Nobody likes a wise guy.

Critics often fall into that category. Artists—whether they be painter, writers, actors, directors, sculptors, or architects—depend on satisfactory critical reviews for their bread and butter. Unflattering reviews can end an artist’s career. So nobody likes a critic who is just a wise guy. But a critic who protects the public from spending its money on "flops"—that’s another function. The same goes for consumer advocates such as Ralph Nader and David Horowitz, and for the various sports commissions. The former help the public negotiate the promises and pitfalls of the marketplace; the latter serve as a check on the personal ambitions of celebrity athletes.

We have critics to help us identify false (or, at least, substandard) art, consumer advocates to help us recognize false advertising, and sports commissions to maintain the integrity of the game. But where are the “laity advocates” who help folks spot false prophets? Are we suggesting by our silences that our arts, and sports are worth more than our eternal souls?

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As I said, nobody wants to sit next to the obnoxious fellow who finds his niche in the world by blowing the whistle on his brothers and sisters. After all, none of us has all the answers. But isn’t there another extreme? One in which charlatans and outright heretics are allowed to pass for orthodox, evangelical spokesmen?

Trinity Broadcasting Network’s president, Paul Crouch, has repeatedly mocked those who would confront false teachers. During a "Praise-A-Thon," Crouch stated: "There are those who spend a lifetime we call them apologists—they spend their whole lives apologizing for the Scripture. They spend their whole lifetime defending the orthodoxy of the doctrines of the church and, as I said a while ago, what is orthodox to them is what is in agreement with their opinion of what the Bible says...You can spend a lifetime gazing at the orthodoxy of the church and let a world go straight to hell and never heard the message of Jesus Christ."

It is worth arguing that the struggle for orthodoxy is the struggle for the authentic message of Jesus Christ” that will, in fact, save those who placed their confidence in it. It is worth arguing that by ignoring the orthodoxy of the message being preached by those who call themselves Christians, we are, in fact, assisting in a delusion that results in the very loss about which Crouch and the "faith teachers" say they are concerned.

"But," says Earl Paulk, defending himself, "a prophet is not to be judged." And elsewhere one hears the warning "Touch not the Lord’s anointed!"

Is that really what God commands? Consider the words of the book of Deuteronomy: "If a prophet...appears among you and announces to you a miraculous sign or wonder and through it leads the people astray, "you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. The lord your God is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul." As for the prophet? "That prophet or dreamer must be put to death" (Deuteronomy 13:1-5).

True, you might say, but we live in the New Covenant era and do not put people to death for heresy. Indeed we do not, but nevertheless the biblical evidence suggests that only an insecure prophet would try to claim that the prophets are beyond the judgment of the people of God. Throughout the Old Testament, and not just in the book of Deuteronomy, believers are called upon to test the prophets. And in the new testament Jesus warns, "watch out for false prophets" (Matthew 7:15). Elsewhere He cautions, "False Christs and false prophets will appear” (Matthew 24:24). John commands, "Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). Whenever someone claiming to be a prophet announces, “A prophet cannot be judged,” warning lights should flash!

Christians should be concerned ultimately not with air-conditioned dog houses or sexual dalliances but with the REAL scandal: heresy. Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, "Tell me what a person believes and I’ll tell you what he’ll do." Theology and ethics are inextricably bound together. Yet under the supposed banner of unity, we have harbored enemy ships as long as they flew our flag. That policy must change. Tolerating enemies of the historic Christian faith as though they were our brethren is not love, but adultery. The substance of the faith (found only in the Bible) is the only basis for unity.

Those who embrace the apostolic
urged not to despise God's mercy but call out, believe in your heart the God raised him and to believe in Him. God's Spirit lives in us to sanctify us to live a more holy life, and to believe in Him. God's Spirit lives in us to sanctify us to live a more holy life, and to believe in Him.

The Gospel in Brief

There is one, and only one, eternal, true, holy God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Matt 28:19). He created everything by His word. God has told us the truth about Himself in the Bible, which He commands us to obey. God is compassionate and just to all. God is pure and Holy; sin is destroyed in His presence (Numbers 14:19). However, we have all sinned, falling short in the evil we do, and the good we fail to do. Yet our problem is not just what we do, but also what we are: we are selfish, corrupt, and estranged from God. Because God is just, He will punish sin impartially, yet God still bestows His love to all men. So our Savior, Jesus, the only begotten Son of God (the God-man, John 1:14), was graciously sent to suffer and die on the cross for our sins and to purify us from all unrighteousness by the sacrifice of His begotten Son of God (the God-man, John 1:14), was graciously sent to suffer and die on the cross for our sins and to purify us from all unrighteousness by the sacrifice of His all unrighteousness by the sacrifice of His all unrighteousness by the sacrifice of His all unrighteousness by the sacrifice of His all unrighteousness by the sacrifice of His salvation to everyone that believeth" (Phil. 1:11), to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3), to "be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict" (Titus 1:9), to "put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not" (Rev. 2:2), to "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves" (Matt. 7:15), to "examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good" (1 Thess. 5:21), with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition. If perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim. 2:25), to follow the example of Paul and Apollos who "vigorously refuted the Jews in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ." (Acts 18:28). These are but a few of the marching orders for the call to ministry, discernment and evangelism. The Inward Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17) whereby the gospel is preached, which is "the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth" (Rom. 1:16), is the weapon of our evangelism. As Hebrews 4:12 states, "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, it penetrates even dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." This is the evangelical missionary methodology of Christian Answers— to bring the Biblical perspective to a culture that is almost completely ignorant of it; to bring Christian truth, Christian answers to those who, as the prophet Isaiah said, have made "lies, and falsehoods" their refuge (Isa. 28:15); to smash lies and falsehoods with the "hammer" of God's word (Isa. 28:18; see also Proverbs 30:5-6, Psalm 38:25, Isaiah 40:8, John 5:39-47, 1 Cor. 1:27, and Acts 17:11.

Christian Answers utilizes all outreach that God allows us including television, radio, audio cassettes, video tapes, speaking engagements, and the printed page. The materials we have been able to produce have been used by churches, Bible teachers, Christian apologists, laymen and others as well as those seeking life in Christ.

We are not afraid to stand up for Christ in public forums or wherever the Lord leads. Of course this type of ministry is not for the faint of heart and very often leads to the same type of suffering and persecution that we find in the book of Acts. But as the old saying goes, "one life will soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last," and as Paul said, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14), knowing this mortal life is short and God's eternity is only a moment away for all.

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substance of Christianity (summarized in the Apostles', Nicene, and other ecumenical creeds) have a basis for unity. Similarly the fundamentals of Marxist-Leninist dogma hold factions within the Communist Party together. Communists might disagree over minor points, but they stick together because of the fundamentals. Essentials serve as the common denominators for a group. When those foundational affirmations are eroded, the group loses its essential identity. And when a group loses its identity, it ceases to offer a common core of commitment that inspires unity and brotherhood. Give up the defense of the fundamentals and you give up any hope of real unity.

How ironic it is, then, that only five decades after the "Modernist-Fundamentalist" controversy evangelical and fundamentalist churches find themselves in the position of harboring-or-tolerating-outright denial of orthodoxy. They are doing that because they have mistaken outward tokens for essential unity. So long as the preacher waves his Bible under the bright lights, or has an altar call, they do not object to what he says, even if he preaches doctrines as dangerous to the soul as those propagated by the "liberals" he so cheerfully mocks.

One consequence of this tolerance is to leave the way open for an inaccurate understanding of Christianity to be spread abroad. The world sees televangelists as the spokesmen for the evangelical movement. It does not distinguish between those who preach the gospel "once for all given to the saints" and those who preach a fraudulent gospel. So when the world examines televangelism—its programming, its triumphs, its failures—and concludes from looking at some, but not all, televangelists and concludes that televangelism is materialistic, exploitative, power-hungry, and success-and-number oriented—in short, is just as worldly as the world itself—it condemns the whole evangelical movement—and Christianity—not just fraudulent televangelists.

Does the world realize that televangelism does not necessarily represent the evangelical movement? Does it know that the evangelical movement is concerned with truth? Do those who occasionally view televangelistic programming know that evangelical Christianity offers an intelligent interpretation of and hope for human existence? Does the average unbeliever come away from a telespectator with a better grasp of the substance of the Christian faith?

Unless the ordinary evangelical is willing to stand up and be counted, the answer will be no. And if the answer is no, that may well mean that evangelical commentators, reflecting the movement generally, have not been as interested in truth as in success. After all, the incursion is not as interesting as "Body-Builders for Jesus," Or is it? The celebrated mystery-novelist Dorothy Sayer once asserted, "Doctrine is not boring! Dogma is the drama!" She was right. The drama lies not in the crying and the shouting, but in the great truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The apostle Peter understood the responsibility an orthodox Christian has and addressed the subject of doctrine directly. He was well aware that his Master had given him the charge, "Feed my sheep"—and had emphasized it (John 21:15-18). That command weighed heavily on Peter's conscience as he reminded the member of the ancient church that though they had once been "like sheep going astray," they were now "returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls" (I Peter 2:25). They needed, Peter said, to "make every effort to be found spotless, blameless, and at peace with [Christ]" (II Peter 3:14)—and to pay attention to doctrine. Not to do so was to bring condemnation upon themselves. The letters of "our dear brother Paul," Peter said, "contain some things that are hard to understand," but the "ignorant and unstable" who distort them, "as they do the other Scriptures," do so "to their own destruction" (II Peter 3:15-16).

Notice the elements of Peter's warning. There is the recognition that the Bible contains a number of truths that are easily reshaped by the subtlest distortion. And there is the assertion that such distortions are caused by those who "ignore and unstable." That is an important clue as to the sort of person we must suspect. Ignorance among many associated with televangelism is no less prized than it was among the ranter who eschewed thought in favor of objectless fascination with feeling during the frontier rivalries of the last century. It was in that setting that many of the cults were born. "No creed but Christ," the evangelist cheered. And instability has been characteristic of many religious celebrities in the past and in the present.

Again, some today would say, "Well, sure, truth is important. But what's really essential is that we know the Person, not the propositions." Not so, the apostle James would say: "My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whosoever turns a sinner away from his error will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins" (James 5:19-20). There is no such thing as a personal relationship with Christ apart from an understanding and acceptance of the nature, character, and mission of Christ. Turning people from error is not a trivial concern. It is bound up with the severest of consequences: saving a soul from death.

Maybe we have the attitude we do because we no longer believe eternal questions are important. And perhaps that means that we—those who should have been the last to do so—have become so preoccupied with this world (success, power, fame, and fortune) that we have tolerated a creeping cynicism about eternity.

The apostle Paul understood that souls are saved and lost in the struggle over truth and heresy. Paul said he was "innocent of the blood of all men" because he had "not hesitated to proclaim to the people the whole will of God." Therefore, he issued his own warning to the leaders of the church at Ephesus: "Guard yourselves and all the flocks of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he [God] bought with His own blood." And then the apostle anticipated apostasy: "I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears" (Acts 20:26-31).

With as many as 500 million viewers worldwide, the televangelists under critical examination have until recently been protected from censure. After all, were they not successful evangelists? But eventually there came an end to their privileged status. What brought
about the downfall? Not that they were preaching "another gospel" though that was in fact what they were doing. No, they were brought down when news of lavish expense accounts and sexual deviance reached the public and shocked the church-shocked it more, apparently, than the televangelists' unabashed disregard for Biblical truth. Only when some televangelists were found to be frauds were Christians brave enough to confront them on theological grounds.

More uncomfortably, the rise and fall of televangelism in our country points up a more general state of affairs in the evangelical movement. For, as Quentin Schulte points out, scandals rocked religious radio before television. And many of us have had experiences with local churches or para-church ministries that gave evidence of giving method priority over message, quantity over quality, volume over clarity, comfort over confrontation. "But they're winning souls!" we are always told. "Isn't that enough?" not really. If success and growth be always a sign of God's favor, we should be elated with what they are doing. But for the Lord!" is not necessarily a sign of God's blessing. "In the last days," Paul warned, "people will be lovers of themselves [so we tailor a self-esteem gospel...lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God] so we put together a gospel of health, wealth, and happiness." Such people have "a form of godliness but deny its power," and Paul's command concerning them is urgent: "Have nothing to do with them." (II Tim. 3:1-5). But they are brothers! "Have nothing to do with them!" But they love Jesus! "Have nothing to do with them!"

Not only have we had a great deal to do with them, we have often been "them." Though the Westminster Catechism asserted that man's chief end was "to glorify God and enjoy Him forever," the modern creed insists that we use God to glorify ourselves and enjoy ourselves forever. Christianity must be fun.

never demanding. It must sweep the believer from one experience of "victory" to another. Talk of discipleship's rewards far outweighs talk of its cost. In short, the modern gospel is marketed to consumers, not proclaimed to sinners.

In spite of all the present dangers, Jesus promised, "I will build My church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it" (Matthew 16:18, italics added). Similarly, although Paul warns Timothy (and all believers) that "the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine," he still challenges him to "keep [his] head." For though men will "gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear" and will "turn aside to myths," there is hope for those who pursue an accurate proclamation of the faith (II Tim. 4:3-5).

A heretic is "one who is self-willed in matters pertaining to God, a fellow who knows of something better and chooses his own way to heaven, a way the ordinary Christian does not travel." Miraculous signs often accompany heretics but this is no proof of truth as even the Devil can do "signs and lying wonders." (I Thessalonians 2:9-12).

Christ's own description of the coming Judgment Day deals with the many miracle working, faith healers as they make their way to Jesus, surprised that they have been excluded from the very kingdom they insisted they were building, they plead, "Did we not prophesy in your name; and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?" And Jesus says, "I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'" (Matthew 7:22-23, italics added).

Clearly, we are in perilous times. We have paid the price of ignorance and shallowness, and our fall has been great. Heretics have been tolerated as divinely appointed messengers; prophets have been stoned. Nevertheless, God has proved Himself faithful in the trials of our own unfaithfulness. Though we do not despair, we do call upon the Body of Christ to repair its own system of beliefs and to bring its faith and life into line with sound biblical teaching without delay. That reformation, as we see it, must take two forms; first, it must be defensive. Those who propagate heresy among us and refuse correction must be excommunicated by their local, regional, and national bodies. Denial of the Trinity is, after all, more damnable than pornography. Second, it must be offensive. We must put ourselves to the arduous-but exciting-task of feeding the sheep on the great themes of biblical faith. The laity are begging for substance. They are often more anxious to deepen their faith than their pastors are to help them deepen it. We must heed a final caution from Peter: "False prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies." "In their greed," Peter said, "they will exploit you with false words" (II Peter 2:1-3). So, too, today, the "Word of Faith" movement in particular is a destructive heresy of "false words." And it is a growing movement. Kenneth Copeland has a daily telecast and other "Word" ministries are also increasing in popularity (they get the big bucks).

These heretics, Peter continues, "indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires and despise authority. Daring, self-willed, they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties, whereas angels who are greater in might and power do not bring a reviling judgment against them before the Lord" (vv. 10-11, NASB). So, too, today, many of the leading televangelists rave about their power over Satan and make sport of taunting and teasing the devil concerning their alleged authority over him. "But these," said Peter, "like unreasoning animals, born as creatures of instinct to be captured and killed, reviling where they have no knowledge, will in the destruction of those creatures also be destroyed" (v. 12, NASB).
Of course, the obnoxiousness of offering salvation for money is itself heretical, indeed, pagan. Nevertheless, the gospel heralded by some of the television preachers is even more perverted.

It is appropriate that a prosperity gospel be born in the hedonistic, self-centered, get-rich-quick milieu of modern American society. We are, by nature, pagan. Either our religion will transfer us or we will transform our religion to suit our sympathies.

For the faith teachers, sickness is "all in the head." Much like the Christian Science cult (whose origins are shared by the "faith teachers"), this philosophy denies the reality of negative things—sin, sickness, poverty, and depression. The supposed reality of their existence is blamed on the failure of the believer to speak the word of faith—a sort of "abraacadabra" recited to decree health and prosperity.

The faith teachers such as Kenneth Copeland, Robert Tilton, Kenneth Hagin (deceased), Charles Capps, Fred Price, Marilyn Hickey, Earl Paulk ("little gods" teaching), Benny Hinn, and many others have their so-called "Christianity" rooted in the ancient heresy of Gnosticism. Gnosticism is marked by a dualism in which the world is divided sharply between "Spiritual" (good) and "material" or "physical" (bad) realms. Thus, Gnosticism emphasizes the spiritual realm to the exclusion of the natural realm.

Copeland argues that when we become believers, we escape the natural realm, with its physical laws, and become engaged to spiritual laws. "You need to realize," Copeland says, "that you are not a spiritual schizophrenic—half-God and half-Satan—you are—al-God. The problem area is not in your spirit; it lies in your mind and body." (Kenneth Copeland, "Believer's Voice of Victory, March 1982, p.2).

Before one is born again, then according to Copeland, he is satanic (by virtue of his humanity) upon conversion he becomes a spirit-god inhabiting a physical body (with god-like powers).

God did not create man with a good (Spiritual) and evil (physical) composition. **Man does not sin because he is human, but because he is a sinner.**

When Jimmy Swaggart defied the orders of the Assemblies of God to refrain from preaching for one year, he assured the public that he was free of moral defect, for, he said, Oral Roberts had cast out the demons from his body over the phone. Oral Roberts confirmed Swaggart's report, insisting he saw the demons with their claws deeply embedded in Swaggart's flesh. Now that the rascals were gone, Swaggart and Roberts asserted, Swaggart could get on with preaching.

For these metaphysical evangelists, even personal sins can be attributed to the bad god, since he is, after all, sovereign over this earthly realm as the good god is relatively in charge of the spiritual domain. Here again, then, is the echo of the Gnostics of old.

Though it is fundamental to any presentation of the Biblical gospel, the doctrine of justification is virtually unknown in much of popular media evangelism. Jimmy Swaggart, in fact, says it is "a lie" to believe that "the believer's sins are already forgiven, past, present, and future," and that "his sins are not taken into account" (Jimmy Swaggart, Ministries, 1985, pp. 291-295). Yet the Apostle Paul joined David in singing, "**Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account**" (Romans 4:8, NASB).

Furthermore, Swaggart teaches that justification, rather than being once and for all declaration of righteousness in Christ, requires a constant renewing (Swaggart, Ibid.). Much of Paul's epistle to the Romans is devoted to the explanation of justification. God, says the apostle, is in the business of declaring wicked people guiltless and, in fact, righteous. He does that not by overlooking their sins, not by having them do penance or by having them write: "I will never do it again." a thousand times, not by giving folks an "A" for effort. Rather, God imputes, that is, charges or credits to the believer's account, the life-long obedience, death, resurrection, and victory of Christ. We are not saved by our "victorious Christian life, but by HIS! Of course that means that even though the believer will sin many times (in one day), God has nevertheless declared that person to be a perfectly law-abiding citizen. The basis for our relationship with God is Christ's track record, not our own.

That status does not change with our moral ups and downs. The believer continues to sin and "fall short of God's glory," even though he stands in Christ's righteousness.

**Faith teachers in the electronic church often "speak to" money, success, and health as though those things were personal gods. Similarly, they "speak to" Satan and demonic forces, "binding them" by their "word faith."**

**Once gain, it seems that the object of faith for those teachers is not the God of Scripture, but the gods of health, wealth, and happiness.** Faith is seen as a matter of believing for things. Hagin speaks of decreeing his brother's salvation. Thus he makes God the absentee landlord who leaves the decreeing and application of salvation, as well as health and wealth, to the "authority of the believer." Hagen is wrong, salvation is God-centered, not human-centered.

Faith, according to such teachers, is not faith in God, but the faith of God. In other words, God is not the object of faith but is a model for the kind of force our faith can have. Just as He spoke things into being, so too can we. "Faith is a power force," says Copeland. "The force of faith is released through words. Faith-filled words put the law of the Spirit of life into operation. Thus faith is not "the gift of God" to trust God with one's eternal welfare (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Like other spiritualists, the faith teachers point adherents to their own inner spirit rather than to a Savior outside of them. But according to Scripture, God gives faith to whom he will (John 1:13, Acts 13:48, Rom. 9:18, Ephesians 1:5, Philippians 2:13).

Furthermore, the object of that faith is always God and His grace, not faith itself. **We are saved, not by believing, but by believing in Christ. Faith in faith is idolatry.** We must admit that the crisis of truth we have seen in the televangelists is only a microcosm of the disarray present in Christendom generally. Paul never said, "If anyone visits a prostitute, let him be eternally condemned" Nor did he say, "if anyone steals millions of dollars from unwary victims and engages in immoral sexual activities, let him be eternally condemned." No indeed. Christ "came not to call the righteous, but sinners." A televangelist who preaches a false gospel can repent of his exploits, but that is not enough. He must repent of his heresy. For **Paul did say, "If anyone preach**
any other gospel...let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:8, NKJV).

To contact Dr. Michael Horton write Modern Reformation, 1725 Bear Valley Parkway, Escondido, CA 92027.

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The false prophets on television have lots of money to spread their heresies to the four corners of the earth. They promise their followers miracles and wealth to gain much support. We, on the other hand, preach the Bible as it is, not as our sinful desires and those who listen to us would want it to be. We will not try to get you to vow a thousand dollars to us so you can get $10,000 from God. We simply seek to preach God’s Gospel honestly and without profit, however, it does take money to pay for our ordinary expenses (printing and postage for newsletters, television production, etc.). If you could help us financially, however small, it would greatly be appreciated. All donations are tax deductible. Please help us fight the battle as life is short and only what’s done for Christ will

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Blessings.

Valerie (from the web)

Dear Larry,

Hey what's up brother, how are you doing? I have only been a Christian for about 11 months and I've got to tell you it has been amazing and wonderful to walk in the Christian faith. I really like your show, "Christian Answers," I think you and Steve Morrison do a great job. I wish I could support your ministry in a more tangible way. I care for my ill father and it is demanding in financial ways as well as others. Please keep us in your prayers. Grace and Peace to you, in Christ.

K.P (Green River, WY)

Dear Larry,

Thanks for sending Christian Answers. What do you have available in videos or audio cassettes about Roman Catholicism? We should like to work on expanding the resources we are making available. We have the equipment to copy videos and audios if we order just one of each. Glad to see you are still active. May God grant you His blessing as you labor for Him.

B.J. (Louisville, KY)

Dear Larry,

It was good to know more about you, your family (Vol.3. #1 newsletter) and the ministry. Thank you for what you are doing.

B.B. (Birmingham, AL)

Dear Brother Larry,

Indeed, it was God's will that led me into these Bible studies under your guidance.

However, I have questions to ask, the answer of which would settle my querying mood, as

"exhort in sound doctrine and refute those who contradict" (Titus 1:9)

Christian Debater Guide

had money to give your wonderful ministry. I too am a working pastor who does not receive a wage, but God is so good to provide. May you continue to walk in His great grace & mercy. In Christ,

Pastor J.A. (Long Beach, CA)

P.S. I will be using the materials I ordered from you as a break from our regular Bible studies.

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