

it a bounded set? A center without a circumference? A quasi-biblical idea that can be shaped like a nose of wax? The evangelicalism of today was shaped by the evangelicalism of yesterday. Treloar does contemporary evangelicals a favor by fleshing out the early twentieth-century permutations and shows the “disruption,” perhaps better, the dissipation of evangelical ideas. If, as Treloar argues, almost everything between Roman Catholicism and the Mormons can be called an evangelical, is there any real significance to the word evangelical?

Treloar is to be thanked for the effort at describing in a concise fashion this forty-year period of evangelicalism’s history. With the completion of this set of books on evangelicalism, the student of evangelicalism will go a long way toward understanding the movement as a whole as it exists today.

Jeffrey P. Straub

A Theology of Biblical Counseling, by Heath Lambert. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016. 352 pp. \$24.99.

A Theology of Biblical Counseling, by Heath Lambert, is an integration of systematic theology into the counseling process. It is a guide to assist the counselor in directing the counselee’s attention back to the doctrinal foundations that fuel appropriate and timely counseling applications. The author’s special focus on the sufficiency of the Bible in counseling practice is especially helpful for those who lean toward the biblical counseling model.

Heath Lambert is the Executive Director of The Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (ACBC), and currently serves as co-pastor of the First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Florida. He has authored several books: *The Biblical Counseling Movement after Adams* and *Finally Free*. Dr. Lambert is an Associate Professor of Biblical Counseling at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and Boyce College, where he teaches courses on biblical counseling and Christian ministry.

In the introduction Lambert states his thesis succinctly: “Counseling is a theological discipline” (11). He seeks to defend this thesis by breaking the book down into ten doctrinal sections. These sections support the thesis by practically showing the importance of doctrine in counseling specific sin issues. He develops this thesis throughout the book by first contrasting two schools of thought in counseling, namely, Christian counseling and biblical counseling. Therefore, the primary purpose of this book is to delineate the debate between these two counseling philosophies and to champion the superiority of biblical counseling. According to Lambert, Christian counselors integrate secular counseling techniques into the counseling process (25), while biblical counseling does not find those techniques necessary (29). A second disagreement between these schools concerns the issue of the sufficiency of

scripture (30). Christian counselors “believe that secular counseling strategies are a necessary adjunct to the Bible. They do not believe that the Scriptures are a sufficient counseling resource” (30). Biblical counselors embrace the sufficiency of the Bible in the counseling process. Therefore, Lambert summarizes his purpose for writing this book by arguing the need to engage counseling as a theological discipline. He says, “Engaging in counseling practice is a theological engagement. Evaluating and debating with various counseling practitioners, whether secular, Christian, or biblical, is a theological enterprise. You are simply not ready to think about counseling—let alone practice it—until you have thought long and hard about theology. That is the reason for this book” (32).

Lambert does not claim origination in the theological discipline of biblical counseling. He gives credit to Jay Adams as the “founder of the biblical counseling movement in the twentieth century” (32). Lambert looks at his book as a continuing effort to “build on Adam’s good work in helpful ways” (33). He mentions Adam’s work *A Theology of Christian Counseling* as one of those helpful resources.

Lambert helpfully weaves together his usage of Bible doctrines and how those constructs help in the biblical counseling process. In each chapter, Lambert focuses on at least one key element of that theological discipline to apply it to the biblical counseling practice. He builds on this biblical counseling tradition by focusing on ten key areas of theology in chapters 2–11: the sufficiency of the Bible, common grace, the doctrines of God, humanity, salvation, and the church. He then concludes with the benefits of biblical counseling in both the knowledge of God and person to person ministry in the church in chapter twelve.

Lambert’s approach in this book of a biblical counseling framework rather than the Christian counseling framework influences the way he constructs his book and in how he relies on the Bible as his source authority (38). He begins in chapter two defending his thesis by first establishing the importance of the doctrine of Scripture in the counseling process. In this chapter he argues for the sufficiency of the Bible as superior framework for the counseling process. He delineates the sufficiency of the Bible along four lines: progressive, completed, formal, and material. Material sufficiency provokes the most debate between biblical and Christian counselors, therefore, Lambert spends time defending it. Material sufficiency “refers to the actual contents of Scripture and means that the Bible tells us everything we need to know from God about any topic” (48). He appeals to two things to defend the material sufficiency of Scripture. First, the Church has historically believed in the sufficiency of the Bible. He says, “For millennia Christians have believed that God supplies these things to his people and that he reveals how he supplies them in the Bible” (52). Second, the only Christians who have doubted this sufficiency have been in the last century primarily because of the current resources outside of the Bible (53–59). For counselors who embrace full sufficiency, Lambert’s focus is crucial to instill hope that the Bible has answers to counseling issues. In contrast, integrationist

counseling philosophies, such as Christian psychology, abandons full sufficiency which inadequately renders Christian growth dependent on the “extra-biblical information available to Christians” (53).

In chapter three, Lambert directs the reader’s attention to common grace and how some who reject the sufficiency of Scripture rely heavily upon it. Those who deny the sufficiency of the Bible see common grace in secular psychology as a “crucial adjunct to biblical counselors” (79). He argues that common grace is informative to the counseling process, but not authoritative like the Scripture.

In chapters four through six Lambert fleshes out the importance of God’s person and attributes in the counseling process. The doctrine of God focuses on God’s attributes of strength “so that they [the attributes] can offer this strength to counselees” (107). He draws out implications of attributes like self-sufficiency, infinity, omnipresence, and omnipotence for the counseling process. He also highlights God’s care for the counselee by focusing on God’s holiness, love, faithfulness, mercy, and grace. The doctrine of Christ assures that the counseling process has a reference point. Lambert says, “Jesus is at the center of biblical counseling because he occupies the center of Christian theology. He is at the center of Christian theology because he is at the center of all of life” (137). The doctrine of the Spirit highlights the Spirit’s work to glorify Christ’s redemptive work and to honor the sufficiency of the Bible.

Chapters seven through nine deal with mankind and the doctrines that directly affect him. Lambert focuses on the delineation of the image of God in man in the counseling process. Man is in the image of God “though in a distorted form” (188). He then argues that “counseling exists because we live in a world where the image of God has been distorted in all those created to bear it. Every counseling need traces back to a failure to fully image God” (189). The goal of counseling, then, is to restore this image. One implication is in the medical realm of dealing with bodily issues. This section helps in a precise diagnosis of the counseling issue because at times the counselee’s problem is physical. Lambert effectively shows that the biblical counselor is not a physician and must therefore conclude that a full medical exam is sometimes necessary during counseling. Although an important part of the counseling process, medical care “is never sufficient to address the problems people have. Problems people have are never *merely* medical” (202). In the next chapter, Lambert addresses the issue of the sinfulness of mankind in biblical counseling. Lambert shows that human suffering is caused by the presence of sin in the world. Sometimes suffering is caused by the person’s sin and sometimes by the sins of others. Lambert appeals to the sufficient Bible as the only true resource to help people who suffer. He says, “When people are struggling with pain, we need to be committed to biblical counseling, because it is the Bible alone that provides us with words to say that matter” (271).

Chapters ten and eleven address the doctrines of salvation and the church. According to Lambert, the doctrine of salvation helps in the counseling process to solidify God’s eternal love and continuing work in

the life of the believer. Considering the doctrine of salvation, Lambert cites the position of Jay Adams that an unbeliever cannot be biblically counseled. Adams did not at all mean by this that a counselor cannot have conversations with unbelievers, but that they cannot change in the renewal of God's image because they are not saved (300). Lambert adds helpfully that in a proper definition of counseling, an unbeliever can be helped. Lambert defines counseling as "providing answers, solutions, and help to the questions, problems, and trouble that people face" (301). He then adds that "any disagreement on this issue is semantic, having to do with how we are using the language of counseling" (301). In chapter eleven, Lambert points out that the avenue by which a person grows in their salvation is through the ministry of the local church. I fully embrace Lambert's focus on the local church as the primary tool for discipleship, and I would add that the care of those growing in their salvation must be accomplished via the local assembly. Lambert says, "This kind of close and comprehensive care would be impossible to find in any other secular or religious venue outside of the local church. No other outlet has anything that even approaches the resources to invest in this way over the long term" (311). For those committed to the centrality of the local church in the process of discipleship, these two chapters are very important for biblical counseling.

I agreed with the thesis of the book and the process the author took to defend it. Counseling is a theological discipline and is best delineated within the sphere of the sufficiency of the Scripture. Each of the doctrinal chapters (2–12) begins with an illustration of either a counseling case or a personal example. This was helpful for the application of the doctrine to a specific issue.

I disagree with Lambert on two minor issues. First, I do not believe that wrath is an attribute of God (131). Wrath is a divine reaction based on God's holy character and righteous requirements. God's justice dispenses wrath in a response to his righteous requirements. Second, I disagree with Lambert's understanding of put off/put on in Ephesians 4:21–24 (233, n. 12). The contrast of old life and new life is transitioned in verse twenty with the phrase "You, however, did not come to know Christ that way." Paul also illustrates this principle with definitive illustrations of the believer's practice in verses 25–32.

This work is an excellent resource for counselors to glean a theological foundation for their counseling ministries. The format and application of doctrine to counseling issues is arguably the greatest strength of the book and is useful as a framework for applying theology to many diverse cases. Lambert's defense of the sufficiency of Scripture is especially helpful in forming one's convictions of biblical counseling. Although I have some minor disagreements with the work, the work is extremely beneficial to one just beginning to form thoughts on how biblical counseling should be practiced. I highly recommend this book as a helpful resource to any counselor and counseling ministry.