

James Petigru Boyce: For Christ and His Church

Thomas J. Nettles

INTRODUCTION¹

JAMES PETIGRU BOYCE (1827-1888) fits well into the category suggested by Brooks Holifield called “Gentlemen Theologians.” In the list of Baptists that he included in this category, we find Boyce along with two of the teachers that partnered

with Boyce on the first faculty at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary—John A. Broadus and Basil Manly Jr. The fourth member of that first faculty, William Williams, also could have been mentioned using the announced criteria of Holifield. In addition, Holifield lists the pastors under whom Boyce sat for his first eighteen years of life, Basil Manly Sr. and William T. Brantly Sr.²

Boyce certainly was a gentleman, reared in a gentleman’s home, and found an urban setting and the developing culture of the cities of the South much to his liking. Far from being in the “middle class” of

the category of the wealthy, having real estate in 1860 worth over \$120,000 and a personal estate worth over \$330,000. Raised as a South Carolinian in Little London, Charleston, he absorbed the taste for exquisite culture fostered carefully by his predecessors and embraced gladly by him and his peers. His daughters bore testimony to his love of fashion, beautiful textiles, elegant book bindings, art, music, punctuality and his delight in trees, glaciers, flowers, quaint houses, social grace, and impeccable manners. They were quite amused and amazed that “Carpets, curtains, table linen, furniture, china and silver were purchased by him with no advice or assistance on the part of his family.” These tasks gave him the “greatest pleasure.” In considering how to please others, Boyce “always showed a remarkable faculty in the choice of beautiful and unique presents.” Giving culture to his children was a personal project, joining them in lessons in French and German, buying them “quantities of beautiful and expensive books and magazines to enhance the pleasure of the studies and give us every opportunity possible to the acquisition of the language.” He built a large library prior to the war but had to diminish

most of the men Holifield discussed, Boyce fit into

THOMAS J. NETTLES is Professor of Historical Theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

He is widely regarded as one of the foremost Baptist historians in America. He previously taught at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Along with numerous journal articles, Dr. Nettles is the author or editor of several books, including *By His Grace and for His Glory, Baptists and the Bible* (co-authored with L. Russ Bush), *Why I am a Baptist* (co-edited with Russell D. Moore), and *The Baptists* (3 vols.).

his indulgence in book buying under the more straitened conditions after the war. "I have heard him say," one of his daughters related, "that it caused him positive pain to see beautifully bound or illustrated books and not possess them." A trip to California and a horse ride into Yosemite Valley produced exactly the effect on his daughters and wife that Boyce reveled in: "It seemed to us impossible how that anything could be more beautiful—the snowy cliffs bathed in the last gleams of the sun, the atmosphere of shimmering blue, the magnificent trees, the cascades, the ever-changing vistas all combined to make a scene that brought to our minds the description of the mountains from which Bunyan's Pilgrim was said to look on the beautiful land of Beulah." Though he had no personal talent for painting or drawing, he developed "excellent judgment, and great critical ability fully appreciating good drawing" along with "an excellent eye for color. He cultivated his taste in this direction by constant visits to art exhibitions." Boyce ordered flowers for the garden in Greenville and taught the Latin names to his eldest daughter. She recalled, "These flowers were called by their botanical terms and very learned it sounded to my childish ears and much it astonished me to hear the tremendous Latin names with which even the tiniest flowers were named. I learned many of them and it was a source of amusement to Father and Mother to hear me use them." Music was a part of every well-rounded gentleman's life and Boyce made it a point to be learned on the subject. When on trips to New York, Boyce attended symphony concerts, oratorios, and made it a point to hear every great singer. He went from Greenville to Charleston to hear Carlotta Patti and told his daughters many times "of the exquisite pleasure he had in hearing Jenny Lind sing 'I Know that My Redeemer Liveth' at Covent Garden." His daughters also were sure that if any young man or young lady wanted to know how to conduct oneself in public, they should take their father's lessons in etiquette.³

Boyce shared the intellectual outlook of his

Gentlemen Theologian peers. He affirmed, contrary to Thomas Paine and Thomas Jefferson, the authenticity of Scripture, its defensibility as revelation using rational arguments, the competence of the mind in engaging evidence, and the integrity of subject/object relationships as defined in Thomas Reid's Common Sense philosophy. Reid's understanding of corporate experience and rational discourse built on such experience was important in Boyce's argument for the Bible as a deposit of revelation. Boyce joined the conservatives, and resisted the liberals, in affirming that each individual doctrine of Scripture, such as the Trinity, does not have to pass muster before the sentinel of reason as an autonomous authority, once the authority that affirms the doctrine, that is the Bible, has been authenticated as revelation.

Boyce believed in the unity of truth, because the creator also was the upholder and redeemer. He accepted the traditional arguments for the existence of God as compelling, eschewing Hume's skepticism. Unlike some of his peers he found the ontological argument the most intrinsically powerful but admitted that *a posteriori* arguments seemed more plausible to most people. He believed in the convincing power of Christian evidences and studied *Elements of Moral Science* under the quintessential ethicist in mid-nineteenth century America, Francis Wayland. Boyce, however, went beyond the normal categories of moral science in his discussion of ethics and saw the Christian standard as embodied in the voluntary character of God manifest in the incarnation and sacrifice of Christ.

Boyce also shared the Southern political commitment to the sovereignty of the states and the potential greatness of the South through the wise execution of the institution of slavery. Boyce, nevertheless, believed that the Union of the states had great advantages for all, and he was pleased that his father had opposed nullification in 1832 when Boyce was five, and Boyce himself opposed secession in 1860. He wanted to see a proposal made by the South of conditions for operation together on

the basis of perfect equality, a proposal surely to be rejected by the North, but putting the North entirely in the wrong through their rejection of these southern overtures for compromise and acceptance. Then they, and not the South, would be responsible for separation. His views on nullification and secession, however, did not diminish his strong sense of States' Rights nor of his commitment to the Confederacy once secession had occurred. He worked for the financial stability of the Confederate government in the South Carolina Legislature, worked as a chaplain in the Confederate Army, served as aid-de-camp to Governor Magrath, and held the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. Subsequent to the war he wrote a young nephew and explained the situation to him:

While you are in Virginia you will hear a great deal about the war, and see many men who have been in battle. Suppose you keep a little book, and whenever you hear any matter of interest write it down in your book, being particular to keep the dates and names of persons perfectly correct, and to state the events as fully as you can recollect them. Always be accurate, only putting down what you know was said, and also the name of the narrator. . . . Whatever else may be the verdict of history—let its writers be so befogged as to believe that the North fought to free the slaves, and not for its own selfish interests of gain, and that the South fought to defend slavery, and not the constitutional rights of the States—one thing is sure, that history must accord to the Confederate army in Virginia, under Generals Lee, Jackson, and others, the exhibition of fortitude, bravery, chivalric courtesy, and knightly courage never surpassed in any nation or period of time. Try then to hear of these things, and remember.⁴

Boyce knew that the South must change after the war, and he worked to contribute positively to that change and to restore relations with Baptist brethren in the North, but he did not want it

forgotten that the South had been noble and its leadership great.

Boyce accepted with full confidence the task, described by Jon Butler as the “African Spiritual Holocaust,” of the conversion of the slaves to Christianity. Butler argued that “Slavery’s destruction of African religious systems in America constituted not only wholesale cultural robbery but cultural robbery of a quite vicious sort.” Butler made his case through studying the systematic breakdown of African Native religion among the colonial slaves, a “holocaust that destroyed collective African religious practice in colonial America,” to be replaced by Christianization in ante-bellum, post revolutionary America. According to Butler, the “systems” that gave coherence, meaning, beauty, security, and hope to Africans were destroyed but individual practices survived. Religious practices according to system were reorganized to be consistent with the dominant religious persuasion of their captors and a crippling system of affectionate regard known as “paternalism.” The original culturally appropriate and helpful religious systems of native Africans “collapsed in the shattering cultural destructiveness of British slaveholding.”⁵ Butler’s analysis of this process reveals much about the systematic deconstruction of the societal humanity of Africans that had come from a wide variety of backgrounds and the complicity of Christian ministers in this process. His argument also reveals his tenaciously held commitment to the cultural origins of all religion, including Christianity.

Boyce inherited a mature system of “Paternalism” and embraced its definitions of the relation between slave and master fully. Boyce, in addition, testified to a transcendent concern for his slaves and the entire population of African slaves. Along with others in his social and religious position, he believed that God had committed a special stewardship to Christians, especially Baptists, of the South in preaching and teaching the gospel to the slaves entrusted to their care. While it is difficult to grasp how a conscientious Christian could be

convictionally sympathetic to the arguments for slavery, one must concede that after the perspective of 150 years, the resultant social changes induced by the Civil War and several cultural revolutions, including a major conflict in the Civil rights movement, the context of our reception to arguments is quite different from Boyce's.

The peculiar obligations resting on southern Christians were taken too lightly, Boyce believed, and part of the divine retribution for not evangelizing with sufficient love and zeal was the removal of the institution of slavery. However culturally, politically, and economically defined slavery was, Boyce knew that the religious dimension had infinitely greater importance than any of those transient and temporal matters. By now, he has changed his mind about slavery as an honorable arrangement for the benefit of melding an inferior race into a society dominated by the economic concerns of the Americanized Anglo-Europeans of the South. He is willing to concede the justness of Butler's lamentation about the insensitive cultural brutality of the slave system as well as the myth of racial superiority. He sees justness in the observation that some religions in particular and much about religion in general, even Christianity, is socially constructed. Boyce would see that as intrinsic to humanity's rebellion against God. But that the message of Christ's incarnation and atoning work and the operations of the Holy Spirit to bring about repentance from sin and faith in Jesus Christ—his commitment to the doctrines of grace and justification by faith—are only the results of social forces he did not nor would he ever embrace. These, Boyce remains convinced, are revealed from the mind and purpose of God by the Holy Spirit and will never change from one generation to another nor from one culture to another.

Central to everything in his life was his commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ. His particular gift in service of the gospel was the teaching of theology. This was present in his mind from the earliest days of his remembrance when he heard from the family pew the theologically

driven pastoral messages of Basil Manly Sr. and then William T. Brantly Sr. His study at Brown under Francis Wayland reinforced this, and his conversion under the preaching of Richard Fuller showed him the conversion power of coherent doctrine fervently proclaimed and applied. His experience as an editor of a denominational newspaper steeled his spirit for a life of theological controversy and his education at Princeton provided an elongated demonstration of the clarity and trans-sectarian applicability of the great doctrinal truths of reformed Christianity. His preaching experience at Columbia, South Carolina, followed by his teaching theology at Furman gave him an invincible conviction affirming the usefulness of theology, specifically Calvinistic theology, in the churches.

However Boyce's background might have predisposed him to elitism, his theological conviction and his zeal for the strength and purity of Baptist churches drove him to an unrelenting advocacy of theological education for Baptist preachers from every level of social standing, economic condition, and educational preparation—that is, among white southerners. The recurring chorus of every public message, the driving theme of every promotional speech, the intensified focus of every explanation of the seminary's goal had the theological curriculum, with systematic theology as the centerpiece, for its theme. Every preacher should get theological education in some way. Find an older and capable preacher to study with, get a few good books and master them, or go to seminary—but do it some how, and the best way is the seminary.

Boyce lived and breathed theological education. For the preacher it greatly transcended classical education in importance. If one must choose between them, choose theology. He used his influence to begin the school, he sought the stability of Confederate currency to salvage the endowment of the school, he used his personal finances as collateral to support the school, he ruined his health in moving the school to a more secure environment,

and he drove himself to death in assuring both the financial and theological stability of the school. When he died, the school formed the last audible utterance from his lips. From Pau, France, we learn

He was out of his head a great deal and in his wanderings his talk was mainly always of the Seminary. We would constantly catch the names of the different professors. The day before he died he was conscious for several hours but could not talk as his tongue was much swollen. He recognized us and pressed our hands and returned our kisses but did not attempt to talk. The English clergyman whom we called on to visit him, saw him for a few moments that morning and prayed and talked with him. Father said a good deal to him but it was impossible to understand what he was saying. He soon became unconscious remaining so until the end.⁶

Boyce overextended himself and further damaged his health in an effort to push his *Abstract of Systematic Theology* through publication in the year prior to his death. It embodied the systematic arrangement of biblical thought, a methodological witness in itself central to Boyce's understanding of truth. Beginning with a carefully developed defense of the knowledge of God and the apologetic credibility of divine revelation as fundamental to that knowledge, he showed how the Bible is in itself the locus of that revelation. Classic Reformed theology unfolds point by point with concise clarity, saturated with biblical proofs for every doctrine. His love affair with the doctrines of grace as defined within the Calvinistic stream of Particular Baptist life constitutes one of the leading features of his presentation of the ways of God with sinful humanity. These truths, however, are not mere abstractions, but all find their power and effect from their vital connection to the living Lord Jesus Christ and his present mediation and intercession built on his once-for-all work of reconciliation. To that christocentric focus we turn our attention.

IN CHRIST ALONE

The knowledge of God, the glory of God, and the scheme of redemption all radiate from the person and work of Jesus Christ, so taught Boyce. Furthermore, the true meaning and exemplar of our worship, our prayer, our ethic, our self-denial, our being in the world but not of the world are bound up in a robust grasp of the incarnation, that is, the true humanity of Christ. Biblical revelation culminates, and finds its most potent verification, in its explication of how Christ makes God known to us through his tabernacling among us for the purpose of redemption. In Boyce's 1870 *Baptist Quarterly* article entitled "The Doctrine of the Suffering Christ," Boyce makes the claim, "The Scripture doctrine of the Triune God lies at the foundation of that of Christ's sufferings."⁷ In an unusual but revealing use of this sentence in the *Abstract of Systematic Theology*, Boyce wrote, "The doctrine of the Trinity lies at the foundation of that of Christ's Person."⁸ He saw Christ's person in the incarnation as having become a historical phenomenon solely because of the necessity of redemptive suffering. In Christ one sees the glory of God in all its fullness; in him one sees the wisdom and power of God; in him, all the attributes are present, not only the fullness of divinity in bodily form, but in the redemptive act on the cross. The Father's character as well as his "voluntary" acts of mercy, grace, and lovingkindness find expression through the entire Christ event. The Spirit's peculiar operations of holy love and communication expressed naturally in eternity find economic expression in time through the work of Christ. An understanding, therefore, of Christ must begin with the biblical doctrine of the Trinity.

TRINITY

Boyce began the section on the Trinity by quoting the *Abstract of Principles*: "God is revealed to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, each with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature essence or being."⁹ He defended the

straightforward propositions that “The Father is God,” “This Son is God,” “The Holy Spirit is a Person,” and “The Holy Spirit is God.” Each of these declarations summarizes a conclusion derived from a synthesis of a large number of biblical passages spread widely through Scripture. Woven into the discussion, the consistent reality of the unity, as well as the simplicity, of God permeated every affirmation of separate personality for each person within the deity. In his catechism, Boyce summarized the doctrine for children with the question, “Does this imply that there is more than one God?” “No,” begins the answer, “the Bible teaches that the Father is God, that the Son is God, and that the Spirit is God, and yet that there is but one God.”¹⁰ His theology contains the more extended summary, “The divine nature is so possessed, by each of the persons in the Trinity, that neither has his own separate divine nature, but each subsists in one divine nature, common to the three.” Neither is the divine nature divided “in its relation through the nature to the person” for that would admit parts into the divine nature and contradict its simplicity and the biblical teaching that “there is but one God.”¹¹

The Scriptures teach everywhere the unity of God explicitly and emphatically. There can be no doubt that they reveal a God that is exclusively one. But their other statements, which we have been examining, should assure us that they also teach that there are three divine persons. It is this peculiar twofold teaching, which is expressed by the word “trinity.” The revelation to us, is not that of tritheism or three Gods; not of triplicity, which is threefoldness, and would involve composition, and be contrary to the simplicity of God; nor of mere manifestation of one person in three forms, which is opposed to the revealed individuality of the persons; but it is well expressed by the word trinity, which is declarative, not simply of threeness, but of three-oneness. That this word is not found in Scripture is no objection to it, when the doctrine, expressed by it, is so clearly set forth.¹²

The affirmation of tri-personality begs for some manner of distinguishing the respective persons in their eternal internal relations. Boyce responded in the framework of historic orthodoxy with an extended defense of the eternal generation of the Son and the eternal procession of the Spirit from the Father and the Son. These are particularly important for the coherence of Boyce’s argument concerning the character of redemption. The Redeemer must fully represent all the interests of the Godhead in his redemptive work; the Holy Spirit must know exhaustively the inner nature and eternal purpose of God and take delight in his communication of love and truth flowing from the Father to the Son and, reciprocally, back to the Father. Redemption, apart from the Trinitarian reality of eternal generation and eternal procession would not be the kind of redemption about which scripture speaks. In one sense, for Boyce, the entire doctrine of the Trinity, as well as the covenant of redemption, rested on the reality of eternal generation. Some ground rules, or “general statements,” therefore, must be presupposed in this discussion.

First, one must discuss this phenomenon in terms provided by the Bible. The biblical language must be seen as expressive of real relations divested of all that “belongs to human conditions, and imperfections” but consistent with that “eternity, and unity, of the nature of God, which exist even in his purposes towards all things which are without.”¹³ Second, these relations exist in the nature of God, that is, necessarily, and not contingently. They are positive revelations of what he is. Third, the relations must be eternal. Though the words “begotten” and “proceed” indicate temporal relations in human connections, so it is with every word that tells us something about God even in his external relation to the world. For correct understanding we seek to divest these of their connections to time, space, and partition. In the same way, this divestment of time and succession characterizes the attempt to perceive correctly God’s internal personal relations. Fourth,

the words must not be perceived so as to indicate any inferiority of essence from one person to the other. Of the one undivided divine essence three distinguishable persons partake, whose persons are defined and eternally exist in terms of relationships denominated by the words Father, Begotten Son, and Proceeding Holy Spirit.

ETERNAL GENERATION

In his early lectures as well as his later published text, Boyce gave both space and tightly reasoned theological energy to defending the doctrine of eternal generation. Earlier he had established the scriptural truth that the Son is God. He is expressly called “God;” he is called “Lord.” Though these titles sometime appear when their object clearly is not divine, “the manner in which they are applied to Christ, and the frequency of that application, become, along with the other evidences presented, an incontestable proof, that he, as well as the Father, is true God.”¹⁴ Jesus is an object of worship; he is equally honored with the Father, and knows the Father as no one else knows him. Boyce listed fourteen proofs of the deity of the Son including the biblical ascription to him of “all the incommunicable attributes of God.” Since the Son is God even as the Father is God, what is their relationship that preserves a single essence of deity but eternally distinguished persons? The answer is eternal generation.

Boyce’s attention to this issue had precedence in the history of Baptist theology. Notably, both Benjamin Keach and John Gill made strong defenses of the doctrine. They viewed it as a necessary corollary to both the doctrine of the Trinity and the eternal covenant of grace. Keach is particularly insistent on the analogy between the Father’s eternal generation of the Son and the arrangement within the eternal covenant by which the Father sends the Son.¹⁵ Gill concurred and also tied belief in the doctrine of the Trinity to the doctrine of eternal generation. “For my own part,” he preached, “could I be prevailed upon to part with this article of faith, I would at

once give up the doctrine of the trinity, as quite indefensible.” Paternity, filiation, and spiration as eternal, natural, and necessary distinctions within the Trinity all depend on the eternal generation of the Son, so insisted Gill.¹⁶ The Philadelphia Association, the confessional mother of the Charleston theological tradition from which came the Abstract of Principles, took seriously the doctrine of eternal generation. In 1743 the Association received recantations from two men, members of associated churches, who had “departed from the literal sense and meaning of that fundamental article in our Confession of faith, concerning the eternal generation and Sonship of Jesus Christ our Lord.” After reporting their recantations, an explanation of the means used for their recovery and the importance of this action was placed in the minutes. We “are glad,” they stated, “that God hath blessed means to convict the said parties of their sin and error; and herein we were *nemine contra dicente*, fully united to repel, and put a stop, as far as we may, unto the Arian, Socinian, and Antitrinitarian systems.” They had stiffened their resolve to give a clear testimony to the world “our joint belief of, and our resolution to maintain, the eternal and inconceivable generation of the second Person in the ever adorable Trinity.”¹⁷

John L. Dagg, who wrote one of the first texts used by Boyce, did not discuss the idea directly but introduced virtually every consideration surrounding the concept that Boyce used in his discussion. In contemplating some of Christ’s titles as they relate to his state of “Original Glory,” Dagg set the table for profitable development of the doctrine.

Why he is called the Son of God, is a question on which divines have differed. His miraculous conception, his mediatorial office, his resurrection from the dead, and his investiture with supreme dominion, have been severally assigned, as the reason of the title; but these appear rather to declare him to be the Son of God, or to belong to him because of that relation, than to constitute it. The phrases first-born, first-begotten, only-

begotten, seem to refer to the true ground of the name, Son of God: but what these signify, it is probably impossible to understand. The ideas of peculiar endearment, dignity, and heirship, which are attached to these terms, as used among men, may be supposed to belong to them, as applied to the Son of God; but all gross conceptions of their import, as if they were designed to convey to our minds the idea of derived existence, and the mode of that derivation, ought to be discarded as inconsistent with the perfection of Godhead. Some have considered the titles Christ, and Son of God, as equal and convertible; but the distinction in the use of them, as pointed out in our examination of the charges brought against the Redeemer, shows the error of this opinion. . . . Christ, or Messiah, is a title of office: but the phrase "Son of God," denotes, not the mere office, but the exalted nature which qualified for it.¹⁸

In addition, Boyce's more immediate theological mentors gave the doctrine a high priority in their discussion of the Trinity and Christology. Turretin discussed it in question twenty-nine and devotes thirty-one paragraphs to its defense. One can see with little difficulty the impact that Turretin's discussion had on Boyce's wording, ordering, and arguing. Out of numerous bits and pieces of such evidence, Turretin's discussion of the Son's generation being complete explained that "[t]he generation may well be said to be terminated by a termination of perfection, not by a termination of duration."¹⁹ Boyce worded it "Such an act must be ever continuing, and completed only in the sense of its being always perfect, though not ended."²⁰ Also, Boyce adopted a concept of Turretin on the relation between the nature and the will of the Father in his relation to the Son. Whereas Hodge says quite starkly, "It is by necessity of nature, and not by the will of the Father," Turretin preferred a more nuanced statement:

Necessary and voluntary may in a measure be distinguished in God as to our manner of conception, yet they are not really opposed. Hence the Father is said to have begotten the Son necessarily and voluntarily; necessarily because he begat by nature, as he is God by nature, but voluntarily because he begat not by coercion, but freely; not by an antecedent will, which denotes an act of willing (free outwardly), but by a concomitant, which denotes the natural faculty of willing in God; not by the liberty of indifference, but of spontaneity."²¹

Boyce, like Hodge, focused on the nature of God but also acknowledged that the relations of Father and Son are not in the absence of "will." In a way similar to Turretin, while staying close to Hodge, Boyce argued,

Though it is true that the Father wills to beget the Son, and the Father and Son will to send forth the Spirit; yet the will thus exercised, is not at mere good pleasure, but it results necessarily from the nature of God, that the Father should thus will the begetting, and the Father and the Son the sending forth. The will, thus exercised, is not like that of his purposes, in which God acts of free pleasure, . . . but like that by which he necessarily wills his own existence.²²

As in many cases Charles Hodge is given the largest amount of space in Boyce's quotations. On three separate issues, Boyce included quotes from Hodge of at least one paragraph.²³

Even with these powerful precedents and theological influences, Boyce gave original and fresh expression to many of the ideas and organized the discussion on the basis of his own peculiar emphasis. He continued to drive toward a vision of compelling coherence both in revelation and redemption that carried a convicting apologetic power.

Boyce did not share Dagg's shyness on speaking clearly about this issue. In his *Abstract of Sys-*

tematic Theology Boyce gave ten pages to it under the title “The Eternal Sonship of Christ.” In his 1861 recitation lecture, Boyce included forty-three responses on the doctrine of eternal generation following twenty on the Trinity. His second question on the Trinity set the stage for both discussions. “In what sense is God revealed to us as Father?” Boyce asked. The answer he provided is in words virtually the same as a paragraph in the *Abstract*:

Not merely in the general way in which he is the Father of all created beings & they his sons, nor in that in which he is the father of those who are his sons by adoption in Christ Jesus; but he is the Father as indicative of a relation between himself and another person whom the Scriptures call the “only begotten Son.”²⁴

His recitation further explored the Father/Son nomenclature in some detail with the purpose of showing its unique and eternal significance. He pointed to four different classes of Scriptures “which speak of God as the Father.” Those in which “Christ addresses God as Father,” those in which “Christ speaks of the Father as co-working with him,” those that represent the “Father, knowing and loving the Son,” and “that class in which He is spoken of as the Father giving and sending the Son.” He listed many Scriptures under each category. Only once, Boyce claimed, does Jesus use the address “Our Father,” but nearly fifty times he uses “My Father.” Apostolic language such as Paul’s in Eph 3:14 assumes uniqueness in the Father/Son dynamic within the Godhead: “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Passages that speak of God calling Jesus his beloved Son, that speak of his being begotten, and that indicate pre-existence in saying that the Son was in the bosom of the Father, or that the Father sent the Son, or gave the Son, or that the Father gave certain people to the Son before the foundation of the world give further weight to the idea of an eternal Father/Son

relationship. On that basis, he summarized the nature of Eternal generation as follows:

The scriptures make known to us the fact of the sonship of Christ, the fact that that sonship expresses the relation between the first and second person of the Trinity, that this sonship is expressive of nature, consequently it cannot be separated from the relations of the persons in the God-head. The whole godhead is possessed by the Father, the whole God-head is possessed by the Son, consequently the generation is not one of the godhead but one of the persons in the godhead. The explanation thus given of this doctrine is, that the Father begets the Son not as God but as a person communicating to him the whole Godhead, so that the Son is God equally as much as the Father is God, that this begetting is consistent with or in accordance with but is not the result of the will of the Father, else would the existence of the Son be a dependent existence, but as the result of a necessity arising out of the very nature of the God head, which necessity like God himself, having no beginning nor end, neither has the generation to which it gives rise beginning nor end; consequently the generation is eternal.²⁵

In *Abstract of Systematic Theology* Boyce summarized the evidence that Scripture affords for the relation of Father and Son to be both natural and eternal. Both paternity and filiation in God are not “mere names for something that does not exist, nor for some relation, different from that of father and son, to which these titles were first applied in connection with Christ’s creation, or birth, or resurrection, or exaltation.”²⁶ Boyce argued with conviction, taking the same position as Dagg, against those that see the title “Son of God” as being given in light of his offices assumed as mediator. Either given at birth or at resurrection or at his ascension, the title is synonymous with the offices he holds as the Christ, so some objectors contend. Boyce believed that such an

assertion had no evidence in the biblical text, but arose only negatively from resistance to the idea of eternal generation. The opposers commended scriptures such as Rom 1:4, Luke 1:35, and Acts 13:32, 33 to give biblical support to the view of sonship being an official status, but Boyce believed their exegesis to be contorted. When seen in their overall contextual thrust, such passages actually support natural and eternal sonship rather than official sonship.²⁷

Christ's sonship is the fountain of his deity like begetting is the foundation of continuing humanity. A human son, like his father, partakes, alike and equally, of the whole of human nature. Though the father bestows and the son partakes of the nature thus bestowed, nonetheless, the son possesses the nature as an undiminished substance. Even in created things, however, paternity and filiation are co-existent, for one cannot be a father when there is no son, nor a son in absence of a father. So with God; though the Father begets, his begetting is of the undiminished essence of deity and, therefore, eternal. If God is Father by nature, then the Son has always co-existed in the same nature. For this reason the Bible assigns to the Son as Son all the incommunicable attributes of deity (e.g., John 5:17, 18, 23, 26).

Priority and succession of events characterize the reality of begetting in temporal, created things. But in God neither beginning nor end, antecedent nor consequent, nor "succession of any kind" characterize his immanent operations. Generation, therefore, ever continues, did not originate and will not end, does not come in a single act or "at a definite moment in the divine nature," but ever is.²⁸

Boyce believed, "The tendency of not maintaining this doctrine is to a denial of the divinity of Christ & of the Trinity & leads to Unitarianism. We may not be thus far led away but those who follow us will if we do not hold to the doctrine."²⁹

Completing his view of personal relations within the Trinity, Boyce affirmed the doctrine of the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father

and the Son. Both the Son and the Spirit proceed from the Father's eternal and necessary will in some manner. The Son's manner of proceeding, or coming from, has abundant biblical witness designated as generation. The Spirit's proceeding remains more "difficult to interpret, and the nature of the relation thus indicated even more incomprehensible than that of the generation of the Son." Boyce believed that the term "procession" is especially appropriate for the Spirit, for the idea of outbreathing serves as an image of the relation between the Spirit and both the Father and the Son. He did not insist nearly as stringently on the procession of the Spirit from the Son as he did for the eternal generation of the Son. In fact, the Scripture leaves it so as "to forbid any positive statement about it." He does affirm, however, that "the preponderance of evidence is in favour of a procession from both Father and Son."³⁰

This double procession becomes a bit more important when the economy of salvation comes into view. Boyce believed that though equal in essence, one essence of deity, in personal relations within the Trinity eternally, subordination of mode of subsistence exists. The Father is of none neither generated nor proceeding, the Son is generated by the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceeds. If the Spirit is subordinated to the Father and the Son, and the Spirit proceeds, it stands to reason that he proceeds from the Father and the Son. This seems especially consistent with those Scriptures that speak of the Spirit as the Spirit of Jesus, or the Spirit of the Son, or Jesus' promise to send the Spirit. "In God," Boyce surmised, "it is probable that the official subordination is based upon that of the personal relations. It corresponds exactly with the relations of the person, from which has probably resulted their official subordination in works without, and especially in the work of redemption."³¹

For this reason, the Father sent the Son as the one representing the Father's glory in the interest of salvation. The Spirit, sent by the Father and the Son, effects in the elect those things purchased by

the Son in his meritorious redemptive operations. The Spirit, who is the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, takes the things of Christ, that he did in full obedience to the Father, and makes us new creations that we might cry to the Father and trust in the Son even as we are transformed, by the Lord the Spirit, from one degree of glory to another, into the image of Christ, who in his incarnation is the example of the true godliness to which we should aspire.³²

THE PERSON OF CHRIST

The incarnation of the Son of God constitutes the central event of revelation as well as redemption. The truthfulness of Scripture finds its most sublime and irrefutable point of coherence in this event and its centrality to all of Scripture. Also one finds the incarnate Son of God as the unique, and thus exclusive and necessary, person in whom redemption could occur. "It is well," Boyce remarked, "to see that the true doctrine as to the Saviour of man is not that of the New Testament only, but of the whole Bible." By proceeding from the Old to the New, "The unity of divine revelation will thus appear." The internal self-authentication of Scripture finds ultimate expression in its witness to redemption through the Christ. When the testimony of prophecy combines with the witness of the miracles in the ministry of Jesus, the authority "of the later revelation will be seen to rest, not upon these miracles alone, but also upon the concurrence of its teachings with the inspired truth already accepted by the Jews."³³

FULFILLED OLD TESTAMENT

Without the consistency of the Christ event with the Old Testament, no valid claim either to revelation or the credibility of the redemptive mission of Christ could be affirmed. Boyce set forth in broad strokes, therefore, "Christ in the Old Testament." He is the promised seed of the woman. The strictest grammatical interpretation of Genesis 3 and 4, Boyce argued, shows that not only did Eve "believe that Jehovah was to be the

Messiah, but that she expected his appearance in human form."³⁴ Christ also is the patriarchal seed promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to which Abraham gave witness in his confidence that "The Lord will provide." The Messiah would be the seed of David, a status that involved a multitude of expectations summarized by Boyce.

These references will suffice to show that David expected not only the perpetuity of the merely earthly kingdom, with its succession of monarchs of his family, but that he also looked in the same line of descent for a true appearance of Jehovah, whose reign in this human person would thus be universal, whose flesh would never see corruption, of whose kingdom there would be no end, whose power would be terrible and his wisdom and righteousness superhuman, to whom as his Lord, David would himself be subservient, who is already the begotten Son of God and can justly be called God, whose government would be especially spiritual, who, with the kingly, would combine a priestly office of peculiar character and origin, and yet whose sufferings would be intense, and these sufferings the foundation of the blessings of his people and of their devotion to God. Are not these the characteristics of the Christian idea of the Messiah as set forth in the New Testament? In whom, except in Jesus Christ, have these expectations been fulfilled? In what respect has he not met them fully?³⁵

The prophetic material promotes expectations of a Messiah born from a virgin, known as Immanuel, born in Bethlehem, the desire of nations, a special king, bearing a relation to God that warrants the attribution of divine names and functions. His sufferings will be substitutionary, unmerited but meritorious, and invincibly effectual, and in his work the Gentiles also will participate. Descriptions of the Old Testament "Angel of the Covenant" raise expectations even higher, for in this angel, the promised redeemer appears in some form, even before his birth in Bethlehem

in true human flesh. He was given divine names, identified with Jehovah, had divine attributes and authority ascribed to him, and received, willingly, divine worship. Glowingly and confidently Boyce summarized the Old Testament witness to Jesus the Christ, the Savior of men.

As the seed of the woman, he has utterly destroyed the power of the serpent, the great enemy of man. In him the day has come which Abraham foresaw and was glad. In him the Lion of Judah, the seed of David, appears as the King of kings, the Lord of lords, whose reign is universal, not over those living on earth only at any one time, but over all the living and the dead of this world, and indeed, of the whole universe. His untold sufferings have secured the happiness of his people and their devotion to God. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. His priesthood has neither beginning nor end. He is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, he ever liveth to make intercession for us. He hath made us kings and priests unto God. At his name every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. His flesh is indeed the tabernacle which is filled with the glory of Jehovah, in whom the ancient prophecy to Israel is fulfilled: "Behold your God!"³⁶

The increasing detail of the picture given by the Old Testament combined with the actual description of Jesus in the New Testament, his life, teachings, actions, claims, and his miracles, fit perfectly the pattern of authentication of revelation and truth established early and carried out consistently through Scripture. Though not understood clearly in the time of its being given in the Old Testament, its unfolding in Christ stamps it with clarity. This establishes "the unity of the doctrines of both Testaments" and gives "evidence of the inspiration of each in their testimony in common" to the doctrines foreshadowed in the former and "distinctly declared in the latter revelation."³⁷

JESUS, THE SON OF GOD

The prophecies distinctly lead to the expectation of a divine Messiah. Jesus, the Son of Mary, is God the Son. The following six responses appear as numbers 11-16 in Boyce's recitation.

11. What first proof of the divinity of this person? That class which to him divine attributes, powers, and wisdom.

12. What are the divine attributes thus ascribed? (a) self-existence Jo v.26. (b) Eternity Jo 1.3; Jo v.5, 24. Hebrews i.10-12 (from 102 Psalm) (c) Omnipotence Mt.xxviii.18. Lk xxi.15. (d) Omniscience Jo ii.24, 25. Jo xvi.30. Jo xxi. 17 (e) Omnipresence Mt. xviii.20. xxviii.20. Jo 3.13

13. What of Divine worship paid him. John v.23. Philippians 2.10. Hebrews 1.6. Mt. 2.2 Mt 9.18 Mt. xxv.25. Mt. xx.20 Mt.xiv.23. Lk xxiv.52. In Revelation the "Lamb of God" is spoken of as the object of worship in various ways.

14. What similarity of nature? Ans. His nature said to be equally incomprehensible with that of the Father Mt xi.27. Lk x.22.

15. What peculiar knowledge has the Son? He is said to know the Father as he is known by the Father. Jo x.15.

16. What class of passages is last mentioned. That class in which Christ has the titles of the Father and in which equality and identity with the Father are ascribed to Him. (Lord) I Cor ii.8. I Cor xiv.9. Rev. xvii.14. (God) John 1.1; John 20.28 acts xx.28. Romans ix.5 I Tim iii.16 (this passage thought probably to be interpolated) Titus 1.3 Heb. 1.8. I John v.20. Positive equality asserted between Father & son. Jo 5.18. Jon 10.32. Phil 2.6. Col 2.9 Col 1.15 Heb. 1.3.³⁸

In his catechism Boyce emphasizes the same points. "Was Christ merely a man? No; He was God also," is the first question and answer. "By what name is He called as such? The only Begotten son of God." "How is He described in Hebrews? As the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person." He points out that

the Father addresses the Son in terms of deity: "Unto the Son He says, 'Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever.'" Is he called God in any other place and does he allow himself to be addressed as such? "Yes," Boyce teaches the catechumen, "in the first Epistle of John, speaking of Him, it says, 'This is the true God' and Thomas said to him, 'My Lord and My God.'" "In what other ways does the Bible teach the Divinity of Christ? It ascribes to Him the possession of every perfection ascribed to God" such as "Omniscience, omnipresence and eternity of existence." "Is the work of creation ever ascribed to Him?" Boyce asked in the final question; "Yes; the Bible says all things were made by Him."³⁹ Surely such a being is God.

His *Baptist Quarterly* article asserted, "Another important fact taught in the word of God, is that in this incarnation and work the Son of God maintains his essential relations to the divine nature unchanged. He was therefore as truly God during his incarnation as before that event."⁴⁰ His subordination came in his official capacity as mediator. This was a subordination, not of essence, but of one divine person to another divine person. For the sake of the necessity of living in obedience, he yielded all his prerogatives of rule and authority "exclusively into the hands of the Father." Even with this voluntarily accepted position, the Scriptures teach clearly that he was God in his incarnation: "we have no evidence at all of Christ's divinity which is not presented with equal force of him while on earth."⁴¹ In this article Boyce modifies his earlier position in regard to Christ yielding his prerogatives of power and authority. "The constant workings of his divine power and energy, by which he is essentially, as God, always working with the Father, were indeed concealed." At times, however, both before the people and more often before his disciples, "the divinity shone through the veil which ordinarily concealed it." He allowed himself to be addressed in terms of divinity and claimed the prerogatives of divinity because "though a servant, he was still the Lord, having his relations to his divine

nature unimpaired, and entitled to the names, as he was also able to perform the acts and display the attributes of God."⁴² That Jesus maintained his deity unimpaired fit with the demands of his redemptive work.

It is not sufficient for us to know that the person who died for us was divine before he came into the world. The Scriptures assure us, and we need to comfort ourselves with the assurance, that he was equally divine when a babe in Bethlehem, when suffering upon the cross, when ascending from Olivet, and even now, while in human nature, he rules as Mediatorial King, or makes intercession with the Father as our great High Priest. We must even go beyond the idea of some kind of divinity, and recognize him as the unchangeable God, who was, and is, and ever shall be, the Almighty, the well-beloved Son of the Father, whom the Father always hears, and to whom all things have been entrusted, in order that the consummation of his glorious kingdom may be fully attained.⁴³

JESUS, THE SON OF MAN

The Redeemer must be not only God, but man. The true humanity of Christ probably astounded Boyce more than any other single idea in Scripture. The Son of God truly became incarnate, that is he took to himself all that humanity is in its flesh. He possessed a true human body, not just the phantom appearance of one, and a true human soul. That omnipotence took on weakness, that omniscience submitted to ignorance and the necessity of increase of knowledge by instruction, investigation, and deduction, and that omnipresence contracted itself to measurability, all for the sake of sinners, engaged the highest of Boyce's intellect and affections.

Christ's incarnation occurred in such a way "that he became man." This in no mere indwelling of a human person but such a transaction that the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, while retaining the divine nature unchanged, so

assumed human nature that “Christ also becomes truly man.” Boyce considered the historical heresies on this point, Docetism, Nestorianism, and Monophysitism, and rejected them decisively flooding his discussion with a deluge of scriptural evidences for the conclusions that Jesus had a true human body, Jesus had a true human soul.

All the essential elements he taught simply in his catechism under the title “Jesus Christ—A Man.” By the answers that Boyce developed we learn that Christ was a man in every respect; but he was without sin.” Also we find out that “He had a human body and soul and could not only suffer, but was also liable to temptation.” Satan did in fact tempt him and “tried in every way to make Him sin, but could not.” As a man Christ was subject to the law of God “and rendered perfect obedience to it.” He had bodily appetites and, therefore, “felt hunger and thirst, and was liable to all sinless infirmities.” Not only could he suffer in body as all humans, but his soul was liable to suffer. In his soul, in fact he “suffered most severely in fulfilling the work which He came to do.” Not only did his humanity allow him to die for us “but also to sympathize with us in our trials and temptations.”⁴⁴

Boyce’s lecture on Christian ethics set forth the humanity of Christ as the perfect exemplar of the ethical demands of the Christian faith. Considering that Christ has revealed God to us and has taught us that we are to be perfect, even as our heavenly Father is perfect, “we are able to take one step further forward in our discussion and show that the moral ethics of Christianity have been embodied in a perfect human example.” Just as Jesus possessed full divinity “he has also perfect humanity so that in his human nature he can set forth a perfect human example to us.” Apollinarianism, or Eutychianism, “the too intimate blending of his two natures” robs him of the character assigned him by Scripture as one “that can suffer, that can be tempted, that can have and does have human emotions, that is a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” His real humanity also qualified him to “make sacrifices in like manner as

we do” and to submit to the “influence of the Holy Spirit for guidance and wisdom.” He needed to “grow in favor with God and man” and draw “his replies to temptation from the same storehouse of God’s truth” and gain “strength in praying to God,” and exercise “faith and trust in Him.”⁴⁵

On these particular points of prayer from the Son of God, as well as his obvious faith and trust in the Father, Boyce concentrated in his sermon on “The Prayers of Christ.” The two-fold nature of Christ gives assurance that Christ neither was ignorant of what he did nor did he intend to deceive in any of his actions. The fact of his divine Sonship makes the prayer of his humanity much more startling and informative.

But here is the Son of God to whom the Scriptures ascribe the fullness of the nature of God, and even those attributes of self-existence and eternity which cannot be given to a creature, as well as the omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence which render impossible any need of aid or protection or of bestowing of blessing. The petitioner is here petitioning God, yet Himself is God. He earnestly prays as man, yet His prayer is to God and He is God. . . . Here it is the Son in his human nature that prays the Father.⁴⁶

Even given the mysterious reality of communication, petition, agreement, and other aspects of interpersonal relationship within the Trinity, Boyce found the prayer of Jesus not to partake of that kind of discourse. Instead, “these have all the marks of human prayer, and these marks enter into their essential elements.” His recorded prayers “are just such prayer as might be offered by a sinless perfect man, convinced of His dependence, conscious of His weakness, overwhelmed with His afflictions, resisting His temptations, and looking upward with earnest solicitude to One believed to be a very present help in time of trouble.” These prayers of Jesus have no other explanation apart from “the plain teaching of Scripture of the full humanity of our Lord.”⁴⁷

Boyce would say emphatically, in resisting any tendencies toward monophysitism, that whatever was “the character of the mysterious union of the human and divine natures in the person of the Son of God, His human nature was still left so unaffected by His divine relations that He was in all respects a man, though He was a sinless and perfect one.” Even at that he was “liable to all the sinless weakness and infirmities of human nature and to all the conditions of creaturely existence;” for one must not doubt that though eternally Son of God he had assumed, “a mere creation of God, . . . a mere creature . . . subject to the infirmities and conditions of creature existence” who depended on his “constant prayers to the Father for gracious aid and support that He might finish the work which it was His meat to do.”²⁴⁸

Not only do we observe him dependent upon prayer as a man, but we find all other relations to be developed as a man, a perfect man, would. In his two-fold nature, we find that he “no more truly reveals the perfect God than He does the perfect man.” He endures the contradictions of sinners. He submits to disgrace and scorn. He gives “his back to the smiters and his cheeks to them that pluck off the hair.” In oppression and affliction he opens not his mouth but is brought as “a lamb to the slaughter and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb so he opens not his mouth.” We find one in our nature that is the “the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross despising the shame and is set down at the right hand of God.” In his example of endurance as a human we are to “consider him lest we be wearied and faint” and in his train we must resist “unto blood, striving against sin.” In every respect he is the model to us of “obedience to the law of Christian ethics.”

Boyce continued to expand his applications of this idea by a massive recalling of biblical material that he considered clearly demonstrable of the perfect human exemplar of Christian ethics. In order to demonstrate the superiority of Jesus in his humanity to any other human, Boyce

delved into the study of comparative religions. “The newest form of infidelity,” Boyce noted, “is to attempt to show that other religions do present systems which thus compare with Christianity.” Among the latest of these Boyce found “a subtle objection” to his position in the “recent poem of Edwin Arnold called the Light of Asia of the great renunciation. It is intended to set forth the life and teachings of Gautama Prince of India and founder of Buddhism.” After pointing to the deeds of Gautama, the frivolous account of the nature of his knowledge, his social life, his attempts at coming to terms with the complexity of his culture, and his father’s attempt to shield him from it, Boyce compared this to Jesus. Jesus was “no self-wrapt, inward looking, world forgetting, pain despising, or piteously whining dried up, sanctimonious, secluded separatist from his fellow men.” He was neither ignorant of human life, detached from it, nor mystified by it, but “He lived in them and with them, as he lived for them, that they also might not only live for him, but in him and with him.” Boyce considered this “the highest conception possible of the divine teacher coming among men.” While humanity yearns for God, nevertheless, “it fears him as such.” Unlike heathenism, “Christianity presents not a god turned into a man, and that a sinful one, but the Son of God, remaining unchangeably God, yet becoming as truly man also, and in that manhood exhibiting the excellence of that character of God himself.” This space-time manifestation “is the basis of the ethical duties Jesus has revealed both in the divine and human natures, and set forth to mankind for their imitation.”²⁴⁹

JESUS’ TWO NATURES INHERE IN ONE PERSON

Jesus lived as a being with two distinct natures in one person. He affirmed that the foundation of his personhood was the person of the divine Son of God; given that, nevertheless, he could be called a human person and a divine person as long as one retains the reality that he is one person.

Jesus expressed both natures, deity and humanity, in personal relations through the eternal singular personhood of the Son of God because “the characteristics of personality . . . allow a most vital union of the two natures in his one person.”⁵⁰

This mysterious union of two natures in one person must be believed solely on the basis of the authority of Scripture and the necessity of showing that Scripture never contradicts itself. “So intimate is the union of the one person with two such distinct natures, “ Boyce reasoned, “that we cannot always separate what Christ says of himself as God, from what is said of himself as man.” While this may puzzle us in interpreting the word of God, it is vital for “harmonizing its statements.” Apart from this doctrine “the word of God cannot be made to agree with itself.” When one remembers, however, that though truly divine, Jesus also is human and “that because of the one person, all that he does in either nature may be as fully said to be done by him as though he had no other, we see the Scripture statements fall beautifully and regularly into their respective ranks, and in that two-fold unity, each receives its full force.”⁵¹

This astounding union of two natures in one person called from Boyce some of his most admirable passages of literary passion.

It is indeed the Son of God, who thus, in human soul, and body, is doing the work. But it is his human soul, not his divine nature, that thus pleads, and shrinks, and fears, and which still willingly submits, resolves to press on, is strengthened by God’s messenger, and again, confident in God, goes forward with sublime self-devotion to the cross. The distance, between this and God is infinite; this soul, the creature, the finite, the fearful, the mutable, the suffering, the trusting, the dying; and him, the creator, the infinite, the support of those who trust, the immutable, who cannot suffer, who cannot die. The acts due to the divine nature are marked, and characteristic, and so also are those of the human nature. While we look at the former, we

must say, this is God; none but he can perform such acts, can possess such attributes, can be called such names. Equally, while we look at the latter, we must say, this is man. None but man can thus suffer, can thus be limited, can thus pray.⁵²

At the end of his lecture on ethics, Boyce could not let the occasion pass without pressing his hearers to draw the right conclusion for their eternal welfare. “In view of the truth presented to day let me in conclusion ask—what think ye of Christ?” Boyce queried. “If his wisdom be mere human wisdom, is it not worthy of your acceptance?” he continued; “If his example be merely human, does it not demand your imitation? If his conception of God be mere philosophy is it not the noblest man has ever known?” But as glorious as Christ would be were he merely human, that is not the whole story. He cannot be merely human; he must be divine. As Nicodemus noted, “We know that thou art a teacher come from God for no man can do these miracles except God be with him.” The same must be true of these teachings, Boyce reasoned. “If so, seek him first in that salvation which though so simple is most important. And be not satisfied until it works out in you the full salvation of the ethical system.”⁵³

THE DESIGNATED, COVENANTAL BLOOD WORK OF CHRIST

THE ATONEMENT AND THE PERSON OF CHRIST

Boyce summarized the teachings of Christ’s person into twelve statements that included the following two: “This human nature was assumed because necessary to the work of salvation, it being impossible that a being only divine could undergo the experience necessary to redeem man.” “There was here, therefore, no participation of the divine nature in the suffering.” In a second summary of nine points, Boyce stated,

This one person was, therefore, able to suffer and bear the penalty of man's transgressions, because, being of man's nature, he could become man's representative, and could also endure such suffering as could be inflicted upon man; yet, being God, he could give a value to such suffering, which would make it an equivalent, not to one man's penalty, but to that of the whole race.⁵⁴

Boyce's catechism dealt with all the essential elements of how Christ's person fits the demands of salvation. After affirming Christ's voluntary offering of himself as a substitute, Boyce asked, "Did He suffer in both natures?" The answer: "No; in the human nature only. The Divine nature cannot suffer." The union of the divine and human was necessary, however, for "otherwise the human nature could not have sustained the sufferings it endured." In addition this union gave "value and efficacy to sufferings which, but for that union, would have been those of a mere creature." That could not have sufficed for "every creature is bound, as his own duty, to do and suffer all that God wills, and therefore can do nothing to secure merit or pardon for others." The value of the death of Christ, however, is that it delivers "those for whom he died . . . from the guilt and punishment of all their sins."⁵⁵

THE ATONEMENT AND THE OFFICES OF CHRIST

In the work of redemption, Christ served and fulfilled the offices of prophet, priest, and king. Boyce gave only four pages to this subject in his theology but stated clearly what is at stake in each of these offices. As prophet he revealed God, even before his incarnation through various means that resulted in the Old Testament Scriptures, but supremely in his incarnation through his actions that manifest the divine attributes, his instruction on all subjects, and his holy living. As Priest Christ made one offering, once for all, of himself, from which it gains its value, actually and effectively procuring forgiveness for "all for whom he

died." He continues his priesthood through his present intercession. He is qualified for this by his sinless humanity conjoined with undiminished deity in one person who is in federal union with his people in order to be their substitute. As King he rules as a "Mediatorial king," that is, one that rules not only with the manifestation of justice and power but of mercy and compassion. He rules in the church, over the world, over the universe, and has all angels, men, and demons subject to him.

In his catechism, Boyce covered all these ideas under the subject "The Mediator." A mediator, Boyce taught, is "One who leads persons who are at enmity to become friends, or to be reconciled to each other." Christ serves this capacity because "he comes between man and God, and reconciles them to each other." He does this in the offices of "Prophet, Priest and King." Christ is prophet in that he "speaks for God, and Christ is the Great Teacher of Divine Truth." The priest had the duty "to offer sacrifice for sin, and to pray to God to pardon the sinner. Christ is in both these respects the High Priest of His people." As king, Christ "reigns in the hearts of saints and angels," is "King of the Universe" because he is called King of kings and Lord of lords," a position to be acknowledged by all at the judgment day.

THE ATONEMENT, COVENANT BLESSINGS, AND A MISREPRESENTATION

Boyce's chapter on the atonement covers forty-six pages, the longest chapter in the *Abstract of Systematic Theology*. It precedes chapters on election, reprobation, outward and effectual calling, regeneration and conversion, repentance, faith, justification, adoption, sanctification, final perseverance of the saints, and four chapters concerning last things. Failure to see all these manifestations of grace in their relation to the atonement has led to puzzling misapprehensions of Boyce's view.

Walter Draughon's treatment of Boyce's view of the atonement isolated five problems. First, he views it as a rationalistic presentation that makes

God captive to his decrees and hinders his freedom in working on behalf of the world. "His sovereignty is separated from his grace."⁵⁶ It is hard to understand this objection as other than an intrinsic resistance to the necessity of penal substitution for the procurement of forgiveness. Grace flows abundantly from Christ's reconciling work and, rather than inhibit God's freedom, constitutes the most profound manifestation of the freeness of grace.

Second, Draughon maintains that "Boyce neglects the subjective aspect of faith in favor of the objective work of Christ on the cross." He depicts Boyce's view of faith as "an appendage to Christian experience, not an integral part of it."⁵⁷ What justifies this dichotomy and depiction in Draughon's perception is a mystery. Boyce clearly discussed faith both as an acceptance of the facts of the gospel and as trust in the person of Christ. Far removed from Draughon's criticism, Boyce wrote that faith is based on the "knowledge of this testimony as given by our consciences and the word of God." It is truth apprehended by the mind, but as a spiritual truth "so it is apprehended spiritually by the heart." Since this faith occurs in the heart, "it must be the act of a regenerated heart which alone is inclined to such belief as constitutes trust."⁵⁸

Three, Draughon indicates that Boyce's "emphasis on God's justice and law" led "to the neglect of mercy and love." Boyce, he said, failed to appreciate that God is both holy love as well as holy righteousness.⁵⁹ This presentation tells more about Draughon's views than Boyce's. Boyce maintains the right integration of love and justice throughout the theology and particularly in his discussion of the atonement. Because of the atonement, God's "electing love flows out freely" to his elect. "Christ did not die to make the Father love the Elect, but was given to die because of that love," and "Christ made full satisfaction to divine justice in order to render the exercise of love consistent with justice."⁶⁰ Boyce's five categories of love in God include a discussion of mercy, which "can be exercised only toward sinners." Then, arguing that one cannot emphasize one attribute at the expense of another, Boyce articulated, "When we say that this mercy must be exercised in accordance with the truth and justice of God, we say no more than is true of every attribute of God. No one can be exercised in such a way as to destroy another. Every one must be in harmony with the others."⁶¹ Draughon has

strangely mischaracterized Boyce.

Draughon's fourth objection has no more warrant than his first three. "Boyce's rational and objective atonement results in . . . the omission of the positive outcome of the atonement. . . . Man's fellowship with God suffers in his treatment."⁶² The positive outcome of the atonement includes, not just forgiveness of sin, but positive justification, our adoption as sons, all the operations of the Spirit by which sinners are regenerated, and sanctified, or as Boyce stated, "the new covenant made in Christ, is one which includes not only the promise of the blessings, but of the establishment in his people of the conditions upon which these blessings depend."⁶³

Draughon's fifth objection is too hackneyed, as well as demonstrably false, to be taken seriously. Boyce's view of "the sovereign will of God, the passivity of man, the objectivity of the atonement, and particular election produces an inadequate platform for missions and evangelism." In Boyce's view, according to Draughon, "the Great Commission has no reasonable basis."⁶⁴ Boyce's own preaching, his life, and his stated reasons for the founding of the Seminary, are sufficient refutation of this misrepresentation.

BOYCE'S ARGUMENT FOR PARTICULAR REDEMPTION

Boyce began his discussion of Christ's death as he did several other chapters. He discussed alternate viewpoints that, in his estimation, fell short of the full biblical presentation. He rejected the Socinian theory, moral influence theory, the Andover Seminary view, the Lutheran view, the Arminian view, and the view proposed by Andrew Fuller among others that the atonement is general in its nature but "limited in its application." To each of these Boyce gave a brief description and a point by point catena of objections. The Andover theology and the view of Fuller drew the most attention of these views. The Andover view was making rapid progress in American Christianity at the very time Boyce wrote, and he believed that "[i]t is opposed by Scripture in every particular involved in it."⁶⁵ He gave space to Fuller's view because it was the closest to his, yet distinct in important particulars, and was held by many Baptists in the South in the nineteenth century.

The view Boyce intended to defend he described as "that of Calvin and the churches which he established. It is the theory of the Regular Baptists of the past. No other pre-

vailed among those who have held distinctively Calvinistic Baptist sentiments until the days of Andrew Fuller.⁶⁶ He defined it by writing, "In the sufferings and death of Christ, he incurred the penalty of the sins of those whose substitute he was, so that he made a real satisfaction to the justice of God for the law which they had broken." Because of such a death, God now pardons all their sins, and being fully reconciled to them, his electing love flows out freely towards them.⁶⁷

Boyce divided his discussion of this definition into five affirmations. The first states that "the sufferings and death of Christ were a real atonement. By this he meant that it was truly a sacrifice, not just symbolic, that procured the actual remission of sins. It secured salvation, not just the means of salvation. Drawing his conclusion from Scriptures quoted from the Old Testament as well as the New, Boyce reaffirmed that Christ, by his blood, "procured pardon, peace, redemption and remission of sins for those whom he represented."

His second point declares, "In order to make this atonement Christ became the substitute of those whom he came to save." He demonstrated that the theme of substitution permeated the Scripture account of God's making a way to accept his people. He particularly concentrated on those passages that speak specifically of Christ's substitute in his people's stead: e.g., "Having become a curse for us;" "who gave himself for our sins;" "gave himself up for us;" "made to be sin on our behalf." Such substitution was possible and morally acceptable only because of the Christology discussed earlier. Christ possessed a human nature and a divine nature. He could, therefore, legitimately represent man and naturally infuse infinite value into his sacrifice. He came in just such mysterious union of nature because he was designated by the Father that "he might be the legal representative of his people and their covenant head."⁶⁸

Boyce's third assertion states, "In so offering himself, Christ actually bore the penalty of the transgression of those for whom he was substituted." The first two naturally involve this point

by inference, but the idea of such a direct bearing of penalty is affirmed by numerous Scriptures, Boyce shows. Those that speak of bearing iniquity mean "bear the penalty of iniquity." Passages throughout the Old Testament demonstrate this. The New Testament references to Christ's bearing sin, or iniquities, confirm it. Since Christ represented his people federally, their guilt was considered his and, thus, their punishment fell on him. "Thus," Boyce concluded, "it became fit that upon him God should inflict the penalty."⁶⁹

These three points taken together lead ineluctably to the fourth point, "he made ample satisfaction to the demands of the law, and to the justice of God." Since Christ substituted himself for the sinner, and bore their penalty, the satisfaction made was necessarily ample; "Christ could have made none that was not." Its ampleness is seen from the fact that the demands of the law have been fulfilled both negatively and positively, mercy and justice are reconciled, in the approval that the Father gave to Christ's work as verified in the resurrection, and in the statements made by "the sacred writers of the certainty of the salvation that is based upon it." The confidence with which sinners are urged to come before God, "with boldness unto the throne of grace," argues the ampleness of Christ's atonement. This ample atonement based on a satisfaction of the demands of the law, however, still operates as a purely gratuitous transaction from God to the sinner because it is founded in a pre-mundane electing love and is made to render such love consistent with the demands of justice.

Fifth, Christ's atoning act constituted an actual reconciliation. It did not bring into being merely a way of reconciliation but enacted reconciliation. The Scripture presents Christ's death as the actual time in which redemption, reconciliation, and the deliverance from wrath took place. It did not merely make a way if we would comply, but was done while we were still enemies and guaranteed our compliance.⁷⁰

What does all this mean about the extent of the

atonement. How can such certainty for a particular group of sinners be made consistent with the universal offer of the gospel and the Scriptures that speak of Christ's death for the world? One answer to this dilemma is to assert pure universalism. An effectual atonement made for the world results in the salvation of all men. Boyce listed seven objections to that answer including "The descriptions of the judgment day deny universal salvation," and "The Scripture doctrine of Hell prepared for the punishment of the wicked shows it to be untrue."⁷¹

Boyce listed five objections to the second answer that makes the atonement itself general but limited only by the belief or unbelief of persons. Boyce's objections included "It does not accord with justice that any should suffer for whom a substitute has actually borne the penalty and made full satisfaction."⁷²

The third answer is that the limitation of the atonement comes from divine purpose. God specifically intended it for the salvation of some and not of others. This view answers all the passages that indicate the limitation of the atonement's effects for a specified group of people. It does not, however, seem to satisfy the phenomenon of a universal offer nor the Scriptures that speak of Christ's death as for the world "and in such a way as to contrast the world at large with those who believe."⁷³ Boyce followed A. A. Hodge in providing an answer to this apparent difficulty. Hodge said that the sufficiency of the atonement is such that it could "accomplish the salvation of all men, however vast the number." What would save one man would save another for the "relations of all to the demands of the law are identical" and Christ's death has "removed all legal obstacles from the salvation of any and every man." He added that an incidental effect of the atonement is "to remove the legal impediments out of the way of all men, and render the salvation of every hearer of the gospel objectively possible." At the same time, the specific design in the death of Christ was the impetration of "the actual salvation of his own

people, in all the means, conditions, and stages of it, and render it infallibly certain."⁷⁴

Boyce added his own comments and affirmed that "Christ did actually die for the salvation of all, so that he might be called the Saviour of all; because his work is abundantly sufficient to secure the salvation of all who will put their faith in him." In this way the death of Christ opens the way for a sincere offer of the gospel to all who will accept the conditions he has laid down. In his chapter on final judgment Boyce asserted, "While the value of Christ's work is indeed ample for all, we are taught that its benefits are not bestowed upon all."⁷⁵ For the elect, however, Christ made, not a possible, but an actual salvation for he has "obtained for them those gracious influences by which they will be led to comply with those conditions."⁷⁶

He believed his final formulation conformed to the nature of the atonement as described earlier and made room for the elements of universal provision and offer indicated by many scriptures.

A Puzzled Observation

The reader may be excused if he is somewhat puzzled by Boyce's closing part of the discussion on atonement. It takes a turn that has every appearance of inconsistency with his earlier argument. He was insistent that the atonement did not render salvation possible, but absolutely procured it. Christ made a real sacrifice, was a real substitute, actually bore the penalty of sin so that nothing legal stands in the way of salvation, accomplished reconciliation of God to man, and thus procured all the means for the elect to be brought to forgiveness and justification. Nothing about his description made any gesture of congeniality toward a theoretical atonement, a mere pathway cleared to be taken at the discretion of the sinner. That work of Christ which guarantees salvation, according to Boyce, and opens the floodgates of grace, including the effectuality of all means, was Christ's becoming a curse for us, his obedience to take on himself the demands of

the Law against us and removing its just penalty of condemnation.

The reader might well ask, then, how is it possible under Boyce's discussion of the nature of the atonement for him to write finally of a "means of reconciliation for all men, which removed every legal obstacle to their salvation" without its being effectual. They did not comply with the conditions, he answered. But compliance with the conditions is a blessing procured in a real reconciliation; forgiveness must come to all those for whom the legal obstacles have been removed. To conclude otherwise radically changes the nature of the atonement to something other than what Boyce described earlier. The reader might conclude, and this writer would concur, that Boyce has equivocated severely on his definition of atonement. It would have been much better to have found a consistent hermeneutic for the passages that speak of universal provision and offer, than to have become confusingly inconsistent on the doctrine upon which he desired the utmost clarity.

In spite of that unfortunate inconsistency, one can still ponder with pleasure the exhilarating magnitude of his description of the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Man who alone can save us.

CONCLUDING REFLECTION

As students, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary give attention to the remarkable continuity of theological education in this institution, a profound exclamation of gratitude for the life and theology of J. P. Boyce should be among the most dominant themes of the recognition. A man with one ounce less of transparent love for divine truth and confident perseverance could not have seen the idea through to its completion. Tenacity was essential, and Boyce had it. In addition, the vision of theological education in Boyce's head focused on the adjective—theological. Baptists as a denomination would not survive, in Boyce's

view, apart from the perpetuation of their robust and edifying doctrinal position. This article has explored a portion of that. His was a biblically-founded, grace-infused, God-intoxicated, and Christ-centered theology. This article has highlighted Christ-centeredness for his thought draws its cohering energy from the person and work of Christ. This foundation has withstood many an assault on the superstructure and has provided support for important periods of recovery. As we remember the blessings connected with the 150 years of Southern Seminary, may we do so with the full recognition that "our hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness."

ENDNOTES

¹This article combines material that is found in the upcoming biography of James Petigru Boyce written by Tom Nettles to be published by Presbyterian & Reformed in 2009.

²Brooks Holifield, *The Gentlemen Theologians: American Theology in Southern Culture 1795-1860* (Durham: Duke University, 1978), 218.

³Lizzie Boyce, "Stray Recollections." This is a handwritten notebook by Boyce's daughters that covers their observations of their father's relation to a variety of subjects. John A. Broadus suggested that they write such a notebook. It is found in the archives of the James P. Boyce Centennial Library on the campus of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

⁴John A. Broadus, *Memoir of James Petigru Boyce* (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1893; repr., Birmingham, AL: Solid Ground, 2004), 209f.

⁵Jon Butler, "Slavery and the African Spiritual Holocaust," in *Awash in a Sea of Faith* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1990), 129-63.

⁶Lizzie Boyce, "Stray Recollections."

⁷J. P. Boyce, "The Doctrine of the Suffering Christ," *Baptist Quarterly* 4 (October 1870): 386.

⁸J. P. Boyce, *Abstract of Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1887), 272.

⁹*Ibid.*, 125.

¹⁰J. P. Boyce, "A Brief Catechism of Bible Doctrine," in

- Teaching Truth, Training Hearts* (ed. Tom J. Nettles; Amityville, NY: Calvary, 1998), 170.
- ¹¹Boyce, *Abstract*, 135, 136.
- ¹²*Ibid.*, 136.
- ¹³*Ibid.*, 137.
- ¹⁴*Ibid.*, 127.
- ¹⁵Benjamin Keach, *The Everlasting Covenant, A Sweet Cordial for a Drooping Soul* (London: printed for H. Barnard, 1693), 24.
- ¹⁶John Gill, *A Collection of Sermons and Tracts* (2 vols.; London: George Keith, 1773), 2:56, 57. See also John Gill, *The Doctrine of the Trinity Stated and Vindicated* (London: George Keith, 1752), 150; and the entire chapter entitled "A Dissertation on the Eternal Sonship of Christ," in *A Collection of Sermons and Tracts*, 2:534-64.
- ¹⁷*Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1851), 47, 48.
- ¹⁸John L. Dagg, *Manual of Theology* (Charleston: The Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1857), 203-04.
- ¹⁹Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* (trans. George Musgrave Giger; ed. James T. Denison; 3 vols; Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1992-97), 1:294.
- ²⁰Boyce, *Abstract*, 144.
- ²¹Turretin, 1:301.
- ²²Boyce, *Abstract*, 138.
- ²³*Ibid.*, 144, 145, 147f. Boyce quotes from Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (3 vols.; New York: Charles Scribner and Company, 1872) 1:474-476. Hodge's discussion covers pages 468-477.
- ²⁴J. P. Boyce, "Questions for recitation" in a theological notebook taken by William Harrison Williams at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, October 1861. Course in Systematic Theology taught by James P. Boyce.
- ²⁵*Ibid.*, 105, 106.
- ²⁶Boyce, *Abstract*, 142.
- ²⁷*Ibid.*, 144-49.
- ²⁸*Ibid.*, 143.
- ²⁹Boyce, "Questions for recitation," 112.
- ³⁰Boyce, *Abstract*, 152.
- ³¹*Ibid.*, 154-55.
- ³²*Ibid.*, 162-66.
- ³³*Ibid.*, 258.
- ³⁴*Ibid.*, 261.
- ³⁵*Ibid.*, 264.
- ³⁶*Ibid.*, 271.
- ³⁷*Ibid.*
- ³⁸Boyce, "Questions for recitation," 90, 91.
- ³⁹Boyce, "Catechism," 169-70.
- ⁴⁰Boyce, "The Doctrine of the Suffering Christ," 389.
- ⁴¹Boyce, *Abstract*, 274.
- ⁴²*Ibid.*, 275.
- ⁴³*Ibid.*, 275-76.
- ⁴⁴Boyce, "Catechism," 168-69.
- ⁴⁵Boyce, *The Christian Ethical System*, handwritten manuscript in the Archives of the J. P. Boyce Memorial Library at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.
- ⁴⁶Timothy George, ed., *James Petigru Boyce: Selected Writings* (Nashville: Broadman, 1989), 99.
- ⁴⁷*Ibid.*
- ⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 100.
- ⁴⁹Boyce, *Ethical System*.
- ⁵⁰Boyce, *Abstract*, 289.
- ⁵¹*Ibid.*, 288.
- ⁵²*Ibid.*, 284.
- ⁵³Boyce, *Ethical System*.
- ⁵⁴Boyce, *Abstract*, 289, 291.
- ⁵⁵Boyce, "Catechism," 172f.
- ⁵⁶William 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), 237.
- ⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 238.
- ⁵⁸Boyce, *Abstract*, 386.
- ⁵⁹Draughon, "A Critical Evaluation," 238f.
- ⁶⁰Boyce, *Abstract*, 317, 332f.
- ⁶¹*Ibid.*, 96.
- ⁶²Draughon, "A Critical Evaluation," 239.
- ⁶³Boyce, *Abstract*, 435.
- ⁶⁴Draughon, "A Critical Evaluation," 239.
- ⁶⁵Boyce, *Abstract*, 310.
- ⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 317.

⁶⁷Ibid., 317.

⁶⁸Ibid., 325.

⁶⁹Ibid., 328.

⁷⁰Ibid. 333f.

⁷¹Ibid. 336.

⁷²Ibid., 337.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Ibid. 338f. Boyce quotes from A. A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology* (rev., enl. ed.; New York: Robert Carter and Bros, 1879), 416, 417.

⁷⁵Ibid., 485.

⁷⁶Ibid., 340.