

Sola Scriptura debate!

Between
David Riggs, Christian
And
Michael Lopez, Catholic

<u>Signed Proposition and rules</u>	
David J. Riggs	Michael Lopez
<u>Affirmative</u>	<u>Denial</u>
<u>First Rebuttal</u>	<u>First Rebuttal</u>
<u>Second Rebuttal</u>	<u>Second Rebuttal</u>
<u>Third Rebuttal</u>	<u>Third Rebuttal</u>

David Riggs first affirmative

First Affirmative of the Riggs-Lopez Debate By David J. Riggs

I am affirming: "The inspired writings (the holy Scriptures of the New Testament of Jesus Christ) claim for themselves that they alone are the standard of authority in Religion today."

I will be examining in this written debate the New Testament Scriptures which reveal that the inspired writings alone are the standard of authority in Religion today. In other words, I will be presenting the passages which teach that the Scriptures alone are the authority. No doubt, my opponent will ask, "Where does the Bible say: 'the Scriptures alone are the authority'?" Those who ask that question (and others like it) know, as well as I, that there is no such verse. Even though there is no verse which says those exact words, the Scriptures very strongly claim for themselves that they alone are the authority, and I will be presenting the passages which so teach. It is my opponent's responsibility to endeavor to show by the New Testament Scriptures that the inspired writings do not claim that they alone are the standard of authority in Religion today.

God speaks to us today through His Son, Jesus Christ (Heb. 1:1-2). Christ spoke the words and commandments given to Him from the Father (John 12:49-50). We are to hear Jesus, not Moses or Elijah (Mark 9:2-8). Christ is the mediator of the New Testament (Heb. 9:15-17). Christ is that great prophet who was to come (Deut. 18:15,19; Acts 3:22-23). The name of Jesus is the only name by which we can be saved (Acts 4:12). We cannot reject His word and be guiltless (John 12:48). God, therefore, makes known His will to us today through His Son who gave us His New Testament.

Jesus Christ did not choose to write His New Testament (His commandments) for us, but selected others to do that for Him. Jesus gave the same words and commandments that He received from the Father to His twelve apostles (John 17:6-7; 17-20). He promised them the Holy Spirit who would remind them of all He had said, and would guide them into all truth. He said, "These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you." (John 14:25-26; see also 14:16-17). Furthermore, Jesus said, "But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning." (John 15:26-27; see also 16:13-14). From the foregoing passages, we learn two important facts: (1) The promise of the Holy Spirit was to the apostles only. They were the ones to whom Jesus was speaking; they were the ones who had been with Him from the beginning. (2) The Holy Spirit would be in them and would enable them to teach all the truth concerning the will of God. Also, we learn from the foregoing passages, as well as from all others in the New Testament, that the promise of the Holy Spirit was never made to the church.

The apostles were to wait in Jerusalem to receive the Holy Spirit as was promised. "Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high." (Luke 24:49). "And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, 'which,' He said, 'you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.'" (Acts 1:4-5). "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you..." (Acts 1:8). All of this was in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies which said, "For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem." (Isa. 2:3; Micah 4:2).

The apostles received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2:1-4. "They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." (Verse 4). Thus, they began to proclaim by inspiration the will or law of God as Jesus had declared in the words, "whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." (Matt. 18:18). What Jesus said to Peter concerning binding and loosing (Matt. 16:19), He also said to all the apostles (Matt. 18:18). The meaning is not that the binding and loosing would come from their own devising--God alone is the lawgiver (James 4:12) and His word is forever firmly fixed in the heavens (Psalm 119:89)--but with the Holy Spirit guiding them they would proclaim the things God wanted bound and loosed. For example, they declared what God bound for forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38), and what God loosed--"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." (Rom. 8:2). This principle is also expressed in Matt. 10:20 which says, "...For it is not you who are speaking, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks through you."

Up to the point as recorded in Acts 2, only the twelve had obtained the ability to speak by the inspiration of God. Verse 14 of Acts 2 shows that Peter, standing with the eleven, declared that the gift which they had received was in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Verse 43 says, "Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles." Consequently, the apostles up to this point were the only ones who had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. God worked with them by giving them the power to work miracles. Mark 16:20 says, "And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs." (See also Heb. 2:3-4).

As we read a little farther in the book of Acts, we see how New Testament prophets were made. The first account of someone besides an apostle working a miracle is that of Stephen. "And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people." (Acts 6:8). Stephen, as well as Philip, was of the seven on whom the apostles had laid their hands. "These they set before the apostles, and after they had prayed, they laid their hands upon them." (Acts 6:6). As we read still farther, we see that Philip is the next person who was able to work miracles. "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did." (Acts 8:5-6).

Although Philip was a New Testament prophet and could work miracles, he was unable to give the Holy Spirit to others. Only the apostles were empowered with that ability. Acts 8:14-19 says, "Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying, 'Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit.'"

Please notice that the Holy Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands. This is the only way New Testament prophets were made, and the prophets themselves were unable to give the Spirit to others. Philip could not give the Holy Spirit to the people of Samaria. Some apostles, Peter and John, had to be sent from Jerusalem before that could be done. When an apostle laid his hands on someone, he received miraculous powers. Acts 19:6 says, "And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied." Cornelius and his household received the "like gift" as the apostles for the specific purpose of showing God's acceptance of the Gentiles into the New Covenant (Acts 11:14-18). Jesus appeared to Paul to make him an apostle (Acts 26:16). The authority of Paul, the one who gave us most of the New Testament, is well established in the Scriptures. (See Gal. 1:11-12; Eph. 3:1-8).

The possession of the Spirit is the factor that determined the authority of the apostles and prophets. They had the authority to deliver God's law because God was speaking through them. On that basis only were they enabled to unerringly deliver God's message to mankind. Furthermore, the apostles and those on whom they laid their hands could speak with tongues, prophesy, and work miracles. They worked miracles to demonstrate their authority, to show that they were indeed inspired of God.

In defense of his own authority, Paul said, "Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds." (2 Cor. 12:12). No one can work miracles today as they did; no one is inspired of the Holy Spirit today as they were; thus, no one has the same authority today.

Thus, the authority of the apostles and prophets is well established by many passages in the New Testament. Their authority is indeed from the Lord Jesus Christ. One commits a grave error when he takes the passages which referred to the apostles and prophets and applies them to the church. The church was never promised the Holy Spirit. The church was not given authority in revealing or changing the laws of God. The church was simply the body of the saved and not a legislative body. When people heard, believed and obeyed the Word of God given by the inspired teachers, the Lord added them to His church or body (Acts 2:41,47). Jesus Himself is Head and Savior of His body (Eph. 1:21-22; 5:23). The responsibility of the church today is not to make or change laws, but to follow the laws which have been revealed by the Lord's holy apostles and prophets.

There was a time when all of the word of God was given orally--by word of mouth of the inspired apostles and prophets. Christians during that period were guided solely by the inspired teachers who were present with them. Paul said, "And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more. Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God." (Acts 20:25-27). The word of God given orally by the apostles and prophets of Christ was the guide and standard of authority in that early period. If an individual wished to be pleasing to God, he had to receive the word of the inspired men as coming from God Himself (1 Thess. 2:13).

There was a period when the word of God was given both orally and written. The apostles and prophets began delivering God's will both by preaching and writing. Paul said to the Thessalonians, "So then, brethren, stand firm, and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter." (2 Thess. 2:15; See also 2 Pet. 3:1-2). Thus, there was a time when people were guided either by having inspired men in their presence or by epistles written by inspired men. Both of these had equal authority because both were the product of the Holy Spirit. 2 Thess. 2:15 will become a very important key verse in this debate. Dear reader, I plead with you to examine it very carefully for yourself. The verse is certainly not teaching that oral traditions independent of the Scriptures are to be an authority in Religion today along with the Scriptures. Please notice: (1) The verse was addressed to the Thessalonian brethren. (2) The Thessalonians were not to hold just any traditions, but "the traditions which you were taught by us." (See also 2 Thess. 3:6). The authority was in the inspired apostles and prophets and the traditions taught by them whether verbally or written were to be held. (3) The expression, "which you were taught" is in past tense. They were to hold to the traditions which they had already received. The verse is certainly not teaching that mankind would continue to be guided by "oral traditions" which would be handed down through the ages by word of mouth.

If we are to continue to receive the so-called "oral apostolic traditions" (traditions independent of the Scriptures received orally) as some claim, from where and how are we to receive them? No doubt, my opponent will claim that the Catholic Church was given the authority from Christ to deliver the "oral apostolic traditions" to us. If so, we plead with him to please give us the Scriptures which so teach. Also, we plead with him to give the Scriptures which instruct us on how we are to receive those oral traditions. Are we to search the mountain of volumes of the so-called church fathers? Are

we to search the mountain of writings derived from the proceeding of the Councils and the decrees of the Popes? Furthermore, we ask him to please give us a list of those oral apostolic traditions independent of the Scriptures which constitute the laws of the Lord. In other words, if there are such traditions which obligate us before God, please tell us what they are. Many of the so-called "oral apostolic traditions" are nothing more than human traditions because they are condemned by the Scriptures. I emphasize, again, that a continual handing down of "oral apostolic traditions" is not authorized in the Scriptures. We are not told: (1) that we are to receive them, (2) from whom we are to receive them, nor (3) how we are to receive them.

When the apostles and prophets passed from the earth, their inspired writings became the only means by which we receive God's word. The apostle Paul said, "...How that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets." (Eph. 3:2-5). Thus, since Paul and the other inspired men are no longer with us, their writings become the only authority by which we receive their revelation. Furthermore, Paul said, "If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord." (1 Cor. 14:37). There is no passage anywhere in the Scriptures which states that "oral apostolic traditions," "teachings of the Pope," or "legislations of the church" are the laws of the Lord. Thus, the Scriptures claim for themselves that they alone are the standard of authority in religion. When 3,000 souls obeyed the gospel on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41) and the Lord added them to the church (Acts 2:47), that group (the church) was not thereby ordained an infallible, legislative body, to reveal God's Word to man. If so, where are the Scriptures which teach it? The church was "the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15) in the sense of upholding, defending, and proclaiming the truth (1 Thess. 1:5-9; Phil. 1:7). The authority to reveal, change, or legislate for God was never in the church. The authority was in the inspired men who revealed God's will by first speaking to the people and then by writing the Scriptures.

John the apostle said, "These are written that you may believe..." (John 20:31), "And these things we write to you that your joy may be full." (1 John 1:4), "...These things I write to you, so that you may not sin..." (1 John 2:1), "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life..." (1 John 5:13). Again, not one time did John, or any inspired writer, declare that the ex-cathedra pronouncements of the Pope, legislations of the church, etc., are given that you may believe, might not sin, or may know that you have eternal life. The Scriptures do not mention or allow other standards of authority.

The Holy Scriptures completely furnish us unto every good work. 2 Tim. 3:15-17 says, "And that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." This is another passage which forcefully teaches that the Scriptures alone are the standard. Some try to dodge the force of this passage by saying that Paul was referring to Old Testament Scriptures rather than New Testament ones. Certainly Timothy knew the Old Testament Scriptures from childhood, but he now had Paul's inspired writings as well. The apostle Peter referred to Paul's writings as Scripture. (2 Pet. 3:15-16). Paul is plainly revealing to us God's purpose for all inspired writings. The verses vividly teach that the Scriptures thoroughly equip us for every good work and, thus, no other standard is needed or allowed. Any so-called good works that men might do which are not in the Scriptures, cannot be good works in God's sight because the Scriptures contain "every good work."

All teachers are to be tested by the Scriptures. 1 Cor. 4:6 says, "Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that in us you might learn not to exceed what is written, in order that no one of you might become arrogant in behalf of one against the other." Even when Paul emphasized that his writings were the laws of the Lord (1 Cor. 14:37), it was in opposition to what men might claim as laws. The Scriptures, therefore, are the only authority. Any practice not found in them is of human origin and is, therefore, false.

The Scriptures are the standard by which we will be judged in the last day. Rev. 20:12 says, "...And the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds." (See also Rom. 2:16; James 2:12; John 12:48). We will not be judged by "oral apostolic traditions," "legislations of the church," etc.; thus, again, showing that the Scriptures are the only standard. Let us all have profound respect for the holy Scriptures, and never speak against or discredit their authority, because the very standard we might seek to discredit, is the one by which we will be judged in the last day. The holy Scriptures claim for themselves that they alone are the standard of authority in Religion today. They do not authorize other standards of authority.

Michael Lopez, Catholic, first Denial

Opening Statements By Michael Lopez

The Word of God is indeed the sole rule of faith for Christians today. The question to be asked is did Jesus or any of his apostles say the only way future generations were to receive the Word of God is by scripture? Let us first examine how Jesus commissioned his apostles to preach the gospel. Prior to his death, and after his resurrection he commissioned his apostles to do several things and he made several promises. He promised the Holy Spirit to guide them (the apostles) to all truth (Jn 16:13). "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (John 14:26). Notice he said the Holy Spirit would guide the apostles to all truth, and they would remember all that I have said to you. If anyone wants to know what Jesus taught, one must hear all of what was taught, as this teaching is guided by the Holy Spirit. This reflects Jesus earlier teaching: "He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me." (Lk 10:16, cf. Mt 10:40). Nothing about writing.

What did Jesus commission his apostles to do? During the last supper, he commissioned his apostles to celebrate the Eucharist, the life giving sacrament of his body and blood. (Lk 22:19-22; 1 Cor 11:23-30; Mt. 26:26-28; Mk 14:22-25). This sacrament that he commissioned forgives sins (Mt. 26:28) and brings eternal life (John 6:51-58). He commissioned his apostles to call people for repentance and baptism for the forgiveness of sins (Mk 16:15-16; Mt 28:19). He gives them the power to forgive sins (John 20:22-23). He promised to build his church and gave the keys exclusively to Peter (Mt 16:18-19), he later gave to the other apostles the authority to bind and loose as well (Mt. 18:18). He also commissioned the apostles to "observe all that I have commanded you (Mt. 28:20)." Anyone can see that here Christ makes very important commissions for the apostles and future

generations for passing on the gospel. One thing is lacking: A commission to write anything. If Christ saw that future generations would only be bound by scripture, why in the four gospels did he never commission his apostles to write a thing? He commissioned all his apostles to teach orally. Only in the book of Revelation did Jesus tell anybody to write (Rev. 1:19), and the canonicity of that book was in doubt for centuries, and in fact verified only by apostolic tradition. Will my opponent who will admit that of the 12 apostles, only Matthew, John and Peter wrote anything, accuse the 9 other apostles of not doing their job because they didn't write? Didn't Jesus promise the Holy Spirit to them as well? They did do their job, to establish churches, pass on the sacraments established by Christ, orally preach the gospel, and commission others to do so as well.

I ask my opponent, using the New Testament, what is the New Testament, and what is the basis for deciding what it is? Since the proposition is that "they claim for themselves to be the sole standard of authority for Christians", we must know what are the contents of this sole authority. Do any of the gospel writers, identify themselves as apostles or commissioned by apostles? No. Moving along to the epistles, doesn't Peter write that Paul's letters are inspired, and thus we should take them as inspired? (cf. 2 Peter 3:15). I will comment on 2 Peter later and show how it disproves Sola Scriptura, but in regards to Paul's letters being scripture, Peter does not write one word on what the contents of Paul's letters are, and makes no specific references to for example, Paul's letter to the Romans, Corinthians, Ephesians, etc. How do we know that Peter is not referring to Paul's earlier letter to the Corinthians, that we have no record of? Paul saw his earlier letter as just as binding as the canonical first letter to the Corinthians. 1 Corinthians 5:9 we read: "I wrote to you in my letter (prior to 1 Corinthians) not to associate with immoral men". What about Paul's letter to the Laodiceans mentioned in the second part of Colossians 4:16?: "And when this letter has been read among you, have it read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you read also the letter from Laodicea." Notice that this second letter from Laodicea is put on the same level as the New Testament letter to the Colossians. These letters we do not have, are on the same level in Paul's mind as his canonical letters. The Achilles heel of Sola Scriptura: No internal record of the contents of the New Testament. As James Akins writes "The Protestant apologist is in a fix. In order to use sola scriptura he is going to have to identify what the scriptures are, and since he is unable to do this from scripture alone, he is going to have to appeal to things outside of scripture to make his case, meaning that in the very act of doing this he undermines this case. There is no way for him to escape the canon of tradition." Neither is there a list of contents of the Old Testament. On this count alone, the proposition falls.

If you have a church commissioned by Jesus to bind and loose (Mt.16:18-19; Mt. 18:17-18) with the authority of God behind it to guide into all truth (Jn 16:13; 14:26) then we have something solid to stand on. Paul does not write scripture is the pillar and bulwark of truth. Paul writes instead: "If I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth." 1 Timothy 3:15. If as Protestantism charges, Catholicism went into error on doctrinal matters, then Paul made a mistake in calling the church the pillar and bulwark of truth. Notice, it does not say pillar of truth only as long as it teaches scripture. The only way that we know who wrote the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and that Paul and Peter were the authors of the other New Testament books is oral tradition; passed on down through the centuries. The Council of Rome in 382, led by Pope Damasus, confirmed the whole extent of the New Testament canon. The Councils of Carthage and Hippo, 393 and 397 AD also defined what the scriptures were (confirmed by Pope Innocent I, 419). Before these Councils, were varying lists held by individuals who would invariably exclude some books (such as 2 Peter, Revelation, Hebrews, Jude) and include some letters as scripture (such as Pope Clement's letter to the Corinthians, Didache, Barnabus, etc). None of those who produced these varying scripture lists said that scripture was the sole rule of faith. If Sola Scriptura is true, why so much confusion on the contents of scripture for centuries? But with an authoritative church to help interpret those scriptures and pass on as well the unwritten truths of the faith, then we have a fulfillment of Jesus' promises (Jn 14:26, John 16:13, Mt. 28:20) to preserve the truth and provide protection from error.

I have limited space, so as I further expose the errors of Sola Scriptura, it will be hard to completely show its deficiencies. Protestant apologist J.I. Packer explains what it is: "What does sola scriptura mean? That the bible is the only word of God, the only guide for conscience in the church. It is the only source of true knowledge and of God's grace. It is the only qualified judge of the church's testimony and teaching." To paraphrase Packer, when the inspired writers died the only thing binding on future generations is supposedly the written Word of God; however, neither Jesus or any of the apostles give any hint of this idea.

We see in the bible: 1) Jesus and the apostles teaching as binding truth things nowhere recorded in Old Testament scriptures. Truths were passed on orally, after the death of the authors of the Scripture; 2) The binding Word of God for future generations includes apostolic oral tradition.

1) a) Mt. 2:23 "And he went and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, "He shall be called a Nazarene." We see prophetic truth passed on that the messiah would be a Nazarene. We nowhere see in the Old Testament this prophecy. Oral tradition at work. b) Jude 14-15 "Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him." Here Jude references Enoch (Gen 5) who was born years before Noah making a prophetic utterance nowhere found in scripture. This is a reference found in the book of Enoch, written 200 BC or so. How was this prophetic utterance passed on for centuries? By oral tradition. No one considers Enoch canonical, but Jude considers this portion as reliable, and divine revelation. c) Matthew 23:2-3 Jesus said "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; so practice and observe whatever they tell you, but not what they do; for they preach, but do not practice." This teaching on Moses seat Jesus finds as binding, even though he later castigates their hypocrisy. No Old Testament scripture refers to Moses' seat. David Palm writes: "As the first verse of the Mishna tractate Abôte indicates, the Jews understood that God's revelation, received by Moses, had been handed down from him in uninterrupted succession, through Joshua, the elders, the prophets, and the great Sanhedrin (Acts 15:21). The scribes and Pharisees participated in this authoritative line and as such their teaching deserved to be respected. Jesus here draws on oral Tradition to uphold the legitimacy of this teaching office in Israel. The Catholic Church, in upholding the legitimacy of both Scripture and Tradition, follows the example of Jesus himself." d) Paul writes of the people in Exodus, 1 Cor. 10:4: "and all drank the same supernatural drink. For they drank from the supernatural Rock which followed them, and the Rock was Christ." The Old Testament says nothing about any movement of the rock that Moses struck to provide water for the Israelites (Ex. 17:1-7, Num. 20:2-13), but in rabbinic Tradition the rock actually followed them on their journey through the wilderness. As Palm writes: "Paul does not hesitate to draw on stock oral Tradition to illustrate and enhance his presentation of the gospel." e) Other allusions to reliance on Oral Tradition with no dependence on the Old Testament include (but not limited to, and space precludes comment) Jude 9, Hebrews 11:36, 2 Tim 3:8-9, Acts 7:52-53, Gal. 3:19, Heb. 2:2-3, James 5:17. The New Testament reliance on these oral traditions shows that divine revelation can be passed on and relied on to infallibly pass on truth even if they were not recorded in scripture.

2) In order to prove Sola Scriptura, I am sure my opponent will make many references to the term Word of God and try to use the term in such a way that limits it to scripture. I ask you to examine his references (I have not seen his opening statement yet) because in most cases they will be irrelevant.

In the New Testament the term Word of God will most often refer to the oral proclamation of the gospel. That is actually part of oral tradition, not scripture. For example the term word of God is used 12 times in the book of Acts (Acts 4:31, Acts 6:2, Acts 6:7, Acts 8:14, Acts 11:1, Acts 12:24, Acts 13:5, Acts 13:7, Acts 13:46, Acts 17:13, Acts 18:11, Acts 20:32). All 12 times refer to the oral proclamation of the gospel. When Paul commends the Ephesians to the Word of God in Acts 20:32, did he leave them a letter? No, he spent 3 years declaring the whole counsel of God to them, orally (Acts 20:27, 31). That was the Word of God they were to hold fast to. In fact, he even shows a reliance on apostolic oral tradition himself by mentioning a saying of Jesus nowhere found in scripture (Acts 20:35). This use of the term Word of God reflects a prophecy showing that in the New Covenant the words would be handed down orally: Isaiah 59:20-21 "And he will come to Zion as Redeemer, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression, says the Lord. And as for me, this is my covenant with them, says the Lord: my spirit which is upon you, and my words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouth of your children, or out of the mouth of your children's children, says the Lord, from this time forth and for evermore." Paul passes this oral word to Timothy, who is to guard this deposit of faith through the help of the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 1:13-14). Faith comes by hearing, not reading the word of God (Rom. 10:17). How long will this oral word of God last? 1 Peter 1:24 for "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, 25 but the word of the Lord abides for ever." That word is the good news which was preached to you." Forever. Yes it references Isaiah, but Peter is calling upon Isaiah as a witness to his preached apostolic witness of Christ: oral tradition.

Apostolic tradition must be adhered to. Not only that but the bible itself is tradition, according to Paul's own writing: 2 Thes. 2:15: "So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter." If we read the context of Chapter 2, Paul writes to prevent people from falling into deception (vv. 3-12). What is to prevent these people from being deceived? Paul commands the Thessalonians to hold to the oral tradition alongside that which was written, on the same level. He reiterates it in 2 Thes. 3:6. 1 Cor. 11:2 is another reference that shows the binding authority of oral tradition.

Paul in 2 Timothy 1:13-2:2 shows how this word of God is to be passed on. We saw that Timothy was given the oral word of God from Paul and is to guard this deposit of faith (2 Tim. 1:13-14). This is the end of Paul's life (2 Tim 4:6-7). It is a perfect opportunity to preach sola scriptura. Instead, he writes in 2 Tim 2:2: "and what you (second generation) have heard from me (1st generation) before many witnesses entrust to faithful men (third generation) who will be able to teach others (fourth generation) also." Timothy is Paul's spiritual son, the second generation (2 Tim 2:1). Timothy is charged to pass on this oral word of God to the third generation. They are then entrusted with this same oral word of God to pass on to the fourth generation. This thus shows apostolic succession through four generations. Timothy was ordained (1 Tim. 4:14, 2 Tim. 1:6) to pass on this teaching and authority. Paul gives no hint that after he dies, the following generations are only to rely upon written scripture. Titus likewise was to establish churches (Tit 1:5) as he had Apostolic authority as well. Jesus promised to be with this church for not just four generations, but until the end of the age (Mt. 28:20, 16:18).

Jude 11 condemns the example of Korah's rebellion (Num. 16:1-35). Korah said we can take upon ourselves authority (Num. 16:1-3). He proclaimed that he was just as holy as Moses and Aaron and sought the ministerial priesthood himself (Num. 16:3, 10), beyond the universal priesthood given to the Jews (Exod. 19:6). They wanted to worship on their own authority and not submit to Moses. God punished not only Korah, and his followers (Num 16:31-34) but also those who complained about it (Num. 16:46-49). Jude directly ties this rebellion to the New Testament. Sola scriptura followers take

it upon themselves to privately interpret God's word, as did Korah and his rebels, who were condemned by God. Why did Jude warn the church against those who rejected the authority of the New Testament Church's hierarchy if (as Sola Scriptura preaches) the New Testament Church has no authoritative hierarchy?

2nd Peter also devastates sola scriptura. 2 Peter 2:1:19-2:2 reads: "And we have the prophetic word made more sure. You will do well to pay attention to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction." Peter condemns private interpretation, as scripture comes from the Holy Spirit. You will notice that just after condemning private interpretation, Peter castigates false prophets and heresies. Private interpretation, the heart of sola scriptura, directly leads to heresies. Peter says in 2 Peter 3:16, "in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which those who are untaught and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the scriptures." Sola Scriptura in action has proved Peter true: People come, claim to speak for the truth and the Holy Spirit, cloak themselves in bible verses, and secretly (by cloaking their faulty interpretation in bible verses) bring in destructive heresies. An authoritative interpreter, guided by the Holy Spirit (as Jesus promised), is needed to preserve the apostolic truth from this twisting. That is the Church.

Sola scriptura has led to a plethora of competing denominations, all claiming to have the truth, and thus forming their own tradition. According to the World Christian Encyclopedia (Oxford University Press, 1983), as of 1982 there were 20,800 Christian denominations with a projected 22,190 by 1985. All but a handful are Protestant. With 270 new denominations each year (Dave Barrett, Oxford University Press, 1982, pp. 15-18) by now there would be 28,000 denominations if the rate continued. All follow a tradition, the only question one has, is which tradition do you follow? If one is a Lutheran, one believes Luther's tradition started in the 16th century. If one follows the Church of Christ doctrine, one believes that this tradition which started in the 19th century, suddenly interpreted scripture correctly. Somehow, nobody else could find this truth. The same with Pentecostals, Baptists, SDA's, Presbyterians, etc. Sola Scriptura causes confusion and new, man-made traditions (cf. Mt. 15:3; Mk 7:8). The Holy Spirit can not be an author of such confusion (1 Cor 14:33). The question is: Can you trace your tradition back to Jesus and his church, or a man-made one started more than a millenia after Pentecost?

Via the New Testament we have seen each of the following points destroy sola scriptura: 1) When Jesus commissioned the 12 apostles in the gospels, never did he order them to write scripture, or hold future generations bound to only scripture; 2) Scripture itself does not explain what the contents of scripture are. Church tradition is what revealed infallibly to mankind the contents of scripture; 3) He gave a visible church, a pillar and ground of truth (1 Tim. 3:15), so that whatever the church binds and looses on earth, God binds in heaven (Mt 16:18-19; Mt 18:15-18). God does not bind himself to doctrinal error. 4) Sola Scriptura is a man-made tradition started in the 16th century, the type of tradition that Paul condemns (Gal 1:9; Col. 2:8). 5) Jesus and the apostles show reliance on extrascriptural revelation as divine revelation; 6) The Word of God for future generations is both oral and written; 7) The attack on Apostolic Oral Tradition is unbiblical. 8) Private interpretation is anti-biblical; What is the Result of Sola Scriptura? 9) Numerous man-made traditions, errors and denominations. Next segment we will see more biblical data reinforce the above as well as prove

more errors in Sola Scriptura.

David Rigg's first Rebuttal

First Rebuttal Of The Riggs-Lopez Debate By David J. Riggs

1) I am affirming: "The inspired writings (the holy Scriptures of the New Testament of Jesus Christ) claim for themselves that they alone are the standard of authority in Religion today." As was done in my Affirmative (Nov. 1, 1997), I list various passages which reveal that the Scriptures alone are the standard of authority in religion today. This is God's way of showing us that His holy writings are His sole law for us today.

2) "...By revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. And by referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit..." (Eph. 3:2-5).

3) "...These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name." (John 20:31).

4) "If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord." (1 Cor. 14:37).

5) "I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; but in case I am delayed, I write so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth." (1 Tim. 3:14-15).

6) "And these things we write to you that your joy may be full." (1 John 1:4).

7) "My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin." (1 John 2:1).

8) "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God." (1 John 5:13).

9) "Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that in us you might learn not to exceed what is written, in order that no one of you might become arrogant in behalf of one against the other." (1 Cor. 4:6).

10) "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

11) "...And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books." (Rev. 20:12).

12) I humbly beseech all the readers of this Debate to carefully examine the above passages. Each of them mention the sacred writings ("these are written," "the things which I write" etc.), and reveal what they (the inspired writings) provide ("that you may believe," "that you may know you have eternal life," etc.). The passages, and others like them, claim for themselves that they alone are the authority. There are no passages which state that "oral traditions independent of Scripture," "laws given by the church," "ex-cathedra pronouncements of the Popes," etc., are given to bring life in the name of Jesus (John 20:31), to equip for every good work, (2 Tim. 3:17), to give assurance of salvation (1 John 5:13), to judge us in the last day (Rev. 20:12), etc. The Hebrew writer made an argument from the silence of the Scriptures. He said, "For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood." (Heb. 7:14). In other words, since Moses spoke nothing concerning anyone from the tribe of Judah being a priest, Jesus could not have been a priest under the Levitical system. Likewise, since the New Testaments Scriptures spoke nothing concerning other authorities in religion today, there are no other authorities.

13) It is evident that my opponent in his Denial (Nov. 1, 1997) has twisted and perverted several passages in effort to prove that there are other authorities in religion today besides the New Testament Scriptures. For example, he perverted the Scriptures by taking the verses which were spoken to the apostles and prophets, and applied them to the church. He said, "If you have a church commissioned by Jesus to bind and loose (Mt.16:18-19; Mt. 18:17-18) with the authority of God behind it to guide into all truth (Jn 16:13; 14:26) then we have something solid to stand on." (Par. 3 & 14). I beg of our readers to carefully examine those verses. The church was not given the authority to bind and loose, guide into all truth, etc. Only the apostles and prophets were given that authority. The phrase "pillar and ground of truth" (1 Tim. 3:15) does not mean that the church is the originator of truth, or that it can make or change the laws of God. It simply means that the church is the upholder, defender and proclaimer of the truth. The apostles often praised the churches for proclaiming the truth, "for from you the word of the Lord has been spread abroad" (1 Thess. 1:8; see also Acts 11:22; 14:26-27). Churches were partakers in the defense and confirmation of the truth by sending funds to support those who were preaching the truth (Phil. 4:15-16; 2 Cor. 11:8-9). There are no verses in all of the holy Scriptures which indicates that the church has the authority to originate truth or to decree laws for God. The apostles and prophets, and they alone, were commissioned by the Lord, not to originate truth, but to reveal truth. Their task was once and for all completed for they gave us the written New Testament of Christ. The responsibility of the church today is simply to follow, defend and proclaim the truth which they revealed.

14) My opponent makes the oft repeated argument on "Moses' seat" from Matt. 23:2-3. He quotes David Palm who said, "Jesus here draws on oral Tradition to uphold the legitimacy of this teaching office in Israel. The Catholic Church, in upholding the legitimacy of both Scripture and Tradition, follows the example of Jesus." Again, we plead with our readers to carefully and honestly examine Matt. 23:2-3. Those verses say absolutely nothing about "the legitimacy of both Scripture and Tradition." Jesus was simply telling the people to follow the things which the Pharisees taught them by Moses' authority, but not to follow their example, because they did not practice what they taught. Instead of "drawing on oral Tradition" and "upholding the legitimacy of both Scripture and Tradition," Jesus repeatedly condemned the oral traditions handed down by the Jews. He said, "All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition...making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do." (Mark 7:9,13). Jesus' manner of condemning the traditions of men was, "God said...but you say..." (Matt. 15:4-5; Mark 7:10-11). After He mentioned, "God said," He then quoted Scripture. That was His method of drawing a clear, sharp contrast between the written Word of God and the oral traditions handed down by men.

15) In paragraph 9, my opponent perverts 2 Thess. 2:15 by trying to make it teach that we are to receive oral traditions which have been handed down independent of the Scriptures. Again, I beseech our readers to please examine the verse very carefully and see if it is teaching what he is claiming. The verse says, "So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter." (2 Thess. 2:15 Catholic Edition - RSV). "So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us." (2 Thess. 2:15 NASV). Thus, please notice: (1) The Thessalonians were not to hold to just any traditions, but "the traditions which you were taught by us." The authority was in the inspired apostles and prophets and the traditions taught by them whether verbally or written were to be held. (2) The expression, "which you were taught" is past tense. They were to hold to the traditions which they had already received. The verse is certainly not teaching that mankind would continue to be guided by "oral traditions" which would be handed down through the ages by word of mouth.

16) As Catholics often do, my opponent quoted passages which reveal that the Word of God was given orally in that early age, and then assumed that it would be given orally in every age. (Par. 8). He assumed the very thing he needs to prove. To assume something, and then assert it, is no way to prove anything. As readers of this debate know, in my Affirmative (Nov. 1, 1997), I went to great lengths to show from the Scriptures that there was a time when the Word of God was given all orally, then both orally and written, and now all written. I also quoted many passages which reveal what the inspired writings claim for themselves. I beg of my opponent to please show by the Scriptures that the "Word of God independent of the Scriptures" would continue to be handed down through the ages. I emphatically deny that a continual handing down of the "Word of God independent of Scripture" is authorized in the Scriptures. We are not told: (1) that we are to receive it, (2) from whom we are to receive it, nor (3) how we are to receive it.

17) My opponent made the oft repeated Catholic argument that the apostles and prophets were not commissioned to write anything (Par. 2 and 14). He asked, "Will my opponent who will admit that of the 12 apostles, only Matthew, John and Peter wrote anything, accuse the 9 other apostles of not doing their job because they didn't write?" Of course, I would not accuse them of not doing their job. Their job was to deliver God's revelation to mankind (Eph. 3:2-5), and they completed their task in that early age. Jude said, "...I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." (Jude 3). Christ commanded John, "Write

therefore the things that thou hast seen, and the things that are, and the things that are to come hereafter." (Rev. 1:19). If the Catholic argument that "the apostles were not commanded to write" proves anything, it proves that we should not have the Scriptures at all. If the New Testament was never intended to have been written, there shouldn't be one, and definitely, Catholics shouldn't be quoting from it as an authority.

18) My opponent also made the oft repeated Catholic argument that the Catholic Church gave us the Scriptures. He used two long paragraphs laboring that point (Par. 3 & 4) and listed it as No. 2 in his conclusion. I remind my opponent that it is his responsibility in this debate to deny the proposition, "The inspired writings (the holy Scriptures of the New Testament of Jesus Christ) claim for themselves that they alone are the standard of authority in Religion today." Thus, I beg of him to please SHOW BY THE SCRIPTURES that they do not claim for themselves to be the sole authority. Whether or not the Catholic Church determined the Canon of the New Testament Scriptures is another debate for another time. To show, however, that the Catholic argument can be easily answered, I copy the concluding remarks from my Essay entitled, "Did the Catholic Church give us the Bible?"

19) "We have studied, therefore, that the Catholic Church argues that since one of its councils in 390 selected the sacred books, one can accept them only on the basis of its authority. We have answered by showing: (1) The Bible is inspired and has authority, not because a church declared it so but because God made it so. (2) Jesus did not teach the people in His day that they could accept the Old Testament Scriptures only on the basis of those who placed the books into one volume. (3) It is a mere assumption that the Council of Hippo in 390 was a Council of the church which is now the Roman Catholic Church. (4) God did not give councils the authority to select His sacred books, nor does He expect men to receive His books only on the basis of councils. (5) The Catholic Church is not solely responsible for the gathering and selection of the New Testament books. (6) The Catholic Church has not been the sole possessor of the Bible at any time. (7) Even if it could be proven that the Catholic Church gathered the books into one volume, it still remains that it is not following the Bible today."

20) My opponent quotes Matt. 2:23 and Jude 14-15 and says that this is oral tradition at work (Par. 7). We plead with him to please explain how those verses prove that "apostolic oral traditions" are an authority in addition to the Holy Scriptures. The verses do not show "oral tradition at work," but "revelation by Holy Spirit at work." The Holy Spirit is not dependent on oral traditions to deliver God's message to man. The Holy Spirit knows perfectly what was spoken by Him in every age whether it be oral or written. Even though we don't have all the words that Enoch orally spoke during that early age, we now have some of them because the Holy Spirit has written them for us. My opponent said, "As Palm writes, 'Paul does not hesitate to draw on stock oral Tradition to enhance his presentation of the gospel.'" He also added in Par. 8 regarding the apostle Paul, "In fact, he shows a reliance on apostolic oral tradition himself by mentioning a saying of Jesus nowhere found in Scripture (Acts 20:35)." What an insult to the apostle Paul! Under no circumstances was the apostle Paul dependent on oral traditions for anything. He said, "But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ." (Gal. 1:11-12).

21) My opponent said in Par. 10, "This is the end of Paul's life (2 Tim. 4:6-7). It is a perfect opportunity to preach sola scriptura." He added, "Paul gives no hint that after he dies, the following

generations are only to rely upon written scripture." I ask my opponent to please let Paul speak for himself. He said, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." Thus, Paul's words vividly teach that the Scriptures thoroughly equip us for every good work and, thus, no other standard is needed or allowed. Any so-called good works that men might do which are not in the Scriptures, cannot be good works in God's sight because the Scriptures equip us to every good work. Furthermore, I ask my opponent to please let Peter, who also was at the close of his life (2 Pet. 1:12-14), speak for himself. He said, "Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior..." (2 Pet. 3:1-2). Now, I ask my opponent to please give the verses where Paul, Peter, or any other inspired writer, plainly revealed that "apostolic oral traditions" would equip us to every good work or remind us of the commandment of the Lord.

22) My opponent would have us to believe that when people use the Scriptures as their only rule of faith, it causes division. (Par. 13). This is another Catholic argument devised to undermine the Scriptures as the only authority. Please notice, first, that the argument comes from man, not God. The Scriptures teach, "...Let God be true, but every many a liar" (Rom. 3:4). "Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ." (Col. 2:8). Secondly, it is absolutely wrong to assume that all Protestant churches use the Scriptures alone as their authority. Most of them, like Catholicism, have their own laws, creeds, traditions, revelations, conventions, headquarters, etc., along with the Scriptures. Thirdly, it is not the "Scriptures alone" which has produced much division among us, but the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church is truly the mother of division. All of the identifying characteristics of the great apostasy predicted in the Scriptures perfectly fit the Catholic Church (1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Thess. 2:3-12). Every major division that is in Christianity originated with and came out of the Catholic Church. The bulk of Protestant denominations today are branches and sects of groups which originally broke away from the Catholic Church. Even today those who have knowledge of the current trends know that the Catholic Church is not united.

23) The prime cause of division in the religious world today is the continual mirage of teaching of the Catholic Church against the Scriptures as the sole standard. Even in this Rebuttal we have been answering common charges made by the Catholic Church against the Scriptures as the only authority. Such charges lead people away from the Scriptures and cause them to distrust them as the only rule of faith. It does this even in so-called Protestantism because many of the same charges are repeated by Protestants. Very few Protestants today truly respect the Scriptures as God's sole authority in religion. In fact, most of their doctrines originated in the Catholic Church rather than in the Scriptures, i.e., clerical dress, baptism by pouring or sprinkling rather than immersion, addressing religious leaders with religious titles, instrumental music in worship, observance of Christmas and Easter. Holding to the Scriptures alone does not cause division, but to the contrary, is the only true means of unity. The solution for overcoming division among us is to reject all the unscriptural practices which have been introduced by men and go back to the Bible. We must completely denounce all the decrees, doctrines, and traditions of men and fully return to the written Word of Christ, the New Testament. This is the only way to please God and to be united in His name.

24) May the Eternal God be with everyone in the study and application of His Word.

Michael Lopez, Catholic first Rebuttal

First Rebuttal Of The Riggs-Lopez Debate By Michael Lopez

1] Before I begin my rebuttal of my opponent's comments I will reiterate what I established in my opening comments. Using scripture, I established 9 points: 1) Jesus in the gospels commissioned his apostles to do many things, including orally preaching the gospels, but not to write or hold future generations bound to scripture; 2) Only tradition verifies for humanity the contents of scripture, as it does not identify its own contents; 3) Jesus gave us a church, not a book, as the pillar and foundation of truth; 4) Sola Scriptura is a tradition of men; 5) Jesus and the apostles rely on extrascriptural revelation as divine revelation; 6) The Word of God for future generations is oral and written; 7) The attack on Oral Tradition, as well as 8) advocating private interpretation is anti-biblical; 9) Sola Scriptura has spawned 28,000 denominations. In his opening statements my opponent did not touch on items numbered 1, 2, 5, 8 or 9. As in his opening statements he tries to establish his own position, he would not touch on these difficulties, but now that my opening statement is out, in order for him to affirm the proposition, he must deal with them. In fact they can not be dealt with and thus invalidate Sola Scriptura on their own merits. As you review his rebuttal, ask yourself if he has seriously interacted with my opening statement on those issues. Here I will respond to those areas that he did bring up in his opening statement.

2] My opponent affirms several things that I would commend for his honesty; 1) There is not one verse in the bible that says scripture is the sole authority (par. 1); 2) the Word of God had authority and came in two forms, oral and written (par. 13); 3) The authority that the apostles had came from our Lord Jesus Christ and had God's authority behind them (par. 4-14). This authoritative church was binding on all those who followed Christ. During this time of apostolic authority, their judgment was absolute (Mt. 18:18-19; Acts 11; Acts 15). There were no private interpreters of the apostles. Their judgment had authority from God and were united in doctrine. When disputes arose, an authoritative apostolic church would decide the matter. These admissions undercut the case for Sola Scriptura. Besides examining his arguments that apostolic authority died when the apostles did, I will examine the ramification of these crucial admissions.

3] My opponent argues that the authority of the apostles could not be passed on (except by the bible, par. 9-11). In my opening statement I showed that not to be the case. 2nd Timothy established two things fatal to this idea: 1) Succession to the apostles with the authority of the apostles; 2) what is to be protected is the word of God in oral form; i.e. tradition. We saw Paul ordain Timothy (2 Tim. 1:6) to the ministry: "Hence I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands". This ministry is transacted in an official ceremony (cf. 1 Tim. 4:14; 1:18) My opponent alleges that after Paul and the other apostles die, there is no binding authority other than scripture. Paul is at the end of his life (2 Tim. 4:6-8);. If this were so I would expect Paul to write "make sure you make copies of what I and the others have written, and that be your only guide after I die. After we die, the only authoritative teaching is scripture. One must read and decide for themselves, and ask the Holy Spirit to guide them. " We see no statement in the New Testament that after the apostles die, so did their authority. On the contrary, we see Paul entrust to Timothy the function of guarding the deposit of faith; Is the deposit of faith limited to scripture? Let us examine Paul's words: 2 Tim. 1:13-14: "Follow the pattern of the sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus; guard the truth that has been entrusted to you by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us." Notice that Timothy must go by the words that he heard from

Paul: oral tradition. This oral tradition is guarded by the Holy Spirit, exactly as the church teaches.

4] Next, we saw Timothy as Paul's spiritual son, have the same authority to pass on this oral tradition, guarded by the Holy Spirit: 2 Tim. 2:1-2 "You then, my son (2nd generation), be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me (1st generation) before many witnesses entrust to faithful men (3rd generation) who will be able to teach others (4th generation) also." No hint that succeeding generations do not pass on the Holy Spirit or teach authoritatively. Paul assumes that the Holy Spirit that Timothy uses to guard from error, is promised to the succeeding generations. This is orally transmitted as well.

5] Timothy is Paul's true son in the faith, and is addressed as so -1 Tim. 1:2: "To Timothy, my true son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord" also 1 Tim. 1:18; 2 Tim 1:2, 2:1; Phi. 2:23). The sons are true successors. They are appointed to preach the gospel message with authority. Timothy: 1 Cor. 4:17: "Therefore I sent to you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church." Titus: Tit. 1:4-5: "To Titus, my true son in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior. This is why I left you in Crete, that you might amend what was defective, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you,". Notice in the Corinthians passage that just as Paul teaches, so does his successor Timothy. Let us digest this point. How was this faith to be passed on? According to my opponent, those who succeed the apostles do not have binding authority, and the sole rule of faith is the bible. On the contrary, Timothy and Titus have the same apostolic authority to bind and loose as the apostles (Mt. 18:18, 16:19). As bishops ordained by Paul, they also have the authority to appoint elders (or priests) transmitting this oral tradition and sacraments given by Christ. No mention here that these successors have less authority or scripture being the exclusive guide.

6] My opponent writes that the Holy Spirit was not promised to the church (par. 11). How could the church be the pillar and ground of truth if it did not have the Holy Spirit (1 Tim. 3:15)? This passage is not qualified by, "it is only so if it teaches scripture", or "it is only the pillar as long as the apostles are alive." He promised the Holy Spirit to the apostles to guide into all truth (John 16:13), and evil will not (future) prevail against the church (Mt. 16:18). He will be with his people until the end of the age (future) (Mt. 28:20), thus through the Holy Spirit. My opponent stressed that one could have binding authority only if he had the Holy Spirit. I have demonstrated that those who succeeded the apostles had such binding authority. Paul, in writing to those who were under successors of the apostles (they were not under apostles) wrote: "Obey your leaders and submit to them; for they are keeping watch over your souls, as men who will have to give account. (Heb. 13: 17):" Authority via the Holy Spirit.

7] My opponent made a big admission when he stated that oral tradition at the time of the apostles was actually the Word of God (par. 14), and was to be received as such by the Thessalonians. There of course is no real choice as Paul is explicit in affirming this in 2 Thes. 2:15. Let us examine the context, 2 Thes. 2:13-17: . "13 But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God chose you from the beginning to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. 14 To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 15 So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter. 16 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through

grace, 17 comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word." Prior to this (vv. 1-12) Paul writes how people must not be deceived by false teaching. Paul tells the Thessalonians that in order to not be deceived, they must hold to both traditions, oral and written. Nowhere does he say that what is oral, is the exact thing as the written. Nor does he tell us that after he dies, the only thing that must be held to is the written word. What does this tradition (oral and written) do? Tradition teaches the gospel (v. 14) that leads to salvation (v. 13). When one holds to these traditions our Lord Jesus Christ establishes them in every good work (v. 17). These are the same things Paul writes of in regards to scripture in 2 Tim. 3:15-17. My opponent stressed that the traditions of 2 Thess. 2 were only to be received by the Thessalonians and not for future generations. . Paul specifically uses the word tradition, which means to pass on. We have seen in 2 Tim. 1-2, that this oral tradition is indeed to be passed on to future generations. If we hold that 2 Thes. 2 only refers to traditions held by the Thessalonians he is writing to, he digs himself into a deeper problem. Paul here puts oral and written tradition in the same category. If we are to believe oral tradition is stopped here, then so is written tradition. That is fatal to Sola Scriptura. If he admits that the written tradition must be passed on, so oral tradition must be passed on as well. That is also fatal to the Sola Scriptura theory. Any way 2 Thess. 2:15 is consistently interpreted, Sola Scriptura falls.

8] My opponents admission that all of what the apostles taught was the Word of God (par. 13-14) destroys Sola Scriptura. Nine of the 12 apostles (all except John, Peter, and Matthew) thus orally taught the Word of God and never wrote a thing. What happened to all these churches established by the nine apostles when the apostles were martyred? According to my opponent, once the apostles died, there was no binding authority except scripture. Were all these churches supposed to forget what they were orally taught? Were they now precluded from passing on this oral tradition? How could the written tradition be binding on them when they had none? Especially since there was no full canon until the 4th century. Of course, the Word of God does not last until the apostles died, but this Oral Word of God lasts forever (1 Peter 1:25). This oral word of God was binding on all the churches established by all the apostles and their successors.

9] Let us examine the verses that were put forward that only the written tradition was binding (par. 15-19). Twice he quoted Eph. 3:2-5: "...How that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets." 1) This is a letter written to the Ephesians prior to the scriptural letter to the Ephesians. Thus, the quotation is not even about scripture; 2) Paul writes of what they had already received before, he had briefly written, thus implying that he told orally much more than what he wrote. In fact, Paul had preached the Word of God for three years (Acts 20: 27, 31). After Paul died, were the Ephesians all of a sudden supposed to forget what Paul told them?; 3) The mystery (as explained in v. 6) is not about all doctrine that must be believed but only that the Gentiles can become a part of Christ's body; 4) This letter does not say that it is referencing all the manifold wisdom of God. What does? Let us examine a few verses later: Eph. 3:10 reads: "that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places." So the authoritative church teaches this wisdom, thus destroying Sola Scriptura; 5) If we read further on, we see the authority of the Church to unite in truth: Eph. 4: 3-5, 12-14 "...eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism...: to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles." Notice, unity, one faith, brought by the Holy Spirit (not 28,000 faiths spawned by Sola Scriptura which does carry about every wind of doctrine).

10] Twice my opponent referenced 1 Cor. 14:37 (par. 15 & 18) as showing that only scripture commands believers, not oral tradition. Quite the contrary, we see several references to Timothy, Paul's spiritual son, having the authority to command based on what Paul taught orally. 1 Tim. 1:3 "As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine." (cf. 1 Cor. 4:17, 1 Thes. 4:1-2). As we have already seen (2Tim. 1:13-2:2), the succeeding generations pass on this oral Word of God with the same authority. Paul, acting as bishop reminds Timothy, also a bishop, that he likewise has the authority to command others: 2 Tim. 2:14-15: "Remind them of this, and charge them before the Lord to avoid disputing about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth." Sola Scriptura people allege here we have authority of all people to rightly understand God's word. I have shown that this word is oral. Paul tells Timothy to charge the people, and as bishop, Timothy has the authority to rightly handle the word of truth (oral tradition), and so instruct the believers. Absolutely no hint of private interpretation.

11] John 20:31 - My opponent quoted John 20:31, about how his gospel is written so that we may believe, and supposedly it proves Sola Scriptura. First, he forgets to mention v. 30 which makes it plain that he is only mentioning John's gospel. Is my opponent arguing that we only need John's gospel? Also, as James Akins writes, "the verse from John's Gospel tells us only that the Bible was composed so we can be helped to believe Jesus is the Messiah. It does not say the Bible is all we need for salvation, much less that the Bible is all we need for theology, nor does it say the Bible is even necessary to believe in Christ. After all, the earliest Christians had no New Testament to appeal to; they learned from oral, rather than written, instruction."

12] My opponent quotes 2 Tim. 3:15-17 to show scripture is sufficient for salvation and equips for every good work: 1) What equips Timothy for salvation and good work? The scripture that Timothy knew since infancy was only the Old Testament. Paul does not even identify this very letter as scripture. 2) The immediate context shows a reliance on what he was orally taught as being a part of what equips him (v. 10, 14); 3). Paul does not tell him to forget the first two chapters of the letter which we have shown to be oral teaching; 4) Scripture is only termed profitable (v. 16), and has its uses. It is quite a leap to say one needs nothing else. Water is profitable for one's health, one also needs food; 5) 2 Thes. 2:13-17 we saw standing fast to oral tradition as also helpful to salvation; 6) For equipping for every good work we saw oral tradition do as well (2 Thes. 2:13-17). James says patience makes a man equipped for every good work (James 1:4). Other things that prepare for every good work and perfect the person: 2 Tim. 2:21; Col. 1:28; 4:12. Scripture is thus not the only thing that does this function; 7) All Scripture only refers either to a specific verse or a specific book. The New Testament use of the term "scripture" reveals that whenever the term is used in the singular -- "scripture" -- it always refers to either a specific book of Scripture or a specific passage within a book. It never refers to the whole corpus of works we today refer to as "Scripture." When the Bible wants to refer to the whole of the corpus, it always uses the term in the plural -- "the Scriptures," never "Scripture."

13] 1 Cor. 4:6 - My opponent alleged (par. 18) that when Paul writes to not go beyond what is written he means not to go beyond scripture. Paul is writing about the book of life, about who will get acquitted or condemned (vv. 4-5). There is no reference to scripture anywhere in the passage. He writes that Rev. 20:12 means that only scripture is the standard that we will be judged (par 19). Let us

look at the context to see if that is so: Rev. 20:12-15: "And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Also another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, by what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead in them, and all were judged by what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire." The book of Life is not scripture, but the list of those who go to heaven. That written in the books is not scripture, but what the people had done. These verses thus have no relation to scripture, let alone having anything to do with Sola Scriptura. Concluding 'proof' texts for Sola Scriptura (Rom. 2:16; Jam. 2:12; John 12:48) are likewise not even references about scripture. Finally, the charge (par. 19) that the church discredits scripture should not be stated by any theory that produces 28,000 versions of truth.

14] This is not a debate about tradition (par. 14). It is whether scripture is the sole authority. If my opponent would in the future like to debate what the early Church Fathers taught on such things as the idea that after the apostles died, no one could pass the Holy Spirit, the sacrifice and real presence of the Eucharist, papal authority, baptism, the rule of faith, worship, etc. maybe that can be done sometime in the future. The early Church was distinctively Catholic. Protestantism is forced to put out this idea of Sola Scriptura because the new ideas put out by those who rebelled against God's church in the 16th- century, are not found anywhere in the early church.

15] My opponent argues that even the apostolic church did not have the power to legislate (par. 11, 15, 16, 19), and there are no papal pronouncements in scripture. Not only Jesus' statements (Mt. 18:18, 16:19; Jn. 20:22-23; Jn. 21:15-17) but the first 15 chapters of Acts shows the power of Peter and the apostles to reveal God's doctrine and legislate. Peter authoritatively revealed that circumcision was not necessary for salvation (Acts. 11, 15). The Church legislated that people could not eat food offered to idols (Acts 15:29) (bound) and by the time Paul wrote his letter to the Corinthians, that was no longer binding (1 Cor. 14) (loosed).

16] Despite my opponents assertions I have shown: 1) the successors of the apostles do have binding authority; 2) the oral, binding Word of God is passed on after the apostles died; 3) the texts that 'prove' Sola Scriptura were sometimes not even referencing scripture, and the ones that were about scripture did not come close to proving it, as they proved tradition and church authority. Next time, before I rebut my opponents first rebuttal, I will show even further errors, in addition to reminding him of the other Sola Scriptura errors I showed in my opening statement.

David Riggs Second Rebuttal

Second Rebuttal Of The Riggs-Lopez Debate

By David J. Riggs

1) I am affirming: "The inspired writings (the holy Scriptures of the New Testament of Jesus Christ) claim for themselves that they alone are the standard of authority in Religion today."

2) First of all, I want to consider again the authority of the apostles and prophets and that which proceeded from them, the holy Scriptures. The promise of the Holy Spirit (the miraculous measure, the baptism of, etc.,) was made to the apostles alone. They were the ones to whom Jesus was speaking, and the ones who had been with Him from the beginning (John 14:25-26; 15:26-27). The Holy Spirit would be in them and would enable them to teach all the truth concerning the will of God (John 16:12-14; Matt. 10:20). The apostles were to wait in Jerusalem to receive the Holy Spirit as was promised (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-5,8). On the day of Pentecost, they received the Holy Spirit and began to deliver the New Testament of Jesus Christ. Their possession of the Holy Spirit gave them great miraculous powers which were designed to confirm their Word (Acts 2:4,43; Heb. 2:2-4; 2 Cor. 12:12). Later, by the laying on of the apostles' hands, New Testament prophets were made (Acts 8:17-19; 19:6). The New Testament prophets could also work miracles and speak by inspiration of God (Acts 6:5-8; 8:5-6), but could not pass on the Holy Spirit to others (Acts 8:14-19). The possession of the Holy Spirit is the factor that determined the authority of the apostles and prophets.

3) In that early age, the inspired apostles and prophets revealed God's Word orally--by the word of mouth. Later, they began to deliver God's law both orally and written. Peter said, "Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior..." (2 Pet. 3:1-2). Thus, both the verbal teaching and the writings of the inspired men had equal authority because both were the product of the Holy Spirit. When the apostles and prophets passed from the earth, their inspired writings became the only means for receiving God's Word. Please consider the following list.

4) THE PURPOSE AND AUTHORITY OF THE INSPIRED WRITINGS: (1) Life in the name of Jesus (John 20:30-31). (2) Commands of the Lord (1 Cor. 14:37). (3) Knowledge of the mystery of Christ (Eph. 3:2-5). (4) The proper conduct (1 Tim. 3:14-15). (5) Every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17). (6) Protection against sin (1 John 2:1). (7) An assurance of eternal life (1 John 5:13) (8) Standard by which teachers are tested (1 Cor. 4:6; Acts 17:11). (9) Joy that is complete (1 John 1:1-4). (10) A reminder of the commandments (2 Pet. 3:1-2). (11) Standard of judgment (Rev. 20:12; John 12:48; Rom. 2:16; James 2:12).

5) From the foregoing, we see the purpose and authority of the Scriptures which the apostles and prophets left us. I humbly beseech the readers of this Debate to look up the above passages in your own Bibles and carefully examine them. Each of them mention the sacred writings ("these are written," "the things which I write," etc.), and reveal what they provide ("that you may believe," "that you may know you have eternal life," etc.). The passages, and others like them, claim for themselves that they alone are the authority because no other authorities are mentioned. There are no passages which state that "oral traditions independent of Scripture," "laws given by the church," "ex-cathedra pronouncements of the Popes," "successors to the apostles," etc., are given to bring life in the name of Jesus (John 20:31), to equip for every good work, (2 Tim. 3:17), to give assurance of salvation (1 John 5:13), to judge us in the last day (Rev. 20:12), etc.

6) My opponent in this debate is trying to establish other authorities along with that which the apostles and prophets left us (the holy Scriptures). Actually, my opponent endorses four authorities besides the Scriptures: (1) the Catholic Church; (2) oral traditions given independent of the Scriptures; (3) ex-cathedra pronouncements of the Popes; and (4) successors to the apostles. Surely, God is not the author of such confusion. Let's consider some of his arguments regarding some of his authorities. He said, "This authoritative church was binding on all those who followed Christ." (Par. 2). "When disputes arose, an authoritative church would decide the matter." (Par. 2). "The Church legislated that people could not eat food offered to idols (Acts 15:29) (bound) and by the time Paul wrote his letter to the Corinthians, that was no longer binding (1 Cor. 14) (loosed)." (Par. 15). My opponent is very good at assuming the very thing he needs to prove. To assume something and then assert it, is no way to prove anything. We plead with him to please show by the Scriptures where Jesus established an "authoritative church." Also, we beg him to stop misapplying the passages which were spoken regarding the apostles and prophets. Passages which refer to the apostles and prophets do not establish authority for the church, and to pervert them in such a fashion is a very grave evil. (See 2 Pet. 3:16; Gal. 1:6-9; Matt. 15:9). We plead with him to please show where Acts 15 teaches that the church legislated anything. Acts 15:28 says, "For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality." Thus, it was by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that the apostles and prophets legislated those things.

7) My opponent asked, "How could the church be the pillar and ground of truth if it did not have the Holy Spirit (1 Tim. 3:15)?" (Par. 6). As we have repeatedly shown, the Lord selected his apostles and promised them the baptism of the Holy Spirit and they were to wait in Jerusalem to receive it (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-5,8; 2:1-4). There is not a single passage in all of the New Testament that remotely indicates that the church received the Holy Spirit as did the apostles. As I mentioned in last month's rebuttal, the phrase "pillar and ground of truth" (1 Tim. 3:15) does not mean that the church is the originator of truth, or that it can make or change the laws of God. It simply means that the church is the upholder, defender and proclaimer of the truth. The responsibility of the church today is not to legislate for God or to reveal divine truth, but simply to follow, defend and proclaim the truth which was revealed by the holy apostles and prophets.

8) My opponent also said regarding the church, "...Eph. 3:10 reads: 'that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places.' So the authoritative church teaches this wisdom, thus destroying Sola Scriptura..." (Par. 9). Eph. 3:10 says absolutely nothing about the church being authoritative. It is simply showing that things hidden from the ages (vs. 9), were now made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places (vs. 10). In other words, the heavenly authorities, the angels, could now see God's wisdom unfolded through the church because it had been established.

9) Clearly my opponent does not understand the nature of the church as revealed in the New Testament. The church in the New Testament is simply the body of the saved and Jesus Christ is its Head. "...Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body." (Eph. 5:23). The apostles and prophets were servants who revealed by inspiration the will of the Head. "...It has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets..." (Eph. 3:5) "...Members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone..." (Eph. 2:19-20). Thus, anyone who obeys the commandments of the Lord as revealed by the apostles and prophets becomes part of the body or household. He then continues in a life of obedience to the Head. The authority is not in the body, but in the Head (Eph. 1:22-23; Col.

1:18). The ruling is not in the kingdom, but in the King (Heb. 7:1-2; Rev. 1:5-6). The authority is not in the church, but in Christ (Matt. 28:18; 1 Pet. 3:22). The church is not the Savior, but simply the body of the saved (Acts 2:47; Eph. 5:22-24). My opponent is claiming an authority for the church that God did not give it.

10) Lets now consider what my opponent says about "oral traditions independent of the Scriptures." My opponent has not given a single verse which reveals the purpose and authority of oral traditions handed down through the ages independent of Scripture. He has assumed, regarding several passages which he has used, that they authorize for us today oral traditions along with the Scriptures. Let me give several examples. My opponent quoted 2 Tim. 1:13-14 and said, "Notice that Timothy must go by the words that he heard from Paul: oral tradition. This oral tradition is guarded by the Holy Spirit, exactly as the church teaches." (Par. 3). 2 Tim. 1:13-14 says, "Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us." My opponent has assumed from the passage that since Timothy received the sound words orally, it authorizes us today to receive sound words orally along with the Scriptures. Paul simply instructed Timothy to follow the sound words (the sound teachings or traditions) which he had heard from him.

11) Furthermore, 2 Tim. 1:13-14 shows that Timothy was a New Testament prophet. At one point during his lifetime, Timothy had received the laying on of hands from Paul. 2 Tim. 1:6 says, "Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands." As we have shown repeatedly, when an apostles laid his hands on someone, he received the Holy Spirit which enabled him to prophesy, work miracles, etc. (Acts 6:5-8; 8:5-8; 19:6), but he could not pass on the Holy Spirit to others (Acts 8:14-19). Also, there was a time when the Word of God was given by the inspired men both orally and written (2 Pet. 3:1-2). Timothy lived in that early time when people received God's Word in both ways. 2 Tim. 1:13-14 does not authorize "oral traditions" as a source of authority for us today. It says absolutely nothing about oral traditions independent of Scripture which would continue to be handed down through the ages by word of mouth.

12) My opponent quotes 2 Tim. 2:1-2 and says, "No hint that succeeding generations do not pass on the Holy Spirit or teach authoritatively. Paul assumes that the Holy Spirit that Timothy uses to guard from error, is promised to the succeeding generations. This is orally transmitted as well." (Par. 4). Thus, my opponent from 2 Tim. 2:1-2, not only has oral traditions handed down through the ages, but the Holy Spirit as well. That's a lot from a passage which says absolutely nothing about oral traditions or the Holy Spirit! 2 Tim. 2:1-2 says, "You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." Thus, the things which Timothy had heard from Paul were to be committed to faithful men who would also teach the things from Paul to others. As before, my opponent has made the false assumption that since one of Timothy's sources of authority was oral (he heard the Word of God orally), succeeding generations would continue to have the oral Word of God as a source of authority.

13) My opponent said, "If we hold that 2 Thes. 2 only refers to traditions held by the Thessalonians he is writing to, he digs himself into a deeper problem. Paul here puts oral and written tradition in the same category. If we are to believe oral tradition is stopped here, then so is written tradition. This is fatal to Sola Scriptura." (Par. 7). The argument my opponent gives here makes no sense. Just because

one means of delivery stopped (oral traditions), it does not mean the other stopped (written traditions). Various prophets of the Old Testament era taught both orally and by writings. When they died, does it mean that their teaching by writings stopped? The oral traditions and written traditions which the Thessalonians had been taught by Paul and other inspired men were one and the same. Paul instructs them, "Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle." (2 Thess. 2:15). Again, as we have shown repeatedly from the Scriptures, there was a time when the sacred traditions (the teachings handed or passed on by the inspired men) were given both orally and written. With the passing of the inspired men, those sacred traditions are only in the inspired writings. 2 Thess. 2 gives no indication or hint whatsoever that traditions independent of those given in the writings of the inspired men would continue to be handed down by word of mouth through the ages. It does not establish "oral traditions" as an authority along with the Scriptures.

14) My opponent said in Par. 8, "...This Oral Word of God lasts forever (1 Pet. 1:25). This oral Word of God was binding on all the churches established by all the apostles and their successors." Again, my opponent is assuming that when passages refer to the oral Word of God, they establish the oral Word of God as an authority for us today. 1 Pet. 1:25 says, "But the word of the LORD endures forever. Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you." Dear readers, let me ask some simple questions: "Does 1 Pet. 1:25 give any indication whatsoever that oral Word of God other than that which was preached in that early age would remain forever?" "If the oral Word of God is to last forever, as my opponent claims, what is it, where is it, and how are we to receive it?" Please notice that 1 Pet. 1:25 is a passage of Scripture. Thus, Scripture is the means God has used to cause His Word to remain forever. Certainly, the oral Word of God was binding on all the churches established by all the apostles. There was a time when the Word of God was given by the inspired men both orally and written.

15) I have repeatedly begged my opponent to please give us a list of those "oral traditions handed down independent of Scripture." I affirm emphatically that the Catholic oral traditions are nothing more than human traditions. Their whole effort in trying to defeat the Bible as the only authority is nothing more than an endeavor to justify their own human traditions. How else would they justify them? They want to discredit the Bible as the only authority because it plainly and forcefully condemns their human traditions. For example: (1) It condemns clerical dress (Matt. 23:4-5). (2) It teaches against the adoration of Mary (Luke 11:27-28). (3) It shows that all Christians are priests (1 Pet. 2:5,9). (4) It condemns the observance of special days (Gal. 4:9-11). (5) It teaches that all Christians are saints (1 Cor. 1:2). (6) It teaches that baptism is immersion instead of pouring (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12). (7) It forbids us to address religious leaders as "father" (Matt. 23:9). (8) It opposes unmarried bishops (1 Tim. 3:2-5). (9) It addresses only God Himself as the "Holy Father" (John 17:11). (10) It shows that the great apostasy would forbid marriage and command to abstain from foods (1 Tim. 4:1-3). (11) It reveals that the great apostasy would have one who claimed to take the place of God (2 Thess. 3:3-4). In view of the above passages, one can easily see why the Catholic Church seeks to destroy the Bible as the only source of authority.

16) My opponent when referring to the apostles added the phrase, "and their successors." (Above quote, Par. 8). He said in Par. 5, "The sons are true successors." We simply ask, "Where in the Scriptures does it say that the sons are true successors?" I encourage everyone to please "...Let God be true, but every man a liar." (Rom. 3:4). The Catholic idea of successors to the apostles comes from man, not God. Paul said, "To Timothy, my true son in the faith..." (1 Tim. 1:2). Thus, Timothy was Paul's true son IN THE FAITH. Like the Corinthians, Timothy had been begotten by the gospel by Paul (Acts 16:1-3; 1 Cor. 4:15). One can easily show where Timothy, Stephen, Phillip, Silas and

others were New Testament prophets, but there are no passages which state that the apostles were to have successors. The word "successor" is not used in the New Testament.

17) A look at the qualifications of the apostles reveals they would have no successors. An apostle had to be an eye-witness of Christ. (See Acts 1:15-26). Paul defended his apostleship by saying, "Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?" (1 Cor. 9:1). The apostles were indeed witnesses in the fullest sense. They were the eye-witnesses, carefully chosen by the Lord, who would witness to mankind what they saw and heard concerning Jesus. Acts 1:8 says, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." The Lord said to Paul, "...I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you." (Acts 26:16). Peter declared, "For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty." (2 Pet. 1:16). The apostle John, in his introduction to his first epistle, declared that he was bearing witness to those things which they had heard, had seen with their eyes, and had touched with their hands, concerning the Word of life. He then added, "And these things we write to you that your joy may be full." (See 1 John 1:1-4). The apostles witness to us through their writings and this is the only way their unerring testimony is transmitted to us today.

18) Let me close by encouraging everyone to continue to look into the perfect law of liberty (James 1:25). Let us receive with meekness the Word which is able to save our souls (James 1:21). Let us continue to have genuine love and respect for God's holy truth that we might be saved (2 Thess. 2:10-12).

Michael Lopez Second Rebuttal

Second Rebuttal Of The Lopez-Riggs Debate

By Michael Lopez

I am denying, "The inspired writings (the holy Scriptures of the New Testament of Jesus Christ) claim for themselves that they alone are the standard of authority in Religion today."

1] Before I respond to my opponent's first rebuttal, I will establish more points fatal to Sola Scriptura. Implicit in the idea of Sola Scriptura are many absolutely necessary assumptions. I have disproved many assumptions but here are others that also need to be considered, borrowed from James Akin (points a-g). a) Sola Scriptura assumes 100% literacy. If God demanded Sola Scriptura to be the guide for believers, then believers that succeed the apostolic generation must have the ability to read. A Protestant publication admits "Literacy in the Roman empire, by very rough estimate, did not exceed 10 percent on average." (Wayne Meeks, *The Moral World of the First Christians* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986). Most Christians, besides not having a definitive canon until the late 4th century, could not read. Since then the vast majority of people have been illiterate. Did God give Christians a binding rule of faith that most people could not participate in? That is an unbiblical assumption that my opponent must make.

2] b) If each Christian is to make a thorough study of the Scriptures and decide for himself what they mean then he must have a copy of the Scriptures to use in making his thorough study. The universal application of Sola Scriptura presupposes the mass manufacturing of books, and of the Bible in particular. It presupposes the printing press, which didn't exist until 1400 years after Christ. In actuality, bibles were written on expensive parchment, a scribe would have to write for ten months to complete one bible (Rev. Henry Graham, *Where We Got the Bible*, p. 53, 75) and bibles were rare, though preserved faithfully in the church. The costs would be exorbitant, well beyond the reach of the common man; c) It presupposes the universal distribution of books and of the Bible in particular. There must be a distribution network capable of delivering affordable copies of the Bible to the average Christian throughout the world, not possible now, let alone for vast generations before; d) If the average Christian is going to study what Scripture says and decide what it teaches, he must possess adequate scholarly support material, be able to read the texts in the original languages or have material capable of telling him when there is a translation question. Sola Scriptura presupposes the possession of adequate support materials.

3] e) If the average Christian is to do a thorough study of the Bible for himself, then he must have adequate time to do this study. Sola Scriptura presupposes the universal possession of adequate leisure time in which to make a thorough study the Bible for oneself. f) Sola Scriptura presupposes universal nutrition. Even if a Christian had adequate time to study the Bible sufficiently, it will do him no good if he lacks a diet sufficiently nutritious to let his brain function properly and his mind work clearly; g) Sola Scriptura also presupposes a high level of universal education in critical thinking skills (a level which does not even exist today). If the average Christian is going to evaluate competing interpretations for himself then he must have a significant amount of skill in evaluating arguments. He must be able to recognize what is a good argument and fallacy and what is not, etc. Nowhere does the bible teach any of these 7 assumptions necessary for Sola Scriptura to be viable, and the points show that many of these assumptions are not even valid now for most believers throughout the world, much less for 1500 years before the rebellion against his church. These problems do not hinder the church found by Christ from passing on his truths. My opponent may argue that scripture does not speak of these things so it is irrelevant. The fact that these assumptions are essential for Sola Scriptura, and scripture makes no mention of such things proves exactly that Sola Scriptura is unbiblical..

4] My opponent's first rebuttal starts with a repeat of verses that supposedly show Sola Scriptura. In my first rebuttal I showed that these verses proved nothing and some did not even relate to the New Testament. His misuse of Eph. 3:2-5, 1 Cor. 14:37, 1 Cor. 4: 6, 2 Tim. 3:16-17, Rev. 20:12 (par. 2-11, his first rebuttal) were all analyzed and exposed in my first rebuttal (par. 9-13). My opponent pleaded that the verses be examined, which I did, including looking at the context. Once that is done, they show no hint of scripture as the exclusive authority.

5] Here I will examine the other verses mentioned in his first rebuttal. In par. 5 he quotes 1 Tim. 3:14-15: "I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; but in case I am delayed, I write so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth." I find that an amusing quote for someone trying to prove Sola Scriptura! First, Paul writes that his preference was to teach face to face, orally and authoritatively being his best way. Only when impossible for him to be there, did Paul resort to writing. Second, he calls the church the pillar and ground of truth. If it said that

scripture was the pillar and ground of truth, my opponent may have a point, but Paul declares the church the ground of truth. It proves the exact opposite of what my opponent wanted. What is the church that can trace itself to Paul's letter to Timothy? The Catholic Church. Can a pillar and ground of truth err? No, it can not. Nowhere does Paul put the restrictions around this phrase, that only the apostles could teach truth, or that after the apostles die, the church can crumble into error. Thus, the verses that supposedly prove Sola Scriptura, instead imply the infallibility of this church.

6] In par. 6 he quotes 1 John 1:4 "And these things we write to you that your joy may be full." Does that scripture imply anything like Sola Scriptura? Not even close. But as I did in my last rebuttal, I can show that the oral tradition did the exact same thing as scripture. 2 John 12: "I have much to write to you, but I do not want to do so with pen and ink. Instead, I hope to visit you and talk with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete." John actually prefers oral tradition to pass on truth to the written tradition, and it does the same thing.

7] In par. 8 he quotes 1 John 5:13, "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God." Is my opponent seriously arguing that disciples of the 9 apostles who wrote nothing (exclusively taught by oral tradition) could not have eternal life after the apostles died? They had nothing written. Paul shows that reliance on the preached gospel (oral tradition) is sufficient for salvation. 1 Cor. 15:2: "By this Gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain."

8] If you read my opening statement and the nine propositions that I wrote that refuted from scripture Sola Scriptura, and carefully read my opponent's objections, one surely realizes that my objections stand quite easily. He has created and knocked down straw men without dealing with the substance of any of my objections. For example, he writes (par. 13) "There are no verses in all of the holy Scriptures which indicates that the church has the authority to originate truth....". Similar statements were made by him in his opening statement and first rebuttal. In any of my statements or anywhere in Catholic teaching is it stated that the Catholic church originates truth? Nowhere. The Catholic teaching is not that the church creates truth, but passes down faithfully the truth that was given by God to his apostles. The church faithfully guards and passes on this original deposit of faith (2 Tim. 1:13-14, 1 Tim. 6:20, Jude 3).

9] My opponent writes that I repeat often quoted Catholic arguments (par. 14, 16, 17, 18). The reason why those arguments are made, is because scripture affirms these arguments and Protestant objections are evasive and can not answer the points. A careful reading of my opponent's objections shows exactly that. For example, (par 14) he attempts to refute my showing that Jesus relied on binding oral tradition in regards to Moses seat (Mt. 23:2-3) by deflecting to other passages (thus avoiding the issue) which condemn traditions of men (Mt. 15, Mk. 7), and he remarks that it is Moses' scriptural authority that is binding. Let us read Mt. 23:2-3 for what it says: "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must obey them and do everything they tell you...". Why does Jesus bind people to obey something based on Moses' seat when there is nothing in the Old Testament saying anything about Moses seat? My opponent does not address this. Jewish scholars explain: "The particular place in the synagogue where the leaders used to sit was known metaphorically as the seat of Moses or as the throne of Torah, symbolizing the succession of teachers of Torah down through the ages." (William G. Braude and Israel J. Kapstein, *Pesikta diRav Kahana*, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America.) Protestants write, "The astounding authority

conceded 'the teachers of the law and the Pharisees' in Mt. 23:2 becomes explicit in v. 3. Even if the emphasis in v. 3 falls at the end, where Jesus denounces the Jewish leaders, hypocrisy, the beginning of the verse give them full authority in all they teach, even if they do not live up to it. *Panta hosa* ('everything' in v. 3) is a strong expression and cannot be limited to 'that teaching of the law that is in Jesus' view a faithful interpretation of it'; they cover everything the leaders teach, including the oral tradition as well. Nor does the text say their authority rests in their roles but not in their doctrine, on the contrary, v. 3 affirms their doctrine but condemns their practice." (DA. Carson, "Matthew in "The Expositor's Bible Commentary": Vol 8 (Matthew, Mark, Luke), Zondervan, 1984), 471-472). Non-Catholics thus agree Moses seat is from binding oral tradition and authority that is successively passed on 'through the ages.' So much for Sola Scriptura.

10] My opponent asserted that I was the one making assumptions (par. 14) in stating that the oral Word of God was to be passed in succession of the apostles. If he would have read what I actually stated in that very paragraph (My Opening Statement, par. 8) I used different scriptures to back that up. For example, Isaiah 59 prophecies of the New Covenant that is to be orally passed on. The Oral Word of God is eternal (1 Peter 1:25), not temporary, or only until the apostles die. In my first rebuttal, I showed via scripture (esp. par. 3-5, 10) that this Oral word of God is passed on to successive generations through authoritative teachers and is binding. I did not assume, I demonstrated via the bible. On the other hand, my opponent writes (par. 16) "I went to great lengths to show from the Scriptures that there was a time when the Word of God was; 1) given all orally, 2) both orally and written, 3) and now all written." No problem with the first two points. The third point my opponent has assumed but failed to demonstrate. I have refuted every attempt of my opponent to twist scriptures to say such. Although Catholics can hold that the Word of God is reduced to scripture in the sense of all revealed revelation (material sufficiency), the church most unhesitatingly affirms along with Paul, Peter and Jesus that an infallible guide is needed to interpret that scripture. Otherwise we have mass chaos.

11] My opponent tries to skirt the fact that Jesus never commissioned his apostles to write anything (except Rev. 1:19, only in regards to the Book of Revelation, and whose canon was in doubt until confirmed by the Catholic Church in the late 4th century). He tries to turn it around on me (par. 17) and says well, why do you quote scripture at all if it was never commissioned? I remind him that Jesus commissioned his apostles to teach to all the world everything he taught them (Mt. 28:20). Guided by the Holy Spirit, the apostles chose two ways. Most of them chose to teach the gospel orally (tradition), a few of them wrote in response to various concerns. The Catholic church honors and abides the manner in which they chose, oral and written. My opponent does not and has given no evidence that only the written was meant to survive. In any case, the fact remains that if Jesus wanted successive generations to have as a binding absolute authority only scripture, Jesus would have commanded them to write, and tell the apostles that future generations are only bound by scripture. As he does not, Sola Scriptura falls.

12] I challenged my opponent in my opening statement (par. 3) to provide from the bible, the contents of the New Testament. After all, it is his assertion that the New Testament is alone the exclusive guide. If you check his response (par. 18-19), you will see that he failed to do so. If the New Testament can not tell us the contents of the New Testament that is the authority, then the proposition falls. Only the Catholic Church has preserved the contents of the New Testament. In fact, when he quotes from the New Testament, he is in effect showing that he relies upon Catholic tradition whether he wants to admit to it or not. Theoretically, though, even if it was not the Catholic Church that preserved the bible, that still does not help his case, as he asserts that the bible is our only guide. He must prove from scripture what scripture is. He was unable to do so and diverted to another

issue (par. 18-19) by denying that it was the Catholic Church that preserved scripture. BTW, he conveniently overlooked the fact that it was the Council of Rome, called by Pope Damasus in 382, (the first Council) that first revealed to mankind the contents of the New Testament. The later Councils of Carthage and Hippo (393, 397) were verified by Pope Innocent in 419 AD. He quotes himself to show that it was not the Roman Catholic Church that produced and preserved the bible (par. 19). I will quote from the founder of Sola Scriptura, Martin Luther: "We are obliged to yield many things to the Papists--that with them is the word of God, which we received from them; otherwise we should have known nothing at all about it." Luthers Works, Vol. 24, Commentary on the Gospel of John, discussion on 16th chapter, St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia, 1961), 304.

13] Acts 1:20 shows apostles establishing successors. Judas' death causes vacancy. Peter says "For it is written in the book of Psalms, let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick (episkopee take)". Peter recognizes that succession must occur. The very word episkopee (bishopric) is later used in 1 Tim. 3:1, which applies the same term to bishop to successors. As Bob Sungenis writes "Luke uses the Greek word episkopee which specifies the 'office' of the person in view rather than the person himself... This is why most translations will render the verse, 'And his office let another take,' rather than 'his apostleship' let another take... Since the same word episkopee is used in reference to the office of bishop in 1 Tim. 3:1, the same principle of succession of that office must hold since that is the way Peter first interpreted and used the word." (Robert Sungenis letter, in Scott Butler, Jesus, Peter and the Keys, Queenship Press, 192-193)." Bishop successors thus have authority.

14] Acts 15 shows 1) papal authority, 2) binding authority of non-Apostles, and 3) the power of the church to legislate, all individually fatal to Sola Scriptura: 1) Paul and Barnabas have trouble with those who want to impose circumcision (vv. 1-2). How do they handle it, do they debate scripture passages and decide? In fact if the Sola Scriptura principle was in place, it is more likely that circumcision would have been reimposed as Gen. 17 says that the covenant with circumcision was to last forever. No, they take it to the apostles and elders, and the head apostle, Peter decides the issue. Paul and Barnabus were arguing with the Judaizers, but when Peter spoke, the Council became silent (vv. 7-12, 13) when he infallibly declared circumcision not necessary. 2) Luke carefully distinguishes apostles and elders throughout (v. 2, 4, 6, 8, 15, 22-23) and asserts that these elders likewise have binding authority that all are commanded to follow. This destroys any assertion that only apostles had binding authority. In fact James, who is not even an apostle, shows binding authority (although his speech of course does not adjust Peter's infallible decree that circumcision was not binding). The more my opponent argues that here Peter does not have papal authority through the use of James, he undermines his own contention that nonapostles do not have binding authority. Heads I win, tails he loses; 3) The church legislates laws that are binding on the believers. For pastoral reasons, James, along with the apostles and elders decide that one can not eat food offered to idols, eat blood and meat of strangled animals (vv. 20, 29). It would be a sin to disobey this law, even though eating food offered to idols in and of itself is not itself a sin. Later Paul shows that this binding law is no longer in place (1 Cor. 14). The Catholic Church likewise has the authority to legislate, as its authority comes from Christ and the apostles.

15] When Jesus uses the word church, it is within the context of authority, binding and loosing (Mt. 16:18-19; 18:17-18). My opponent's assertion that the church does not have this power is thus unbiblical. Going by the bible alone gives mass confusion. My opponent admitted all Churches came from the Catholic church (somehow excluding his church which is indeed a branch off from a branch off). He blames the Catholic Church for this. That is like blaming Moses for Korah's rebellion (Num. 16; cf Jude 11). Those following in the Sola Scriptura tradition of men, join ranks with Korah, who

rebelled against God's established leader (Moses), and Jude specifically warns against imitating (Jude 11, 8). BTW, I wonder why Jude is an inspired epistle when it is written by a non-Apostle? I wonder why my opponent quotes from Luke, Mark, or James, non-Apostles who wrote scripture. That undercuts his case that he is only required to follow teaching only directly from the apostles.

16] How is one saved? Are works necessary for salvation? Is Christ really present, and in what way in the Eucharist. Is baptism necessary for salvation and what does it do? Do infants get baptized? Can one lose salvation? What day do we worship? These are questions that were agreed upon (although of course there was discussion) in the Catholic Church for 1500 years. No new churches were created on those specific issues for 1500 years. Yet due to Sola Scriptura, churches divide explicitly on those issues, giving many interpretations, and thus fulfilling Peter's condemnation of those who twist the scripture to their own destruction (2 Pet. 3:16). How can the Church be the cause of those divisions when the Church did not have different positions on those issues? Using the bible and tradition the Catholic Church has provided the same answers (although growing in its understanding) to these questions for 2000 years. Only when Sola Scriptura arose have 28,000 denominations come with it. Jesus established a pillar of truth, not mass confusion. The church has a living teaching office, which though not always having perfect people, has been protected by Christ from the gates of hell ever prevailing against it (Mt. 16:18). On the other hand, Sola Scriptura has led to anarchy. Although there are more challenges and errors I must respond to, some of those will have to await my next rebuttal.

David Riggs Third Rebuttal

Of The Riggs-Lopez Debate By David J. Riggs

1) I am affirming: "The inspired writings (the holy Scriptures of the New Testament of Jesus Christ) claim for themselves that they alone are the standard of authority in Religion today."

2) My opponent in his last essay was truly getting ridiculous in trying to refute the Scriptures as the only authority. He quoted from James Akin who said, "Sola Scriptura presupposes universal nutrition. Even if a Christian had adequate time to study the Bible sufficiently, it will do him no good if he lacks a diet sufficiently nutritious to let his brain function properly and his mind work clearly..." There you have it folks. The Scriptures alone cannot be the authority in religion because some people lack a sufficient diet for their brains to function properly! Does he actually expect us to believe such nonsense? Why can't I equally argue, "Oral traditions independent of Scripture" can't be an authority because some people's brains don't function properly!

3) My opponent also used the old "illiteracy" and "printing press" arguments. (Par. 1 & 2, Second Rebuttal). It is argued that since many people were unable to read and that there was no printing press until 1400 years after Christ, the Scriptures cannot be the only standard. Please observe that such arguments come from men, not God. The following passages demonstrate that people in the time of Christ had access to the Old Testament Scriptures: "For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath." (Acts 15:21). "Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures..." (Acts 17:1-2; see also Acts 17:10-11). "And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians,

who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship, was returning. And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet." (Acts 8:27-28).

4) Everyone in those ancient times did not have a copy of the Scriptures, but those who were seeking to know the will of God had free access to them. The synagogues, even in remote places, had Scriptures in them and some individuals had Scriptures which were carried with them. The same could have been true regarding the New Testament Scriptures if the people who lived during the first through the fifteenth centuries had wanted them. The only time people do not have the Scriptures is when they do not want them and are opposed to them. There are many who are unable to read, but that does not discredit the Scriptures as the only authority, nor does it imply that oral traditions independent of the Scriptures, the pope, and the church are equal in authority with the Scriptures. How would a Catholic relay or transmit his belief to those who cannot read? He would simply teach them. This is precisely how that which is revealed in the Scriptures (the Word of God) is transmitted to those who cannot read.

5) In all of my essays in this Debate I have listed various passages which reveal the purpose and authority of the inspired writings. Again, here is a list of those verses:

6) THE PURPOSE AND AUTHORITY OF THE INSPIRED WRITINGS: (1) Life in the name of Jesus (John 20:30-31). (2) Commands of the Lord (1 Cor. 14:37). (3) Knowledge of the mystery of Christ (Eph. 3:2-5). (4) The proper conduct (1 Tim. 3:14-15). (5) Every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17). (6) Protection against sin (1 John 2:1). (7) An assurance of eternal life (1 John 5:13) (8) Standard by which teachers are tested (1 Cor. 4:6; Acts 17:11). (9) Joy that is complete (1 John 1:1-4). (10) A reminder of the commandments (2 Pet. 3:1-2). (11) Standard of judgment (Rev. 20:12; John 12:48; Rom. 2:16; James 2:12).

7) As I have done before, I humbly beseech you, the readers of this Debate, to carefully examine the above passages for yourselves. Each of them mention the sacred writings ("these are written," "the things which I write," etc.) and reveal what they (the inspired writings) provide ("that you may believe," "that you may know you have eternal life," etc.). The passages, and others like them, claim for themselves that they alone are the authority because there are no passages which state that "oral traditions independent of Scripture," "laws given by the church," "ex-cathedra pronouncements of the Popes," "successors of the apostles," etc., are given to bring life in the name of Jesus, to equip for every good work, to give assurance of salvation, to judge us in the last day, etc. The Hebrew writer made an argument from the silence of the Scriptures by saying, "For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood." (Heb. 7:14). In other words, since Moses spoke nothing concerning anyone from the tribe of Judah being a priest, Jesus could not have been a priest under the Levitical system. Likewise, since the New Testament Scriptures spoke nothing concerning other authorities in religion today, there are no other authorities.

8) If one reads and studies the New Testament Scriptures and obtains all the things mentioned in the above list, what else would he need? There is not a solitary thing needed by the child of God which is not provided in the Scriptures. As everyone knows, I have repeatedly begged my opponent to give us a list of his "oral traditions independent of Scriptures." In other words, if there are other things independent of Scriptures which are needful for our salvation, where are they, what are they, and how

do we obtain them? He has not provided a list because there is none. His "oral traditions independent of Scriptures" are nothing more than human traditions which the Bible strongly condemns. Please see my list in Par. 15, Second Rebuttal.

9) Let's carefully examine some of the above passages and see what my opponent has said regarding them. First, please consider 2 Tim. 3:15-17: "...And that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."

10) Just as God has provided all of man's needs for his survival here on earth, (air, water, food, etc.), He has provided all our spiritual needs in the Scriptures. The Scriptures are profitable for doctrine or teaching. They reveal that which is to be learned, taught, and obeyed. They are profitable for reproof. They convict and convince all those who open their hearts to it. They are profitable for correction. From them we learn what is right and wrong, what is truth and error. They are profitable for instruction in righteousness. They direct and encourage us to follow in the righteous course of life. They reveal the proper conduct that pleases God. As I mentioned, God created us and knows exactly what we need to please Him. Through His Scriptures, the child of God is fully equipped for all that God requires, for everything necessary to please Him.

11) Dear readers of this debate, I beg of you to judge for yourselves what 2 Tim. 3:15-17 is teaching. The verses vividly teach that the Scriptures thoroughly equip us for every good work and, thus, no other standard is needed or allowed. My opponent on this verse said, "Scripture is only termed profitable (v. 16), and has its uses. It is quite a leap to say one needs nothing else. Water is profitable for one's health, one also needs food..." (Par. 12, First Rebuttal). My opponent is ignoring verse 17 which says, "...That the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." Inasmuch as God is the Creator, He knows all of our needs. He has given us all profitable things, air, water, food, etc., to thoroughly equip us for living on earth. He also has given us through the Scriptures all profitable things to thoroughly equip for every good work which is pleasing to Him. If there are other sources of authority necessary for good works as my opponent claims, the Scriptures do not thoroughly equip us to every good work. In other words, the Scriptures either thoroughly equip us or they do not. What my opponent needs is a passage which teaches that "the Scriptures" AND "oral traditions independent of Scripture," AND "laws given by the church," AND "pronouncements of the Popes," AND "successors of the apostles" thoroughly equip us for every good work. If God has declared that the man of God is thoroughly equipped for every good work through the Scriptures, who has the right to say that the man of God is NOT thoroughly equipped for every good work through the Scriptures? Who will we believe, God or man?

12) Let us consider Eph. 3:2-5. It says, "...If indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets..."

13) Very simply, Paul said that he received knowledge of the mystery of Christ by revelation, and he wrote it so that when we read, we can understand what he understood. Notice, too, that the knowledge of the mystery was revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets. The authority of the apostles and prophets is clearly and plainly established in the Scriptures. My opponent in replying to this verse said, "Paul writes of what they had already received before, he had briefly written, thus implying that he told orally much more than what he wrote. In fact, Paul had preached the Word of God for three years (Acts 20: 27, 31). After Paul died, were the Ephesians all of a sudden supposed to forget what Paul told them?" (Par. 9, First Rebuttal). Certainly, Paul spoke orally to the Ephesians much more than he wrote, and definitely when Paul died, they were not to suddenly forget what he had told them. As I have repeatedly shown from the Scriptures, there was a time when the Word of God was given both orally and written, but now since the apostles and prophets (those who were given the revelation by the Holy Spirit) are all now dead, their writings become the only authority by which we receive the Word of God.

14) Let me give a simple illustration that hopefully will help everyone understand the above basic principle taught in the Scriptures. Let's suppose that the Lord Jesus after teaching a portion of His law, wanting to return to heaven, chose one servant (only one) to reveal the rest of His law to mankind. Let's call that servant's name "John" and his title is, "Ambassador." Jesus gave John the Holy Spirit so that he would not make mistakes in delivering His laws. Ambassador John, as a good servant, during his lifetime verbally taught the laws of the Lord to the people. Many people were blessed to have John in their presence teaching the laws of the Lord. Also, during his lifetime, John wrote the laws of the Lord for the people. Furthermore, in his writings he described how he had taught the people during his lifetime. Since John was the only one chosen, when he dies, his writings become the only means through which the people receive the laws of the Lord. This is precisely that which is revealed in the Scriptures regarding the work of the apostles and prophets. They were the Lord's chosen ambassadors to deliver His laws to mankind and through their preaching and writing their commission was completed. The apostle Paul said, "...The things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord." (1 Cor. 14:37). Jude said, "...I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." (Jude 3).

15) Next, let's consider 1 Tim. 3:14-15: "These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."

16) My opponent replied to these verses by saying, "I find that an amusing quote for someone trying to prove Sola Scriptura. First, Paul writes that his preference was to teach face to face, orally and authoritatively being his best way. Second, he calls the church the pillar and ground of the truth... Thus, the verses that supposedly prove Sola Scriptura, instead imply the infallibility of this church." (Par. 5, Second Rebuttal). I simply quoted the verses to show the purpose and authority of Paul's inspired writings. They are given, among other things, to show how one ought to conduct himself in the church. For example, Paul revealed in chapter 3 how bishops and deacons were to be selected and appointed in the local church. There are many passages which reveal what the Word of God does for us, "able to save your souls" (James 1:21), "able to build you up and to give you an inheritance" (Acts 20:32), etc.; however, 1 Tim. 3:14-15 is one of those passages which states specifically why the holy writings were given. What my opponent needs from the Scriptures are verses which state that "oral traditions independent of Scripture," "laws given by the church," "successors of the apostles," etc., are given to show how one ought to conduct himself in the church.

He can't give such verses because there are none.

17) My opponent has assumed from 1 Tim. 3:14-15 that since Paul wanted to visit Timothy and speak to him face to face, oral teaching independent of the Scriptures becomes an authority along with the Scriptures. Could it not be that Paul wanted to visit Timothy because he was his friend and brother in Christ? Also, my opponent has assumed that 1 Tim. 3:14-15 teaches that the church is infallible. The verses say absolutely nothing about the church being infallible. As I have shown in every Rebuttal, the expression "pillar and ground of the truth" means that it upholds, defends, and proclaims the truth, not that it legislates truth. My opponent said, "The church legislates laws that are binding on the believers." (Par. 14, Second Rebuttal). However, he has not given us a single passage which authorizes the church to legislate anything. I have begged him to please show where Acts 15 says that the church legislated anything. If God had wanted His church to legislate laws, He would have clearly and plainly revealed it to us. The idea that the church has the authority to legislate comes from man, not God. My opponent said, "The Catholic teaching is not that the church creates truth, but passes down faithfully the truth that was given by God to his apostles. The church faithfully guards and passes on this original deposit of faith (2 Tim. 1:13-14, 1 Tim. 6:20, Jude 3)." (Par. 8, Second Rebuttal). Does my opponent actually expect us to believe such nonsense? The Catholic Church is not guarding and passing on the "original" deposit of faith, but has added a host of traditions of men. (Please see list: Par. 15, Second Rebuttal). Furthermore, the Catholic Church is not guarding and passing on that "original" deposit of faith, but has added other authorities to it. If the church has the authority to legislate as my opponent claims, there would be no "original" deposit of faith because it would continue to deposit the faith down through the ages.

18) Let us consider 1 John 1:1-4: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life; the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us; that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full."

19) Thus, this is another passage which shows the purpose and authority of the Scriptures. In accord with the authority and commission given to him by the Lord, John declared that he was bearing witness to those things which they had heard, had seen with their eyes, and had touched with their hands, concerning the Word of life. He then added, "And these things we write to you that your joy may be full." Inasmuch as all the apostles and prophets are now dead, their writings become the only means by which we receive their infallible witness. My opponent in reply to this verse quoted 2 John 12 and then added, "John actually prefers oral tradition to pass on truth to the written tradition, and it does the same." (Par. 6, Second Rebuttal). Thus, my opponent from 2 John 12 has again assumed that since John wanted to visit some brethren and speak to them face to face, it establishes "oral traditions" as an authority along with the Scriptures. Certainly, the tradition (or the infallible witness) which was given by John whether face to face or by writings was to be received. However, since the apostle John and other inspired men are no longer with us, their writings become the only means by which we receive their infallible witness.

20) Please consider Rev. 20:12: "And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books."

21) Very clearly, the following books will be opened at the judgment: (1) the Book of Life which records the names of the faithful (See Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:5; 20:15; 21:27), and (2) the books that will judge us. Jesus Himself said, "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him; the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day." (John 12:48). Paul said, "...In the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel." (Rom. 2:16). James said, "So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty." (James 2:12). These passages teach that the Scriptures alone are the authority because no other standard of judgment is revealed. As I have repeatedly shown, what my opponent needs in order to prove his contention are passages which reveal that we will be judged by "legislation of the church," "pronouncements of the popes," etc.

22) My opponent replied to Rev. 20:12 by saying, "That written in the books is not scripture, but what the people had done. These verses thus had no relation to scripture, let alone having anything to do with Sola Scriptura." (Par. 13, First Rebuttal). Thus, my opponent has the verse teaching that we will be judged by our works ("what the people had done") in accord with our works. It makes no sense whatsoever to say that we will be judged by our works according to our works. As always, I humbly plead with our readers to examine Rev. 20:12 for themselves and decide what it is teaching. The verse plainly reveals that we will be judged by the things written in the books according to our works. Let me ask a very simply but important question: "If we will NOT be judged by the Scriptures (the sacred books) in the last day, what will be our standard of judgment?" When one admits that the Scriptures are the standard of judgment (as they clearly claim for themselves), he admits that the Scriptures alone are the standard of authority.

23) As we have seen, my opponent has tried to refute the passages which show the purpose and authority of the inspired writings. Catholics do so because those passages destroy the other authorities which the Catholic Church has added. The holy Scriptures forcefully and plainly claim for themselves that they are God's standard of authority. They produce the faith which brings life in the name of Jesus (John 20:30-31), provide the infallible witness (1 John 1:1-4), thoroughly equip to every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17), are the standard of judgment (Rev. 20:12), etc. If they are God's standard of authority as they indeed claim for themselves, all other authorities are excluded: legislations given by Church, oral traditions independent of Scripture, the book of Mormon, publications of the Watch Tower Society, etc.

24) Following the Bible alone does not produce 28,000 versions of truth as my opponent claims. There is only one version of truth. God has revealed it to us through His holy writings. God's Word is truth. (John 17:17). God expects us to understand, believe, and obey His truth. Paul said, "For we are not writing any other things to you than what you read or understand. Now I trust you will understand, even to the end..." (2 Cor. 1:13). John said, "These things I have written to you...that you may know that you have eternal life..." (1 John 5:13). It is the arguments and teachings of men which have produced the many versions of error that are in religion today. My opponent in this Debate has assaulted the Scriptures as the only guide by giving a mountain of human arguments. He has tried to establish several other authorities besides the Scriptures. I have tried to give answer. Let it be remembered, though, that the sacred Scriptures are not dependent upon nor affected by my success or failure. Whatever may be the verdict passed upon this Debate by an intelligent reader, the Scriptures will continue to stand. In the ages to come, when its present assailants and defenders are moldering into dust, and when our names have long since been forgotten, God's Scriptures will continue to be

the only guide and standard of the true children of God. Thus, in closing, I humbly appeal to you, dear reader of this Debate, to accept the holy Scriptures as your only rule of faith. They will guide and lead you to eternal life.

(Note: Each respondent agreed to close his last Rebuttal with six pages rather than five. Also, the Scriptural quotations in the essays of David J. Riggs are either from the New King James Version or the New American Standard Version).

Michael Lopez Third Rebuttal

Third Rebuttal Of The Riggs-Lopez Debate By Michael Lopez

1] In this closing statement/rebuttal, I will summarize the points I have shown that destroys the proposition. As I go through each of the points I have given, I will respond to his statements affirming the proposition. As shown in this debate, Sola Scriptura is a man-made tradition (Mk. 7, Mt. 15:3-9) built on false, unbiblical assumptions. As shown last time, (Par. 1-3), there are 7 absolutely necessary, but unbiblical assumptions for Sola Scriptura, impossible for most down through the centuries: a) It assumes 100% literacy, when 90% of the people were illiterate, and most people have been illiterate ever since; b) It assumes a printing press for the mass manufacture of books, which didn't exist until the 15th century; c) It assumes a distribution network able to provide affordable bibles to all for 2000 years; d) It assumes adequate leisure time for people to study for themselves to get correct doctrine; e) It assumes universal nutrition so they can profitably study; f) It assumes adequate support materials for study; g) It assumes that all believers have adequate critical thinking skills, so they can properly analyze scripture, not even available for most today. If only one assumption has not been true at any time for the last 2000 years, Sola Scriptura can not possibly be the means that God established. Each assumption is in fact unbiblical and false, showing Sola Scriptura to be another gospel, (Gal. 1:8-9).

2] My opponent has not established the proposition. I have established and sustained 9 points. (Abbreviations from now on, Opening statement = OS, First Rebuttal = 1R, and 2R = 2nd Rebuttal). 1) Nowhere in the gospels did Jesus commission them to write. I showed that (OS, Par. 2) he established his church through his apostles (Mt. 16:18-19, Mt. 18:15-18) and gave them the power to forgive sins (John 20:22-23), and legislate (Acts. 11, 15). He commissioned them to baptize (Mk 16:16; Mt. 28:19), partake and distribute his body and blood (Lk. 22: 14-20, Mt. 26:26-29), and preach the gospel (Lk. 10:16, Mt. 28:20). He did not say, after you die, the only way one can hear me is by reading. The apostles chose two ways to preach his gospel: Most preached only orally (2 Tim. 2:2, 2 Thes 2:15, 1 Cor. 11:2), and a few wrote. If Jesus wanted future believers bound only by New Testament scripture, he would have said so. My opponent's failure to deal with that fact (and instead he diverts, 1R, Par. 17) destroys Sola Scriptura.

3] 2) I have challenged my opponent (OS, Par. 3, 2R, Par. 12) to show from the New Testament what its contents are. He is unable to do so. How can the proposition be valid when the New Testament can not even identify itself? The Catholic Church does not make the New Testament inspired, as it is God-breathed, but for man to infallibly know, requires an infallible guide (1 Tim. 3:15, Mt. 16:18-

19). Peter's reference to Paul's writings (2 Pet. 3:15) identifies not one letter. Other references to writings churches were responsible for reading are extrabiblical (Eph. 3:3, 1 Cor. 5:9, Col. 4:16). He said the Catholic Church was not responsible for providing the bible, (1R, Par. 19) I showed even through Martin Luther to be false (2R, Par. 12). Theoretically if the Catholic Church did not provide and preserve the bible, he still has not proved from the New Testament what the New Testament is. That is fatal to Sola Scriptura.

4] 3) The Church is the pillar of truth (1 Tim. 3:15). My opponent attempts to separate the apostles from the church. He argues: a) I can not any use passages in regards to the apostles and apply them to the church. (2R, Par. 3). b) There is no binding, authoritative church besides apostles and prophets; I say: a) Jesus said he would build his Church upon visible Peter, who alone had the keys, meaning authority. My opponent admits the apostles had authority, but Jesus says the Church has this binding authority (Mt. 16:18-19, 18:15-18). It is unbiblical to separate the apostles from the church, found on the apostles (Eph. 2:20) with Christ the cornerstone. b) The church is Christ's bride (Eph. 5:23-31) and reveals the manifold wisdom of God (Eph. 3:10), not saying only as long as the apostles are alive. When I pointed to this he replied this wisdom of God doesn't reference authority (2R, Par. 9). The context shows binding authority (1R, Par. 9). Eph 4:4 - "There is one faith." Paul gives the function of the various ministries for the church to maintain the unity of the faith, and prevent children from being tossed for every wind of doctrine (Eph. 4:12-14). Only authority can do this. It does not say reading scripture on one's own prevents people from getting tossed around in doctrine. Read all the verses he provided and none say after the apostles die, so does authority, an unbiblical assumption. I showed church elders, neither apostles or prophets, legislated (Acts. 15:14-29). Those not specifically under apostles or prophets were told to submit and obey their leaders who rule over them (Heb. 13:7, 17).

5] c) He attempts to skirt the force of 1 Tim. 3:15 (church is ground of truth) by admitting that the job of the church upholds the truth but can not pass the Holy Spirit (2R, Par. 7). An invisible church can not be a pillar of truth, with this so-called body of the saved coming from 28,000 different denominations preaching different gospels. The passage he cited showing 'a body of the saved' Acts 2:46, are strictly organized into one body, not different bodies, differing in doctrine. The theory that the church is not visible and is unorganized is again a tradition of men. The church in 1 Tim. 3 is visible, and teaches authoritatively. Only if there is one united, visible body, can it indeed be the pillar of infallible truth to fulfill Paul's statement of 1 Tim. 3:15.

6] My opponent's argument (2R, Par. 10-12) that only the apostles can transmit the Holy Spirit is nowhere stated in any of the biblical texts he provided. Acts focuses specifically on the Apostles, and their work included passing on the Holy Spirit. As it primarily focuses on their work I would not expect other generations to be shown passing on the Holy Spirit. His focus on Acts 8:14-19 to prove this is selective and misguided. Nowhere does anyone say here that only the Apostles can pass the Holy Spirit on. Simon wants this gift through money (8:18-21). If dogma essential to Sola Scriptura that none can pass on the Holy Spirit but the apostles, Peter should have said "Simon, only Apostles can pass on the Holy Spirit and you can have no such ministry." Peter saw that Simon had a bad heart, had not been ordained, and thus could not share in this ministry (v. 21). He could not pass on the Holy Spirit because "your heart is not right before God." Nothing about because he was not an apostle. In fact, after this we see a non-Apostle pass on the Holy Spirit. Philip, ordained to the ministry (Acts 6:5-6), is directed by the Holy Spirit (v. 31) to speak the gospel to the Ethiopian eunuch reading Isaiah (Acts 8:29-34). He explains the gospel to the eunuch (showing bible alone is not enough), and is led to baptize him. In the New Covenant, even my opponent admits that baptism is by water AND SPIRIT (Acts. 2:38). The Holy Spirit falls upon Philip, and the Eunuch likewise

goes with joy (vv. 39-40). Baptism brings the Holy Spirit, the eunuch is joyful, and the Holy Spirit surrounds the whole scene, very much implied is that the eunuch receives the Holy Spirit. So much for my opponent's theory.

7] My opponent's attempt to limit the promise of the Holy Spirit to the apostles (and prophets) is at odds with Jesus' words: John 14:16-18. "And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you FOREVER, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him; you know him, for he dwells with you, and will be in you. I will not leave you desolate; I will come to you." Jesus promises his Holy Spirit forever. Next (v. 18), it is the Holy Spirit who keeps the people from being desolate (in other translations orphans). If my opponent is consistent in saying that this promise is only for the Apostles, then Jesus left all of us desolate orphans. Instead, the Holy Spirit has guided the visible, Catholic Church for 2000 years as the New Covenant family of God. He did not leave us as orphans as my opponent must contend, leaving it up to ourselves to find out truth by sifting through our private reading of the bible and 28,000 denominations. The Holy Spirit is to guide us into all truth (Jn 16:13) through the one Church Jesus established (Mt. 16:18, 18:15-18).

8] My opponent is quite selective in what those who follow the apostles can and can not do. When it confirms the Catholic view, he says "Oh, that is only for the apostles." When scripture speaks of things that his church practices, it suddenly applies to us? Why does he have a web page preaching his gospel? Why does he celebrate the Lord's supper, and baptize people? Remember, Jesus specifically only commissioned the apostles (Mt. 28:19). This picking and choosing of what gets passed down from the apostles, is a vain attempt to hold on to a faulty doctrine.

9] 4) Sola Scriptura is an unbiblical tradition of men. My opponent continues to repeat the same verses (OS, Par. 15-19, 1R, Par. 2-11, 2R, Par. 3-5) that supposedly show Sola Scriptura. He admits that not one verse specifically teaches it (OS, Par. 1). Merely reciting these verses without any interaction with my refutation of his use of these verses shows the inability of any of these verses to even hint at Sola Scriptura. In no citations did he give a context. I gave 7 reasons why 2 Tim. 3:16-17 does not help Sola Scriptura yet he repeats himself. I examined the context, and parallel verses that show that scripture is not the only source that does these things. He repeated verses I showed previously not even to be referencing scripture (Eph. 3, Rev. 20, etc.)! Read them for yourselves and examine my refutation of them. Following is his own look at the verses (2R, Par. 4). Next is where I refuted his use of them:

10] (1) Life in the name of Jesus (John 20:30-31) - See 1R, Par. 11 - Oral - 1 Cor. 15:2 (2) Commands of the Lord (1 Cor. 14:37) - See 1R, Par. 10 - Oral - 1 Cor. 4:17, 1 Tim. 1:3 (3) Knowledge of the mystery of Christ (Eph. 3:2-5) - See 1R, Par. 9 Not about scripture (4) The proper conduct (1 Tim. 3:14-15) - 2R, Par. 5 - Prefers oral, church is pillar of truth (5) Every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17)-1R, Par. 12-Oral- 2 Thes. 2:13-17 - Gave 7 reasons (6) Protection against sin (1 John 2:1) (7) An assurance of eternal life (1 John 5:13) - See 2R, Par. 7 Oral - 1 Cor. 15:2 (8) Tests teachers (1 Cor. 4:6; Acts 17:11) - 1R, Par. 13, Not scripture, Acts - only OT (9) Joy that is complete (1 John 1:1-4). See 2R, Par. 6 - Oral - 2 John 12 (10) A reminder of the commandments (2 Pet. 3:1-2) (11) Standard of judgment (Rev. 20:12; Jn 12:48; Rom. 2:16; James 2:12) See 1R, Par. 13.

11] 5) I have shown numerous passages with Jesus and apostles passing on as truth oral tradition coming from the time of the Old Testament (Mt. 2:23, Jude 14-15, Mt. 23:2-3, 1 Cor. 10:4, among others (OS, Par. 7, 2R, Par. 9). I showed through 3 non-Catholic sources that Moses seat, nowhere mentioned in the Old Testament, is oral tradition that Jesus proclaimed as binding (Mt. 23:2-3). My opponent said it was Moses's scriptural authority, though absent from the bible. Non-Catholic sources affirm Moses Seat speaks of oral tradition, a position of authority, leadership, and succession (2R, Par. 9). My opponent asked how Mt. 2:23 and Jude 14-15 show binding oral tradition. He admits that the Holy Spirit somehow worked and passed it down. This admission that the Spirit passed down truth outside scripture and prophets, undercuts his position. That somehow is oral tradition. In fact Jude 14 quotes verbatim, a statement from the book of Enoch, (7th from Adam), an extrascriptural revelation, written approximately 200 BC. Oral tradition passed that on reliably and infallibly from the time of Enoch until written in an unscriptural book. Jude refers to this as infallible truth. Mt. 2:23 states that the prophets spoke that the Messiah would be a Nazarene, binding truth that instructs us but not in the Old Testament. The Holy Spirit uses binding Oral tradition. Another dagger to Sola Scriptura.

12] 6) Nowhere does scripture reduce the Word of God to writing. Although my opponent has produced scriptures which speak of the authority of scripture (and I assert as well) he has produced none which say that after apostles and prophets die, the only means of passing on divine revelation is scripture. This assumption is biblically unfounded. The previous paragraph shows oral tradition infallibly passes on truth, proving the proposition wrong. The Word of God does not last until the prophets and apostles die, but forever (1 Pet. 1:25). My opponent argues 1 Peter is about scripture so is irrelevant (2R, Par. 14); However 1 Peter 1:25 says the Word of God that endures forever is that which is PREACHED, oral, not written. This fulfills Isaiah's prophecy of people orally passing down the truths of the New Covenant (Is. 59:20-21). Most apostles did not write at all, yet even my opponent admitted that they spoke the Word of God (2Tim. 1:13) and established churches. His argument that the Word of God, as it was not written by these faithful apostles, died when they died, is another unbiblical assumption. The New Testament term Word of God mostly means the preached Word of God, not written. The assumption that the oral Word of God died because it was not written is actually a rejection of some of the Word of God.

13] My opponent has continually erred in claiming the Catholic Church does not trust the bible. On the contrary, the Catholic Church more than any other Church has defended it from attack. The Catholic Church puts the bible first, Prima Scriptura, She is under the bible. See Vatican II's Dei Verbum, which affirms the bible's inspiration, inerrancy, and authority. As I asserted (OS, Par. 1) the Church lives by God's Word alone, but it is not found only in Sacred Scripture. Just because it is not the sole rule of faith, does not mean that it is not authoritative. It loses its authority when 28,000 denominations twist it to their own man-made doctrines (Col. 2:8).

14] 7) Oral tradition binds believers as well as scripture. (Here I do not respond to my opponent's challenges on specific Catholic traditions (2R, Par. 15) because that has nothing to do with the proposition. If one wants a point by point response to his charge of unbiblical, man-made traditions, please email me at matt1618@ix.netcom.com). In 2 Thes 2:13-17 we saw Paul command believers to hold fast to both oral and written tradition as it equips them for every good work (same as for scripture cf., 2 Tim. 3:17). Paul shows oral and written to be in the same category, (2:15) and binding. If one is to be passed on, so is the other. My opponent says my argument makes no sense because if "if one means of delivery stopped (oral), it does not mean the other stopped (written) (2R, Par. 13)." He assumes without proof that the oral delivery stopped. Of course the written does not

stop, neither does the oral!! (We just saw this with Jude quoting Enoch). Where does Paul say "after I die, oral tradition stops, and only the written survives.?" Nowhere. If Paul wanted the oral tradition stopped, why does he use the word tradition, which means to pass on? This passage kills Sola Scriptura (1R, Par. 7 for a fuller examination).

15] We have also seen Paul through Timothy and his successors pass on truth through exclusively oral tradition 2 Tim. 1:13-14, 2:2, 2:15. 2 Tim. 2:2 shows 4 generations pass on what Paul had orally told Timothy. BTW, not one scripture has four generations receiving the New Testament. My opponent attempts to avoid this by saying Timothy has authority because he is a prophet, but it doesn't mean that those following him can pass it on (2R, Par. 10-12). If so, 2 Tim. 2 would have stopped at the second generation. However, Paul makes no distinction between Timothy's generation and the generation that Timothy (3rd) trains to pass on to the following generation (4th), all transmitting what Paul orally taught!!! My opponent claims the Holy Spirit has nothing to do with this. 2 Tim. 1:13-14 shows the Holy Spirit protecting this truth from corruption and is the background to 2 Tim. 2:2. Nowhere is Timothy called a prophet, and that being the only reason he commands others with Paul's oral teaching (2 Tim. 2:15). The passage cited (2 Tim. 1:6) to show a one time prophetic office instead shows Timothy's ordination to the ministerial priesthood, with succession. Joshua succeeds Moses with full responsibilities by the laying on of hands, (Dt. 34:9, Nm 27:19-23) meaning succession. Indeed, Timothy is warned by Paul not to lay hands (1 Tim. 5:22) on hastily. The Holy Spirit is transmitted. We have seen Titus have the power to ordain successors (Titus 1:5) with the same authority.

16] My opponent claims I insulted Paul by saying that he relied on oral tradition (1R, Par. 20), as he received his commission directly from Jesus (Gal. 1:11-12). Paul holds oral tradition in esteem, because not only does he commend those for holding to it (1 Cor. 11:2), but passes on information that he could only have received from talking to the apostles. He quotes a saying of Jesus not found in the gospels (Acts. 20:36). He received from the Lord (through the apostles) and passes on the way of celebrating the Eucharist (1Cor. 11:23-29) (paralleling Luke, neither prophet or apostle) who orally heard from the apostles (Lk. 1:2-5). Paul received from the apostles information about 500 people who saw Jesus after his resurrection 1 Cor. 15:3-7. Nowhere is it recorded that Jesus told Paul these things. He received this from the apostles who he visited (Acts 15, Gal. 1:18-19). Paul sees oral revelation as binding and from the Lord.

17] My opponent claims the word succession is not in the bible. The word bible is not in the bible does that mean we should not read it? Neither is incarnation, Trinity and other terms my opponent would agree to. The concepts are in the bible as is succession (in contrast to Sola Scriptura). We saw through non-Catholic sources the seat that Jesus binds people (Mt. 23:2). to was based on Succession of authority. We have seen James, neither termed a prophet or apostle, make a binding decision (Acts 15:14-29) along with the binding papal decision of Peter (Acts 15:7-13). Here we also saw elders in the same position of authority with apostles making binding decisions, showing this authority was also given to successors (2 R, Par. 14). We have seen the apostles appoint successors not in the office of apostleship Acts. 1:15-26, but of bishopric (Acts 1:20) (2 R, Par. 13), the same term used in 1 Tim. 3:1-15 for the term of bishop. We have seen Titus and Timothy have the ability to ordain successors (Tit. 1:5, 1 Tim. 5:22). They command others to things Paul orally told them (1 Tim. 1:3, 1 Cor. 4:17, 2 Tim. 2:2, 2:15).

18] 8) I showed 2 Peter destroy private interpretation (OS Par. 12), the heart of Sola Scriptura. My

opponent never responded, yet refers to 2 Peter 3:1-2 (easily paralleled by oral tradition just referenced). Why not let Peter speak when he condemns private interpretation, and why ignore Peter's refutation of it? In an exegesis of 2 Peter 1:20, Protestant Ernst Kasemann writes (Essays On New Testament Themes - 189-190): "Our epistle considers an ecclesiastically authoritative interpretation to be essential. For even exegesis which now takes the prophecy is exposed to the threat of error as the example of the exegesis of Paul's letters shows (2 Peter 3:16). It must therefore be regulated. This is done by tying it to the church's teaching office. Thus the church is here, the possessor of the correct interpretation of the scripture, just because she is the possessor of the correct teaching.' pp. 103 - 'Every unauthorized exegesis and interpretation can now be prohibited. The locus classicus is 2 Peter 1:20. Ordination is now the expression of a principle of legitimacy and succession. In short, we have now crossed out of primitive Christianity, and laid the foundations of early Catholicism... The time when it was possible to set up scripture in its totality, in opposition to Catholicism has gone beyond recall. Protestantism today can no longer employ the so-called Formal Principle without rendering itself unworthy of credence in the eyes of historical analysis." Honest Protestant exegesis shows 2 Peter establishes binding succession, and destroys Sola Scriptura, just as Jude 11 (as showed in OS, Par. 11), by quoting and condemning Korah's rebellion (Nm. 16) condemns unauthorized private authority and interpretation.

19] 9) Sola Scriptura leads to anarchy and 28,000 denominations (OS, Par. 13). With no authoritative guide and every one claiming the Holy Spirit's guidance, mass confusion develops. With no solid rock of a living pillar of truth, (1 Tim. 3:15), people twist scripture to their own destruction (2 Pet. 3:16, Eph. 4: 14). Jesus promised that he would not leave us orphans (Jn 15:26). These denominations are made by man, not Jesus, and are all traditions of men, precisely fulfilling Jesus and Paul's condemnation of such (Mt. 15:3-9; Mk. 7; Col. 2:8). My opponent admitted (1R, Par. 22) "Every major division that is in Christianity originated with and came out of the Catholic Church." His attempt to blame the Church for this division is like blaming Moses for Korah's rebellion (Num. 16:1-35, cf., Jude 11, My 1R, Par. 11). Jude castigated Korah then, as exactly paralleled to those who rejected the divinely established authority in the New Covenant. Sola Scriptura causes Protestantism to divide on so many issues central to salvation that it can not possibly be the way Jesus established for his people to have a relationship with him. Paul writes that we must have one mind and judgment (1 Cor. 1:10; cf., Acts. 4:32, Eph 4:4). There are disobedient Catholics on the left and right that dispute the Pope, but he, with the sure guide of 2000 years of truth, and protection of the Holy Spirit, makes it possible to have an infallible, living guide. Scripture is an infallible guide, but for us to understand its meaning Jesus established one church with promises the gates of hell shall never prevail against his church (Mt. 16:18).

20] I want to thank my opponent, for engaging on this important issue; Nevertheless, we have seen the premises of Sola Scriptura destroyed in this debate. We have seen numerous reasons why Sola Scriptura is impossible and unbiblical (not an exhaustive list by any means). Any Protestant who has read this debate I ask you to honestly look at the lack of biblical evidence for this proposition. I ask you to examine the multitude of reasons why Scripture can not be the sole authority. Please come to the one Church, the one family of God, the Catholic Church that Jesus Christ established. An infallible church is needed to make the inerrant and infallible Scripture infallible in discovering its meaning. Otherwise we have the result of many people thinking they are going by the bible when in fact they are going by what their errant, fallible human minds think it says. God did not leave us as orphans, twisting in the wind. He invites all to come to the fullness of truth that he promised the Holy Spirit would guide us into (Jn 16:13).

Actual signed debate proposition

Proposition: "The inspired writings (the holy Scriptures of the New Testament of Jesus Christ) claim for themselves that they alone are the standard of authority in Religion today."

Affirm: David J. Riggs Deny: Michael Lopez

Rules for the Written Debate:

1. Each writer agrees to send his essay to his opponent via E-Mail at the first of each month. 2. Each writer agrees to the time limitation to complete the necessary essay of one month, with affirmative/denial and rebuttal essays being as follows: First Affirmative and Denial essays due Nov. 1, 1997; First Rebuttal essays due on Dec. 1, 1997; Second Rebuttal essays due on Jan. 1, 1998; Third and final Rebuttal essays due on Feb. 1, 1998. 3. Each writer agrees that all rebuttals will be limited to the material of his opponent. Small quotes from others, of course, are allowed. However, the opponents agree to defend what they, themselves, have written, not what someone else has written. 4. Each writer agrees that his essays will simply be in black and white, with no graphics or links. 5. Each writer agrees to conduct the debate in English and not primarily in Greek. Small quotes from Greek Lexicons or Greek Scholars, of course, will be allowed. However, the debate is to be conducted for the benefit of the average person. 6. Each writer agrees that no new material shall be added in the fourth and final essay. 7. Each writer agrees that they will conduct themselves in such a way as to demonstrate the Spirit of Christ, i.e., no personal attacks, no name calling, etc. 8. Each writer agrees that the time and page limitations of essays cannot be exceeded without the prior written acknowledgment of the opponent. 9. Each writer agrees that if either one wishes to discontinue the written debate, for whatever reasons, a letter stating his reasons for ending the debate be sent to his opponent. 10. Each writer agrees to the page limitations for each essay of no more than five single-spaced 8 x 11 pages, 12 point font size, with all margins of one inch only. 11. Each writer agrees to use any of the following Translations: Confraternity-Douay Version, Douay-Rheims Version, and Catholic Edition-Revised Standard Version, The New American Bible, the New American Standard Version, and the New King James Version.

Agreed to by Michael Lopez Agreed to by David J. Riggs

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