

Lord adds (gives increase) to the church (Acts 2:47; I Cor. 3:7). Jesus did not say to baptize everyone in the world, He said to preach belief and baptism to the whole world (Mk. 16:15-16). While the world (the lost of the world) is responsible to be baptized for remission of sins, the Lord did not place the burden on His church to *force* people into the baptistry. If so, where? **We will not fellowship those who teach baptism is not for the remission of sins, while Cope does.** There's the difference. The Bible teaches we are to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them (Eph. 5:11). If preaching what the Lord said to preach makes the church small, so be it. If preaching what the Lord said to preach makes the church larger in one geographical area of the country than another, so be it. Our duty is to obey Jesus and preach the gospel in its purity, leaving the response up to the hearers. It is their choice, not ours. We dare not do as Cope and others who would force the circle to a different size than the Lord authorizes it to be. We dare not seek to lower the walls of the kingdom Christ has built under the pretense of, *"we're returning to our wonderful roots."* It's a lie, brethren, and no lie is of the truth.

**Cope:** *"Nor would I bury my head in the sand and pretend that everyone likes what's been happening in Churches of Christ."* **My Comments:** Cope **knows** that his teaching of unity in diversity is unacceptable to many congregations of the Lord's people. Cope and his liberal cohort, Shelly, know the truth of the gospel but are now (through *Wineskins*) perverting it. How do you know this, you say? By their fruits. Jesus said, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits" (Matt. 7:15-16). Brother **Marshall Keeble**, who baptized thousands during his preaching work, was right when he said to the church of yesteryear that **we are fruit-inspectors**. Many times at the end of his debates brother Keeble would baptize his opponent. God's Word commands a "sharp rebuke" to "gainsayers" and teaches that their mouths are to be stopped. This the case since they are guilty of teaching things which they ought not for filthy lucre sake (Tit. 1:11, 13). In a day when many are seeking to turn the Lord's church into nothing more than a denomination, consider this tract a minute, small, sincere attempt in obeying Titus 1:13 (rebuke them sharply). **Many times the preaching of the pure gospel without fear or favor produces little churches with big men, as opposed to big churches with little men which the social gospel produces.**

Is the church in an identity crisis? The **Lord's** church is not in an identity crisis. Those today who preach the simple gospel of Christ are not in an identity crisis. Those who advocate to speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent are not in an identity crisis. Those who advocate the one faith, one body, one baptism of Ephesians 4:1-6 are not in an identity crisis. But some men today who are in positions of influence such as Cope and Shelly are trying desperately to tell us that we are in an identity crisis—so that they will be able to dictate to us our identity. However, **their image of the church is theirs, not the Lord's**. Many congregations of the Lord today are discovering that Shelly's and Cope's identity of the church is that of a church which teaches that one does not need to believe that baptism is for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), that unity in diversity is acceptable (I Cor. 1:10), and that "believers" are those who possess faith only (James 2:24). In short, their view of the identity of the church is that the church may fellowship denominationalism (man-made religion, Mt. 15:13-14). For these editors to preach that the church is presently experiencing an identity crisis is to imply that we cannot presently preach the true of the identity of the church to a lost person until we allow Cope and Shelly to define that church for us. **Let us determine to reject the arrogance of heretics who are presently dividing the body of Christ across the country today in their attempt to restructure the church in another non-unique denomination (Titus 3:10).** Let us determine as members of the church of Christ that we will hold firm to Jesus **and his doctrine** during this period of on-going apostasy (Acts 8:35; 2 Jn. 9-11). Let us determine to contribute to the congregation where we worship the attitude that we want to remain faithful to the old paths. Let us determine that, though the winds of false doctrines and liberalism are blowing to and fro, we shall not be moved. Let us determine that we will continue to respect the authority of God's Word. Only then can we make the church where we are, the salt to the earth and a city set on a hill that cannot be hid. (Matthew 5:13-16). ■

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# Is The Lord's Church In An Identity Crisis?



*A Message For Members Of  
The Church Of Christ*

By Gary L. Grizzell