Contents

— *Chapter 1* —

SOLA SCRIPTURA:
The Matter of Biblical Authority

The teacher's appraisal read with a clarity that Kathy and John Carpenter could not ignore.

> Matthew fails to give attention to details and makes careless mistakes. He fidgets and squirms excessively in his seat. Matthew often blurts out answers before questions have been completed. He has a problem of talking excessively and he often loses things necessary for daily tasks. Matthew often leaves his seat when remaining in his seat is expected, has difficulty waiting his turn, and sometimes bullies others.

The assessment went on to recommend testing for ADD or *Attention Deficit Disorder.* Matthew's teacher explained to Kathy and John that no medical tests exist for ADD, but various diagnostic guidelines have been established. She showed them the guidelines. Comparing Matthew's behavior to those guidelines, it seemed to Kathy and John that their son might have ADD. In order to find out, the teacher encouraged them to visit the school

psychologist. But the Carpenters remained unsure how to proceed. They were aware that a debate over ADD was raging—a debate over its existence, diagnosis, and treatment. Given the generic nature of the guidelines for determining ADD, they were concerned that their son could be misdiagnosed and wrongly labeled.

They were concerned also about the treatment that Matthew would receive. Ritalin is a drug used to treat children and adults with ADD. Although they knew that Ritalin enables individuals to focus their attention, they also had read of its side effects that alter mood and temperament. Not knowing the long-term effects of the drug, they were uncertain that they wanted to pursue a personality-altering remedy.

As evangelical Christians, they had another concern, the use of a secular school psychologist and psychological treatment. Would their acceptance of Matthew's diagnosis and the use of Ritalin be consistent with their stance that Christ and His Word are sufficient, or would they be compromising with the world by accepting a secular solution to Matthew's problems? How exactly should Christians relate to the research, findings, theories, and treatments of psychology? These questions motivated the Carpenters to contact their pastor. With a sincere longing for answers, the Carpenters sought his advice. Unfortunately, the conversation that followed left them even more confused.

After hearing their concerns, he turned in his Bible to 2 Peter 1:3–4, where he read,

> His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

He then asked, "Kathy and John, I know you believe God's Word and seek to follow it. Let me ask you, do you believe that when God said 'everything' in this passage He meant *everything*?" John and Kathy nodded in agreement. He proceeded to tell them that they

"should not pollute the pure stream of God's Word with the impure stream of secular psychological ideas." Instead, he told them, they should find the work of Christ and His Word sufficient for their son's scholastic problems. Finally, he said, "Matthew's behavior is a problem of disobedience to authority and a lack of self-discipline." He then gave them a book on child discipline that he said advocated a biblical approach to their son's problems.

At first his words sounded logical. Certainly, Christ is the sufficient answer to all human need. What Christian could or would question that? And, of course, they believed the Bible was relevant to their lives. Still they could not avoid a deep sense that his comments were overly simplistic and had a pat-answer tone to them. Furthermore, something was lacking in his reasoning and in the consistency of his actions. On the one hand, he advised them not to take the counsel of the secular school psychologist, yet, only moments before, they had watched him take a drug called dihydroergotamine (DHE) used in the treatment of migraine headaches. Sure, the tablet of DHE was only for a headache, but was not his use of this pain reliever similar to their son's potential use of Ritalin? Both drugs help to maintain concentration in order to deal with daily tasks.

As they glanced around the room, another inconsistency struck them. They noted that one of their pastor's bookcases stored several books on management, communication theory, and sermon delivery. Nearby, in another bookcase, were books dealing with group dynamics and interpersonal relationships. They wondered how he could justify his use of "secular psychological theorists" when it came to managing the church, leading a small group Bible study, or delivering his weekly message. How could he use these practical applications of psychological research while claiming that *everything* he needed for his life is contained in the pages of Scripture? Didn't he just say that everything meant everything? How did he deal with this contradiction? Surely, he could not deny that truth is found outside the Bible, for he was employing extrabiblical truth in his own life and ministry. Maybe he just wasn't aware of the inconsistencies between his actions and his position when it came to the matter of psychology and its use by Christians.

Although names have been changed in this story, it is true. And it is a good illustration of the confusion brought out by questions of psychology and counseling in the church.

As another example of how theories play out in the real world, meet Carl Hartman, lone pastor at a Midwestern church of one hundred and fifty attendees located on the edge of one of the largest communities in his state. While joined by many laypersons in the work of the ministry, Carl still finds that serving as a pastor is stretching. As solo pastor, Carl must wear several hats—teacher, preacher, leader, administrator, and counselor to name a few. Preaching demands that he be a Bible scholar and communicator. Teaching ministry requires that he be both a student of the Bible and capable facilitator of learning. Administrative tasks and organizational leadership duties necessitate effective management skills. In each of these areas, Carl has gained some measure of confidence and competence. But it is his role as counselor that presents the greatest challenge.

There are simply more human struggles and tales of tragedy than Carl feels equipped to address. He hears of so many needs and broken lives, so many stressed marriages and shattered families, so many neglected children and wayward adolescents that his heart is burdened daily. He wonders how to help—how to bring counsel to those whom he serves. How will he give the spiritual counsel they require to reorder their chaotic and sorrowful lives? Of course there is one thing of which Carl is certain: The truth that gives sure direction is found in the pages of his Bible. He is equally certain of his commitment to the authority of the Bible in his ministry of providing spiritual counsel.

In an effort to more effectively care for his congregation, Carl read several books on counseling. Some offered helpful insights into the pastoral care of people. But others concerned him. One book in particular caused him to contemplate. In it, the author questioned the validity of using the tools and theories of psychology in counseling ministry. Although Carl recognized that this author was advocating an extreme position, he did raise an important issue—the appropriate use of the social science field of psychology in caring for people. From his reading, Carl came to

understand that several views exist on this topic. Some writers advocated an almost indiscriminate use of psychology within a counseling ministry. Others proposed a more moderate view in which psychological theories and treatments are selected within the parameters of biblical teaching. Still others entirely opposed any use of psychology in the emotional and spiritual healing of people. For them, only the Bible is to be used.

As a pastor dedicated to the goal of being thoroughly biblical in his ministry, what viewpoint should he adopt? He is committed to serve Christ and His church and to faithfully submit his ministry to the authority of God's Word, so how should he proceed? Should he take the "antipsychology" view of the so-called "biblical counseling" apologists, which, on the surface, appears to be the least risky position because of its Bible-only stance? Or should he adopt the "integrationist" position of the "Christian counseling" authors with its wide array of people-helping techniques and practical methods, many of which are drawn from the research of secular psychologists?

THE ISSUE OF BIBLICAL AUTHORITY

The case studies of Matthew Carpenter and Carl Hartman raise some important questions. What exactly does it mean to live one's life under the authority of Scripture? Does it mean that we are to find all truth for life in the Bible alone? What does it mean to embrace the doctrine of biblical authority? How is a commitment to biblical authority relevant to the ministry of counseling? Does it mean that the Bible alone is our basis for counseling? Could there be some other understanding of biblical authority that would lead to greater consistency in daily living and counseling ministry? Is there a way to tap the many sources of human knowledge and use those understandings in ministry while, at the same time, remaining true to God's Word? These are among the foundational questions that those who seek to provide spiritual counsel to others must consider.

The debate over how to address human needs and how to counsel people in a way that is consistent with Scripture is not

simply a theoretical matter. It is a human issue. We must first recognize that real people with real problems come to pastoral or lay counselors seeking spiritual counsel, biblical wisdom, and practical solutions to life's many hurts and stresses. What may seem simply an interesting debate in an Internet chat room or an "Introduction to Counseling" course at a Christian seminary is, in reality, a highly practical and people-impacting concern.

We offer this book as a practical resource for those who seek to help and counsel others. We begin with a chapter on the authority of the Bible because, first and foremost, we are committed to the authority of Scripture. In fact, we have subtitled this book *Counseling Under the Authority of Scripture* because of the supreme place we give to God's Word in doing the work of ministry. What we offer in this chapter is a review of the doctrine of biblical authority and practical help in applying that doctrine in the care of God's people. We believe that this is the correct starting point for those of us who desire to give spiritual counsel to the men and women who attend our churches. By beginning with the subject of biblical authority, clearly defined and illustrated, the lines of demarcation necessary for the evaluation, selection, and employment of various approaches to counseling and treatment can be established. To do this with accuracy will require a brief but enlightening look into history.

A Historic Debate: The Compatibility of Human Reason and Divine Revelation

As strange as it may seem, we will find the clearest direction for our thinking regarding the matter of psychology and its use in counseling ministry not in books written in the field of counseling, but in church history and theology textbooks. This is because, while the debate over the use of modern psychological theory and therapy methods in counseling God's people is a contemporary issue, the fundamental questions behind that debate are actually centuries old. We would frame these questions as follows:.

- How should knowledge gained through human reasoning be related to the truths communicated in the sacred Scriptures?

- What measure of authority should be granted to knowledge derived from such extrabiblical sources as philosophy, the church, personal experience, science, or, in our day, the social sciences?
- How should such knowledge be used in ministry?

A brief survey of church history reveals that these questions have troubled Christians in other times as well. Since the very early years of the church, Christians have had to wrestle with the issue of how human reason relates to matters of faith. Is there a place for human reasoning in addressing human problems, or are the only true answers found in the realm of faith and the pages of the Bible? Can we rely on human reason, or is it deceptive, leading only to a devilish wisdom and to corrupt misunderstandings? Three perspectives have been proposed.

Reason Corrupts Faith

Some have held that human reasoning and learning are the polar opposites of divine knowledge and faith. They would suggest that human reasoning corrupts a pure faith. Speaking specifically of the relationship of secular philosophical thought to Christian theological understanding, Tertullian (160–230) expressed a view that no relationship could exist between Christianity and Greek philosophy. He wrote:

> What is there in common between Athens and Jerusalem?
> What between the Academy and the Church?
> What between heretics and Christians? (7)

For Tertullian, human reasoning and learning, as expressed in philosophy, had nothing to contribute to Christianity and the Christian life. It was plain to him that the Christian should completely avoid dialogue with the philosopher. Christian theology was seen as heavenly and full of truth, whereas philosophy was deemed to be worldly and empty of truth. To use secular thinking in any form was to pollute the pure message of Scripture and to cavort with paganism (Erickson 40).

Trained in speaking and law, Tertullian was a great apologist for the early Western church. From his pen came passionate defenses of the persecuted Christians. Probably his most famous observation was with regard to the ineffectiveness of the martyrdom of Christians by the Romans. Tertullian wrote "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." But it is also true that Tertullian often wrote with what one author calls "a fiery and fighting spirit" that sometimes skewed his thinking toward intolerance. At times he took a militant separationist approach to the world and to those with whom he disagreed (Cairns 22, 117).

Later the *reason corrupts faith* position was reaffirmed, albeit with more grace, in the theology of Kuyper (1837–1920), Berkouwer (1903–1996), and Van Til (1895–1987), all of whom believed that sinful man was incapable of any knowledge, spiritual or scientific, and that the only facts that exist are "theistic facts." They held that human reasoning leads nowhere but to error. Facts derived from the natural world are isolated and futile. Because of the human tendencies toward self-centeredness, self-worship, and corruption, such facts merely generate a human wisdom—the antithesis of divine truth. So men, professing to be wise, become as fools (Rom. 1:22). Only divine revelation, made known specifically in the pages of Scripture, could be trusted to give valid understanding. Human reasoning is, from this viewpoint, hopelessly distorted and erroneous. On this basis, Christians should have nothing to do with the world's wisdom and claims to truth (Demarest 135–56).

Reason Supports Faith

Some have argued that reason can serve to support faith and that a place exists for human learning apart from the study of the Bible alone. This view, while recognizing the primacy of special revelation, also recognized a valid place for knowledge gained through natural revelation. Aurelius Augustine, bishop of Hippo (354–430), espoused this alternative to Tertullian's antagonistic understanding of the relationship of human reason to divine revelation.

Augustine acknowledged the presence of considerable truth in Greek philosophy. He believed truth was present there because

of the universal disclosure of God through general revelation or things that are made. For Augustine, human reasoning served to elucidate and support Christian theological understandings. Augustine considered human intellect to be a divine gift that could be used to better understand the Christian faith. For Augustine, reason is an essential support to genuine faith, but it is faith that is foundational to ultimate understanding. To put it another way, "thinking is prior to believing" and "believing prior to understanding." Augustine saw an interrelationship between reason and faith. Both were to play an essential role. Reason leads to faith and faith completes reason by granting understanding (Demarest 34–42).

Augustine coined the now famous phrase "All truth is God's truth," meaning that truth, wherever it is discovered and whoever discovers it, has its origins in God. Augustine differentiated between two kinds of truths, termed *sapienta* (wisdom) and *scientia* (knowledge). The first is eternal and changeless, while the second is temporal and changing. Augustine held that the revealed truth of God's Word was sapienta truth and the discoveries of human reason were scientia truths (*NPNF* 3:161–68). Because of the crippling effects of sin, humans are unable to intuit the eternal and changeless truths apart from divine illumination. Humans can, however, discover truths in the temporal realm. Although such knowledge is still distorted by the limitations of sin and the darkness of the natural mind, the gift of common grace (not a term used by Augustine) and the image of God in human beings enables people to come to a partial understanding of eternal truth. Of course, Augustine would stress, any human understanding must be completed by the divine revelation of Scripture (Demarest 27).

Augustine held that human reasoning does not create truth but, instead, discovers it (*LCC*, 6:261). God is the creator of all truth, and men and women are merely discoverers of that truth— His truth. Although recognizing the possibility of human beings reasoning to truthful understandings through general revelation, Augustine held firmly to the complete dependability of the Bible as God's final authority. According to Augustine, God is not known in a personal and intimate way through the induction of truth from

the finite world and sense perception. God is known by faith in Christ as presented in the revealed written Word of God (Cairns 156–61).

Reason Establishes Faith

The third view of the role of human reasoning in the Christian faith was that of Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) who held that, through reason alone, one could establish the existence of God and His divine attributes. Furthermore, Aquinas believed Christianity to be a reasonable faith that could be established by use of rational inductive thinking without direct reference to the Bible. Aquinas is best known for his rational arguments for the existence of God. Aquinas argued that, because of an untarnished *imago Dei* (image of God) in man, both non-Christians and Christians were capable of reasoning from the empirical data of nature to the God of the Bible. Using the principle of cause and effect, Aquinas established five arguments for God's existence. He argued that God is the first mover of all that is in motion, that God is the first cause of all effects, that God is the first being of all beings, that God is the perfect source of all morality, and that God is the intelligent designer behind the order and harmony of nature (Demarest 34–42).

Working from an Aristotelian philosophic framework, Aquinas argued that reality was divided into a hierarchy of two orders. The higher order was the supernatural realm, the lower order the natural realm. Aquinas considered the human mind to be the passageway between those worlds, and reason the key to the door that opened that passage. Aquinas spoke of a "twofold truth of divine things" (Demarest 34). The first he was referring to was truth communicated directly from God through Scripture and the second, truth reasoned by natural man through the study of what God has made and human logic. Thus, Aquinas divided truth into knowledge that is revealed and knowledge that is natural. Aquinas believed that human beings could reason, through rational inductive processes, from what has been made and from the effects of God's actions, to empirical knowledge of God, but that reasoning would not lead to a saving knowledge of Christ. Salvation knowledge, Aquinas held, came through the specific revelation

of the Scriptures authoritatively interpreted by the Roman Catholic Church (Demarest 35).

Aquinas attempted to harmonize the knowledge of the natural realm with knowledge of the realm of revelation. He believed that this was possible because the knowledge from both realms is from God and all truth fits into a single totality. In this way Aquinas was an early integrationist. But in the final analysis, Aquinas's emphasis on knowledge gained in two separate realms through two different methods led to a separation of knowledge into two compartments, the sacred and the secular. Later a final divorce would occur in the thinking of many, one that continues to the present. It is a divorce not intended by Aquinas, but one to which he ultimately contributed. That was a divorce of faith from reason, a compartmentalization into scientific truth and theological truth instead of understanding both to be parts of a whole that is unified by God, the Author of all that is true (Cairns 251–60).

Although Aquinas should be commended for stressing the rationality of the Christian faith, he must be criticized for his inflated view of the power of human reason. He failed to recognize that not only has the Fall affected the spiritual status of men and women before God, but it also depreciated human cognitive abilities. We do not understand clearly because fallen man is cognitively crippled. We miss the true God and fabricate gods of our own making, ending up worshiping the creature rather than the Creator (Rom. 1:25).

In summary, the pre-Reformation church espoused three primary views regarding the role of human reason in the life of the believer. One view (Tertullian) called for an absolute separation from worldly wisdom and embraced a very low view of the worth of human intellectual inquiry. The second was a more moderate position (Augustine) that placed Scripture as the final authority over all knowledge gained from human study and reasoning. The Bible was not the only source of knowledge, but it was the norm by which such knowledge is judged. The third view (Aquinas) magnified human reasoning powers. The Bible was depreciated in its authoritative role, sharing its authority with philosophy and human reasoning. From this third position a full-fledged divorce

TABLE 1–1
Faith and Reason: Three Historic Perspectives

	Reason Corrupts Faith	**Reason Supports Faith**	**Reason Establishes Faith**
Proponents	Tertullian (160–230 A.D.)	Augustine (354–430 A.D.)	Aquinas (1225–1274 A.D.)
Key Concepts	Human reasoning is hopelessly distorted by sin and leads to corrupted ideas. Two types of wisdom exist, heavenly and worldly. Christian theology is heavenly wisdom, whereas Greek philosophy is worldly wisdom. Human reasoning will always lead one to errant views of life. Human wisdom is, therefore, the antithesis of divine truth. Facts derived from the natural world are isolated and futile. The only truths that can be used in daily living are "theistic facts." The Bible alone is truthful. Only the Bible should be used to discover truth.	Human reason can secure genuine and truthful understandings of the world because of God's general revelation in His creation. All truth is God's truth, whether found in Scripture or in the created order. There is only one source of truth, God. Human reasoning can serve to support the Christian faith and is not inherently in conflict with the truths of the Bible. There are two kinds of truth, *sapienta* (wisdom) and *scientia* (knowledge). The first type of truth can only be discovered in the pages of the Bible. Believers and unbelievers, through the use of inductive thinking, can discover the second type.	Rational inductive thinking processes can be used to establish the Christian faith. Through the use of apologetics, without direct reference to the Bible, one can come to an empirical knowledge of God. Through a study of visible effects, one can reason backward to discover their cause. This reasoning process leads to an understanding of the first cause, God Himself. The human mind is a passageway between two worlds, the natural and the supernatural (secular and sacred). Careful application of the rules of logic can overcome the limitation of sin and free the mind to think about truth accurately.
Implications	Christians should have nothing to do with philosophy and cannot trust human reason. Human reasoning pollutes the pure stream of scriptural truth. Incorporation of human reasoning into the Christian faith will produce a false wisdom and will, in fact, lead to foolishness. Christians should reject all aspects of philosophy rather than risk the corruption of their faith.	Christians can pursue truth in all domains of human learning including philosophical study. Truth and error come to us as a mixture; therefore, Scripture must be used as the final authority in evaluating truth claims. Saving faith can only be known through the truths revealed in the Bible. One cannot reason his way to God. That knowledge comes through the Word of God.	Human reason is exalted and the impact of the Fall on human thinking minimized. One need not be a Christian to come to the knowledge of the truth, provided careful, logical, inductive reasoning is employed. Two kinds of knowledge are possible, scientific and theological. While both find their source in God, one need not study theology to understand science or science to understand theology.

between faith and reason developed, leading to a compartmentalization of truth into secular and sacred categories. In these three basic views, we have the essence of the debate over the place of human reason and theory in the practice of ministry. But we must now turn the page of our historic review to the period of the Protestant Reformation where the matter was crystallized.

It is plain from our brief discussion of Tertullian, Augustine, and Aquinas that the issue of the use of human reason, human discovery, and extrabiblical authorities is not new. Three views were identified. Although these early followers of Christ debated the place of philosophy and its authority in Christian thought and life, others who came later debated the authority of the Roman church. In doing so, these church reformers sought to return the church to its earlier commitment to the Bible as the ultimate standard for all matters of faith and practice. Proclaiming God's Word to be the means by which all other authorities are finally judged, the Reformers proclaimed the doctrine of "Sola Scriptura" (Cairns 333).

What did the Reformers mean by "Sola Scriptura" or "Scripture alone"? Did they mean that the Bible was the sole source of truth and that all truth claims that were derived from a reasoned study of the natural world were corrupt? Did they mean, alternatively, that the Bible alone is the authoritative standard by which all matters of faith and practice are ultimately judged? Did the Reformers seek to return to the more narrow separationist understanding of Tertullian or the more moderate view of Augustine? The answers to these questions are essential in establishing how Christians in ministry are to deal with concepts addressed by extrabiblical sources, including the ministry of counseling and the field of psychology.

"Sola Scriptura" was one of the basic tenets of the Reformation. Rejecting both the exaltation of reason and the Roman Church, the distinguishing conviction of the Reformers was their belief that the Scriptures alone were the ultimate and final authority in matters of faith and practice. They rejected the priority given by Aquinas to human reason and the church authorities in determining what it is true. Instead, they called for a return to the Bible as final authority (Demarest 43–60). Such central figures

of Protestantism as Martin Luther, John Calvin, Huldrych Zwingli, Menno Simons (Mennonites), and Jacob Amman (Amish) agreed that only the Scriptures could be given the place of infallible authority against which the opinions of men, the church, and society were to be confirmed and conformed. Although each of these reformers recognized the immeasurable importance of "Sola Scriptura," they could not agree as to its application. Luther and Calvin represented one view of Sola Scriptura; Zwingli, Simons, and Ammann another.

Luther and Calvin

Drawing heavily on the writings of Augustine, both Martin Luther (1483–1546) and John Calvin (1509–1564) held that "Sola Scriptura" meant that the Bible was to be a measuring stick, a standard or norm, against which human thoughts and ideals were to be compared. They advocated a return to the views of Augustine regarding the place of human reason and the use of extrabiblical knowledge. They allowed for a twofold knowledge base, one drawn from the general revelation of God in the natural world, the other from God's special revelation in Christ and His written Word. Luther described this knowledge as "left-handed" and "right-handed" knowledge. Left-handed knowledge was the knowledge of the philosopher. It contained truth, but was incomplete and vague and could not save. Right-handed knowledge, by contrast, was evangelical in nature, gained from God's self-disclosure in the Bible and in Christ, and led to salvation. To Luther and Calvin, both were legitimate pursuits so long as the limitations of the first were acknowledged (Demarest 44, 51).

Luther argued against a proud reason and philosophic speculation that sought to dethrone God. He described *natural reason* as a gift from God appropriate to its appointed domain. He saw this reasoning ability as a quality that distinguished human beings from God's created beasts. It was this natural reasoning that enabled men and women to manage households, build cities, govern in civil affairs, invent, create, and discover. *Regenerate reason* is found in the Spirit-filled person. The Spirit enables the believer to interpret the Scriptures and sanctifies the believer's mind

for heavenly service. *Arrogant reason* attempts to usurp God as authority. It seeks alternatives to the God of the Bible. It is driven by man's fallen nature and no longer seeks God as God. Thus, for Luther it is possible that through natural reason men could discover divine truths consistent with the Scripture. Those same persons can then distort that truth in an effort to deny God and seek, in pride and spiritual blindness, to enthrone some other god in the true God's place (Demarest 47).

When it came to Christian living, both Calvin and Luther allowed for Christians to integrate into their Christian practice what the Bible did not expressly prohibit. In other words, if the Bible did not speak against something or if something were not in opposition to a direct teaching of Scripture, it was deemed permissible.

In Calvin's view, the creation serves as a mirror in which the invisible attributes of God are reflected. God's handiwork, the precision and orderliness of His created world, and His providential care all point to God's existence and qualities. Because of the message of general revelation, nature is an open book that all persons, Christian or non-Christian, can read. It tells of God's existence, His eternal power, and His divine attributes. Calvin also recognized God's revelation in the detail and structure of the human body. Calvin believed that in the study of the human frame—particularly in its utility, functionality, and beauty—God's nature could be recognized. Calvin held that the evidences of the Godhead are so many in the structure of man that people need not go beyond their own bodies to discover the hand of God. But to Calvin, the knowledge gained through the study of the world or the body does not bring salvation or piety. Instead, because of sin's cloud, it merely condemns because humans reject the knowledge of God it bestows. Only Scripture can grant knowledge that leads to salvation. Nature merely offers human inquirers information, but the Word of God offers redemption (Cairns 334–40).

Zwingli, Simons, and Amman

While Calvin and Luther sought to establish the Scriptures as the final authority through the doctrine of "Sola Scriptura," other

TABLE 1–2
Sola Scriptura: Reformation Perspectives on Biblical Authority

Integrationists	Separationists		
Luther (1483–1546) and Calvin (1509–1564)	Zwingli (1484–1531)	Simons (1496–1561)	Amman (1644–1729)
Influenced by the writings of Augustine.	Influenced by the writings of Tertullian. Sought to reconstitute the first-century church by rejecting all authority except Scripture.		
Sola Scriptura understood to mean that the Bible is a measuring stick or norm against which all truth claims are judged.	Sola Scriptura understood to mean that the Bible is the only source of truth that one can reliably accept. All other claims to truth should be considered risky links to a secular world system. Divided truth into sacred and secular. Secular was to be rejected in favor of the sacred. Extreme distrust for philosophical and scientific study.		
Encouraged education, study in all fields of human inquiry, and the development of an integrative Christian worldview based upon the authority of the Bible.	Embraced a form of anti-intellectualism but did not forbid continued education. Biblical study was considered preferable to advanced studies in "secular" fields, however.	Simons and Amman were especially skeptical of any form of advanced education. Amman forbad study beyond the eighth grade. Rejected the concept of formal training of the clergy in favor of learning in the context of community and everyday living.	
Recognized a twofold basis for gaining knowledge of the truth, through general revelation and through special revelation.	Discouraged study of general revelation in favor of the study of special revelation (the Bible). Sought to be the people of the Book. Dualistic approach divided life and learning into godly and worldly categories.		
Promoted the concept of discernment. Scripture is seen as a standard to use in discerning truth from error in various fields of study. Taught also that reason only takes a person so far. Human reason fails to bring one to salvation. Special revelation is needed to come to a saving knowledge of God.	Promoted the rejection of study in fields deemed to be secular in order to avoid the polluting influence of human wisdom. Promoted knowledge of the Bible as antidote to worldly wisdom.		
If the Bible does not prohibit a practice or speak against an idea, it is permissible, though not always profitable.	If the Bible does not permit a practice or explicitly teach an idea, such practice or teaching is prohibited.		
Separation is a matter of personal conscience. Christian liberty is the norm. The principle of the weaker brother should be observed when in doubt.	Separation from the world is essential to godly living but does not extend as far as technological advancements. Separation includes avoidance of worldly values and lifestyles, but does not include a complete rejection of advanced education or the practice of shunning.	Separation is essential to maintaining a distinct people of God. Separation extends to education, technology, customs, and lifestyle. Shunning is used to keep people from too close of a worldly association.	

reformers called for a return to the strict separationist position of Tertullian and, in their view, the position of the first-century church. In the northern, German-speaking regions of Switzerland, Zwingli held to the absolute authority of the Bible and permitted nothing in religion that could not be proven explicitly by the Scriptures. For example, Zwingli, early in his ministry, argued against infant baptism because he could find no biblical warrant for the practice. For Zwingli this view of Sola Scriptura also meant that an organ should not be used in a worship service since organs were not prescribed in the Bible or used by the first-century church. In essence then, whereas Luther and Calvin allowed for the practice of those things the Bible did not expressly prohibit, Zwingli prohibited what the Bible did not specifically prescribe (Cairns 331–33).

Some, such as Menno Simons and Jacob Amman, felt even Zwingli did not go far enough in applying Sola Scriptura. In their view, the doctrine of Sola Scriptura demanded an absolute separation from the world and a distinct people of the Holy Book. Their goal was not the reformation of the church (Roman Catholic), but the reconstitution of the first-century church with no authority but Scripture alone. These Anabaptist leaders (called "Anabaptists" because of their belief in adult baptism of believers only—thus rebaptizing those who had been baptized as infants) were far more radical than Zwingli and, as a result, were marginalized by society and often persecuted (Cairns 334).

As the horse-drawn buggy approached them over the hilltop, Jim Shellborn applied his brakes so the family could all take a look. His wife, Karen, spoke first. "Look at the Amish farmer, children. See how different Amish people live. They still live like people did before we had cars and electricity." She went on to explain to the children that many Amish communities seek to maintain a separated existence that demands distinctive dress and very simple lifestyles. It seemed an oddity to see a small black and gray buggy, drawn by an old plow horse, negotiating a modern highway. Jim thought how different life must be for this Amish family. Jim's world is filled with laptop computers, digital phones, e-mail communication, and instant stock market trades. He benefits daily from

scientific and technological advancements occurring at a truly amazing rate. So his mind questioned, Why would some of God's people choose lives marked by such a plain and basic existence when so many modern conveniences are available? Jim did not realize it, but these quaint buggies and the lifestyle they represent are rooted in a particular view of scriptural authority. They are the practical outworking of a radical understanding of "Sola Scriptura."

Although their application of "Sola Scriptura" is far less radical than that of the Amish, modern "antipsychology" folk follow a similar line of theological reasoning. Like their Anabaptist forerunners, "biblical counselors" understand Sola Scriptura to mean that the Bible alone is to be used in counseling and that counselors should maintain a complete separation from "worldly" psychological theory. But this is not what the Reformers meant by "Sola Scriptura." Upholding Sola Scriptura does not require that we rule out the incorporation of findings from psychology and its many subfields simply because we do not find them specifically expressed in Scripture. The Reformation understanding of Sola Scriptura requires that we be more discerning than that. We are to "test the spirits to see whether they are from God' (1 John 4:1) or as Paul put it, to "Test everything. Hold on to the good" (1 Thess. 5:21).

We would suggest that the doctrine of Sola Scriptura is more accurately understood when aligned with the views of Augustine, Luther, and Calvin than it is with those of Tertullian, Zwingli, and the Anabaptists. Like the apostle Paul, we are open to employing truth discovered outside the Bible in pursuit of changed lives, but only under the authoritative parameters of a biblical understanding of God and human beings. In Acts 17 we read of Paul's use of the philosophic thought of his day when he spoke in the city of Athens. After surveying the city and its many idols, Paul was distressed. But he drew on his understanding of Greek culture and prepared a message focused on his audience. When he had opportunity to present Christ, Paul appealed to the philosophic base of the Athenians with these words:

Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you.

"The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'

"Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by man's design and skill. In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead." (Acts 17:22–31)

It is interesting to note that Paul, although distressed at his observations of idol worship, did not present a message condemning their idolatry. From this scriptural record we can see that Paul was comfortable in using and even crediting the secular poets of Athens to strengthen his point. He recognized that even these who worship false gods also had discovered some truth about man and his relationship with God, and so he built upon their correct yet distorted understandings. Like Paul, we believe that non-Christians can discover truth, but that truth must be sifted by the authoritative sieve of Scripture to filter out the "arrogant reasoning" and inaccurate conclusions of fallen man.

In many regards, when we speak of the Bible as our authority for matters of faith and practice, we mean that the Bible serves

as a kind of map. In the same way that a map gives direction and provides a point of reference for the traveler in making judgments and decisions, so also does the written Word of God for the Christian pilgrim on his journey. A map is not the only source of information a traveler employs. Along the way are many travelers' aids and information centers. People seek to give direction. Some fellow travelers have already traversed the land and seek to offer guidance to the pilgrim. And, of course, the traveler can make his own observations. Each traveler, through the use of the senses and reasoning skills, can make judgments about the direction to proceed. By study not just of maps but of the terrain, the direction of the sun, or the position of the stars in the night sky, the traveler can make reasonable assertions about the direction that his journey should take.

The wise traveler knows that the map offers the greatest authority for the journey. He trusts it. It alone serves as the standard by which he can judge the accuracy of his observations or the quality of the directions or advice from fellow travelers. It alone can serve as the ultimate authority for deciding which way is the true way to the planned destination. In much the same manner, the Bible serves as our map through this dark world. It judges the opinion and "truths" of men. By it we gain essential information about God and godly living that we could know through no other means. And it is that information that rightly orders all of life. It is that information that comes from God as a special revelation that unlocks the truths found in the natural revelation of God. It is the Word, rightly interpreted, that enables us to fashion a view of the world consistent with the nature and will of our Maker.

Our plane touched down a little before three o'clock in the afternoon. It was a sunny and warm October day in San Francisco, and we had until late in the evening before our conference was to begin. After gathering our bags and checking into our hotel, we had several hours free to explore the city. Alone in San Francisco with good friends watching our children, Marlene and I (Gary) ventured off to the heart of the city. We had time to take a trolley ride and get dinner at Fisherman's Wharf. Our map was a small city guide that showed the major expressways and a few

key city arteries. It seemed adequate to get us to our destination and back to our hotel, but little did we know how inadequate our pocket map was for the day that lay before us. You see, at 5:07 P.M. on October 17, 1989, San Francisco was shaken by a devastating earthquake.

For a while we did not realize the extent of the disaster. We did not know of the persons trapped under tons of concrete due to the collapse of the Embarcadero Freeway. We knew nothing of the failure of the Oakland Bay Bridge. All we observed were some new cracks in the sidewalk. At first we thought the city had experienced a minor, non-life-threatening trembler. But in a few minutes we became aware of the power of the earthquake as stunned citizens gathered in the streets to observe smoke rising from the Marina District. For an hour or so we watched as firefighters sought to control the blazes caused by broken gas pipes. Then came the aftershocks. Slowly it began to dawn on us. This was no small event. This was a catastrophe.

As the evening grew later, a man standing near us asked if we were from the area. We told him we were tourists and had just arrived from Toronto. He then made a comment that got our full attention. "Well, if I were you, I would get myself out of here before it gets dark. I'm a shop owner downtown and I'm heading back to get my shotgun and stand watch for looters. Once it gets dark, who knows what could happen next!"

It seemed to us that he might be on to something. Taking his advice, we returned to our rental car parked nearby, and we began our drive back to our hotel located near the airport. It was then that we discovered just how worthless our little map was. Our map could guide us to Fisherman's Wharf well enough, but now, with all of San Francisco's major expressways closed, it was of minimal value. We turned on the radio in the car and listened to the only radio station that was still operational. News reports streamed in describing the devastation. We now began to grasp our own situation. Here we were in a major city, by this time enveloped in the darkness of a moonless night, the only lights visible being those of cars and fires. No stoplights, no streetlights, and no clue how to get to our destination. We were without an adequate map to

deal with the darkness of our world. We had no sure authority on which to make crucial decisions at the many crossroads we would face. It was a night of high adrenaline to say the least. At one point we passed a lumberyard totally in flames and for a moment our way was lit. But generally we drove in the dark, making what we hoped were the correct turns.

Eventually, four-and-one-half hours later, we made it to our hotel. What had taken only twenty-five minutes earlier in the day became a nearly insurmountable journey in the dark. Life's journey has a much less encouraging ending without the authoritative map of the Word of God. The Bible is our map. Our guide. Our norm for all matters of faith and practice. Sola Scriptura—the Scripture alone is our measure, our light, and our standard in this present darkness. It is our one sure criterion by which we can judge truth claims and truth contributions from other sources. That is what the Reformers meant by "Sola Scriptura." They did not mean that the Bible was the only stream from which truth could be drawn, but that it was the only pure stream against which claims to truth could be judged.

THE PRACTICE OF SOLA SCRIPTURA

Consider these two statements.

Statement one: *The Bible alone is completely true and reliable as our standard of truth.*

Statement two: *The Bible alone is true and is our one source of truth.*

Which of these statements is true? If you answered that the first is true and the second is false, give yourself 100 percent on this quiz. You are right. The Bible is entirely true and, as such, it stands as our rule or standard to determine the truthfulness of all human ideas. The second statement falls short. It is not accurate because there are indeed truths to be gleaned from extrabiblical sources. Take, for example, the growing data on brain functioning and activity. From this research, Alzheimer's patients can find an

increasing sense of promise that a cure may one day be found. The Bible does not tell us in which parts of the brain our memories or emotions reside. Neurological research does. What the Bible does tell us is that those memories are important to defining who we are as people and that to forget the works of God on our behalf is to risk the shipwrecking of our spiritual lives.

Although the Bible does not give us all the data that we might use in daily living or in ministry with others, it does provide salvation truth we can know in no other way and it functions as the final authority over all truth claims. It does this by providing a worldview. By this we mean that it establishes the parameters for accurately understanding reality. One of the challenges of Christian living and ministry is to live all of our lives under the authority of the Word of God. We must actually practice Sola Scriptura, not just embrace it. Let us consider how we might do that with regards to the use of the social sciences.

An Example: Management Under the Authority of Scripture

Keith Martin is heading a search committee that is seeking an assistant pastor for his church of four hundred–plus persons. Keith was selected to head the committee for two major reasons. The first is his Christian life and character. Keith is a godly man who seeks to live for Christ in all aspects of his life. From his family life to his business life, from his church life to his community service, Keith is noted for his integrity and consistency. Keith is a person the church leadership trusts and who is able to infuse a solidly biblical perspective into the search for a pastoral candidate.

The second reason that Keith was chosen for the search committee is that he is the director of the human resources department of a major company in his city. Because of his work role, Keith has a good understanding of the recruitment, interviewing, and hiring processes. Keith's knowledge is helpful to the search committee. Keith will be able to bring that knowledge to the effort as his church seeks the best possible candidate for the position now open on its pastoral staff. But still, the Bible must remain the authority in such an endeavor. The Bible must provide the parameters as it establishes the character qualifications for those who would oc-

cupy the position of assistant pastor. The Bible must give guidance to the committee as to what kind of person to select, how that person should be treated by the congregation, and, in a broad sense, the role that the person should take as a pastor of the church. In this way, the Bible remains the authority in the search process. Practicing Sola Scriptura in this situation demands that Keith and his search committee use the Bible as a kind of map. It should show them the boundaries into which their decision and selection process must fit.

When we speak of the Bible as our ultimate authority and our rule for matters of faith and practice, we do not mean that the Bible is the only source of information valuable to those who serve Christ. The Bible is true, but there is truth outside of the Bible as well. When we speak of the Bible as our authority, we mean that the teachings of the Bible should serve as a sieve through which ideas from extrabiblical sources are sifted. Biblical authority demands that the thinking Christian know and understand the Bible in a systematic way in order to discern the correctness and failings of ideas derived from human reason and study in the various fields or disciplines of human knowledge.

Should we use secular theories and studies of management in ordering and operating the church? How about in managing our personal lives? Some would say, "Absolutely not!" They would suggest that the Bible should be our only source of information for managing the church. Others would offer a more qualified caution. "We can use knowledge from management theory just so long as we do not violate the clear teachings of the Word of God as to how the church should be run or how people should be treated." This is a more moderate and realistic position.

Most local churches employ knowledge gained from the world of business management in running at least some of the affairs of the church. The Bible does not give details on these issues. Knowledge of accounting, as an example, would be helpful to the one appointed to the post of church treasurer. Likewise, organizational skills taught in a school of management could help a Sunday school superintendent lead in the process of organizing the Sunday school program. On a personal level, most people have found benefit in

the use of personal information management systems, such as daily planners and filing systems.

None of the above tools of management are derived directly from the pages of the Bible, although many of the principles they use are biblical. The best-selling book *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, written by Stephen Covey, is another example. Many a Christian leader has benefited from Covey's work and has found principles in the pages of his book that are often parallel with the teachings of the Bible. Covey is a Mormon, yet that does not keep him from discovering truths that, when applied to the lives of Christian leaders, bring greater effectiveness. But his work, valuable as it may be, must be critiqued by the teachings of the Word of God. Concepts that violate the clear teaching of the Bible must be rejected as errant, no matter how eloquently or effectively presented. This is what is meant by practicing Sola Scriptura.

Management theory, whether used in running an organization or running an individual life, is a clear example of the concept of what we mean by practicing the authority of the Scriptures. Management theory is actually applied psychology. What management writers do is to take the findings from the realm of individual and group psychology and show readers how to apply them in practical ways in managing a group of people or an individual life. When Christians use these ideas in their daily lives or in the corporate life of the church, they may not realize it, but they are, in reality, applying and integrating psychology into life and ministry. Furthermore, the integration of psychological theory into our lives and ministry is probably inevitable. For this reason the issue does not become one of whether to incorporate psychological research findings and truth claims in our lives, but of how to do so while remaining under the authority of Scripture. Do we integrate in a haphazard and an uninformed way, or do we do so with a discerning eye and spirit?

The Views: Counseling Under the Authority of Scripture

In the previous section we tried to show how, by allowing the Bible to establish the boundaries or grid through which truth

claims from outside the Bible are judged, we can practice Sola Scriptura. But now we must ask, "What about psychology?" Are Christians to use psychology in ministry? How shall we practice Sola Scriptura in this arena of human learning? To answer these questions, we must pause for a moment to understand how Christians have dealt with studies in psychology.

The Bible-Only Approach

Some have contended that the practice of Sola Scripture demands that only the Bible is to be used in ministry and that psychology has no valid place in providing spiritual direction and counsel. This position is really a revisiting of the separationist perspectives of Tertullian, Zwingli, and the Anabaptists. For those who hold this view, psychology is seen to be an enemy of Christianity and the Bible. *Psychology* is a term used as a synonym for "man's wisdom." Thus Christians who use psychology in counseling others or in their personal walk have been seduced. Like Tertullian, those who hold this view contend that such use of human reasoning and theorizing can only corrupt true faith. This leads those who embrace this position to reject any use of psychology as dangerous, unwise, and unfounded.

Probably the most vocal and the most representative element of this viewpoint is the "nouthetic counseling" contingent. Jay Adams (heavily influenced by the theology of Cornelius Van Til), Martin and Deidre Bodgan, and Ed Bulkley are examples of those who advocate this orientation. The term "nouthetic" is taken from Paul's use of the Greek word *nouthesia* in Colossians 1:28 that is translated "admonish" in many English texts. The term describes the confrontational methodology and basic elements of the nouthetic counseling approach. Because this approach is presented as the "biblical" view and its adherents claim to have the stamp of Scripture on its technique, it is sometimes presented in a tenacious and combative way. Its advocates are found doing battle with fellow believers whom they believe to be seduced by theories of psychology and guilty of compromising the truth of Scripture through the integration of psychological findings in the ministry of counseling. It is an approach reminiscent of the radical Anabaptist separationist leanings (Hurding 277–90).

The sign was located next to the elevator in the main classroom building and in most of the dorms. Its purpose was to inform the students attending a major Bible college of a counseling seminar sponsored by a local church. The seminar's subject matter was unmistakable in its boldface title—"Biblical Counseling vs. Psychological Counseling . . . What's the difference?" An interesting choice of terms and tone, isn't it? The word *versus*, against, is most often employed between sporting competitors or litigating parties. Its purpose is to set a combative or at least corrective tone, appropriate for a battle or a debate. Terms like "Biblical Counseling" and "Psychological Counseling" were chosen to convey a message of orthodoxy on the one hand and a perceived secularism on the other hand. From the title of the seminar, one might be led to think that some form of a debate between a Bible-believing, conservative Christian counselor and a God-denying secular therapist was about to occur. But this was not the case. Two authors of recently published books would speak. No, they did not represent opposing views. This was not going to be a debate. The advertisement made it clear that both were from the "biblical counseling" camp seeking to speak against the use of psychology in Christian ministry. Strangely, the other side was no godless, secular social scientist, but fellow Christians who are considered errant in their use of psychology in people-helping ministries.

Ironically, the carrot by which the Bible students would be drawn to the seminar was proclaimed not once, but eight times, in giant-sized print—"Free Pizza, Free Pizza, Free Pizza." Little did the seminar organizers realize it, but in their quest to motivate seminar attendance, they had practiced the integration of behaviorist psychology in their promotional materials. Apparently they felt that Bible college students are akin to Pavlov's famous salivating dogs. While their judgment may well be correct, it demonstrates the simple fact that one cannot entirely avoid the integration of faith and learning.

Nouthetic counselors seek to be biblical in all aspects of their counseling, and for this they should be commended. The problem, however, arises with this group's understanding and practice of Sola Scriptura. Taking an extreme dualistic, two-kingdom per-

spective that divides all reality into Christian and non-Christian, this view reduces all knowledge to that of divine or devilish. The knowledge revealed in Scripture and expressed in theology is divine. All other knowledge is devilish and misleading. Additionally, this view is excessively simplistic in that it categorizes all human problems as the result of demonic activity, personal sin, or physical malfunction. It allows for no middle ground, no mental illness or abnormal psychological development and thus, no value in research connected with such disorders (Adams, *Christian Counselor's* 72; Adams *Theology* 4). While its contribution to the ministry of counseling has been enormously valuable, because of its polarized view of reality this view fails to provide an adequate model for the consistent practice of Sola Scriptura in ministry.

The Bible-and Approach

At the other end of the continuum of views with regards to the use of psychology in people-healing ministry, we find what we might term "The Bible-*and* Approach." It is an approach similar to that of Aquinas. This viewpoint elevates studies in psychology to a level that is on par with the Scriptures so that the Bible and psychology are given an equal or nearly equal place in counseling ministry. Three variations on this approach are often observed. The first involves an intentional compartmentalization of theology and psychology. This approach contends that theological study is distinct from study in psychology. It holds that theology and psychology use their own terms that describe reality from radically different vantage points. Each effort is valid, but each is distinct and is best kept separated. Among Christians, this position has been termed a "perspectivist" view, meaning that theology and psychology describe men and women from differing perspectives and therefore, any attempt to integrate their conceptualizations distorts both fields of study. The *and* in this view is seen in that both theology and psychology can coexist without necessitating any attempt at integration so long as both remain in their appropriate compartments.

The second variation of the Bible-*and* psychology approach also compartmentalizes psychology and theology. In this case, compartmentalization is done for more pragmatic reasons rather than

for intentional ones. This is the classic separation of sacred and secular. One finds this approach among many average parishioners. Here thinking is divided into different compartments. Faith, the Bible, and theology are kept in a compartment that is opened most typically on Sunday at church. The rest of life, including psychology, is placed in a compartment that is entered Monday through Saturday. Whether it is the study of mathematics, physics, law, or psychology, the truths of theology and the Bible are thought to have little direct bearing. For many, this compartmentalized attitude allows for a comfortable segmentation of life into the sacred and the secular, thus allowing for the use of a non-Christian psychoanalyst in addressing life's problems. People's beliefs are considered to be irrelevant unless they are seeking a position on the church board. Upholding a separation of theological and nontheological truths in this way allows for the Bible and psychology to work separately in people's lives.

The third variation of the Bible-*and* approach takes a far different path from the first two that we have discussed. Rather than compartmentalizing, this approach welcomes psychology and seeks to incorporate its concepts freely and directly into Christian thinking and practice. Whenever possible, theological and psychological concepts are equated. For example, Robert Schuller has done this with his incorporating of self-esteem and positive-thinking literature of the humanistic branch of psychology into his preaching ministry. Blending the message of Maslow with that of Matthew and Mark is the ultimate result. Many pastors and church leaders practice this approach in ministry. They incorporate the findings of psychology into the counsel and care of people without first doing the hard work of evaluating those ideas in light of the clear teachings of the Bible.

The Bible-Over Approach

The Reformers used words like norm, standard, rule, and measure to describe their understanding of the role of the Bible in the life of the church and the believer. They chose those terms for a reason. For them, all claims to truth and authority, whether from philosophy, science, or church leadership, were to be placed

FIGURE 1–1
Science and Theology: Human Inquiry into God's Revelation
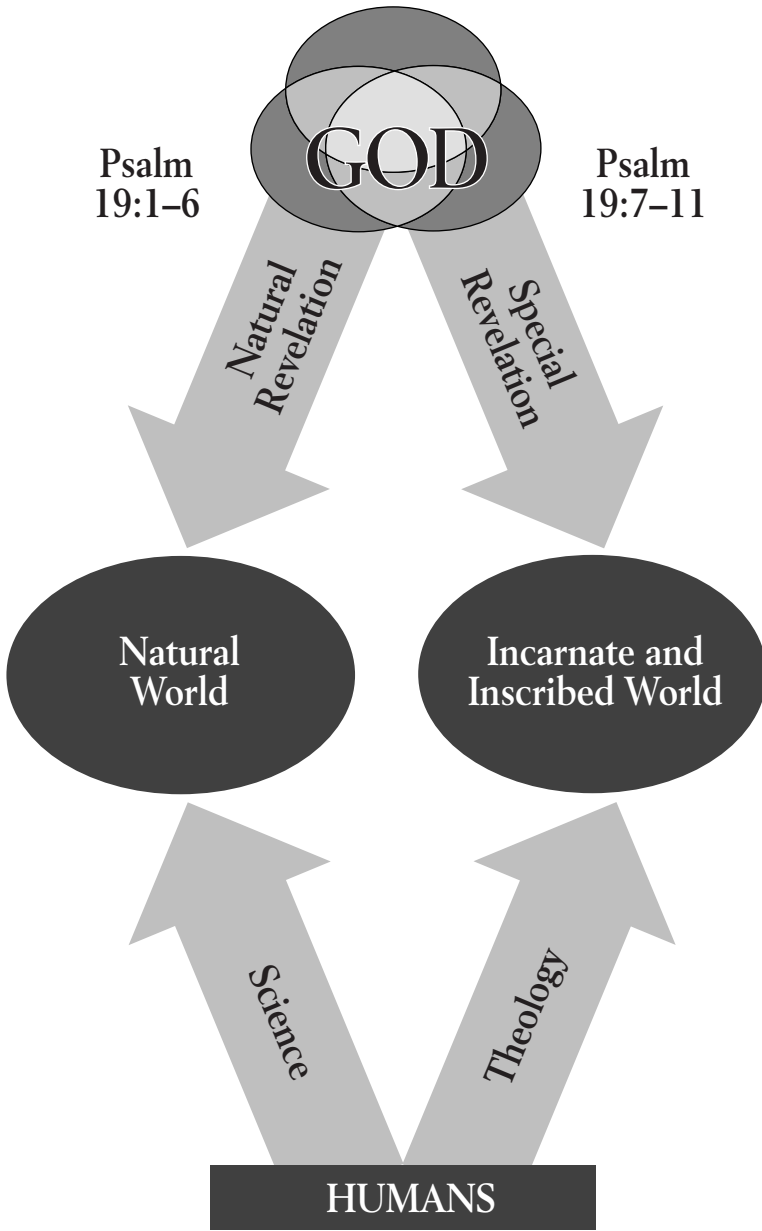
against the Bible. Luther and Calvin sought not to deny the value of human reason, nor to exalt it either. They did not deny the church had authority, but they did deny that the church's authority should be held above that of the Word of God. They also granted that in the natural world truth is revealed that both Christians and non-Christians can discover, but they were clear that such truth could never lead to salvation and ultimate spiritual healing. They understood the limits both of natural revelation and the mind of man to comprehend it, but they did not deny it. They demanded that the Bible be placed in authority over all truth, all practice, and all matters of faith and worship. It is this view of Sola Scriptura that we believe can be most effectively practiced by those who seek to provide spiritual direction and counsel to others.

Figure 1-1 depicts this understanding of divine revelation. God has made Himself known in two primary ways—through the world He made and all of its creatures, including human beings, and through His Word, both incarnate in Jesus and inscribed in the Bible. Human beings inquire into those two revelatory realms. Through use of reason, humans inquire into the natural order through a process of study that may be termed "science." Through reason and illumination of the Spirit, humans delve into special revelation doing what may be termed "theology." Although discovery of truth is possible in either domain, theological study in the Word must be given greatest authority because by it we can determine the parameters of an accurate worldview and the means to a right relationship with God. Theology can tell us what ought to be; science can only tell us what is. This is not to say that in specific details science might not serve to inform one's theology, but in those issues that deal with the nature of man, the nature of God, or God's purposes in this world, only the Word can make these truths known. For example, science may tell us how to clone a person, but it is only the Bible and the truths of theology that can give us any hope of knowing whether or not we should create such a clone.

TABLE 1–3
Contemporary Approaches to the Relationship of Psychology and the Bible

	The Bible-*Only* Approach	The Bible-*Over* Approach	The Bible-*And* Approach
Brief Summary	The Bible is the only valid source of truth to be used in counseling ministry. Psychology is "man's wisdom." Those who use psychological findings in ministry have been seduced by lies of the devil. The pure stream of Scripture must not be polluted with the impure stream of psychology.	The Bible is the norm or standard against which all claims of truth must be judged. Because of natural revelation, the study of psychology has a place, but Scripture must be given authority over psychological findings. As authority over psychology, the Bible is central to all learning.	Psychology is given equal role with the Scriptures in counseling ministry. Through an equal but compartmentalized approach to faith and reason, or through a total interweaving of the two, this approach magnifies the role of psychology while lessening the role of the Bible.
Earliest Historical Roots	Tertullian	Augustine	Aquinas
Reformation Roots	Zwingli, Simons, Amman	Luther, Calvin	Post-Reformation modernist and postmodernist thought.
Orientation to Truth	Separationist Approach (truth vs. error)	Integrationist Approach (discern truth amidst error)	Compartmentalist Approach (categories of truth)
Contemporary Proponents	Nouthetic counselors (sometimes call themselves "biblical counselors")	Most Christian counselors	Some Christian and some non-Christian counselors

The Principles: Practical Guidance in the Practice of Sola Scriptura

How shall we actually go about evaluating truth claims from sources outside of the Bible? In this final section we will identify some principles that we believe will guide those who seek to counsel under the authority of Scripture. We will develop this matter further in the book, but here are five principles we believe are helpful in considering ideas drawn from the field of psychology.

Is the proposed psychological concept or conclusion . . .

1. *Directly Supported by Scripture?*

Some claims to truth derived from extrabiblical sources are also explicitly taught in the Bible.

2. *Theologically Consistent with Scripture?*

Some claims to truth derived from the field of psychology are consistent with a scriptural understanding of human nature. Although these concepts are not taught explicitly in the Bible, they are in keeping with biblical concepts and are found implicitly in the overall teachings of God's Word.

3. *Addressed by Scripture?*

It is possible that a particular concept or issue is not directly addressed in the Bible. In this case, assuming that valid scientific findings are involved, believers can carefully integrate the concept into their ministry or personal life. Of course one must be cautious to observe two fundamental principles in this process. These are the principle of profitable benefit and the principle of the weaker brother. By "profitable benefit" we mean that although an act, concept, method, or technique may be lawful for the believer to practice, it may not be to that person's spiritual benefit (1 Cor. 6:12; 10:23). By "weaker brother" we are referring to Paul's teaching that our actions should not make another believer stumble in his faith (Rom. 14:13–21; 1 Cor. 8:13).

4. *Explicitly Denied by Scripture?*

Some concepts taught or practiced by psychologists may be in direct conflict with the teachings of the Bible. These should be rejected and not practiced or supported by the Christian.

5. *Doubtfully Consistent with Scripture?*

At times there is a sense that something just does not stack up with the Bible. It is possible that the teaching rests on faulty premises or results in actions inconsistent with godly character. In these times of doubt it is wise for the believer to bypass the idea or action in favor of prudence.

— A Final Thought —

*O*ur goal is to be thoroughly biblical caregivers. If that goal is to be attained, we must always keep the Word of God as the sole norm or authority in matters of faith and practice. That is the message of the Reformers. The Word must guide us in judging all claims of truth and ideas of men. That is the means by which we can discern truth and error. For without that sure Word as our standard and rule, we would be lost on a sea of modern thought, scientific claims, and theoretical proliferation. But with the Word of God central in our thinking, we can appropriately incorporate truth from all potential sources in the day-to-day demands of ministry. This is the meaning of Sola Scriptura.

We must now consider the biblical dimensions of human personality. We will, in the next two chapters, seek to establish a biblical anthropology, one that can serve as a sieve to sift and separate truth and error in various personality theories. In doing so, we will establish an authoritative foundation for the development of our counseling ministry.

NOTES

Adams, Jay E. *The Christian Counselor's Manual.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973.

———. *A Theology of Christian Counseling.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979.

Augustine, Aurelius. *Augustine: Earlier Writings.* Trans. J. H. S. Burleigh. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1953. Vol. 6 of *Library of Christian Classics (LCC).*

———. *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church (NPNF).* Ed. P. Schaff. 1st series. 8 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956.

Cairns, Earle E. *Christianity Through the Centuries.* Rev. ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974.

Demarest, Bruce A. *General Revelation: Historical Views and Contemporary Issues.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982.

Erickson, Millard J. *Christian Theology.* Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990.

Hurding, Roger F. *The Tree of Healing: Psychological and Biblical Foundations for Counseling and Pastoral Care.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985.

Tertullian. *De praescriptione haereticorum.* 24 July 2000 <http://www.tertullian.org/works/de_praescriptione_haereticorum.htm>.