, but with man only.

³¹Boyce presented Adam as the federal representative of the human race, and Christ, the second Adam, as the representative of the elect (Rom 5:12). “Theologians are accustomed to speak of two especial covenants, the one of works, the other of grace,” he said. “The fall of man occurred when he was on probation under the Covenant of works.” Ibid., 243. Here the Princetonian influence is clearly seen; in fact, in support of the idea of covenants in Scripture, Boyce pointed the reader to p.235 of A.A. Hodge’s *Outlines of Theology*.

is generally admitted that the latter share with him all these evils.”³² He devoted an entire chapter to explaining how “The Headship of Adam” translated into the inheritance of corruption on the part of all humanity from its head, summarized by this passage:

In the covenant, under which he sinned, he acted not merely as an individual man . . . but as the head of the race, for his posterity as well as himself. The condition of mankind shows that they have all participated with him in the evils which resulted. The Scriptures teach that this is due, not merely to his natural headship, but to a representative or federal headship, because of which his act of sin may justly be considered theirs . . . They are born with the corrupted nature which he acquired.³³

Vital to understanding Boyce’s doctrine of salvation is the concept of this “corrupted nature” that each inherited and now possesses. He maintained that it could be summarized with the one word “death.” And there were three types: natural (separation of the soul and body), spiritual (separation of the soul from God), and eternal (which follows logically from spiritual death; that is, that this separation must be eternal). Boyce assigned more value to the soul than to the body, evidenced by the fact that he devoted comparatively little space to his defense of natural death resulting from the fall over against the other two. He explained that because of inherited sin all men inherit the “death of the soul,” a significant description in itself in that it emphasized the depth of the depravity that all men are under. If a man’s soul is dead, he has no hope of being made alive apart from a life-giving miracle that he could never perform himself. All of this was included in the idea that all men have inherited a “corrupted nature.” Just one of his points in support of this position came from “the declared necessity of regeneration in

³²Boyce, *Abstract of Systematic Theology*, 240.

³³Ibid., 248-49.

each man; from the direction to preach the gospel to every creature; and the assertion that there is no salvation for any man except in the name of Christ.”³⁴

Just what is the extent of the corruption of man? How hopeless is his condition? For Boyce, the answer was contained in the phrase “necessity of regeneration in each man.” It is vital to understanding both his anthropology and his soteriology. When his view of total inability is examined in the context of his views of unconditional election and effectual calling (i.e., that all are a work of God, see above), then a cohesive overall picture becomes clear. All men have participated with Adam in the fall from a state of holiness and blessing to a state of sinfulness and curse. They are no longer God’s friends but God’s enemies. Sin has irrevocably marred the image of God in which they were originally created. Their inclinations are now bent toward sin and evil, and they follow those inclinations to commit all types of sins. Therefore, they find themselves justly condemned to a state of eternal separation from God. It is quite a hopeless state indeed in which all men find themselves. So hopeless, in fact, that only the sovereign grace of God, having elected a person from eternity past, breaking into his mind and soul to awaken him to his sinful state and changing his desires and affections from sin to righteousness, can bring about the repentance and faith in Christ and His finished work that leads to salvation. This was Boyce’s unmistakable position. In the next chapter, we will see that he was not the first to hold it, nor was he in the minority when it came to Baptist thinkers.

³⁴Ibid., 240-47.

CHAPTER 3

INFLUENCES ON BOYCE'S THEOLOGY

We are seeking to establish, through examination of the theology of James P. Boyce, the existence of a soteriological matrix, rediscovered by the Reformers in the sixteenth century and passed on unbroken to at least the time of Boyce. That matrix consists of: (1) the total inability of man, helplessly having no inclination toward God; (2) the doctrine of unconditional election, God having chosen from eternity some out of the human race to save; and (3) the effectual call of God, whereby God sends His Holy Spirit to those individuals He has chosen for salvation to awaken saving faith in them. In the first two chapters, we have seen that this matrix was well-established among Baptists in the South in the middle of the nineteenth century. Wills confirmed,

Virtually every church creed [among Baptists] affirmed the two fundamental tenets of Calvinism: that human nature was radically depraved due to original sin and that God was the absolute author of salvation, electing individuals for salvation before the creation of the world and creating faith by the operation of the Holy Spirit.¹

This view elevates the sovereignty of God in salvation, He being the “absolute author” of it. For Boyce, this seemed to be the only correct understanding, even the starting point for one’s soteriology. Matheson observed, “Boyce came from a mid-nineteenth century world view and theology. The predominant theological position of his day was

¹Greg Wills, *Democratic Religion: Freedom, Authority, and Church Discipline in the Baptist South 1785-1900* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 103-04.

Calvinism, a system which emphasized the sovereignty of God.”² The “system,” in fact, was not new in Boyce’s day, but had been directing the course of much of Christian thought since the early sixteenth century. This will be demonstrated by an examination of Boyce’s mentors as well as his theological ancestors.

Basil Manly, Sr.

The testimony of James Boyce reflects the undeniable impact that Basil Manly, Sr. (1798-1868) had on his life. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Dr. Manly was the only pastor young James knew until he was ten years old. The pastor of the historic First Baptist Church of Charleston, South Carolina made a profound impression on Boyce primarily through his Christian character and commitment to the tender, loving pastoral care of his people. He said of Manly,

I do not know how a people could be more attached to a pastor than they were to Mr. Manly . . . No one ever understood better how to console a suffering soul, or dealt with it more tenderly. And his people loved him with a depth of devotion seldom equalled . . . After a lapse of more than thirty years I can still feel the weight of his hand, resting in gentleness and love upon my head. I can recall the words of fatherly tenderness, with which he sought to guide my childish steps.³

As no man’s life may be divorced from his theology, it is critical to understand the theology that drove such an influential pastor as Basil Manly, Sr. Again, we look to

²Mark Edward Matheson, “Religious Knowledge in the Theologies of John Leadley Dagg and James Petigru Boyce, with Special Reference to the Influence of Common Sense Realism” (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1984), 327. Matheson apparently did not see much usefulness for Boyce’s Calvinism, and he went on to say, “Boyce probably spoke for a large number of early Southern Baptists but relatively few today.” This statement, though, is probably still accurate (see chap. 4).

³John A. Broadus, *Memoir of James Petigru Boyce* (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1893), 16-17.

the words of Boyce himself, who said at Manly's 1868 funeral, "Dr. Manly was a decided Calvinist." As there was the need to define this term, in Boyce's day as well as ours, he explained what he meant by referring to the "Century Confession," or the Calvinistic *Second London Confession*, as being consistent with his former pastor's beliefs and sufficient to define the term "Calvinist." Boyce further contended that Manly's Calvinistic doctrines "became dearer to him with advancing life. They were the doctrines by which he lived, and by which he died. They were the subject matter of his preaching. And this is a noteworthy fact."⁴ Indeed it is, not only because these doctrines were to resound in the ears of Boyce, the pioneer of Southern Baptist theological education, for the first ten years of his life, but also,

for the holding these doctrines of grace has been thought by many inconsistent with the preaching of the Gospel to all men. Certainly Dr. Manly felt no such inconsistency; on the contrary no one could preach the Gospel more freely than he. No one ever urged sinners more earnestly and successfully to believe in Christ as their Saviour.⁵

To better understand Manly's Calvinism, we turn to one of his own sermons, the occasion of which was a division that had arisen between the Tuscaloosa and Columbus Baptist Associations in Alabama over doctrinal matters. The Salem church of the Tuscaloosa Association had "voted out her articles of faith," the ones causing the most concern being "the fifth and tenth articles, and what relates to the doctrines of

⁴James P. Boyce, *Life and Death the Christian's Portion* (New York: Sheldon and Company, 1869), 68. It is clear that Boyce meant the *Second London Confession* by "Century Confession," for he described it as "accord[ing], on all points except peculiar Baptist doctrines, with the well known Confession of the Westminster Divines."

⁵Boyce, *Life and Death*, 68-69.

election and effectual calling.”⁶ A meeting of the two associations was called and the matter apparently resolved, and the sermon preached by Manly addressed the agreed-upon doctrinal positions. His text was Philippians 2:12-13: “Work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.” The passage describes a paradox of both divine and human activity in the daily Christian experience, with the divine being pre-eminent, according to Manly. He said this was also “consistent with the scheme of salvation,”⁷ and spent much of the sermon outlining his soteriology.

Manly, like Boyce, clearly articulated a Calvinistic understanding of salvation, beginning with unconditional election. He said,

Now, if God knows all things, he knows who will be saved. Could God know who will be saved, if it were not capable of being seen, is certain. But, if in order to be saved, a divine operation is necessary, and the incipient part of that operation belongs to God, could he foreknow that the man would believe, unless he had a gracious purpose to work this operation in him, so that he might believe?⁸

The answer to this rhetorical question must obviously be stated in the negative. For Manly, the reason God knows beforehand who will be saved is because God is the one who chose them.

In the above passage, Manly mentioned the “divine operation” necessary for one’s salvation, a reference to his view of regeneration, or effectual calling (the term Boyce employed in his *Abstract of Systematic Theology*, see previous chapter). He was

⁶Basil Manly, “Divine Efficiency Consistent with Human Activity,” sermon preached at Pleasant Grove Church, Fayette County, Alabama, April 8, 1849 (Tuscaloosa, AL: M. D. J. Slade, 1849), 5.

⁷Ibid., 7.

⁸Ibid., 15.

arguing for the sovereignty of God in salvation operating in tandem with (albeit superseding) “human activity,” asking concerning the latter, “How comes the first movement toward God? This is the great question--the *one* question on this subject--the question on which all others turn.”⁹ (emphasis in original) There was no denial, in Manly’s view, that men are called on to repent and believe in order to be saved, and these things they certainly must do. But “the Scriptures,” he said, “in no ambiguous manner, intimate the true reply to this question. We are confident that ‘he that hath begun a good work in you will perform it &c.’”¹⁰

Manly saw regeneration as being absolutely dependent upon God’s initiative. In attempting to explain the role of human activity in salvation, he denied that man has the wherewithal freely to choose to believe in Christ for salvation. In response to the common objection that God’s sovereignty in salvation negates human responsibility, he said,

In regard to salvation, so far from compelling a man against his will, the very thing which God does is to make him willing to act right; of his own choices, and under sufficient motive. The Christian is willing and chooses to do right, because a divine operation has made him so The man then acts, under this influence, as freely as water runs down hill; acts out of the impulses of his renewed nature.¹¹

Boyce would articulate this very same view of effectual calling in his *Abstract* (see previous chap.). Man is completely dependent upon God for his eyes to be opened (2 Cor 4:4) to the glorious gospel. Only then is he moved to respond in faith.

Manly held the above two positions (unconditional election, effectual calling)

⁹Ibid., 14.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid., 17.

because of his position on human inability. This was the reason for mankind's utter helplessness in the matter of salvation and why the "divine operation" was necessary. He explained:

The sinner's inability consists not in his dependence on God, which is no hindrance; but in his guilty disinclination to him This deep-seated indisposition to love God is, in fact, an aggravation of the fault—the very essence of the fault and sinfulness of our fallen nature.¹²

It is now clear that Boyce's Calvinistic soteriology was from the same stock as that of his boyhood pastor, Basil Manly, Sr. Both held to the total inability of man, to the extent that only God's sovereign grace in election and regeneration could bring about saving faith in a person.

After Manly's death, Boyce reflected upon Manly's strong mind and constitution, admirable combination of conviction and gentleness, and respect others had for him, saying, "In these respects he very strongly resembled the late Dr. Archibald Alexander."¹³ So influenced by his time at Princeton was Boyce that the institution and its theologians appeared never far from his mind. It is to that influence, particularly upon Boyce's theology, that we now turn.

Princeton Theological Seminary

Presbyterians were undergoing somewhat of an identity crisis in the early part of the nineteenth century. Revivalism in the New England states had modified the "Old School" Calvinism that was strongly confessional and had its roots for Presbyterians in Scotland and Ireland. The "New School" was anti-confessional (charging that the Old

¹²Ibid., 21.

¹³Boyce, *Life and Death*, 57.

School had an “unhealthy traditionalism”), and was open to the practical innovations of promoting revival most commonly linked with Charles Finney.¹⁴ Hill has associated the birth of “evangelicalism” in America with the Great Awakenings of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. With the greater desire for personal piety, devotion, and emphasis on transformation of the heart, “there was no place . . . for critical biblical scholarship and historical criticism,” since these things were associated with liberal theology.¹⁵ While it is true that liberal theologians were using biblical criticism to advance their theology, the Princetonians saw that there needed to be some serious scholarship, including textual and historical criticism, done to defend biblical theology. And for them, biblical theology was tantamount to historic *Westminster Confession* Calvinism.¹⁶ When Boyce enrolled at Princeton Seminary in 1849, he was entering an institution which had drawn its theological boundaries so definitively that its Calvinism “was remarkably powerful for more than a century from 1812 on.”¹⁷ Sampey could say toward the close of the nineteenth century that Princeton was “then, as now, one of the

¹⁴George M. Marsden, “Reformed and American,” in *Reformed Theology in America: A History of its Modern Development*, ed. David F. Wells (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985), 5.

¹⁵Jonathan Hill, *The History of Christian Thought: The Fascinating Story of the Great Christian Thinkers and How They Helped Shape the World as We Know It Today* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 246.

¹⁶Or, as Hill put it, “The evangelicals were extremely doctrinaire, stressing the essential nature of certain doctrines inherited from the toned-down version of Calvinism promulgated by Wesley. The sternest of the evangelicals [i.e., the Princetonians], however, toned it up again.” Ibid.

¹⁷Mark Noll, “The Princeton Theology,” in *Reformed Theology in America: A History of its Modern Development*, ed. David F. Wells (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985), 29.

leading theological schools of the country.”¹⁸ So the one who was to become “the premier theologian for Southern Baptists”¹⁹ was to learn theology from perhaps the premier Presbyterian theologian of his day.²⁰

Charles Hodge

Packer called Charles Hodge (1797-1878) “America’s greatest nineteenth-century theologian.”²¹ It is no wonder, then, that Broadus said, “The most influential of all Boyce’s instructors at Princeton was Charles Hodge, now fifty-two years old, and at

¹⁸John R. Sampey, *The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary: The First Thirty Years, 1859-1889* (Baltimore: Wharton, Barron and Company, 1890), 27.

¹⁹Robert Andrew Baker and Paul J. Craven, Jr., *History of the First Baptist Church of Charleston, South Carolina 1682-2007* (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press, 2007), 484.

²⁰It must be noted here the distinction between Boyce’s *soteriology* and his *ecclesiology*. This is an important characteristic of the Calvinistic tributary of the Baptist river. Historically, as English Baptists were evolving in the seventeenth century, McNeill observed, “The decade of the [1650s] was the era of Cromwell and the Independents--Calvinists (as were also many of the Baptists) *in doctrine but not in polity.*” (emphasis added) John T. McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), 328. The same could be said of the Baptists who were to found the Southern Baptist Convention, and those like Boyce. Kendall found this to be true and commented, “The Calvinism which governed Southern Baptists, however, was of a soteriological nature only.” Robert T. Kendall, “The Rise and Demise of Calvinism in the Southern Baptist Convention” (M.A. thesis, University of Louisville, 1973), iii. He also noted of Southern Baptists, “Their Calvinism was combined with other cherished beliefs such as religious liberty, autonomy of the local congregation, and believers baptism.” Ibid., 56. Boyce, then, like his fellow Southern Baptists, could (and did) share much in common theologically with Presbyterians without surrendering any of the ecclesiological distinctives that separated the two denominations.

²¹J. I. Packer, “Introduction,” in Charles Hodge, *Ephesians*, The Crossway Classic Commentaries, ed. Alister McGrath and J. I. Packer (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), ix.

the height of his powers.”²² Yet Noll could also describe Hodge as “the most complex of the Princetonians. [He] possessed the most capacious mind . . . and he has been the least understood by modern observers.”²³ On the doctrine of salvation, however, he was quite clear in self-consciously articulating traditional Calvinistic soteriology.

Like all great theologians, Hodge developed his doctrine by way of careful exposition. He was an inerrantist, and faithfully held to the verbal and plenary inspiration of the Scriptures.²⁴ Each word, therefore, was important because each was “God-breathed” (2 Tim 3:16). This explains his commitment to the meticulous exegesis that characterized his commentaries.

Hodge’s analysis of Ephesians is a natural place to look for his view of election. He sought to bring out what he saw as Paul’s main thrust in the letter: the glory of God in the salvation of sinners. And God’s glory is guaranteed since He chose sinners “before the foundation of the world, that [they] would be holy and blameless before Him” (Eph 1:4). In this verse, the apostle speaks of Christians being chosen “in Him [Christ].” Union with Christ, for Hodge as well as Boyce, implied federal headship. Of this, Hodge said, “There is a federal union with Christ which precedes all actual union and is the

²²Broadus, *Memoir*, 72.

²³Mark Noll, ed., *The Princeton Theology 1812-1921* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 14.

²⁴Roger E. Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition and Reform* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1999), 558. “Although he denied that the human authors of Scripture were mere ‘machines’ who wrote mechanically under divine inspiration, Hodge insisted that inspiration and infallibility extend to the very words and not merely to the ideas of the Bible.” It was due to his holding this position so strongly, along with his wide influence, that caused Olson to describe Hodge as “a precursor of twentieth-century fundamentalism.” Ibid., 559.

source of it. God gave a people to His Son in the covenant of redemption.”²⁵ This was akin to the way the Jews were chosen in Abraham, all of this being but an expression of Hodge’s belief in unconditional election. Concerning the grace of God that brought about this election, he said, “The grace was given to us before we existed.”²⁶ He was careful to reject any notion of God’s electing purpose being determined by foreseen faith, commenting on verse 4, “Holiness cannot in any form be the ground of election. If men are chosen to be holy, they cannot be chosen because they are holy.”²⁷

Another likely place to go to see Hodge’s view of election is his commentary on Romans, specifically chapter 9. His tone here was more polemical, spending significant time not only defending unconditional election, but also answering the most common objections to the doctrine. Hodge’s “inspiring and ennobling views of God” (chapter 2, footnote 9) are clearly seen in his refutation of the idea that unconditional election makes God to be unjust. He replied, “There is no injustice done to one wicked man in the pardon of another God does nothing more than exercise a right inherent in sovereignty, viz. that of dispensing pardon at his pleasure.”²⁸ In Romans 9:11, the apostle Paul was careful to explain that God, in choosing the younger Jacob over the older Esau to receive the promised inheritance, did so when “the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad.” Hodge took this to mean that “the ground of the

²⁵Charles Hodge, *Ephesians*, The Crossway Classic Commentaries, ed. Alister McGrath and J. I. Packer (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), 30.

²⁶Ibid., 31.

²⁷Ibid., 32.

²⁸Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 16th ed. (Philadelphia: William S. and Alfred Martien, 1859), 222.

choice is not in those chosen, but in God who chooses.”²⁹ This interpretation was so clear that it was remarkable to him that anyone could understand the passage otherwise. He said, “The language of the apostle in this verse, and the nature of his argument, are so perfectly plain, that there is little diversity of opinion as to his general meaning.”³⁰ Hodge’s position on unconditional election was inextricably tied to his understanding of the implications of the doctrine of creation. He concluded,

The Creator has a perfect right to dispose of his creatures as he sees fit. From the very idea of a creature, it can have no claim on the Creator . . . The mass of fallen men is in the hands of God as clay in the hands of the potter, and it is his right to dispose of them at pleasure; to make all vessels into honour, or all into dishonour, or some to one and some to the other. These are points on which, from the nature of the relation, we have no right to question or complain.³¹

Hodge saw election as God’s means of saving sinners in eternity, and the effectual call as His means of saving sinners in time. In his treatment of regeneration in his *Systematic Theology*, Hodge critiqued differing views of the subject (those of Emmons, Finney, and Taylor, to name a few), and used the term “effectual calling” (as did Boyce) in articulating his position. He said,

The effectual calling is of God’s free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man, who is altogether passive therein, until being quickened and

²⁹Ibid., 226. Hodge’s *Systematic Theology* certainly paralleled the view of election espoused in his commentaries. He explained the “Augustinian scheme” of the plan of salvation, in part, by saying, “From the mass of fallen men God elected a number innumerable to eternal life, and left the rest of mankind to the just recompense of their sins . . . That the ground of this election is not the foresight of anything in the one class to distinguish them favorably from the members of the other class, but the good pleasure of God.” It was this “great scheme of doctrine known in history as the Pauline, Augustinian, or Calvinistic” that Hodge believed to be “taught . . . in the Scriptures.” Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1898), 2:333.

³⁰Hodge, *Commentary on Romans*, 226.

³¹Ibid., 233.

renewed by the Holy Ghost, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it.”³²

By using the word “passive” in describing the individual, Hodge meant that not only the entirety of salvation, but the very act of regeneration is entirely of God. He described regeneration as “a change wrought in us, and not an act performed by us.”³³ Surely, then, as a student of Hodge’s, James Boyce was taught that regeneration precedes faith, and that faith is nonetheless an act of the individual’s renewed will. As Hodge explained, “The first conscious exercise of the renewed soul is faith; as the first conscious act of a man born blind whose eyes have been opened, is seeing.”³⁴

In Hodge’s view, the reason unconditional election and effectual calling had to be true was because of his understanding of the total inability of man. Romans 3 and Ephesians 2 both contain unflattering assessments of the natural condition of mankind. What a theologian says about these passages will reveal much about his anthropology. Commenting on Ephesians 2, Hodge thought it was clear that “the Scriptures do indeed teach the doctrine of inherent, hereditary depravity, and that that depravity takes the nature of sin and therefore justly exposes us to the divine displeasure.”³⁵ He connected Ephesians 2:1 (“you were dead in trespasses and sins”) with 1:19 (“the surpassing greatness of His power”). The power of God was the only thing that could bring about salvation in the soul, because, by consequence of “trespasses and sins” (2:1) people were

³²Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3:30.

³³Ibid., 31.

³⁴Ibid., 41.

³⁵Hodge, *Ephesians*, 72.

absolutely spiritually dead. Hodge explained,

The state of men was one of helplessness and just judgment. Their deliverance from that state is due to the power and unmerited love of God. They neither deserved to be saved, nor could they redeem themselves. This truth is so important and enters so deeply into the very nature of the Gospel that Paul brings it into the open on every suitable occasion.³⁶

From these snapshots, a representative portrait of the soteriology of Charles Hodge has now been painted. Individuals are so utterly depraved that they cannot please God and have no desire to turn from their sinful ways and embrace the grace He offers toward salvation. Therefore, salvation must be a work that only God can do. In fact, He has determined in eternity past to save some out of the human race. This choice cannot be changed, and in time, He will send His Spirit to those individuals to give them new hearts and new desires that will enable them to apprehend Christ by faith for salvation. Hodge, commenting on Romans 3:19-20, said,

To be prepared for the reception of the Gospel, we must be convinced of sin, humbled under a sense of its turpitude, silenced under a conviction of its condemning power, and prostrated at the footstool of mercy . . . that if ever saved, it must be by other merit and other power than our own.³⁷

John Dick

The Reverend John Dick (1764-1833) was a Scottish pastor who seemed to have an inclination toward the study of theology and writing from an early age. Ordained by the Scottish Secession Church at twenty-two, he received a Doctor of Divinity degree from Princeton Seminary in 1815, and in 1819 he began a professorship in Systematic

³⁶Ibid., 75. See also Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 2:333: “That the fall of Adam brought all his posterity into a state of condemnation, sin, and misery, from which they are utterly unable to deliver themselves.”

³⁷Hodge, *Romans*, 74.

Divinity at the Seminary of the Secession Church in Scotland. The lectures he gave there constitute the bulk of his *Lectures on Theology*, which were a favorite of James Boyce as he gave his own lectures on theology some half a century later.³⁸ George has even posited that because Boyce's personal copy of Dick's *Lectures* was "replete with marginal annotations and corrections . . . in these marginal notes we have perhaps the origin of Boyce's *Abstract of Systematic Theology*."³⁹

In his treatment of "The Decrees of God," Dick maintained that in a general sense, God had foreordained everything that ever happens. Specifically, predestination or election has to do with His decrees that relate to His created beings. He crystallized the position he sought to prove when he said, "God did actually choose, before the foundation of the world, some of the human race to eternal life, and . . . he left the rest to perish in their sins."⁴⁰ Like Boyce after him, Dick was often polemical, taking care to describe not only what he took election to mean, but also what he took it not to mean. Election was not of a whole class of people to salvation, nor was it God ordaining a particular means by which people could be saved based on their individual decisions. For

³⁸ Apparently Boyce's students became quite familiar with Dick's *Lectures* also, as the professor had a reputation as a rigorous instructor, using Dick's work as his textbook. Broadus cited the testimony of one J. William Jones, a student of Boyce's in the seminary's early days in South Carolina: "As a teacher, Dr. Boyce greatly impressed me. I found very irksome at first his system of requiring the student to give a minute analysis of the lesson in Dick's Theology, which was then his leading text-book; but I soon got used to it, and many a time since I have had occasion to thank God and to thank my old professor for the thorough drill he gave us in the doctrines of God's Word." Broadus, *Memoir*, 266.

³⁹ Timothy George, review of *Abstract of Systematic Theology*, by James P. Boyce, *Review and Expositor* 81 (Fall 1984): 463.

⁴⁰ John Dick, *Lectures on Theology* (Philadelphia: J. Whetham and Son, 1841), 1:361.

Dick, election was of certain individuals to salvation. The language of the Bible was clear. Words such as “predestination,” “election,” and “chosen” showed that “whatever else they may imply, they manifestly refer to some act of God in relation to the persons designated, by which they are distinguished from others.”⁴¹ The notion espoused by some that God predestined individuals to eternal life based on their foreseen faith, Dick said, was “derogatory to the supreme dominion and absolute authority of God.”⁴² Like Hodge and Boyce, his soteriology seemed to flow out of his “inspired and ennobling views of God.” Concerning election, Dick believed,

That God did make choice of certain individuals to enjoy salvation in preference to others; that he chose them before the foundation of the world; that in doing so, he acted according to his sovereign will, and was not influenced by the foresight of their good qualifications; and that this decree is immutable, it being impossible that any of the elect should perish.⁴³

Dick’s doctrine of regeneration argued strongly in favor of Boyce’s notion of effectual calling, or irresistible grace. He preferred the name “invincible grace,” as he felt that grace could be, and certainly was, resisted, not just on the part of the unregenerate but also by those who would finally believe. But although it may be resisted for a time, God’s saving grace cannot *finally* be resisted by those who will believe. And they do not believe against their will, for God’s regenerating power is invincible in the sense that “it can take away the spirit of opposition, and so influence the

⁴¹Ibid., 362.

⁴²Ibid., 364.

⁴³Ibid., 365.

hearts of men, that this submission shall be voluntary.”⁴⁴ Dick further taught,

Conversion is effected by the almighty grace of God; that . . . [man] is in the first instance passive, and his concurrence is the consequence of supernatural power communicated to him; and that he does not come to God till he is effectually called by the operations of the Holy Spirit in his soul.⁴⁵

He argued with a series of four proofs that there was this necessity of almighty grace for conversion to occur: the Scriptural evidences of the corrupt nature of mankind;⁴⁶ the Scriptural terms used to describe the operation of regeneration;⁴⁷ the fact that Scripture asserts that divine grace is necessary to receive the Word (the external call is not enough); and that the Scriptures attribute to God an “internal and immediate agency upon the soul in conversion.”⁴⁸

Consistent with his practice throughout the *Lectures*, Dick refuted objections to his view of regeneration as well as argued by analogy in favor of his position. For example, in seeking to convince the reader that the corrupt nature of man necessitates the immediate agency of the Holy Spirit upon the soul for conversion, he said,

Now, if these things be true, how is it possible that men have freewill to do good as well to evil; that they possess a degree of moral power . . . so as to change the current of their affections and actions; that with some assistance they can work out their salvation? It is not sufficient to open the eyelids of a blind person, to pour the full blaze of light upon his face; you must remove the impediment of vision, or form

⁴⁴John Dick, *Lectures on Theology* (Philadelphia: J. Whetham and Son, 1841), 2:157.

⁴⁵Ibid., 150.

⁴⁶Dick cited Eph 2:1,8ff.; 1 Cor 2:14; Rom 6:17; Col 1:21; Rom 8:7.

⁴⁷E.g., “creation,” “resurrection,” “new birth,” “heart of stone” replaced with “heart of flesh.”

⁴⁸Dick, *Lectures*, 2:150-52. In support of this, Dick cited Phil 2:13; 2 Thess 1:11; Heb 13:10; and Ezek 36:26,27.

the organ anew. It is not sufficient to go to the grave of a dead man, and with a loud voice call upon him to arise; you must bring back his spirit from the invisible regions, and unite it again to his body There is, indeed, a difference between a person physically, and one morally dead. The body in the grave is destitute of all life, and has lost all its energies; while the sinner is still a rational being, and is capable of acts of understanding and will. But he is divested of every moral habit; he cannot discern spiritual things in a spiritual manner, nor choose what is spiritually good, till his natural powers be renovated and invigorated Hence, although commanded and exhorted, and addressed by every argument, to return service of God, he refuses, till he be roused and persuaded by something of greater efficacy than the clearest demonstration, and the most impressive oratory which men can employ.⁴⁹

From his discussion of regeneration alone, Dick's position on depravity is not difficult to discern. In fact, it was the very foundation for his belief not only in unconditional election, but also effectual calling. It is quite noticeable how the doctrines of regeneration and inability overlapped. Of the latter, Dick said this doctrine was "an argument for the necessity of regeneration."⁵⁰ His view of total depravity flowed from his affirmation of original sin, explaining that "there was a federal transaction between God and our first parent."⁵¹ This transaction was one of corruption, and it has now infected all of Adam's offspring. It was due to the fact that God was true to His promise, "In the day that you eat from it you will surely die" (Gen 2:17). The death implied,

⁴⁹Ibid., 151.

⁵⁰Dick, *Lectures*, 1:484. He supported this assertion by saying the language describing conversion (that of the "new man," passing from death to life, acquiring a new heart, etc.) was "unintelligible, if the nature of man is not totally depraved." He contended that those who deny original sin and total depravity cannot understand regeneration, but must think it is not necessary.

⁵¹Ibid., 456.

according to Dick, was of three kinds: temporal, spiritual, and eternal.⁵² The spiritual death “dissolved the moral union between man and his Maker,”⁵³ and this dissolution was permanent. He later stated the matter even more explicitly,

A change there is described, which human power cannot effect, and which is the work of the Spirit of God; a change so great and so complete, that it is fitly compared to a second birth, a creation out of nothing, a resurrection from the dead . . . The Scripture doctrine of regeneration is inseparably connected with the doctrine of original sin. Both stand or fall together.⁵⁴

John Dick taught the very Calvinistic soteriology that remained in most Baptist confessions well into the nineteenth century. He believed that all individuals are utterly depraved, so that only a sovereign work of God can bring about a person’s salvation. Those whom God unconditionally elects, He also sends His Holy Spirit to perform a divine operation in their souls. Although passive in this operation, the individual is subsequently free to, and always does, respond by faith in Christ for salvation by an exercise of the will. This soteriological matrix will remain intact as we go back even further in the history of the Christian church and in the line of Boyce’s theological ancestors.

Francis Turretin

Whereas Boyce’s textbook of choice was Dick’s *Lectures*, Charles Hodge used

⁵²Boyce also noted the same three kinds of death here, using the word “natural” where Dick used “temporal.” James P. Boyce, *Abstract of Systematic Theology* (Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2006), 240.

⁵³Dick, *Lectures*, 1:470. He stated the permanence of this dissolved moral union between God and man: “and we cannot conceive [man] to have retained the moral excellence of his nature after this separation, any more than a branch retains life after it has been cut off from the tree.”

⁵⁴Ibid., 485.

the *Institutes* of Francis Turretin (1623-87) for his main text. Olson stated, “Turretin’s scholastic Protestant orthodoxy formed the foundation for theological study and ministerial training at the influential Princeton Theological Seminary.” As Turretin’s *Institutes* was required reading there throughout the nineteenth century, “a dynasty of theological scholarship, known as the ‘Princeton school of theology,’ grew up around Turretin’s teaching.” The Genevan was therefore highly influential,⁵⁵ not only in the stream of nineteenth-century American theological instruction in general, but in the theology of James Boyce in particular.⁵⁶ Of Boyce’s fondness for Turretin’s *Institutes*, Broadus said, “To Dr. Boyce it was simply delightful. It gratified his taste for analysis, it satisfies his Calvinistic convictions, its energetic and forceful exhibitions of truth

⁵⁵Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 557. Concerning Olson’s description of Turretin as “scholastic,” Noll explained, “It is Turretin’s precise defense of Reformed positions . . . with his intense concern to defend the faith against all detractors that has earned him the reputation of a ‘scholastic.’” And concerning Olson’s assessment that Turretin’s teaching provided the foundation for the Princeton Theology, Noll said, “There is much to support this contention,” although he urged the historian not “to rate Turretin too highly as a theological guide for the Princetonians.” He pointed to the influence of many others upon Alexander and the Hodges, and the fact that, later, Warfield rarely referred to Turretin in his writings. Noll concluded by saying, “That Turretin was a major influence at Old Princeton is clear. That he was dominant in the sense of determining the scope and sweep of their theology is not.” Noll, *The Princeton Theology*, 29-30.

⁵⁶Holifield explained this connection clearly when, speaking of Boyce, he said, “He returned to the South to preach at Columbia, South Carolina, and to teach first at Furman and then in 1859 at the Southern Baptist Seminary, where he taught the Calvinism of the Swiss scholastic Francis Turretin, which he had absorbed through Hodge.” E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought From the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 285. Holifield also noted that Hodge considered Turretin’s *Institutes* to be “incomparably the best book as a whole on systematic theology. Both Alexander and Hodge taught their classes with Turretin as their text.” Ibid., 381.

awakened in him practical as well as intellectual sympathy.”⁵⁷

The *Institutes* outlined Turretin’s theology by asking and answering questions.

On unconditional election, he asked, “Is election made from the foresight of faith, or works; or from the grace of God alone?” The answer was, “The former we deny, the latter we affirm.”⁵⁸ Then, in typical fashion, he set out to give reasons for his position.

Quoting often from Augustine, Turretin summarized his view of election by saying,

Election to glory as well as to grace is entirely gratuitous. Therefore no cause, or condition, or reason existed in man, upon the consideration of which God chose this rather than another one. Rather election depended upon his sole good pleasure (*eudokia*) by which, as he selected from the corrupt mass a certain number of men neither more worthy nor better than others to whom he would destine salvation, so in like manner he decreed to give them faith as the means necessary to obtain salvation.⁵⁹

For Turretin, it is to holiness that the elect are so chosen (Eph 1:4). This was one way in which he argued for unconditional election, saying, “Faith and obedience are the fruit and effect of election, therefore they cannot be the cause or previous condition.”⁶⁰ And perhaps his strongest reasoning for God not electing on the basis of foreseen faith was, “If election is from foreseen faith, God would not have elected man, but rather man would have elected God, and so predestination should rather be called postdestination; the first cause would be made the second, and God would depend on man.”⁶¹

⁵⁷Broadus, *Memoir*, 268.

⁵⁸Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, trans. George Musgrave Giger, ed. James T. Dennison, Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1992), 1:355.

⁵⁹Ibid., 357.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid., 361.

Like Boyce, Turretin used the term “Effectual Calling” in describing the new birth, and said that it was the Spirit “act[ing] immediately with the word on the soul, so that the calling necessarily produces its effect.”⁶² In this section he was careful to refute Pelagius at every turn, contending that conversion

consists not in a simple and bare moral suasion (which is merely objective), but in an omnipotent and irresistible power. It is nothing less than the very creation and resurrection of man, which therefore operates not only objectively, but also effectively within man. Now who can believe that to regenerate and resuscitate man, to take away his heart of stone and give him a heart of flesh, is nothing else than to morally persuade to conversion?⁶³

Turretin was comfortable with a genuine element of mystery in his soteriology. He often referred to John 3 and Jesus’ explanation of the new birth.⁶⁴ He had no other choice but to adhere to the clear teaching in the text of Scripture, and could not go further than this. To the one who struggled with the mystery of regeneration, he could simply say that conversion was to be

felt by experience rather than capable of being explained by reason . . . Still, it is false to proceed from the ignorance of the mode not revealed in the Scriptures and unnecessary to be known by us in order to salvation, to a denial of the thing itself which is so clearly revealed in the Scriptures.⁶⁵

He was much less concerned with *how* God converts the sinner (for this the Bible gives no detailed explanation) than with the fact *that* God converts the sinner by sovereign grace.

⁶²Turretin, *Institutes*, 2:526.

⁶³Ibid., 519.

⁶⁴“The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit,” v.8.

⁶⁵Turretin, *Institutes*, 2:521.

Like Boyce, Hodge, and Dick, Turretin saw that the necessity of God's sovereign activity in regeneration was proved from the corruption of man, or his total inability. He said,

For if what the Scriptures teach concerning the most miserable condition of sinners and their total and absolute impotence for good is true . . . how can the hypothesis stand which maintains that nothing else is required for the conversion of a man than moral suasion and the proposition of the gospel fitly and opportunely made?⁶⁶

The only reply to his question must be that the hypothesis cannot stand. An offer of the gospel, although indispensable, is not enough. Also needed for conversion to take place is a divine moving upon the soul, the giving of a new heart, the removing of spiritual blindness in regeneration, without which the sinner is hopeless and will not exercise saving faith. But to those whom God has chosen, He will accompany the offer of the gospel, the external call, with the divine operation, the new birth, by result of which the sinner will respond in repentance and faith unto salvation. This was Turretin's view. And Boyce was persistent and determined to study⁶⁷ and teach him in Latin.⁶⁸ But Turretin followed in time another Genevan whose soteriology we are also compelled to examine.

⁶⁶Ibid., 530.

⁶⁷Broadus, *Memoir*, 182: "Being very zealous as to his special class for the study of theology in Turretin and other Latin text-books, and not satisfied with his own knowledge of the Latin language, he made an engagement for a regular series of recitations in the language to one of his friends, who was known to have made Latin a specialty. It was simply wonderful to see how regularly he attended, with so many labors and responsibilities, and how carefully he prepared."

⁶⁸Ibid., 268. Concerning the seminary that Boyce founded, Broadus said, "While the chief instruction in Theology should be brought within reach of intelligent men having only an English education, there should be a separate class for men acquainted with Latin, and desiring to make wider and deeper study by means of Latin text-books. During the first sessions [Boyce] used Turretin alone." Ibid.

John Calvin

“Calvin was possibly the most important Protestant theologian of all time . . . he forged a systematic vision of the Christian faith that still profoundly influences modern Western society.”⁶⁹ So said Hill, and it is quite apparent that the theological influence of John Calvin (1509-64) can be seen in Baptist life well into the nineteenth century. Although Boyce himself never quoted Calvin directly in his *Abstract*, his personal copy of Calvin’s Institutes contains many marginal notes, underlinings, and asterisks throughout the three volumes,⁷⁰ and their doctrines of salvation have evident similarities. Perhaps the element of Calvin’s theology most often associated with him is that of unconditional election, which he often called predestination. In the very beginning of his section on the subject, he stressed the practical importance of belief in God’s sovereignty in salvation when he said,

We shall never be persuaded as we ought that our salvation flows from the free mercy of God as its fountain, until we are made acquainted with his eternal election, the grace of God being illustrated by the contrast--viz. that he does not adopt promiscuously to the hope of salvation, but gives to some what he denies to others.⁷¹

It is therefore not surprising that Calvin had much to say concerning the first chapter of Ephesians, which he said taught, “Election is not foreknowledge of merit but is of God’s

⁶⁹Hill, *The History of Christian Thought*, 194.

⁷⁰Materials used courtesy of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Archives. Boyce did use “Calvinist” and related terms and spoke, for example, of “Calvin and the churches which he established.” He was not hesitant to call his own views on the atonement and election “Calvinistic.” Boyce, *Abstract of Systematic Theology*, 317, 347.

⁷¹John Calvin *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 3.21.1, trans. Henry Beveridge, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 203.

sovereign purpose.”⁷² Since Paul told his readers that they were elected “to be holy” (v.4), this for Calvin meant that anything virtuous that comes from man is the result of election. Addressing those who would “invert Paul’s order,” that is, those who would make election based upon foreseen faith, Calvin said, “If he chose us that we should be holy, he did not choose us because he saw that we would be so.”⁷³ To lay the matter to rest, he thought, one only had to know the meaning of verse 9 and the phrase “purposed in himself,” which Calvin said meant “the same thing as to say that [God] considered nothing outside himself with which to be concerned in making his decree.”⁷⁴ This was Calvin’s “unconditional election.”

To Calvin, salvation was totally of God, including the act of regeneration.⁷⁵ It was God who chose individuals to be saved before they were born, and it was God who took the initiative to bring about their actual new birth at the moment of conversion. Using the term “effectual calling,” he explained, “Although in choosing his own the Lord already has adopted them as his children, we see that they do not come into possession of so great a good except when they are called.”⁷⁶ Calvin further made it clear what he believed about the order of events in regeneration when he said,

For all who have at any time groped about in ignorance of God will admit that it

⁷²Ibid., 3.22.1 (2:213).

⁷³Ibid., 3.22.3 (2:215).

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵F. Towney Lord, “A Modern Estimate of Calvinism,” *The Baptist Quarterly* 4 (1928-29): 87: “Calvin believed that the spiritual work of regeneration was wrought in the souls of the elect only, who had the seed of perseverance planted in them.”

⁷⁶Calvin *Institutes* 3.24.1 (2:240).

happened to them in such a way that the bridle of the law restrained them in some fear and reverence toward God until, regenerated by the Spirit, they *began* wholeheartedly to love him.⁷⁷ (emphasis added)

Calvin, like Boyce, stressed God's initiative in the act of regeneration that flowed from His eternal decree of election. And for Calvin, like Boyce, both of these doctrines necessarily depended on a third, that of the total inability of man.

"The whole man, from the top of his head to the sole of his foot, is so flooded, as it were, that no part remains without sin, and so everything that comes from him is considered sin."⁷⁸ Hardly a more unambiguous statement can be imagined in support of the absolutely corrupt nature of mankind that the Scriptures describe. But the real significance of this doctrine, especially for the present thesis, is how it gave rise to Calvin's views of both unconditional election and effectual calling. Concerning the former, even Hunter, unsympathetic to the overall theology of Calvin, understood the Reformer correctly on this point. He said, "The starting point of the doctrine [of election] is to be found in the assumption, based on an alleged assertion of Scripture, that the whole human race, untouched by grace, is without exception in a state of total moral corruption."⁷⁹ And concerning effectual calling, Calvin's view was that, by consequence of his total depravity, man needed the regenerating work of God to break into his soul if he was ever to be saved. He spent several sections (2.2.18-25) in the *Institutes* discussing the extent of man's depravity, contending that he is totally unable to believe unto

⁷⁷Ibid., 2.7.11 (1:308-09).

⁷⁸Ibid., 2.1.9 (1:219).

⁷⁹Adam Mitchell Hunter, *The Teaching of Calvin: A Modern Interpretation*, 2nd ed. (London: James Clarke and Company, 1950), 103-04.

salvation in and of himself. Then, in his treatment of faith, commenting on 2 Thessalonians 1:11 (“that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power”), Calvin said, “Here Paul calls faith ‘the work of God,’ and instead of distinguishing it by an adjective, appropriately calls it ‘good pleasure.’ Thus he denies that man himself initiates faith, and not satisfied with this, he adds that it is a manifestation of God’s power.”⁸⁰ That man was totally dependent upon God for the new birth Calvin also clearly stated in his section on depravity:

Now we are not in the least afraid to admit what Paul asserts with great earnestness: all men are both depraved and given over to wickedness (cf. Rom 3:10). But we add with him that it is through God’s mercy that not all remain in wickedness. Therefore, although all of us are by nature suffering from the same disease, only those whom it pleases the Lord to touch with his healing hand will get well.⁸¹

From these glimpses of Calvin’s writings, one may arrive at an accurate overall understanding of his soteriology. All men are by nature absolutely sinful and corrupt, groping in spiritual darkness, unable to find salvation in Christ; in fact, left to themselves, it is not something they even seek after. God, however, has decided not to let all men go their own way to eternal destruction, but has, in His goodness and grace, chosen some for salvation. He calls these individuals externally through the preaching of the gospel, and He sends His Spirit to regenerate them, the result being that they are given a new heart with new affections and desires by which they are moved to apprehend Christ by faith for salvation. This was the same soteriological matrix carried on by Turretin, Dick, Hodge, and Manly, and eventually found a home in the Southern Baptist Convention, represented

⁸⁰ Calvin *Institutes* 3.2.35 (2:500).

⁸¹ Ibid., 2.5.3 (1:275).

by the Reformed soteriology of James Boyce.

CHAPTER 4

BOYCE'S THEOLOGY: THEN AND NOW

An Anchor in His Day

Robert Baker has said, “Historians would agree that in the history of Southern Baptists hardly would any individual stand taller than Boyce.”¹ Many have expressed similar sentiments about the founder of the first seminary of the Southern Baptist Convention. Not many historians, Calvinistic or otherwise, have missed the fact of his championing Southern Baptist theological education.² What is sometimes missed in recounting his life and ministry, however, is his own personal theology. Honeycutt, for example, wrote of Boyce on the occasion of Southern Seminary’s one hundred twenty-fifth anniversary. Although he spoke highly of the seminary’s founder, accurately summarized his biography, made reference to his *Abstract of Systematic Theology* and “Three Changes in Theological Institutions” as well as his time at Princeton with Charles Hodge, and praised him for his “genius” and “vision for theological education,” he never

¹Robert Andrew Baker, Paul J. Craven, Jr., and R. Marshall Blalock, *History of the First Baptist Church of Charleston, South Carolina 1682-2007* (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press, 2007), 277.

²The Caners, hardly friendly toward the Calvinism espoused by Boyce, admitted that he “laid the groundwork for Southern Baptist education for generations to come.” Emir Caner and Ergun Caner, *The Sacred Trust: Sketches of Southern Baptist Presidents* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2003), 19.

once mentioned anything of Boyce's theology.³ But the very reason Boyce stood so strongly for theological education, advocated access to it even for those without a college degree, and insisted upon the necessity of a confession of faith to guide institutions, was because he wanted to preserve the great doctrines of Scripture that he saw as under attack, or at least susceptible to gradual drift. Boyce's concern was not institutional, social, or even historical, in the sense of wanting to preserve just any form of seminary education. His concern was primarily theological. Through the training of ministers, he sought to establish Calvinistic soteriology for generations to come because, for Boyce, Calvinistic soteriology was the gospel.⁴ As Packer said,

It is most misleading to call this soteriology 'Calvinism' at all, for it is not a peculiarity of John Calvin and the divines of Dort, but a part of the revealed truth of God and the catholic Christian faith. 'Calvinism' is one of the 'odious names' by which down the centuries prejudice has been raised against it. But the thing itself is just the biblical gospel.⁵

Because Boyce held fast to this biblical gospel, he was an anchor in his day.

³Roy L. Honeycutt, "Heritage Creating Hope: The Pilgrimage of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary," *Review and Expositor* 81 (Fall 1984): 367-91.

⁴Quite a few stories exist of Boyce seeking to turn Arminians into Calvinists as they went through his classes at Southern. One could anticipate, as Packer did, the suspicion that, instead of being concerned with the gospel, those who hold to the soteriology of Boyce simply want to make others "Calvinists" like themselves. To this charge, Packer replied, "Whether we call ourselves Calvinists hardly matters; what matters is that we should understand the gospel biblically. But that, we think, does in fact mean understanding it as historic Calvinism does." J. I. Packer, "Introduction," in John Owen, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1995), 13. It would seem that Packer has captured the sentiments of Boyce here also.

⁵Ibid., 10.

The Blowing Winds of Doctrine

Boyce's successor as professor of systematic theology at Southern Seminary was F. H. Kerfoot, who continued to use Boyce's *Abstract* as his primary classroom textbook. In 1899, however, he put out a revised version of the *Abstract*, adding footnotes to Boyce's original text where he disagreed. This revised version was used until 1917, when E. Y. Mullins's *The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expressions* was implemented.⁶ Noting that Kerfoot's lengthiest rebuttals were given to Boyce's views of imputation in depravity and atonement (striking at the heart of his Calvinistic soteriology), Dever said,

Ironically, Kerfoot and Mullins use of Boyce as a text probably served to inoculate their students against Boyce's theology. Thus, rather than seeing the continuing use of Boyce as a text as the continuing influence of Calvinism in the Convention, it is more appropriate to see it as an agent for a gradual dissolution of that Calvinism.⁷

Nettles saw signs of the decline of historic Calvinism in the Southern Baptist Convention just after the time of B. H. Carroll (1843-1914), who founded Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Texas in the first decade of the 1900s, and more specifically during the time of Mullins (1860-1928) and L. R. Scarborough (1870-1945). Following the lead of these two, there came to be a popular emphasis on human consciousness and experience and on human decision and personal freedom.⁸ Perhaps

⁶Edgar Young Mullins, *The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expressions* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1917).

⁷Mark E. Dever, "Representative Aspects of the Theologies of John L. Dagg and James P. Boyce: Reformed Theology and Southern Baptists" (Th.M. thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1987), 121.

⁸Tom J. Nettles, *By His Grace and for His Glory: A Historical, Theological, and Practical Study of the Doctrines of Grace in Baptist Life* (Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2006), 196-97: The author pointed to several real factors surrounding the passing

these emphases are inevitable in an American culture that cherishes and promotes individual autonomy and liberty. In any case, when the emphasis shifts from God in His absolute supremacy to the experience and freedom of the individual, the doctrines of grace cherished by Boyce cannot last long. Kendall said, even more strongly than Nettles, that “E. Y. Mullins articulated theological principles which catapulted Calvinism into near oblivion.”⁹ By the latter part of the twentieth century, Dale Moody, professor of Systematic Theology at Southern Seminary from 1941 to 1982, was on record saying, “The Synod of Dort, it’s deplorable.”¹⁰ The words of Kendall could almost read as an epitaph of Boyce:

James P. Boyce had hoped to perpetuate the soteriology of Calvin without his ecclesiology throughout the Convention. But his dream was not destined to be fulfilled. Boyce could not see that Southern Baptists would regard ecclesiastical matters as being more important. Neither could he see that there was a latent

of widespread adherence to the doctrines of grace: (1) the influence of the Cooperative Program away from confessional identity and toward operational identity; (2) an “increasing indifference toward doctrine in literature and Baptist papers;” and (3) the gradual rise of the liberal mentality, “which has crept in the back door of Southern Baptist life.” However, Nettles claimed these factors were not as influential in the doctrines of grace being overshadowed in Southern Baptist life as the two Baptist giants, Mullins and Scarborough. “Mullins, through his theological method, and Scarborough, through his evangelistic method, shifted Baptist theological commitment and opened the door to other specters.”

⁹Robert T. Kendall, “The Rise and Demise of Calvinism in the Southern Baptist Convention” (M.A. thesis, University of Louisville, 1973), iii. This was despite the fact that Mullins himself said of Boyce that he was the “great leader and constructive genius of the earlier and later years” of Southern Seminary. Edgar Y. Mullins, *The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary: What the Seminary Is, What it Has Done, and What it Needs* (Louisville: n.p.), 2.

¹⁰Walter D. Draughon, “A Critical Evaluation of the Diminishing Influence of Calvinism on the Doctrine of Atonement in Representative Southern Baptist Theologians James Petigru Boyce, Edgar Young Mullins, Walter Thomas Conner, and Dale Moody” (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1987), 268. Quoted in an interview the author had with Moody.

repulsion for historic Calvinism in the soul of the Southern Baptist Convention.¹¹

These developments in the years following James Boyce were surely to the Convention's misfortune.

Boyce's Theology Today

David Wells has issued a call for evangelicalism to return its theology to the church.¹² He has contended that the study of theology has been relegated to "the academy," when what should be the case is that the study of God and his truth finds its primary sphere of activity and influence in the local church. Wells said that ministers "must somehow span the gap between the Church and things theological, a gap created when the clergy coopted theology and removed it from the soul of the Church."¹³ Holifield observed that this phenomenon was not new, but in fact could be seen in the day of Charles Hodge. This was when, he said, "theology moved from the parishes to the seminaries."¹⁴ It would seem that James Boyce sought to reverse this trend by bringing (or returning) theology to the churches by his bold advocacy of theological education for Southern Baptist ministers. They were the ones who would bring theology to the churches by way of preaching and teaching. The kind of theology Boyce would have returned to the churches has been amply demonstrated in this thesis; this was rightly

¹¹Kendall, "Rise and Demise," 2.

¹²David F. Wells, *No Place for Truth or Whatever Happened To Evangelical Theology?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993).

¹³Ibid., 251.

¹⁴E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought From the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 271.

understood by Kendall, who said of Boyce, “He spearheaded the original faculty that was to uphold the quintessence of Calvinism in the face of the Arminian threat. Southern Baptists have not seen his like since.”¹⁵ Perhaps we need to see more like him. Wells has observed, “Within the Church, strong winds are blowing from a range of religious consumers who look to the churches and ministers to meet their needs.”¹⁶ It seems that what is most needed today are men who will lead churches to anchor their theologies (including their thinking on salvation) on the solid foundation of the Scriptures, divinely revealed by the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth.

John L. Dagg, highly influential in Boyce’s day, wrote concerning the real measure of the value of theology. Nearly a century and a half ago, he said,

The study of religious truth ought to be undertaken and prosecuted from a sense of duty, and with a view to the improvement of the heart. When learned it ought not to be laid on the shelf, as an object of speculation; but it should be deposited deep in the heart, where its sanctifying power ought to be felt. To study theology, for the purpose of gratifying curiosity, or preparing for a profession, is an abuse and profanation of what ought to be regarded as most holy. To learn things pertaining to God, merely for the sake of amusement, or secular advantage, or to gratify the mere love of knowledge, is to treat the most high with contempt.¹⁷

These words cut to the heart of the matter concerning the contemporary value of the theology of someone like James Boyce. The study of God ought to affect a person’s day-to-day behavior, to make him more holy in lifestyle, to conform him to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29). In this regard the value of Boyce’s legacy cannot be seriously questioned. His was a unique life, given the testimony of those who knew him. Judge

¹⁵Kendall, “Rise and Demise,” 85.

¹⁶Wells, *No Place For Truth*, 256.

¹⁷John L. Dagg, *A Manual of Theology* (Charleston, SC: Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1857), 13.

Alex P. Humphrey said, "This man illustrated at once the manliness and the devotion of the Christian minister."¹⁸ Broadus reflected, "James Boyce was the soul of honor . . . marked by true humility and modesty."¹⁹ Z. T. Cody, his successor as editor of South Carolina's *The Baptist Courier*, said, referring to Boyce's *Abstract of Systematic Theology*, "He himself was greater than his book . . . Dr. Boyce was his theology incarnate."²⁰ Cody also said Boyce

was a whole-hearted Calvinist . . . he believed in the fall of man and his utter alienation in sin; he believed in simon-pure Calvinistic election and what it involved, preterition and all the rest. He accepted this system . . . he loved it. He found in it satisfaction, repose and freedom."²¹

Cody could not fault the man, however, since, "Dr. Boyce's Calvinism was simply the outcome of his belief in the greatness and the holiness of God."²² Admittedly, external morality alone is not a measure of a person's theological correctness. Nevertheless, in James Boyce there is to be found a marked consistency between his God-centered theology and his God-centered life. His theology does not appear to have been of the "ivory tower" variety, for intellectual purposes only, and not touched by the real needs of people. In fact, a former student said,

My contention is that no other theory than that of an overwhelming and soul-consuming love for men will account for James P. Boyce and explain his career . . . This zeal for souls called out the first sensibility of his being as the morning sun

¹⁸John A. Broadus, *Memoir of James P. Boyce* (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1893), 346.

¹⁹Ibid., 357-58.

²⁰Z. T. Cody, "James Petigru Boyce," *Review and Expositor* 24 (1927): 159.

²¹Ibid., 160.

²²Ibid.

causes the dew laden flowers and plants to bend toward the god of day.²³

Forgiving the student for his overly subjective sentimentality, his words nevertheless serve to underscore the fact that Boyce did not separate his theology from his life. The awe-inspiring sovereign God of the Bible was the same One who commanded him to love his neighbor as himself. This, by all accounts, is exactly what he did.

A common caricature of “Calvinists” is that they are not evangelistic.²⁴

Following the example of his boyhood pastor, Basil Manly, Sr., Boyce was a lover of the souls of men, so much so that he can be observed faithfully bringing the external call of the gospel, pleading for men to be reconciled to God. In the conclusion to a sermon on Luke 15 (“The Prodigal Son”), this was how he appealed to his hearers:

Christ says, I seek after sinners. Each of them is as dear to me as a son to you . . . The more they have strayed, the more I do yearn. The greater the sinner, the more anxious my heart. My love has never failed.

Do you believe Jesus, my hearers? Is it, can it be true, that Jesus thus yearns over each one here? That He thus earnestly desires the salvation of each soul? Can you resist these pleadings? Can you reject such love? Can you disappoint such earnest longings and desires?

Will you not welcome to your heart your blessed Lord, your glorious Savior, who thus seeks you that He may regain His wandering sheep, His lost treasure, His prodigal child, that He may once more number you among His own.

Suffer this day the word of exhortation. Would that I could utter such words as would make you hesitate no longer.²⁵

²³David Marshall Ramsay, “James Petigru Boyce, God’s Gentleman,” *Review and Expositor* 21 (1924): 139.

²⁴“Boyce’s emphasis on the sovereign will of God, the passivity of man, the objectivity of the atonement, and particular election produces an inadequate platform for mission and evangelism . . . the Great Commission has no reasonable basis.” Draughon, “A Critical Evaluation,” 239.

²⁵James P. Boyce, “Christ Receiving and Eating With Sinners,” in Timothy George, *James Petigru Boyce: Selected Writings* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1989), 84. Boyce was not unique as a Calvinist who issued strong appeals to the unconverted. Packer, commenting on the “full and free” offer of the gospel that Calvinistic preachers should bring, noted, “It is the glory of these invitations that it is an omnipotent King who gives them, just as it is the chief part of the glory of the enthroned Christ that He

Here Boyce incarnated the teaching of the apostle Paul, whose discourse on unconditional election in the strongest of terms in Romans 9 nonetheless led into one of the premier evangelistic texts in the New Testament in Romans 10. God, for no reason outside of His own good pleasure, elected the nation of Israel to be His chosen people (cf. 1 Pet 2:9), and receive “the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises” (Rom 9:4). This is not to say that every individual Israelite was elected to salvation, for “it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants” (v.8). As an example of His sovereign choice of certain individuals to salvation, Paul cited Jacob and Esau. God chose the younger Jacob to receive the inherited promise rather than the older Esau. God “elected” Jacob and passed over Esau. And this choice was made when the twins “were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad” (v.11). But this in no way means that there is any “injustice with God” (v.14), only that an individual’s salvation is due not fundamentally to a choice that he or she makes, but to the choice that God made in choosing the person: “So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy . . . He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires” (vv.16,18). Yet the apostle, in the very next chapter, realized that no one whom God had chosen will be saved apart from “call[ing] on His name” (Rom 10:13). To call, they must first believe;

condescends still to utter them. And it is the glory of the gospel ministry that the preacher goes to men as Christ’s ambassador, charged to deliver the King’s invitation personally to every sinner present and to summon them all to turn and live.” Packer went on to describe these full and free gospel invitations as “universal, real, and marvelously gracious.” Packer, “Introduction,” in Owen, *Death of Death*, 18-19.

and before they can believe, they must hear, “And how will they hear without a preacher?” (Rom 10:14). In other words, just as God has ordained the end (the salvation of sinners), He has ordained the means to that end--there must be an external call, brought by a human agent entrusted with the “Gospel of God” (Rom 1:1).

Evangelist. Statesman. Gentleman. And yet, Calvinist. This was James P. Boyce. His soteriology, well understood in his day, is perhaps not so well understood in ours. This is regrettable, as what seems to be needed most among us are inspiring and ennobling views of God. Broadus said of Boyce’s *Abstract*, “The chief emphasis in this work is laid on the doctrine of God rather than that of Man Thus the book is truly a Theology, in the strict sense of the term.”²⁶ Boyce, along with his contemporaries, stood firmly in the line of the Reformed theological giants of the past to trumpet those exalted views of the sovereign Lord of the Bible. The question now is whether those views have any place today, particularly in Boyce’s own Southern Baptist Convention. Timothy George, for one, thought there ought to be. He said,

The theocentric thrust of Boyce’s theology is a healthy corrective to our human-centered preoccupations His bold advocacy of the great doctrines of grace is a much-needed emphasis in light of our shallow, transactional evangelism and neglect of the Holy Spirit.²⁷

The use of the word “theocentric” (God-centered) here is most significant. Time and again, Calvinistic soteriology²⁸ is described as having a “high view of God.” But how high is *too* high? While advocates of the doctrines of grace would set no limit, for God is

²⁶Broadus, *Memoir*, 308.

²⁷Timothy George, review of *Abstract of Systematic Theology*, by James P. Boyce, *Review and Expositor* 81 (Fall 1984): 463.

²⁸In truth, all “five points” of Calvinism have to do with soteriology.

infinitely glorious and majestic, opponents to the doctrines of grace seem to have set a ceiling somewhere.

Almost one hundred years ago, Chilvers made his case for the need of the doctrines of grace. His words may still ring true today:

There is a great national need for the assertion of the truth of the sovereignty of God, for man has been and is seeking to-day that which is right in his own eyes People are inarticulately longing for a strong centre of authority, a dictatorship, if you will, which they will find in the sovereignty of God when it is brought home to them by the power of the inspired Bible in which it is so clearly revealed.²⁹

Commenting on Boyce's bold advocacy of Calvinistic soteriology among Baptists, Dever articulated the possibility of his continuing influence. He said it may serve as "a needed correction to much of modern theology—reminding . . . twentieth century readers that ultimately in the gospel of Jesus Christ, God stands in judgment of humanity, not humanity of God."³⁰

James Boyce sought to raise up generations of preachers who would preach and teach the gospel in such a way that God was the focus, that His supremacy was magnified. Their task was to bring the gospel of the sovereign God of the Bible to souls longing to hear and be transformed by it. By God's grace, may the task be taken up again.

²⁹H. Tydeman Chilvers, "Is There a Future for Calvinism?," *The Baptist Quarterly* 4 (1928-29): 12.

³⁰Dever, "Representative Aspects of the Theologies of Dagg and Boyce," 125.

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ABSTRACT

JAMES PETIGRU BOYCE: SOUTHERN BAPTIST SOTERIOLOGY IN THE REFORMED TRADITION

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2007
Chairperson: Dr. Tom J. Nettles

This thesis investigates the theology of the leading Southern Baptist theologian of the mid-nineteenth century, James P. Boyce. Chapter 1 examines the history of Reformed soteriology among Baptists to the time of Boyce. He is introduced with a biographical sketch, highlighting some of his theological influences.

Chapter 2 is an analysis of Boyce's soteriology, primarily his views concerning total inability, unconditional election, and effectual calling.

Chapter 3 examines in detail those influences that shaped Boyce's soteriology. Attention is given both to his contemporaries as well as his theological ancestors.

Chapter 4 offers thoughts on what happened to Boyce's soteriology in Baptist life in the years that followed. The thesis concludes with a discussion of the contemporary value of his theology.

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