

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

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This article addresses an issue that is both fundamental and current for Christian practice. The intersection of Sola Scriptura and "Character in thinking" is an insightful and potentially fruitful avenue for exploration and, more importantly, application in Christian practice. But I see many problems I hope the authors will address.

First, I would like to see this article polish its prose and scholarly apparatus. Quotations are left uncited in the introduction. In several places, words (and even paragraphs) are repeated. Some words choices seem incorrect ("mediocre," "secondary," "patron"), bibliography is not consistently alphabetized, and etymology is incorrect on "biblia" (which *is* the plural, while "*biblion*" is singular).

The key concept of Sola Scriptura is not handled very carefully. It requires more theological and historical nuance. For instance, does Sola Scriptura always mean that the Bible is the "sole source of Christian teaching and life"? The Bible itself does not make this claim (or at least the authors do not prove this from scripture) and in fact suggests that accurate knowledge of God is attained through other sources, such as nature (Romans 1:19-20). Nor does the Bible claim that God no longer speaks directly to humans (even the most emphatic proponents of Sola Scriptura do not always argue this). Historically, the sixteenth century reformers (who arguably first clearly articulated Sola Scriptura) debated at length the reach of the Bible's authority. The category of "adiaphora" or "indifferent things" specifically deals with issues of faith or (more commonly) practice not addressed explicitly by Scripture. At that juncture, a deliberate process of applying *principles* of scripture may rise in distinction from direct application of specific words of scripture. Furthermore, it can be problematic to juxtapose the "church" and "apostles and prophets" as though "apostles and prophets" are not part of the church. The author could usefully engage in exegesis of such key passages that are at the contentious point of disagreement between Catholics and Protestants. Finally, the authors seem to conflate Sola Scriptura with doctrines that support this, such as perspicuity of scripture and "scripture interprets scripture." These are not simply claims that state Sola Scriptura "more emphatically" but actually delimit a *type* of Sola Scriptura.

Similarly, the key concept of Character is not well defined or biblically established. For instance, the authors argue that Christians must exhibit a "Christ-like lifestyle" but that Christians should not necessarily emulate other biblical persons because character is relative "to their calling." This seems inconsistent. Didn't Christ have a distinct calling that not all can necessarily imitate? (his death on the cross for the salvation of the world is the chief illustration). Relatedly, citing that Jesus spent time with his disciples or taught them does not establish that he "put much emphasis on the character of his disciples." With much literature on "virtue ethics" from a Christian perspective and a tradition of character theory going

back to Aristotle, this essay misses the scholarship of many helpful (and challenging) sources.

The argument for use the Bible *only* in Christian thinking in character fails to establish the necessary exclusivity. Why, for instance, does “the Bible is the word of God” or “the Bible is inerrant” mean that other sources of authority cannot help?

The explication of the “problems” with consumerism are opaque. Why, for instance, is “becoming dependent” problematic? More elaboration is needed in this cultural critique.

The research methods need greater clarity. Use of the Bible is clear (but also somewhat circular, i.e., can the importance of Sola Scriptura be established by appealing to Scripture?), but what are the criteria for inclusion of “books” and “internet exploration” regarding this topic? Some of the sources cited as authoritative do not provide much insight or nuance, such as the Dictionary.

Finally, this essay speaks in generalities; an example or case study of this decision-making process would strengthen the argument overall. This would also be aided by more precision regarding who “students” are in the author’s minds.

Readers get very little concrete condition, which seems important for an article purporting to discuss decision-making.