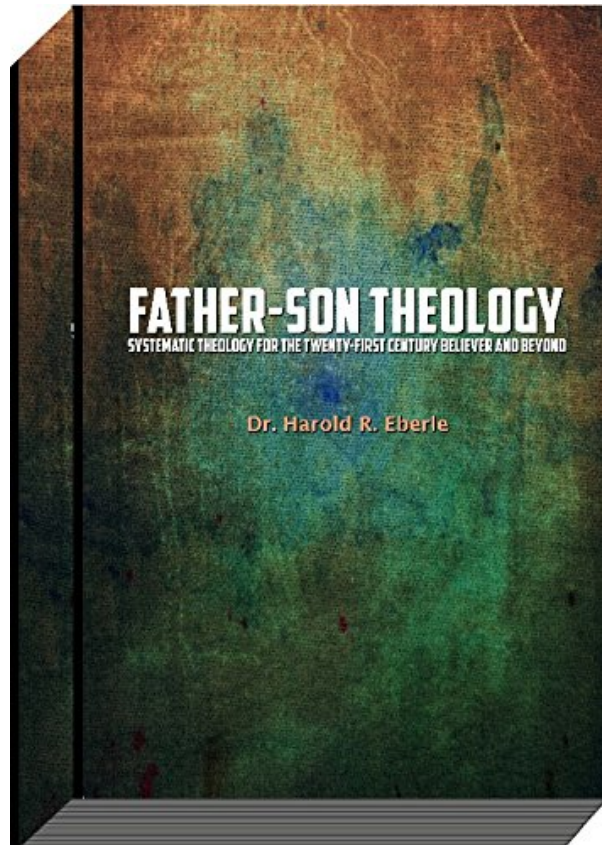
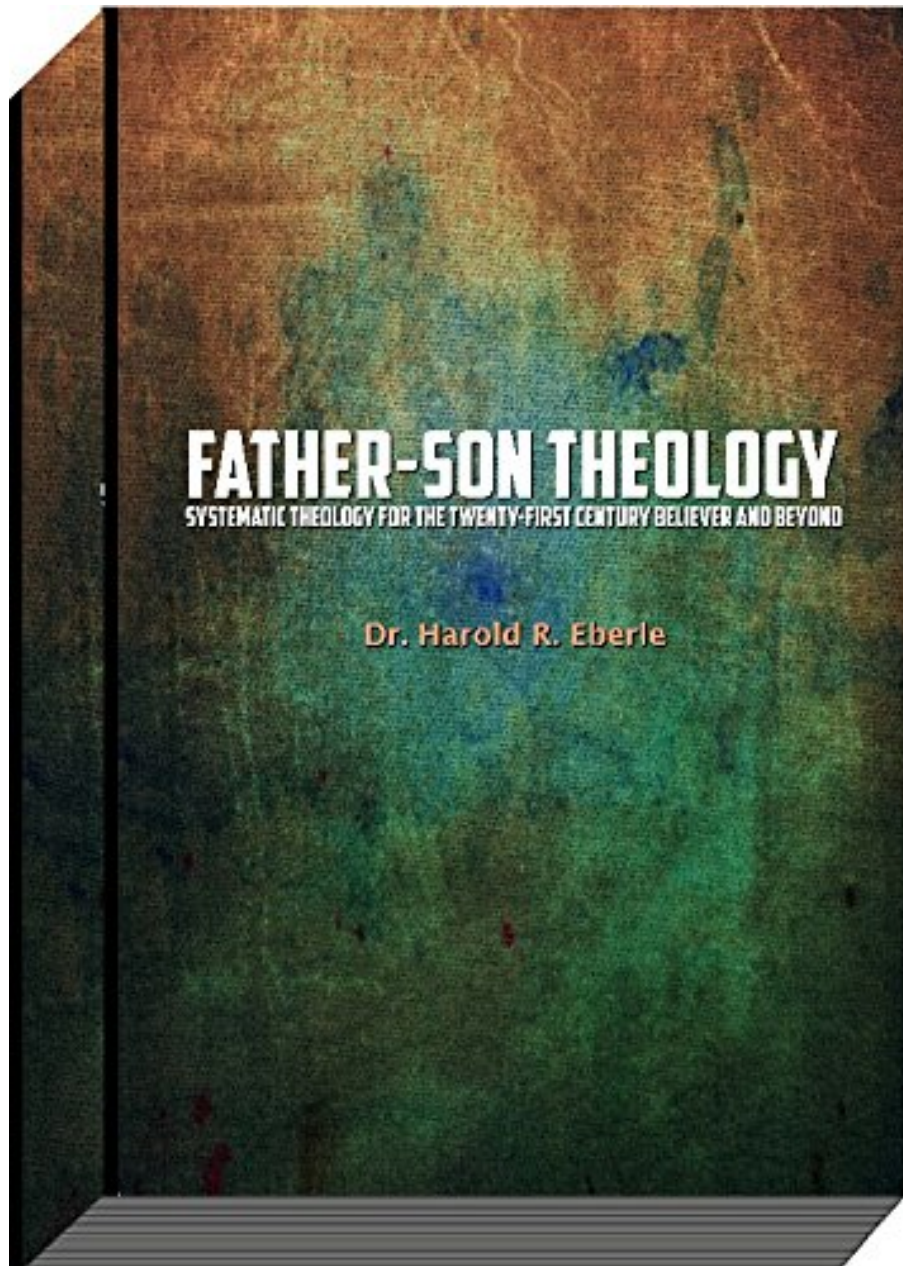


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This book will help you embrace God as your Father and see yourself as a son/daughter of God. In other words, it will help you hear what God is communicating to His people at this time. The concept of God as Father sounds simple enough, but the related truths are clouded by 2,000 years of Christianity being filtered through the lens of Western civilization. In Father-Son Theology, I have worked passionately to separate biblical Christianity from Western culture. That means: 1. separating Christianity from the dualism that lies at the foundation of Western civilization; 2. eliminating the influence of Plato that came into the Church primarily through Augustine and Calvin; 3. and embracing the Biblical/Hebraic concept of God. In Father-Son Theology, I take a stand on several major issues, challenging doctrines that Christians have accepted as truth, without taking the time to consider the historical development of the related doctrines. Just one example of a false doctrine that developed as a result of mixing the hedonistic philosophy of Plato with Christianity is the doctrine that God is so holy that He must separate Himself from sin and sinful people. This false doctrine came into Christianity during the fourth century and has led to a historic misunderstanding of what happened when Adam sinned and what happened when Jesus died on the cross. There was no gap of eternity created between God and man when Adam sinned in the Garden. Nor did Father-God separate Himself from Jesus when He hung on the cross and became sin for us. There is nothing in the nature of God that makes Him separate Himself from sinners. The best, most perfect, example of holiness that we have is Jesus Christ, and He did not separate Himself from sinners. In fact, He hung around them. In order to understand God's holiness we must relate it to His love--which causes Him to pursue sinners, not separate Himself. There are other fundamental misunderstandings within Western Christianity that have profound implications on everything we believe. They distort our view of God. The Western Christianity that we have been indoctrinated into robs us of the supernatural dimension inherent in biblical Christianity. It distances us from the Kingdom of God. It yields a form of godliness that denies the power.

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Raises questions bound to stir up controversy if the right ...

By J. Butler

Raises questions bound to stir up controversy if the right people were paying attention. Highly readable and logically organized. I find my reactions to his ideas run the gamut from completely disagreeing, to that marvelous feeling of reading what I've been thinking but was unable to articulate. If you're from a traditional, denominational theology standpoint, this is likely to make your blood boil. Others will find it unusually approachable for a systematic theology book. As with any book on these topics, hold it up to scripture and be lead by the Spirit.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Among the very best books on the subject

By S. Edel

Among the very best books on the subject. Dr. Harold Eberle is a teacher with deep insight in the person of God, his plans and revelations. This book is a MUST to understand the gospel as good news from a good God.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

A Pastoral Systematic Theology for REAL Shepherds, REAL Sheep, and REAL Life

By LifeLegacy

Reviewing Dr. Harold's Eberle's Magnus opus, the 765-page Father-Son Theology, reminds me of a line from a comedy: So Harold, NOW tell us how you REALLY feel ...

This is the first book I've read by Dr. Eberle, and I am a mature Christian working full-time in Christian ministry. I want to believe in the God that Dr. Eberle describes. After reading the entire book cover to cover, and many parts multiple times, I do believe most of what he writes.

Ultimately, this is a very pastoral book. When I read my wife key sections of the chapter on the atonement (page 435ff), she was moved to tears - a tender and unexpected healing moment from a clearly anointed chapter. There are many "ah-ha" moments throughout, moments that will infuriate you (over being lied to for many, many years) or more typically, move you to a closer walk with God.

(Traditionalists will largely just be infuriated, left to argue about what the Bible really means when we can't accept it at face value, and must except it instead. Grudem's best-selling systematic theology, for example, contains three to four times as many words; his extended discussion on why God doesn't really change his mind, in spite of what the Bible clearly says, is almost incomprehensible.)

This has been an expensive book for me, for to check out Eberle's claims, I've purchased the best Greek and Hebrew Interlinears I could find, along with a new Strong's concordance, and two 1000+ page word study books for the Old and New Testament. I'm using them, and loving it, and have never felt closer to God. And yes, next up is a careful, cover-to-cover reading of Grudem. I have no doubt there will be significant, even profound differences, all to resolved by the Biblical evidence.

A key goal of Father-Son Theology is to eliminate the Greek philosophical influence out of classical reformed theology. Hence the joke above: Eberle is very direct in telling us where (influenced by Greek philosophy) Augustine and Calvin just plain got it wrong. As an Augustinian monk, Luther also had his moments, but Eberle critiques his, and Roman Catholic, theology less explicitly.

After describing the God of the OT Hebrew Bible, Eberle contrasts what Plato and Aristotle believed about God, and how, through Plotinus and Augustine, these non-biblical Greek philosophies were incorporated into classic, reformed Christian systematic theology – doctrines commonly believed to this very day. These Greek philosophical ideas are critiqued against the Biblical evidence.

For example, for Grudem (and the Greeks) it is a given that God exists in a timeless reality over creation – the cornerstone belief for classical reformed theology. Eberle presents the Biblical – and dare I say, commonsense – evidence that God operates in progressive time within His creation. (Is Jesus currently dying on the cross, right now? Is He presently standing or seated at the right hand of God? It's recorded both ways in the Bible.) Outside of creation, Eberle bluntly says – we don't know how God operates in time, except that clearly God is eternal. Being sovereign over creation, God can participate in time with His creation in whatever matter he chooses to.

Because God is sovereign, He knows what He wants to know. He can know the number of hairs on my head, or He can choose to remember my sins no more, as far as the East is from the West. That's something different than the philosophical idea of omniscience.

The book's theme throughout is this: If we take the Bible seriously, it must speak for itself on what God is like, what He has done for us, and what He would like us to do with and for Him.

No longer compelled to start with the Greek philosopher's (and Augustine's) core problem of resolving earthly imperfection with heavenly perfection, Eberle's systematic theology starts with God's heart's desire - before the fall, before creation itself - and his original intent for humanity: To raise up holy and blameless sons (and daughters):

"He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to himself." (Eph. 1:4-5).

Hence, Father-Son theology, the ultimate theme of Eberle's systematic theology. Sin remains a serious problem, and must be solved. Yet it is not the biggest problem. The biggest problem of the Bible is accomplishing God's original desire and purpose to raise up holy and blameless sons and daughters. And He will have them, in the end presented to the Son as his Bride at the Wedding Feast of the Lamb.

Thus a defensible, realistic, and BIBLICAL explanation of why a loving God would allow suffering and tragedy on earth:

"Sometimes we wonder why God allows people to be the instruments of pain. The answer is because God is a Father who is raising sons. He has placed humanity in the perfect environment to raise sons. He has put people in a world that runs according to natural laws. It is a world where people need God. It is also a world with spiritual opponents that must be overcome. Father-God has given humanity much freedom. He has allowed people to sin, even though it has resulted in creation being subjected to futility. Father-God has placed His people in the perfect environment where they can learn how to love." (p. 432).

Frankly, anyone who has had children, and studied love and logic parenting even just a little bit, would totally get this, although Eberle never mentions love and logic. When a father leaves a son in jail overnight instead of bailing him out, is the son's comfort knowing that "Dad is control"? Or, as he sits in his jail cell, is the son's comfort knowing that his Dad loves him very much, and ultimately is acting - or not acting - to help him be mature and responsible going forward? (Even if he doesn't see it at the time?)

So glibly, in times of trouble, do we assure each other that "God is in control." Wouldn't it be more pastoral and real, in those difficult times, to say God loves us, is very near to us, hears our prayers, and indeed, cries with us through our many troubles? And that, through all this pain, God is growing us to maturity? Isn't that the essence of James 1 and Romans 5?

In contrast to my confirmation-class understanding of a God who is timeless, omniscient, omnipotent, immutable in everything, arbitrarily predestining people to eternal bliss or damnation, Eberle presents the Biblical God: El Shaddai - the "big breasted one" the almighty God who gives, provides, and sustains my life. The great Yahweh's: Jireh (Our Provider), Rapha (Our Healer), Nissi (Our Banner), Shalom (Our Peace), Tsidkenu (Our Righteousness), Rohi (Our Shepherd), and M'kadesh (Our Holiness). Note the "Our" part - God is personal and active in our lives, not some impersonal force. All of these characteristics were repeatedly and concretely demonstrated in the life of Jesus while here on earth.

The God I believe in is a God who wants ALL men and women to be saved (1 Timothy 2:3, John 3:16). (Greek note: Out of 31,000+ verses in the Bible, the Greek word for predestined is found exactly four times. Four times. I can hardly wait to see what Grudem has to say on this!)

The true God is not a smug deist who randomly and arbitrarily throws us slimy worms a chit now and again. Our God is right here, close to us. He is near. He is emotional. He cares. He is warm, social, and relational – a real family man – for those who draw near to him. He hears our prayers and answers them.

Yes, those who reject him will receive judgement, wrath, and punishment, perhaps for eternity. Perhaps they will be completely annihilated in the lake of fire. But to those who love him, He grants immortality and bliss – likely right back here on a recreated earth no longer cursed with futility, a new earth no longer dominated by the power of sin and iniquity.

While Eberle boldly takes up the most complex and profound issues that have vexed theologians, philosophers, agnostics, atheists, and ordinary thoughtful people, for two millennia, he does so in a straight-forward, very easy-to-read format with copious, incredibly helpful diagrams of the issues, well over a hundred. He also quotes scripture generously, underlining key words and phrases that illustrate his points. His numerous analogies are very helpful.

Except for the necessary use of dry theological terms such as soteriology, basilology or eschatology, Eberle's book passes Einstein's grandmother test: You really don't know something until you can explain it in a way your Grandmother would understand.

In addition, Eberle's overall book outline is straight-forward with logical sections and chapters. Eberle very helpfully divides the material into 552 "points" whose length ranges from a few paragraphs to a couple of pages. All of this makes this large tome very reader-friendly.

Eberle frequently will go back to the original Greek and Hebrew, but in a clear and straightforward way. He will also go into how the original beliefs of the church have changed over time. And they have!

A notable example. For anyone who has suffered through the pain of a miscarriage or abortion, Eberle's careful dissection of the history and bible passages behind the doctrine of original sin will be very healing. On this doctrine of inherited depravity – the idea that a stillborn baby was sinful from the moment of conception and is now doomed to an eternity in hell – Eberle concludes his affirming discussion on the very real Biblical problems with this later-added doctrine by quoting no less than Charles Finney:

"It is a relic of heathen philosophy, and was foisted in among the doctrines of Christianity by Augustine, as everyone will know who takes the trouble to examine it for himself."

Our family had four miscarriages. Years ago, I asked our well-read, erudite Lutheran pastor the simple question – are these children going to heaven or hell? The best he could say was: "We don't know." How very sad, because Jesus said:

"See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven." (Matthew 18:10)

Another example. The church's understanding of Christ's work on the cross was quite different in the first thousand years compared to the second. Understanding this difference that has everything to do with how we live our lives NOW, past Jesus' victory over sin, death and the devil. Eberle's take – we lost something very

important in the 2nd millennia. (What? Read the book ...)

All of this matters to a world highly skeptical of Christianity's claims. Consider, for example, Ingersoll's critique of the Christian Reconstructionism movement (Building God's Kingdom), as she summarizes the foundational reformed theology at its root:

"This God, whose greatest act of love is the violent execution of his Son (Himself?) as the only adequate resolution to sin, is a wrathful, vengeful God who sits in judgement of disobedient nations." (p. 23)

To which Eberle would say: Hooey!

Or the great historians Will and Ariel Durant, in their Lessons of history:

"If history supports any theology this would be a dualism like Zoroastrian or Manichaeism; a good spirit and an evil spirit battling for control of the universe and men's souls. These faiths and Christianity (which is essentially Manichaeism) assured their followers that the good spirit would win in the end; but of this consummation history offers no guarantee." (p.46)

Eberle actually explains Augustine's nine-year run with Manicheism, its influence on his (and our) theology, and why it's still a problem, particularly in understanding the nature of sin. There is indeed a significant grain of truth in what the Durants wrote.

The God of Moses, of Paul, of Daniel – the God who lived among us in 1st Century Palestine – is not the dualistic and sadistic god lambasted by Christianity's critics. The angry, wrathful, and capricious god indicted, judged and sentenced to death by angry atheists is simply NOT the God described in the Bible. Daniel, Paul, Moses, and Jesus were not dualists. The Old and New Testament were not dualistic. All of that was added by an early church struggling for intellectual credibility.

In the end, the words of the wonderful hymn In The Garden capture the essence of the God Eberle describes, the God in whom I believe:

And He walks with me,
And He talks with me,
And He tells me I am His own,
And the love we share,
As we tarry there ...
None other, has ever, known.

At a conference this summer, Dr. Eberle said that he had put more of himself into this book than any of his other books, and it shows. I for one am VERY grateful.

In terms of suggestions for improvement:

- (1) An index in the back would be nice.
- (2) A listing of key Bible verses explained in more depth (ala Grudem) would be very helpful
- (3) I just didn't understand the first, second, third heaven idea, and why it is significant. Maybe this needs to be explained better, or maybe it is just me.

(4) With great respect, I do not agree with Dr. Eberle on the idea that the Father gives spiritual gifts to all people, not just Christians (p. 676 ff). The KJV translation of Romans 12:3 is used as justification. But the original Greek clearly backs up the commonly held view that Paul was speaking to Christians about life in Christ.

Therefore, the Romans 12 gifts are given to Christians alone, not everyone else, and are not simply natural abilities. Many of Eberle's other insights on spiritual gifts, such as the nuances of the gifts of tongues and prophecy, are very helpful, but this overall idea is a black mark against a wonderful, brilliant, and very pastoral systematic theology.

THANK YOU, Dr. Eberle, for having the courage to publish this book.

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