

A Brief Biography of

C. D. Cole

By Ben Stratton

Claude D. Cole was born in Webster County, Kentucky in the small town of Lisman on November 12, 1885. He was the son of Sidney Cole. He graduated from Dixon High School in Webster County. At the age of sixteen, Cole moved to neighboring Hopkins County to work as a telegraph operator for the L&N railroad in the town of Morton's Gap. He also worked as a bookkeeper for the Kington Coal Company and for a time was associated with the Planter Bank at Morton's Gap.

In 1907 Cole married Miss Roxie Sisk and this union was blessed with one son, Winfrey D. Cole. Mrs Roxi Cole died in 1933 and in 1934 Cole married Miss Minnie Kington.

While working in Morton's Gap, Cole began attending the Disciples of Christ Church. Though he was unconverted at the time, the Christian Church recognized his intellect and made him their Sunday School Superintendent. However, a couple years later he was saved and was baptized into the membership of the Morton's Gap Baptist Church. His first job

there was janitor, but he was soon teaching Sunday School as well.

In 1912 Cole surrendered to the ministry. His first sermon was on Easter Sunday of that year. He was ordained to the gospel ministry in 1913 and his first pastorate was the Morton's Gap Baptist Church. While pastoring this church, Cole helped to organize the Nebo Baptist Church and also served as the pastor of the Corinth, Slaughters, and White Plains Baptist Churches, all in the area. He remained the pastor of the Morton's Gap Baptist Church until 1930, when he resigned to move to Florida to pastor the Titusville Baptist Church. He would also pastor Baptist churches in Plant City and Orlando, Florida. In 1943 Cole moved back to Kentucky to again pastor the Morton's Gap Baptist Church, where he remained until 1953.

During his pastorate at Morton's Gap, Cole was often involved in controversy. The Morton's Gap Baptist Church was a member of the Little Bethel Baptist Association, which included Southern Missionary Baptist Churches in Webster and Hopkins County. During the 1920's this association was deeply divided over the issue of Calvinism. E. G. Sisk was pastoring the Victory Baptist Church in Providence in Webster County and was a leading preacher in the association. While Cole and Sisk were in basic agreement on Landmark Baptist ecclesiology, they were sharply divided over sotoriology. In 1924 Sisk authored the book "Sixty-Five Errors of Unconditional Election." The controversy heated up in 1925 when H. Boyce Taylor, the famous pastor of the First Baptist Church of Murray, Kentucky and Sisk held a four-day debate in Providence on the subject of unconditional election. The next year, Cole, together with Benjamin Connaway and L.M. Winstead organized the Old Bethel Baptist Association. Seven churches pulled out of the Little Bethel Baptist Association to join this new association, including the Morton's Gap Baptist

Church. The controversy between the two associations continued as the Old Bethel churches distributed a sermon on unconditional election by Charles Spurgeon and other Calvinistic literature throughout the area. Yet by 1939 the Old Bethel Baptist Association had shrunk to three churches and the next year it dissolved with all seven original churches eventually rejoining the Little Bethel Baptist Association.

Cole also had some controversy with the famous Calvinist scholar, A.W. Pink. The two men had gotten to know each other through H. Boyce Taylor of Murray, where both men had spoken in Taylor's Annual Bible Institutes. In May of 1929, Pink and his wife moved to Morton's Gap and joined the Baptist Church there. Pink had hoped to work on his periodical "Studies in the Scriptures," have a Bible Conference and evangelistic ministry in the area, and be a fellow helper to Cole. However, within less than a year, the friendship between Pink and Cole had dissolved. During one of the services at Morton's Gap, Pink and his wife got up during Cole's sermon and left the church. Though the Morton's Gap Baptist Church had over a hundred active members, Pink announced that there were only eight or nine saved members of the congregation and Cole was not one of them. In May of 1930, Pink moved to Glendale, California.

In 1954, Cole moved to Toronto, Canada to teach at the Toronto Baptist Seminary. This school was associated with the Jarvis Street Baptist Church and its famous pastor T. T. Shields. Cole was soon made Dean of the seminary. During this time, many of Cole's articles regularly appeared in *The Gospel Witness*, the newspaper of the Jarvis Street Baptist Church. Even after he moved back to Kentucky two years later, Cole would often return to Canada to give lectures at the seminary. One student of the seminary during this time remembers that Cole would always bring another Baptist preacher from Kentucky with him and that he would always

pass out copies of the "Trail of Blood" by J.M. Carroll to the students.

Cole was a prolific writer, authoring at least eight books. These include "Definitions of Doctrine," Volume I, II, and III, "Lectures in Bible Theology," "Eternal Punishment," "Doctrine of Election," "Divine Order of the Sexes," and "Heavenly Hope." Of these his most famous works are his "Definitions of Doctrine" series. Volume I was written while Cole was pastoring in Florida. He wrote a series of articles on the nature and attributes of God for the Florida Baptist Witness newspaper which was then edited by E. D. Solomon. There was such a wide interest in these articles, that Cole put them into book form in 1945. In February 1968, Cole published "Definitions of Doctrine, Volume II" which dwelt with sin, salvation, and service. At this same time, Cole had begun work on Volume III which dwelt with the New Testament Church. Cole died before completely finishing this book, but it was published after his death. Thankfully all of Cole's writings remain in print by the Bryan Station Baptist Church of Lexington, Kentucky. They would be an excellent addition to any Christian's library.

In September of 1956 Cole moved back to Kentucky. He joined the First Baptist Church of Madisonville in Hopkins County and was made Minister of Enlistment Visitation. Harold D. Tallant was the pastor of the church at this time. Cole served in this position until March of 1962 when he was made Minister Emeritus of the church. During these years Cole also served as interim pastor of the Park Avenue Baptist Church in Madisonville and the First Baptist Church of Providence. In July of 1963, Tallent resigned as pastor of First Baptist Church of Madisonville to accept the pastorate of the First Baptist Church, Daytona Beach, Florida. The next month the Madisonville congregation asked Cole to serve as interim pastor of church during their search for a pastor. Cole served

in this position from August, 1963 to June 1964. Cole remained a member of this congregation until his death four years later. On March 26, 1968 he suffered a heart attack while reading his recently published book "Definitions of Doctrines, Volume II." Cole had just received the book in the mail that very morning.

His funeral sermon was preached by Harold J. Purdy, the pastor of the First Baptist Church of Madisonville. C. D. Cole was buried in the Madisonville City cemetery in-between his two wives.