

# **A Written Debate**

**between**

**David J. Riggs**

**and**

**Nicholas Accetta**

*Is the New Testament alone the standard of  
authority for religion today?*

*Are there other authorities in religion today such  
as unwritten traditions, the pope and the church?*

*FROM THE LIBRARY OF*  
*ROBERT A. O'DELL*



# Written Debate --- Riggs - Accetta

## Propositions Phase 1:

*From the Library of  
Robert A. O'Dell*

*(Note: both Riggs and Accetta signed the following propositions and rules).*

**"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: Nicholas Accetta \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

### Rules for Written Debate

1. 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.
2. Each writer agrees that no new material shall be added in the forth and final essay.
3. 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.
4. Each writer agrees that the time and page limitations of essays cannot be exceeded without the prior written acknowledgment of the opponent.
5. 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 their opponent.
6. 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.
7. Each writer agrees to use the following Catholic Translations: Confraternity-Douay Version, Douay-Rheims Version, and Catholic Edition-Revised Standard Version.
8. Each writer agrees to the time limitation to complete the necessary essay of one month, with affirmative/denial and rebuttal essays being as follows: Phase 1 --- Affirmative and Denial essay due Feb. 1<sup>st</sup>; First rebuttal essay due on March 1<sup>st</sup>; Second rebuttal essay due on April 1<sup>st</sup>; Third and final rebuttal due on May 1<sup>st</sup>. Phase 2 --- Affirmative and Denial essay due on June 1<sup>st</sup>; First rebuttal due on July 1<sup>st</sup>; Second rebuttal due August 1<sup>st</sup>; Third and final rebuttal due September 1<sup>st</sup>.

Agreed to by David J. Riggs \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

Agreed to by Nicholas Accetta \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

## Written Debate --- Accetta - Riggs

### Propositions Phase 2:

**"The inspired writings (the holy Scriptures of the New Testament of Jesus Christ) claim that there are other authorities in religion today (unwritten traditions, the pope, and the church) besides the inspired writings themselves."**

Affirm: Nicholas Accetta \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

Deny: David J. Riggs \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

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July 1<sup>st</sup>; Second rebuttal due August 1<sup>st</sup>; Third and final rebuttal due September 1<sup>st</sup>.

Agreed to by Nicholas Accetta \_\_\_\_\_

## Riggs' First Affirmative

First Affirmative: "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."

By David J. Riggs

In this present age, God speaks to us 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.

Jesus makes known God's will through His apostles and prophets. Christ gave the same words and commandments that He received from the Father to His twelve apostles (John 17:6-8, 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 yet dwelling with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your mind whatever I have said to you." (John 14:25-26; see also 14:16-17). Furthermore, Jesus said, "But when the advocate has come, whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness concerning me. And you also bear witness, because from the beginning you are with me." (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.

The apostles were to wait in Jerusalem to receive the Holy Spirit as was promised. "And I send forth upon you the promise of my Father. But wait here in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high." (Luke 24:49). "And while eating with them, he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, 'of which you have heard,' said he, 'by my mouth; for John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence.' " (Acts 1:4-5). "...You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you..." (Acts 1:8). All of this was in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies which said, "...The law shall come forth from Zion, 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 and "began to speak in foreign tongues, even as the Holy Spirit prompted them to speak." (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 shall be bound also in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed also 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--"...Delivered me from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2). This principle is 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, "And fear came upon every soul; many wonders also and signs were done by means of the apostles in Jerusalem, and great fear came upon all." 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, "But they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the preaching by the signs that followed." (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. "Now Stephen, full of grace and power, was working 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. "And Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached the Christ to them. And the crowds with one accord gave heed to what was said by Philip, listening to him and seeing the miracles that he worked." (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 in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John. On their arrival they prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit; for as yet he had not come upon any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. But when Simon saw that the Holy Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, saying, 'Give me also this power, so that anyone on whom I lay my 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 laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they began to speak in tongues and to prophesy." Cornelius and his household received the "like gift" as the apostles for the specific purpose of God's acceptance of the Gentiles into the New Covenant (Acts 11:14-18).

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, "Indeed, the signs of the apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in miracles and wonders and deeds of power." (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.

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 now, behold, I know that you all among whom I went about preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no longer. Therefore I call you to witness this day that I am innocent of the blood of all; for I have not shrunk from declaring 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. 2 Thess. 2:15 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." (Catholic Edition RSV; see also 2 Pet. 3:1-2). Thus, there was 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. Notice also that they were not to hold just any traditions, but "the traditions which you were taught by us." 2 Thess. 3:6 teaches the same; the traditions delivered by the apostles and prophets were to be held, not the traditions of men.

When the apostles and prophets passed from the earth, their inspired writings became the only means by which we receive God's . When the apostles and prophets approached their deaths, they did not leave us other authorities from which we could obtain the law of God. Instead, they left their writings. Paul said, "If anyone thinks that he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things I am writing to you are the Lord's commandments." (1 Cor. 14:37). Thus, the inspired writings are the laws of the Lord. No passage anywhere in the Scriptures gives the slightest hint that unwritten human traditions, teachings of the Pope, or legislations of the church, are the commandments of the Lord. Instead, the Scriptures repeatedly reveal that man's teachings, whether writings or otherwise, are to be rejected (Col. 2:8; Eph. 4:14; 2 Cor. 11:13-15).

It is important for us to understand how the apostles witness to us today. It is not through other men; it is impossible for a man in our time to be a witness in the sense the apostles were. Instead, it is through their writings--the Holy Scriptures. The apostle John in his introduction to his first epistle declared that he was bearing witness to those things which they had heard, which they had seen with their eyes, which they had touched with their hands, concerning the Word of life. He bore witness to those things by writing them for us. "And these things write we unto you, that our joy may be full." (See 1 John 1:1-4). Thus, the apostles witness to us today through their writings and this is the only way their unerring guidance is transmitted to the present age. It is the only way God's is delivered to us today.

The apostles' testimony given in their writings was to "...All that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours" (1 Cor. 1:2), and "...To the faithful in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 1:1). Furthermore, their writings were given to bring a knowledge of the mystery of Christ (Eph. 3:2-5), to protect against sin (1 John 2:1), and to assure believers of eternal life (1 John 5:13). Also, their writings provide the proper conduct in the church (1 Tim. 3:14-15).

Jesus prayed for unity of all those who would believe on Him through the word of the apostles. "Yet not for these only do I pray, but for those also who through their word are to believe in me." (John 17:20). In this prayer Jesus revealed how believers are to be made--through the apostles' word. Since we do not have the apostles present with us, we must inquire, "How are believers made through their word today?" It is not through other authorities, but as John said, "But 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). Very simply, therefore, individuals were made believers at first as result of the inspired apostles witnessing to them while in their presence. Individuals are made believers today as result of the apostles witnessing through their inspired writings.

In God's plan all men will be judged by the same standard. Those first individuals will be judged by the word of God which was spoken to them orally. "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48 Rheims Trans.). Those living afterward will be judged by the word of God spoken through inspired writings. "And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, by what they had done." (Rev. 20:12; see also Rom. 2:16; James 2:12). God's word does not mention nor allow any other standard of judgment. This, likewise proves that the Scriptures are man's only infallible authority in religion today. We will not be judged by the teaching or legalization of any man or group of men.

The Lord Jesus Christ, who left us an example (1 Pet. 2:21), often referred to in the Scriptures as the final source of authority. He often used such terms as, "search the Scriptures" (John 5:39), "have you not read?" (Matt. 12:3,5; 19:4; 21:16,42; 22:31), "is it not written in your law?" (John 10:34; Luke 10:26). Furthermore, He often showed the consequences for failing to abide in Scriptures, e.g., "You err, not knowing the Scriptures..." (Matt. 22:19 Rheims Trans.), "Thus making void the word of God through your traditions" (Mark 7:13 Catholic Edition RSV). His manner of refuting error was, "God said...but you say..." (Matt. 15:4-5; Mark 7:10-11). After Jesus mentioned, "God said," He then quoted Scripture. That was His manner of drawing a clear, sharp contrast between the written word of God and the teachings of men. Admittedly, Jesus was referring to the Old Testament Scriptures which the people were under at that time; however, would He not require the same respect today for His very own written law (1 Cor. 14:37) as the final source of authority?

If a man or any group of men are teaching anything contrary to the Scriptures we must reject it. For example, if man teaches that baptism is pouring water on a person, but the scriptures teach that baptism is a burial of a person in water, which should we accept? Or, if the Scriptures teach that Peter was not a pope, but men say that Peter was a pope, which should we accept? My point here is that the inspired writings are the sole standard of authority, and not uninspired men. 1 Cor. 4:6 says, "Now, brethren, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos by way of illustration for your sakes, that in our case you may learn not to be puffed up one against the other over a third party, transgressing what is written." (See also Acts 17:11). Notice that the Scriptures are the standard which we cannot transgress or go beyond. No other standards of authority are mentioned or allowed. We cannot respect

men above that which is written.

Paul said, "Far from thy infancy thou has known the Sacred Writings, which are able to instruct thee unto Salvation by the faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and useful for instructing in justice; that the man of God may be perfect, equipped for every good work." (2 Tim. 3:15-17). This is another passage which forcefully teaches that the Scriptures alone are the standard. Any 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." Catholics try to dodge the force of the passage by saying that Paul was referring to Old Testament Scriptures rather than New Testament ones. However, the apostle Peter referred to Paul's writings as Scripture. (2 Pet. 3:15-16).

Let me pose this question, "Why would Catholics want to defeat the Bible as the only authority?" The answer is: it is their way of trying to justify their own traditions. How else would they justify them? Furthermore, Catholics try to discredit the Bible as the sole authority because it plainly and forcefully condemns their doctrines. For example, to cite only a few: (1) It condemns clerical dress (Matt. 23:4-6); (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. 6:3-4; Col. 2:12); (7) It forbids us to address religious leaders as "father" (Matt. 23:9); (8) It opposes unmarried bishops (1 Tim. 3:1-7); (9) It addresses only God Himself as the "Holy Father" (John 17:11); (10) It shows that the great apostasy would forbid marriage (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. 2:3-12).

Here is a summation of the verses which we have examined which show clearly that the Scriptures alone are the standard of authority in religion today: (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 (Acts 17:11; 1 Cor. 4:6); (9) Joy that is complete (1 John 1:1-4); (10) Standard of judgment (Rev. 20:12).

Each of the passages listed in the paragraph above reveal what the writings, the Scriptures, provide. The holy Scriptures do not mention or allow other authorities in religion today. The Scriptures alone are the complete and final standard which furnish all of man's spiritual needs. They alone are the standard by which all teachers should be tested, and by which we will be judged in the last day. God will not judge us by a standard which is not the sufficient, complete, and final one. 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.

## Accetta's First Affirmative

First Affirmative: "The inspired writings (the Holy Scriptures of the New Testament of Jesus Christ) claim that there are other authorities in religion today (unwritten traditions, the pope, and the Church) besides the inspired writings themselves."

By Nicholas Accetta

1. Our Lord Jesus Christ never commanded His Apostles to write any part of the New Testament. He did command them to teach and to preach the good news. He also promised them the gift of the Spirit (John 14:26) and that he would be with them unto the end of the world (Matt 28:20). Not once did Christ command the Apostles to write anything, thus disproving the "bible only" theory.
2. Scripture teaches that leaders of Christ's Church have authority in matters of faith and that they must be obeyed. "...and if he shall neglect to hear them tell it unto the Church; but if he neglects to hear the Church let him be unto you as a heathen and a publican." (Matt 18:17) "...he that hears you hears me" (Luke 10:16)"...whatever you (Peter) shall bound on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Matt 16:19).
3. The Bible clearly states that many truths of the christian faith were to be handed down by word of mouth. ..."stand fast, and hold the traditions that you have been taught, whether by our word, or by our epistle." (2 Thes 2:15) If the Bible was meant to be the only rule of faith, it would seem odd that Scripture itself denies the theory.
4. The New Testament itself plainly teaches that it does not contain everything that Jesus did or taught. "...there are many other things that Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose the world itself contain the books that should be written". (John 21:25)
5. Scripture teaches that the Apostles appointed successors to carry out their work. "...as they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work that I have called them. And when they had prayed and fasted, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away." (Acts 13, 2 and 3) "...For this cause I left you in Crete that you should set in order the things that were wanting, and ordain elders (ie priests) in every city, as I appointed thee." (Titus 1:5)
6. The first book of the New Testament was not written until ten years after Christ's ascension. The last book, probably Revelations, was not written until about 100 AD. Furthermore, prior to 397 AD, when the Council of Constantinople, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, decided upon the canon of the Bible, The New Testament had yet to be placed under one cover. It would be rather hard for the Christians living in the first 400 years of the Church's existence (remember, the Bible as we know it did not exist) to practice the Lord's Faith if the Sola Scriptura theory is correct.

7. The original writings were written on papyrus, a frail material which had temporary enduring qualities. The books that were judged to be inspired by the Church were copied with great care and dedication by Her monks, while the rejected writings were left to rot away. If the Catholic Church has no divine authority, then why do the Protestants continue to use the Bible that the Church proclaimed to be God's Word? If it were not for the divine authority of the Church, Protestants would probably be reading the Gospel of Thomas as the inspired Word of God.

8. Who gave Martin Luther and the rest of the so called "reformers" the authority to break away from the teaching of the True Faith and invent the Sola Scriptura doctrine? Scripture itself answers that question perfectly. "...though we or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." (Gal 1:8). The consequences of the teaching of the false dogma of Sola Scriptura have been embarrassingly clear: there are currently over 5,700 Protestant sects today, each one claiming to have the Bible alone as their guide to the truth, yet each one disagreeing on a particular Biblical doctrine. If the Bible was intended to be the sole rule of faith, then what is the explanation for this mess?

9. Contrary to popular Protestant thought, Scripture implicitly states that it is not open to private interpretation. "...Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is open to private interpretation." (2 Peter 1:20) "...as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do in their other scriptures, unto their own destruction." (2 Peter 3:16). If the Holy Scriptures are not open to private interpretation, then we would need an infallible guide to interpret the Scriptures correctly. That infallible guide is the Church.

10. Which came first, the Church or the Bible? Well, of course, the answer is obvious. When the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, when the Apostles were preaching the good news across the world, and when countless numbers of christians were being martyred for the faith that they believed in, the New Testament was not in existence. It was by the spoken word of the Church that the Christian converts believed in the good news, not by reading the Bible. I challenge my opponent to deny this historical fact.

11. The Bible teaches that the one Church that Jesus founded had Simon Bar-Jona, also called Peter, as its head. "...and I say unto you, thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build my Church". (Matt 16:18) "...Simon son of Jonah do you love me?...feed my lambs". (John 21:15-17) By telling Peter to "feed my lambs", Jesus made Peter pastor of His flock, that is, His Church.

12. Scripture teaches that Christ's visible Church will have uninterrupted existence. "..Go, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit..and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matt 28;19-20) "...the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (the Church) (Matt 16:18) Therefore, the theory that Christ's Church somehow became nonexistent for 1000 years until the reformers revived it is ridiculous and contrary to the Bible.

In view of these biblical truths and historical facts, it is difficult for me to understand how my opponent can continue to defend the bogus Sola Scriptura theory.

## First Rebuttal of the Riggs-Accetta 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." First, I will briefly summarize my First Affirmative which was presented last month, and then as space permits, deliver my First Rebuttal to my opponent's material.

In my First affirmative I showed that the promise of the Holy Spirit 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). On the day of Pentecost they received the Holy Spirit and began to deliver the New Testament of Jesus Christ. Later, by the laying on of the apostles hands, New Testament prophets were made (Acts 8:17-19; 19:6). They, too, could work miracles and speak by the inspiration of God (Acts 6:5-8; 8:5-6).

The possession of the Holy Spirit is the factor which determined the authority of the apostles and prophets. They had the authority to deliver God's law because God was speaking through them. Paul said, "...According to revelation the mystery has been made known to me, as I have written above in few words; as you reading may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not known to the sons of men, as it is now revealed to his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit." (Eph. 3:3-5).

In that early age, the revelation of the gospel was given orally--by the word of mouth of the inspired apostles and prophets. Later, there was a time when the word of God was given both orally and written. Peter said, "This, beloved, is now the second epistle that I am writing to you wherein I stir up your pure mind to remembrance, that you may be mindful of what I formerly preached of the words of the holy prophets and of your apostles, which are the precepts 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. The apostle Paul said, "...The things I am writing to you are the Lord's commandments." (1 Cor. 14:37). There is no passage anywhere in the Scriptures which states that unwritten traditions, teachings of the Pope, or legislations of the church are the laws of the Lord. John the apostle said, "...These are written that you may believe..." (John 20:31), "...These things write we unto you, that our joy may be full" (1 John 1:4), "...These things I write to you in order that you may not sin" (1 John 2:1), "These things I am writing to you 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. Thus, the Scriptures claim for themselves that they

alone are the standard of authority in religion.

Now, let's examine the comments of my opponent which were made in his First Affirmative last month. He said in paragraph one, "Not once did Christ command the apostles to write anything, thus disproving the 'bible only' theory." This is a common Catholic argument against the Scriptures. One simple verse completely destroys their contention. 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). Furthermore, the prophets of the Old Testament era were not commanded to write, yet by the inspiration of God they left their writings, and after their deaths, those writings were the sole authority for the people under that law. If the argument that "the apostles were not commanded to write" proves anything, it proves that we should not have the Bible 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.

In his second paragraph, he states that leaders of Christ's Church have authority and then he quotes Matt. 18:17 to prove it. We ask our readers to carefully examine Matt. 18:15-17.

One can easily see that the passage deals with correcting personal differences. If the sinner would still not repent, after personal efforts and after taking witnesses, the matter should be brought before the local congregation. Other passages in the New Testament teach that local churches were to discipline sinful members (1 Cor. 5:1-13; 2 Thess. 3:6) There is absolutely nothing in Matt. 18:15-17 which gives the church legislative authority over the commandments of the Lord.

In paragraph 3, as is often done by Catholics, he uses 2 Thess. 2:15 in order to justify unwritten traditions along with the Scriptures. The Greek word "tradition" simply means "a handing down" (Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words). In 2 Thess. 2:15 Paul instructs the Thessalonians to hold fast the things which the inspired writers were handing down to them. It is abundantly clear that he is not instructing them to hold just any traditions, but "the traditions which you have been taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter." As we have shown, there was a time when all of the word of God was given orally--by word of mouth of the inspired apostles and prophets. Then followed a time when people were guided either by having inspired men in their presence or by epistles written by inspired men. With the passing of the inspired men, the inspired writings became the only means by which we receive God's word.

We strongly affirm that the unwritten traditions of the Catholic Church are nothing more than human traditions. As we have already shown, the Bible condemns many of the teachings and practices of the Catholic Church. To cite only a few: (1) It condemns clerical dress (Matt. 23:4-6); (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. 6:3-4; Col. 2:12); (7) It forbids us to address religious leaders as "father" (Matt. 23:9); (8) It opposes unmarried bishops (1 Tim. 3:1-7); (9) It addresses only God Himself as the "Holy Father" (John 17:11); (10) It shows that the great apostasy would forbid marriage (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. 2:3-12).

Jesus Christ repeatedly condemned human traditions. He said, "...In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrine the precepts of men" (Matt. 15:9) and "Well do you nullify the commandment of God, that you may keep your own tradition!" (Mark 7:9) The apostle Paul repeatedly warned against human traditions: "See to it that no one deceives you by philosophy and vain deceit, according to human traditions, according to the elements of the world and not according to Christ." (Col. 2:8). (See also Titus 1:13-14; 2 John 9-11; 2 Cor. 11:13-15; Eph. 4:14). Remember, too, that the Scriptures thoroughly furnish us to every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17), and all teachers are to be tested by them (1 Cor. 4:6; Acts 17:11). Thus, any practice not found in the Scriptures, is of human origin and is therefore false.

In paragraph four, he states, "The New Testament itself teaches that it does not contain everything that Jesus did or taught." He then quotes John 21:25. John is simply saying in John 21:25 that his writings do not contain everything Jesus did. He was emphasizing that his gospel was only a brief account of what Jesus did. To write every detail of every breath, thought, and move of the life of Jesus would take a multitude of books. John, through the power of the Holy Spirit, wrote only those things which are essential. In a parallel verse, John himself said, "Many other signs also Jesus worked in the sight of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But 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 20:30-31).

The assertion that the Bible does not contain all truth reveals the true attitude of the Catholic Church toward the Bible. The Catholic Church does not have love and respect for the Bible; otherwise, why raise such false claims? The Catholic Church is not building men's faith in the Bible as the only standard, but is destroying it. It wants to place on equality with the Bible its own man-made authorities; namely, Catholic human traditions, a human church, and the Pope. However, those of us who truly love the Lord will follow only the Bible. It contains the revelation of the mind of God (Eph. 3:1-5; 1 Cor. 2:6-13), is a perfect and complete guide to eternal life (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 1 John 5:13), and is the only standard by which we will be judged in the last day (Rev. 20:12; Rom. 2:16).

My opponent said in paragraph 5, "Scripture teaches that the Apostles appointed successors to carry out their work." He then quotes Acts 13:2-3 and Titus 1:5. Again, I plead with our readers to examine those verses and see if they reveal what he is claiming. How could they teach that the apostles appointed successors when successors are not mentioned? Acts 13:2-3 simply shows that Paul and Barnabas were separated by the Holy Spirit from the brethren in Antioch for their first missionary work. In Titus 1:5, Paul instructs Titus to ordain elders in the churches on the island of Crete. He then gives instructions on what type of men are to be selected (Titus 1:6-11). Again, the verse says absolutely nothing about successors to the apostles.

No one is a successor to the apostles and has their authority today because no one is inspired by the Holy Spirit today. The possession of the Spirit is the factor which determined the apostles' authority. If the Catholics are to sustain their idea of successors, they must produce the passages which plainly and openly reveal it. The Catholics cannot produce the passages for their doctrine of successors because none exist. The Catholic bishops and priests were not promised the power from on high nor commanded to wait in Jerusalem to receive it (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4,8). They have no authority because they are not inspired of the Holy Spirit nor are they eyewitnesses of Jesus (John 20:22-23; Acts 1:8, 21-26). They cannot prove their authority by speaking in tongues, prophesying and working

miracles (2 Cor. 12:12). They are not the chosen ambassadors who were selected to deliver God's message or "the faith" to mankind (Eph. 3:3-5; Jude 3). Moreover, they cannot be successors to the apostles and prophets because the only infallible succession from them are the inspired writings (2 Pet. 1:15; 3:1; 2 Tim. 2:14-17). Doesn't it seem very strange and odd that the successor of a king is a king, the successor of a president is a president, and the successor of a governor is a governor, but the successor of an apostle is a Catholic bishop or priest?

My opponent in paragraph 6 claims, "...The Council of Constantinople, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, decided upon the canon of the Bible..." This is another common Catholic argument - that the Catholic Church gave us the Bible. Please notice that he assumes that the Council of Constantinople was inspired. To assume something, and then assert it, is no way to prove anything. I would like for him to prove to us that the Council of Constantinople was inspired of God.

I affirm that the acceptance of the Bible is not based of the Catholic Church for the following reasons: (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 Constantinople 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.

My opponent said in paragraph 8, "The consequences of the teaching of the false dogma of Sola Scriptura have been embarrassingly clear: there are currently over 5,700 Protestant sects today, each one claiming to have the bible alone as their guide to the truth, yet each one disagreeing on a particular Biblical doctrine." It is a mere assumption that all the Protestant churches claim to follow the Bible alone. I wish it were true, but it's not. Many of them, like Catholicism, have their own creeds, traditions, revelations, conventions, headquarters, etc., along with the Bible. In spite of this, Catholic officials would like all to believe that the Catholic Church has unity, whereas those who hold to the Bible alone, have utter division. However, the truth of the matter is that the Catholic Church is the mother of division. Every major division that is in Christianity originated with and came out of the Catholic Church. Approximately 1050 A.D., the Catholic Church split and there was the great schism between the West and the East. A few hundred years later, there was a split and the Anglican Church was started. It claimed to honor many of the very same bishops and trace its lineage back to the apostles over much the same route. A division occurred in Catholicism when the Lutheran Church broke away; it was another branch or division within Catholicism. The bulk of Protestant denominations today are branches and sects of groups which originally broke away from the Roman Catholic Church. Even today those who have knowledge of the current trends know that the Catholic Church is not united.

The disrespect that the Catholic Church has toward the Bible is the prime cause of division in the Religious world. Even in this Rebuttal we are answering common charges made by the Catholic Church against the Bible as the only authority. Such charges lead men away from the Bible and cause them to distrust it 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 Bible as God's sole authority in religion. In fact, most of their doctrines originated in the Catholic Church rather than in the Bible, i.e., infant baptism, instrumental music in worship, observance of Christmas and Easter. The only authority they have for these and many others is the Catholic Church. Holding to the Bible 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.

In paragraph 9, it was stated, "Contrary to Protestant thought, Scripture implicitly states that it is not open to private interpretation. '...Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is open to private interpretation.' (2 Peter 1:20)." What kind of rule is it that says we can make a private interpretation of a verse which says we can't make a private interpretation! Catholics are always inconsistent on this point. They quote Scripture to support their doctrine expecting us to understand and to make a private interpretation. However, when we quote a passage which refutes their doctrine, they tell us that it is wrong to make private interpretations!

Catholics usually only quote 2 Pet. 1:20, but not the next verse, 2 Pet. 1:21. However, when viewing the two verses together, it is easy to see that Peter is not saying one cannot have a private interpretation of Scripture, but is teaching that no prophecy of Scripture ever came by private interpretation. He said, "This, then, you must understand first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is made by private interpretation. For not by will of man was prophecy brought at any time; but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." (2 Pet. 1:20-21). Thus, Peter is saying that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation (i.e., not a matter of the prophet's own interpretation) because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but it came as the prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit. The passage affirms the inspiration of the Scriptures. They did not originate from the private interpretation or will of men, but from holy men of God who were moved by the Holy Spirit. Peter certainly wasn't teaching that one cannot make a private interpretation of Scripture.

The inspired writers taught that people could privately interpret or understand the Scriptures and they encouraged them to do so. The word "interpret" means "1: to explain or tell the meaning of: present in understandable terms 2: to conceive in the light of individual belief, judgment, or circumstance." (Webster's Collegiate Dictionary). Paul said, "...According to revelation the mystery has been made known to me, as I have written above in few words; as you reading may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ." (Eph. 3:3-4). "For we write you nothing but what you can read and understand..." (2 Cor. 1:13). "Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is." (Eph. 5:17). The Eternal God, who made our minds, through His holy Scriptures addresses us as intelligent beings and He requires and expects us to interpret and understand.

In as much as each respondent is limited to no more than five pages, I will continue my Rebuttal in my next essay. All Scriptural quotes in the above essay are from the Catholic Translations - Confraternity-Douay Version, Douay-Rheims Version, and Catholic Edition-Revised Standard Version.

## Second Rebuttal of the Riggs-Accetta 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." As before, I will briefly summarize my First Affirmative, and then as space permits, deliver my Second Rebuttal to my opponent's material.

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). Furthermore, he 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 unwritten 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.

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 we have eternal life. Again, the Scriptures claim for themselves that they alone are the standard of authority.

The holy Scriptures furnish us unto every good work. 2 Tim. 3:16-17 says, "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." Any practice, therefore, which is not in the Scriptures cannot be a good work in God's sight. Please name one good work which is necessary for salvation which is not in the Scriptures. Thus, the Scriptures alone are the authority; they thoroughly equip us for every good work.

All teachers are to be tested by the Scriptures. 1 Cor. 4:6 says, "Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other." Acts 17:11 says, "These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so." 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 according to their works, by the things which were written in the books." (See also Rom. 2:16; James 2:12; John 12:48). We will not be judged by unwritten traditions, teachings of the Pope, legislations of the church, writings of the so-called church fathers, etc., thus, again, showing that the Scriptures are the only standard.

Now, I will continue to examine my opponent comments which were made in his First Affirmative. In paragraph 10, he said, "Which came first, the Church or the Bible? Well, of course, the answer is obvious." He also added, "It was by the spoken word of the Church that the Christian converts believed in the good news, not by reading the Bible. I challenge my opponent to deny this historical fact." This is another often repeated Catholic argument designed to exalt the church as an authority in addition to the Bible. They claim that the Bible is not the sole authority because it followed the establishment of the church.

The Scriptures clearly reveal that the Word of God came before the church. As we have shown, there was a time when all the Word of God was given orally--by word of mouth of the inspired apostles and prophets. When people heard, believed and obeyed the Word given by the inspired teachers, the Lord added them to His church (Acts 2:47). In other words, upon obedience, they then constituted the church or the body of the saved. When they became "the church," they had no authority in making or changing the laws of the Lord. Their responsibility, as today, was to follow the commandments given by those who were guided by the Holy Spirit.

In all the accounts of conversion in the book of Acts, it is revealed that the Word of God was first preached (Acts 2:14-41; 8:5-13; 35-39; 9:17-18; 10:34-38; 16:13, 32). Thus, churches were established as result of the preaching of God's Word, and after being established, they continued to be guided and instructed by the inspired men who were present with them (See Acts 20:17-28). The Word of God given orally was the guide and standard of authority in that early period. If Christians in any given locality wished to be pleasing to God, they had to receive the Word of the inspired teachers 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. 2 Thess. 2:15 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." Thus, there was a time when the church was 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. When the apostles and prophets passed from the earth, their inspired writings became the only source of authority in religion.

Here, again, is a list which shows what the holy writings furnish: (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 (Acts 17:11; 1 Cor. 4:6); (9) Joy that is complete (1 John 1:1-4); (10) A reminder of the precepts (2 Pet. 3:1-2); (11) Standard of judgment (Rev. 20:12). This is all that is declared in God's revelation regarding His authority or law. The holy Scriptures do not mention or

allow other authorities. They alone are the complete and final standard which furnish all of man's spiritual needs. They alone are the standard by which all teachers are to be tested, and by which we will be judged in the last day. Thus, for the church to be pleasing to God, it must follow the Bible alone as its authority.

It is obvious that Catholics have the wrong concept of the church that is revealed in the Scriptures. The church of the New Testament was never a legislative body with authority to deliver or change the laws of God. The inspired individuals delivered God's laws (1 Cor. 14:37), and it was required of the early church, as well as the church today, to follow those laws. In other words, 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 was not thereby made an infallible, legislative body. The authority was not in the church, but in the inspired teachers who delivered the Word to them.

Consequently, the Word of the New Testament existed before the church (first given orally and then written). The church came into existence as result of the preaching of the Word. The Word was not born of the church, nor is the church the mother of the Word. How could it be the "New Testament church" except that the New Testament had been first? When Catholics argue that the church existed before the written New Testament, are they trying to say that the church existed without the faith that comes by hearing the Word (Rom. 10:17)? We see, therefore, that their argument amounts to nothing more than another feeble attempt to exalt the church as an authority in addition to the Bible.

In paragraph 12, my opponent said, "Scripture teaches that Christ's visible Church will have uninterrupted existence. 'Go, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit..and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.' (Matt 28:19-20) '...the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (the Church).' (Matt 16:18)." Thus, my opponent claims that Matt. 28:19-20 teaches that the church would have uninterrupted existence. Another Catholic writer quotes the same passages and declares that it teaches that the apostles were to have successors. He says, "The guidance of Christ was, therefore, to continue with their successors. This is clearly disclosed by the Words of Christ: 'Behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world.' Since the Apostles were not to live until the end of the world, Christ promised to be with them in the person of their successors unto the end of time." (**The Faith of Millions**, p. 137).

Moreover, another Catholic writer quotes Matt. 28:19-20 and asserts that Jesus was teaching that the church would never teach error. He said, "Why can't the Catholic Church ever teach error? Because Jesus promised to be always with His church to protect it from error. 'Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you: and behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world' (Matthew 28:19-20)." (**A Catechism For Adults**, p. 56).

Doesn't it seem strange that Catholics can make the same passage teach a host different doctrines, especially when it says nothing about any of them? The passages neither mentions the church nor successors. The promise of Christ was to the apostles and to them alone. We ask, "In what way would He be with them to the end of the world?" Please notice the context. Just before He declared, "I am with you all days," He said, "...Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." Thus,

Christ would be with them in the teaching of His commandments. The apostles themselves would not remain forever, but their teachings, the commandments of Christ which they delivered, would. The same is taught in parallel passages. "For you have been reborn, not from corruptible seed but from incorruptible, through the word of God who lives and abides forever. For, 'All flesh is as grass, and all its glory as the flower of grass; the grass withered, and the flower has fallen--but the word of the Lord endures forever.' Now this is the word of the gospel that was preached to you." (1 Pet. 1:23-25).

My opponent also used "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18) to teach that the church would have uninterrupted existence. Again, we ask our readers to consider what other Catholic writers teach from the same phrase. Please notice the following from Catholic sources:

"Jesus Christ promised to preserve the Church from error. If His prediction and promises were false, then he would not be God, since God cannot lie. Christ said: 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' *If therefore the Church falls into error, the gates of hell certainly would prevail against it.*" (**My Catholic Faith**, p. 144)

"Our Blessed Lord, in constituting St. Peter Prince of His Apostles, says to him: 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' Christ makes here a solemn prediction that no error shall ever invade His Church, and if she fell into error the gates of hell certainly prevailed against her." (**The Faith of Our Fathers**, p. 55).

**The Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words**, by W.E. Vine defines the word "hell" of Matt. 16:18 as, "HADES, the region of departed spirits of the lost (but including the blessed dead in periods preceding the Ascension of Christ)." (p. 187). Mr. Vine on page 188 added, "The word is used four times in the Gospels, and always by the Lord, Matt. 11:23; 16:18; Luke 10:15; 16:23; it is used with reference to the soul of Christ, Acts 2:27,31; Christ declares that He has the keys of it, Rev. 1:18..." **The Theological Word Book of the Bible**, edited by Alan Richardson, says of the word, "The name for this region was SHEOL (Heb.) or HADES (Gk.)...It was in Sheol that a man was 'gathered to his fathers'; the dead may not return to earth, but the living must eventually go to them (cf. II Sam. 12:23)." (p. 106).

When Jesus said, "...Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," He did not promise to preserve the church from error. He simply meant that the gates of hell would not prevail against Him in preventing Him from building His church. Acts 2:31-32 says, "...He, foreseeing it, spoke of the resurrection of the Christ. For neither was He abandoned to hell, nor did His flesh undergo decay. This Jesus God has raised up, and we are all witnesses of it." Hence, Jesus was not stopped from building His church by being left in hell ("hades" in the Greek, meaning the place of the disembodied spirits) because His spirit was again reunited with His body. If He had been confined to hades, it would have prevailed against Him.

A parallel constructed sentence to Matt. 16:18 is, "The students are going near the swamp, and the faculty does not like it." The faculty does not like what--the students? No, the faculty does not like the students **going near the swamp**. Jesus said, "...I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The gates of hell shall not prevail against what? They would not prevail against

### Him **building His church.**

The seven short epistles to seven churches of Asia in the book of Revelation reveal the relationship the church sustains to Christ (See Rev. chapters 2 and 3; see especially 2:1-5, 12-14, 18-20; 3:1-3, 14-15). Those verses plainly reveal that when a church continues in Christ's Word, it keeps its identity as His church, but when it fails to abide in His Word, it is no longer regarded as His church. Also, they reveal that Christ did not establish His church as one that could never fall into error, because some of those churches went into error. Someone might say that the passages in Revelation referred to the various parishes or congregations rather than the whole church. It is true that the verses were speaking of local churches; nevertheless, the same principle that applied to them, relates to the whole church. The Lord does not have a rule for one congregation which is not equally applicable to all. If one church is rejected for embracing error, all others who likewise embrace error are rejected.

Many times during the Old Testament period, the whole Israelite nation left the truth. Jeremiah the prophet recorded that false prophets and priests had turned the people from the truth and none were right (Jer. 5:31; 6:13; 8:10; 13:25; 14:14; 23:32). Isaiah said, "And judgment is turned away backward, and justice hath stood far off: because truth hath fallen down in the street, and equity could not come in. And truth hath been forgotten..." (Isa. 59:14-15). Time and time again the whole Israelite nation left the truth and followed error--Judges 2:10-12; Psalm 14:2-3; 53:2-3; Micah 7:2 etc. Some generations, however, abandoned error and turned back to the Word of God. A good example is when the book of the Lord was found and reforms were made (2 Kings 22 & 23).

The Old Testament examples of the people of God falling away, reveal the proper relationship the church sustains to Christ because the New Testament writers declared that those things serve as warnings for us. 1 Cor. 10:11 says, "Now all these things happened to them as a type, and they were written for our correction, upon whom the final age of the world has come." (See 1 Cor. 10:1-12; Rom. 15:4). If God's chosen people under the Old Testament went into error, and the inspired writers declared that those things were written as a type to admonish us, it necessarily follows that God's people under the New Testament can go into error.

The relationship that the church sustains to Christ is the same as that of the individual Christian. As long as the individual abides in the Word of the Lord, he will never perish and no outside forces can remove him from the Lord's favor. Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me. And I give them everlasting life; and they shall never perish, neither shall anyone snatch them out of my hand." (John 10:27-28). Did Jesus mean "once saved, always saved?" No, He meant that no outside forces can remove one from Him; however, it still remains that one can remove himself by not abiding in His Word. Likewise, there are no outside forces that can destroy the church, e.g., "a kingdom that cannot be shaken" (Heb. 12:28), but it can cause itself to be rejected by embracing error. As long as the church is abiding in the Word of Christ, there are no outside forces that can destroy it, but when it is overtaken by error, by its own actions it loses its identity as His church.

As before, I have limited myself to five pages as agreed in the rules for this debate. All Scriptural quotes in the above essay are from the Catholic Translations - Confraternity-Douay Version, Douay-

Rheims Version, and Catholic Edition-Revised Standard Version.

It is truly unfortunate and sad that this debate must now come to a end. The reason for its closing is that Mr. Accetta, without any explanation, has chosen to discontinue his part in the debate. Thus, he has clearly broken one of the rules which was agreed upon and signed by each correspondent. Rule No. 5 stated, "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 their opponent."

In the final analysis, what can we conclude but that God's holy Word has defeated the Catholic claim? Indeed, God's sacred writings are the true and sole standard in religion today. They are the revelation of the mind of God (Eph. 3:1-5; 1 Cor. 2:6-13), the means by which all teachers are to be tested (1 Cor. 4:6; Acts 17:11), the complete and perfect guide to eternal life (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 1 John 5:13), and the only standard by which we will be judged in the last day (Rev. 20:12; Rom. 2:16).