

Review of: "Sola Scriptura to Improve the Quality of Christian Students in Thinking Characteristics"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

The authors clearly put a lot of time and hard work into publishing a paper not in their native language. I want to encourage them in all that hard work. They are clearly devout followers of Jesus. This is a great thing and I appreciate learning theology from another part of the world (I am in Canada). I think that with some work this paper could be improved and published, but it currently has some major areas that need to be fixed.

The challenge with this paper is that it attempts to address too many topics without clearly showing how its methodology engages each topic. It would be a better paper if it selected just one or two topics and gave a more detailed study and defense of this topic. Likewise there are numerous factual errors and generalizations. I will quote here some of the paper and then note where there are errors.

Inaccurate Historical Descriptions of Sola Scriptura

"Sola Scriptura is the doctrine that the Bible, and the Bible alone, has the final Word on all our teachings and our lives. All aspects of thought and energy must be subject to God's Word that the Scriptures are "the ultimate and absolute source of authority, the final say in determining, for all doctrines and practices (faith and morals)" and that "the Scriptures, neither more nor less, and nothing else is needed for faith and morals." ... There is a note to be made here to avoid a common misunderstanding. Many people think that the Reformers believed in the inerrant authority of the Bible. In contrast, the Roman Catholic church believed only in the inerrant rule of the church and its traditions. This is a mistake. During the Reformation, both parties recognized the authority of the Bible (Boice, 1984)."

One major error I will point out is that there is a factual error about what the reformers meant when they taught *Sola Scriptura*. The article states that *sola scriptura* means *Scriptura Nuda* (i.e. the Scriptures without any other source) instead of *Scriptura Suprema* (i.e. the Scriptures are the supreme source of doctrine. Many of the reformers appealed to the early church to ground their doctrine. While they believed that Scripture was the supreme source, it was not the exclusive source of doctrine. In the Lutheran Book of Concord there is a whole book of testimonies from early church fathers they cite to prove their point. Similarly the Anglican Archbishop John Jewel (an Apology for the Church of England) and the Lutheran Reformer Phillip Melancthon (i.e. Loci Communes), the 39 Articles of the Church of England, the Augsburg Confession, frequently cite early church fathers, the deuterocanonical books, the early church Councils of Nicaea and the Apostles Creed, as legitimate sources of Doctrine since they accurately handed down and clarified teaching that was in Scripture. This distinction can be found in the use of patristic citations and Ecumenical Creeds in the Lutheran Book of Concord, the Reformed Second Helvetic Confession, as well as the Anglican Book of Common Prayer. Classical

Protestants believed that the Reformation was not an abandonment of tradition but rather a return to the tradition of the early church. The supremacy of Scripture, then, signifies that Protestants find in the tradition a principle that only theological developments whose roots are clearly seen in Scripture are valid, and they thus criticize the Roman Catholic theological tradition which they see as advancing beyond what is clearly revealed in Scripture. Likewise the Roman Catholic Church at the Reformation believed that their tradition infallibly passed down the tradition of the Bible, it was not until John Henry Newman and the idea of the Development of Doctrine, that Roman Catholics began to talk about a development of doctrines such as purgatory or the assumption of Mary. This article makes incorrect statements about the early reformers and the Roman Catholic Church. While later groups in the 1700s and later, such as Baptists and Pentecostals did practice a form of Scriptura Nuda (the Bible alone with no reference to church fathers and early creeds), this was a later development and not the practice of the early reformation.

I recommend the following evangelical scholars (I am guessing the writers come from an evangelical/fundamentalist tradition) who give a better historically accurate definition of sola scriptura.

Kenneth Stewart, *In Search of Ancient Roots: The Christian Past and the Evangelical Identity Crisis* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 68

Vanhoozer, Kevin J. "The Sufficiency of Scripture: A Critical and Constructive Account." *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 49, no. 3 (September 1, 2021): 218–234.

For a conservative Roman Catholic View on Scripture I would recommend

Pontifical Biblical Commission. *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1993.

Bergsma, John Sietze, and Brant James Pitre. *A Catholic Introduction to the Bible*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2018.

Pitre, Brant – The Mystery of God's Word Inspiration, Inerrancy, and the Interpretation of Scripture. *Letter & Spirit* 6 (2010): 47-66

Relation of Sola Scriptura to Ethics

The article does not spend adequate time developing what was the view of Scripture at the time of the Reformation and then switches to a discussion of contemporary ethics. The article needs to show why Sola Scriptura is related to ethics. Why not simply ethical study of Scripture?

I recommend engaging: Hays, Richard. *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethic*. San Francisco: HarperOne, 1996.

Methodology

"Research Methods In this scientific paper, the writer uses qualitative research methods, with an exposition approach and a study of Biblical literature where the writer researches books and conducts internet explorations that examine the

concept of enhancing Christian Character according to the Bible. Library or literature research (literature review, literature research) examines or critically questions information, ideas, or results contained in the scientific literature (scientific literature). It formulates theoretical and methodological contributions to certain topics (Donald R, Cooper., and Schindler, 2011)."

The paper does not show how it uses this methodology, it merely states that it uses a methodology. How is this methodology enacted in the paper? How did the authors conduct a literature review? How did they select sources? It does not look like any methodology was actually used to construct the argument of the paper.

Character

"Analysis and Research Results The Meaning of the Characters"

Finally I do not see how the idea of character is related to the idea of ethics broadly and sola scriptura? There is no argument or method showing that these concepts are related. The authors do argue that ethics come from scripture, but why focus on Character as opposed to environmental care or combatting personal sin? They need to show how and why these topics are related. Once again the paper confusingly tries to study too many things.

Conclusion

At this point, I could continue, but I simply would state that at this point the Paper should not be published It needs to have a more focused topic, have a clearer methodology, and have better engagement with sources to avoid historical errors. I do appreciate the pastoral goal to show how the bible and character development are linked, but this needs to be made stronger first. The authors are clearly devout Christians, and this is a good thing that should be encouraged, but I do think the paper needs to be improved first.