

060 BRYCE, JOHN – [REV. JOHN BRYCE]

Publisher

Richmond

Publisher at Richmond of a religious tract printed in Baltimore on infant salvation (1815).

John Bryce (sometimes spelled Brice) was a Baptist minister who practiced law all of his adult life, a seemingly disjointed pairing. Yet it is evident that his legal vocation supported his religious avocation; it was a portable skill that sustained him through residences in four states and eight parishes.

Born in 1784 in Goochland County, west of Richmond, Bryce was a practicing attorney with respectable Episcopalian credentials when he encountered the Rev. Andrew Broaddus; that elder's preaching brought Bryce into the Baptist faith in about 1801. By 1810, he resided in Richmond, practicing law and serving as assistant pastor to Rev. John Courtney at the city's First Baptist Church. Bryce held that post until 1822 with only a brief interruption when he was called to military service during the War of 1812 – as a chaplain.

During the war, Bryce published the one imprint reliably credited to him. It was an amalgam of two English treatises on the relationship of baptism and salvation in infants, prefaced by a circular letter from the Charlestown (S.C.) Baptist Association endorsing the doctrine set forth in those tracts: infant baptism guaranteed a child's salvation while adult baptism required confession for one's salvation. Evidently, Bryce had the work printed in Baltimore by Joseph Robinson while posted there as a result of the British invasion of the Chesapeake in 1814. The imprint recorded that it was published in Richmond, meaning that Bryce intended to distribute his imprint in Virginia on his return there, and did just that.

Bryce finally broke free from his Richmond base in 1822, largely for financial reasons, or so he then claimed. He moved to a legal practice and a pulpit in Fredericksburg (1822-27) with a brief sojourn to Alexandria in 1824. Bryce then struck out for greener pastures in Kentucky (Georgetown, 1827-32) and Indiana (Crawfordsville, 1832-43). In 1843, President John Tyler, a friend and confidante from his Virginia days, dispatched Bryce to Shreveport, Louisiana, to oversee the collection of customs duties on imports from the new Republic of Texas; there he evidently served as the president's eyes-and-ears during the following annexation crisis. Bryce found no Baptist congregations in that frontier neighborhood, and so founded Shreveport's first in 1844, serving as its pastor until 1851, and aiding in the founding of others. He was also elected that town's mayor in 1849. But by 1851, the sixty-seven year-old Bryce wanted a less-demanding situation, and so returned to a pulpit in Kentucky (Henderson, 1851-62). There he died, in the company of his fifth wife, in December 1864.

Personal Data

Born:	May 31	1784	Goochland County, Virginia, ,
Married [1]:	June 8	1805	Ann Gordon @ Goochland County, Virginia.
Married [2]:	June 25	1811	Sophia McDaniel @ Richmond, Virginia.
Married [3]:	---	1821	Louisa S. B. Care @ Port Royal, Virginia.

Married [4]: Dec. 6 1823 Lucinda I. Norris @ Fairfax County, Virginia.
Married [5]: ??? 1847 Unrecorded in Shreveport, Louisiana
Died: July 26 1864 Henderson, Henderson County, Kentucky
Children: At least three, likely more: John (b. 1816), James (b. 1819), Sarah
(c. 1822).

Sources: Imprints (S/S 34709 & 34998); Cathcart, *Baptist Encyclopedia* (from which all other published accounts are cribbed); Tupper, *First Baptist Church of Richmond*; genealogical data from family charts posted on USGenWeb.com (August 2012).