

EDWARD W. H. VICK: Writings

BOOKS AND MANUSCRIPTS

Edward W. H. Vick

HOPE

If hope is bound up with the continuance of life and if life ends, what can we speak of hope? There seem to be three possibilities: to have all there is to be had in a life beyond this one or to have all there is to be had here and now. 'Pie in the sky when you die or pie on your plate while you wait.' On the one hand we are offered an other-worldliness, a world-denying faith, on the other a this-worldliness, a world-affirming faith. The third alternative is to avoid both extremes by affirming both and by seeing the Christian hope as pointing to fulfilment both in this existence and in one 'beyond' it. We must be able to say both 'This is my Father's world,' and also 'I'm but a stranger here.' It is instructive to refer to the teaching of Jesus concerning the Kingdom of God. It had come. It was to come. It was then present. It would continue to be present, but it would also burst into the future like lightning.

Hope is based upon faith. Faith is directed toward God here and now. Faith points forward to a fulfilment in what is yet unknown. Faith finds its context within the revelation of God. That context is one of promise and of fulfilment, both of achieved fulfilment of promise and also of awaited fulfilment.

The God who has been made known and who is now being revealed in Jesus Christ is the God who will be known at the end. He is the God who 'in the beginning' created the heavens and the earth. We were not at the beginning and we are not yet at the end. God is the God of promise. The believer knows this to be so because he has experienced the fulfilment of that promise. Since he has known what God has done and is doing, hope can rest upon certain grounds, without detailed knowledge of what the future will bring.

There are twelve chapters:

- 1 God, Hope and History
- 2 The Nature of Hope
- 3 Hope and the Past
- 4 Hope and the Present
- 5 Hope and the Future
- 6 Resurrection and Justification
- 7 Resurrection and Sanctification
- 8 Creation and Resurrection
- 9 Victory and Defeat
- 10 Resurrection and Immortality
- 11 Resurrection and Judgment
- 12 Resurrection and Advent

Edward W. H. Vick

A LITTLE BOOK ABOUT CHRISTIAN FAITH

Sometimes we take our faith for granted. Sometimes we wonder how we can believe at all. Sometimes we are very certain. Sometimes we doubt. This writing takes a look at what faith means and implies. We consider how faith is related to our understanding and experience in the world. For we are making very serious claims when we confess faith in God.

There are eleven chapters:

I Introduction: Faith in God

II Faith and the Word

III Faith and Experience

IV Faith and Doubt

V Is Christian Faith Reasonable?

VI Does it Matter what you Believe?

VII Changing beliefs

VIII On Being Certain

IX Faith, Belief and Commitment

X Christian Faith and the Revelation of God

XI Faith and the Writings

Edward W. H. Vick
CHRISTIAN BELIEFS

For a college course in Christian Beliefs, such as this was, the presentation must be crisp, comprehensible and interesting, while at the same time doing justice to the basic beliefs of the Christian faith. It must also be non-partisan, and must clarify issues so that the main themes stand out with clarity. It must also be stimulating, so that the student will want to continue to question and explore.

This book, then, is an introduction to the main themes of Christian belief. The chapters are short and are accompanied by a series of discussion questions. These are intended to assist the understanding and to promote further reflection. The text may be used in connection with selected biblical passages.

We examine the meaning of the terms *belief*, *faith*, *assent* and *trust* and then ask: 'What is the point of studying Christian Belief?' 'Does it matter what you believe?' We then take up the following themes

God as Father and as Triune. What does it mean to say that God creates the world *out of nothing*. God is omnipotent and all loving. What does being all-powerful mean in relation to the existence of the evil in the world and belief in the love of God.

How is the life and death of Jesus related to the individual believer, to the church, to the non-Christian, to nature?

What is gone wrong with human beings? Two different explanations of the idea of *atonement*. What does it mean to be human? What may we hope for the human? The human ('man') is a disobedient, divided creature, in an ambiguous relation to his creator.

The basic affirmation of Christian belief is that Jesus is *Lord*. Why is the expression *Lord* appropriate for speaking about Jesus as the source and sustainer of faith in God.

The burial of Jesus means that his death was real. Why this is important as a shield against *docetism*. The resurrection of Jesus means that after the death of Jesus a remarkable series of events took place. Jesus is spirit not simply a resuscitated body. The ascension signifies that after the shameful death, God vindicated Jesus as the Christ. The death is not defeat but victory.

The teaching that God is judge suggests that it is God who takes the initiative in deciding what is ultimately worth preserving. But not every interpretation of the analogy of judgment is appropriate.

God as Holy Spirit. God is at work within the community after the death of Jesus and continues to be at work. The result is fellowship and witness. The term *church* has both a particular and universal meaning. The authority of the church has its source in the divine presence. But how is that authority to be established and how exercised?

Life after death: *resurrection*, *soul*, *real person*, *immortality*, *eternal life*. Reasons for belief in resurrection of the person to eternal life. How is Christian faith related to science? There are different levels of discourse which need not be in opposition to each other.

Arguments for the existence of God attempt to relate our experience of the world (for example as orderly), to the existence of God. Does the believer need them?

Edward W.H. Vick
SAVED TO SERVE

The expression 'saved to serve' can be taken in different ways. But what is clear is that the idea of 'salvation' is very rightly connected with the idea of 'service.' There are many scriptural illustration of this important principle. And the idea of salvation has past, present and future implications. The Christian's salvation is practical, in that it manifests itself in *effective activity*. Christian service also emerges from understanding. The Christian receives salvation as God's gift ('saved' is passive). We can then witness to that event and that is basic to service.

But there are pitfalls: being saved can become ego-centric, or at the other extreme: the individual can get lost in the community. We are saved as individuals. But the church must also guard against ecclesiastical introversion. And the individual's 'position' in the church is the occasion for service, rather than for self-satisfaction. Whatever competencies we have may be the instrument for our Christian service.

All our living is done within specific contexts. The context of Christian service is the church, and the church is in the world.

Christian service demands obedience, faithfulness, and productivity.

We are servants of our Lord in the church. The church is thus defined by the acknowledgment of the Lordship of Christ in the activities of service. Unity is evident in the community only as there is harmonious co-ordination within great diversity. The church is *a community, a communion, a fellowship*. It exists because response has been made to the demand of Jesus Christ. The response involves the total individual and is made possible by witness. God is made known as someone bears witness to his activity. The church has a *commission* which stretches across all boundaries of time and of place.

There is both difference between church and world. The New Testament uses the term 'world' in different ways. The world is God's world, even in its opposition to him. It is over simple to draw the line between the good and the bad by means of the distinction between the church and the world. The church has to fight its own sin. So the question for the church is, How seeing that we are in the world are we to be there?

Edward W. H. Vick

DEATH, IMMORTALITY AND RESURRECTION

This writing presents biblical, theological and philosophical discussions of death, in a readable and interesting style.

The opening chapter sets out the important questions and the significant alternative answers which have been given to them. It is followed by a presentation of the New Testament teaching about resurrection and immortality.

But what is immortality and what is the *soul*? How can we find our way in view of the confusing variety in the use of the language which has expressed the problem of death? We suggest guiding considerations to clarify the issues.

The second part presents significant philosophical discussions, so familiarising the reader with the language which has been and continues to be used in constructive discussions of the problem of the soul and its possible survival.

The Christian theist wrestles with the questions, What is it to be a human person? What could the Christian teaching of the resurrection mean? Could there be *also* talk of the immortality of the soul? If not, is it possible to find another way of speaking of immortality?

The book is an attempt to present the subject in a readable way i.e. to be interesting, and at the same time to be a serious piece of scholarship.

Its companion volume, *The Problem of Evil*, has similar aims, and is similarly constructed in two parts.

Edward W. H. Vick

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

This book presents biblical, theological and philosophical discussions of evil in a readable and interesting style.

The first chapter sets out the important questions and problems, in particular the claim that faith in a loving God is reasonable in view of the presence of evil in the world.

This is followed by a presentation of the biblical accounts of suffering, first in the Old Testament and then in the New.

Then comes a discussion of the theological issues involved: of the creative purpose of God and the origin of evil; of freedom and responsibility, of providence and miracle, of the status of the physical universe.

The book concludes with a treatment of the philosophical issues related to the preceding discussion.

It is an attempt to present the subject in a readable way and at the same time to be a serious piece of scholarship.

Its companion volume, *Death Immortality and Resurrection*, has similar aims and is similarly constructed.

Edward W.H. Vick,

HISTORY AND CHRISTIAN FAITH

The Christian conviction is that God is active in human history to fulfil his purpose, which he will do in the end. 'In the beginning, God.' 'In the end, God.' How are we to think about this assertion? We human beings act to bring about our purposes and sometimes are successful, but what is it to say meaningfully that God acts, that 'God is working his purpose out as year succeeds to year'?

This book is a modest attempt to speak to this issue.

First, it tries to show that our Christian faith is bound up with our personal history, but beyond that, stretches far into the past. The existence of faith raises the problem of God acting in history.

Second, it tries to analyse Christian faith and its relations to the theist's belief in God.

Third, it *defines history*, and shows how faith is not identical with knowledge of facts about Jesus. Then it attempts to understand what the claim that *God reveals himself in history* means.

Fourth: since we are where we are, our historical outlook is relative to where we are. So it is appropriate to ask, Why should it matter that, when we think about the meaning of God acting in Jesus Christ, we are thinking as twentieth/twenty-first century persons? In particular, what happens when we examine the Gospels as historical sources?

Fifth, in view of the fact that the Christian finds an ultimate meaning in history, it asks the question: Taking the course of history as a whole, how is it possible to find an overall meaning in history?

Sixth, it suggests that when we appeal to the New Testament we are bound to go beyond the New Testament to the series of events which brought about the very existence of the Christian community before there was a New Testament. This has significance for our understanding of our faith today. Since we interpret Scripture according to principles of interpretation which we have worked out, adopted or inherited, it is at some time wise to ask about the origin of those principles of interpretation.

This small book is an introduction. Hopefully it will clarify issues and lead to further investigation of such central matters.

Edward W H Vick

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

Chapter 1 Approaching the Bible

Since there are different ways of approaching the Bible there are correspondingly different ways of understanding its significance. Only when we look at the ways the church actually uses the Bible can we understand from that practice what to say about its significance. It is a case of putting practice into theory, in this case into theology.

Chapter 2 Canon

It is by looking back at the story of how the books came to be accepted and used that we can understand why there are just sixty-six in the canon of scripture. But there is a distinction between a formal canon and the canon in use, even if the church holds to the principle of *sola scriptura*.

Chapter 3 Authority

There is an important distinction between investing books with authority, and recognizing them as having authority. In the latter case, the book commends itself for what it does, for the function it has in the life of the Christian community. It thus has an *intrinsic* authority, whoever its author was. Authority and recognition of authority are correlative. Here it is not a matter of demonstration. So there are wrong reasons for taking the Bible to be authoritative. Ten such reasons suggested.

Chapter 4 Inspiration.

A doctrine of inspiration, if it is to be at all satisfactory, must take into account the facts about how the books of scripture came into being and how they were recognized as special books. We consider carefully possible meanings for the term, *inspiration*. Does inspiration have to do with the process i.e. the composition of the book or the product of the writing, or with both? The great diversity in the writings, and the practice within the churches in using and valuing some portions of scripture over others, means that a doctrine of inspiration which claims that all parts of scripture are equally inspired is unsatisfactory. To say that a book is inspired rather serves to give the content a special status. But to claim that the Bible has authority *because* it is inspired is an error.

Chapter 5. Revelation

Revelation means an unveiling, a making known. The Old Testament speaks of the *knowledge* of God, the New Testament of the *mystery* now revealed. We examine the biblical understanding of revelation. Scripture is the product of revelation and the means by which the revelation of God continues.

We then provide a careful examination of the terms used to represent the different ideas of revelation and of faith. A satisfactory account will recognize that faith and revelation are not purely intellectual operations, and that here there can be no question of proof. So scripture will be seen as part of a dynamic process and not as a set of propositions which can be grasped by an act of intellect.

Chapter 6 Tradition and Scripture

Tradition is something that has been handed down, a *content*. It is also the *process* of handing down something. Every Christian group hands on a body of teaching, of interpretation, as well as the scripture. So what is the issue between the Catholic who speaks of an unwritten tradition, and the Protestant with the principle of *sola scriptura*, the Bible and the Bible only? For the Catholic also asserts the primacy of the scripture, and the Protestant interprets the Bible by producing doctrines and hands these on as tradition. To understand here, we must be clear as to what *sola scriptura* does not mean. It may then be evident that there is no necessary opposition between scripture and tradition.

Chapter 7. Interpreting the Bible: A. Figure, Form and Content

Not only must we make a clear distinction between literal and figurative language, but also distinguish the different ways in which language can be figurative. For example there are such types as the allegorical, the typological, the parabolic. We examine these, with the question in mind, In what senses, if at all, do these respective methods enable us to interpret the text, rather than give the text a preferred meaning?

Chapter 8. **Interpreting the Bible: B. Text and Revelation.**

Interpreting is the process of finding or rendering meaning. Different interpretations lead us to see things in different ways. Some texts lend themselves readily to different interpretations. This may be particularly the case when a text is translated from another language. The Scriptures we use are translations. We have two problems: to say what the writer intended, and to say what the text now means, i.e. provide a relevant and contemporary meaning. This involves more than simply repeating what the scripture says. The interpreter has different goals: to discover what happened; to come to a decision as to which is the best possible text; to say what the writer meant; to say what the word from the past can *now* mean. The Christian interpreter can approach the Scriptures with different goals in mind, but may not forget that it is through Scripture that God reveals himself.

Edward W. H. Vick

SCIENCE AND FAITH

Questions can be answered on different levels, which levels have rules of right discourse and which need not necessarily conflict with one another. Is there any level of discourse upon which God-language is helpful?

Clarity and understanding result from recognizing the level of discussion and the appropriate arguments to be deployed on the particular level. Conflicts are resolved in different ways. With the resolution of particular conflicts of science and religion, the question of our fundamental attitudes to the world is raised.

We cannot entertain as an objection to religious perspective, that the attitudes of the believer and the modes of logic in which these are expressed, are so different from those of the scientist, that they are not respectable; nor, conversely, that the scientific attitude and logic requires an attitude of mind that is of necessity antagonistic to that of the believer. Specifically, it is just not true that there is a necessary conflict because the scientist simply deals with facts and proof, while the believer relies upon feelings and theory.

The objection cannot be sustained that the scientific attitude is either so unique as to produce unique certainty, or is to be taken as normative for all modes of inquiry, on the basis of its concern for facts. The question of its uniqueness and normativeness must be discussed in each particular case. At all stages of science there is theoretical construction, which is revised when it becomes necessary.

Summary chapter by chapter

- 1 Different Kinds of Question
- 2 Conflict
- 3 Fact and Proof
- 4 The Scientist and His Facts
- 5 Subject and Object
- 6 What is Possible?
- 7 Miracles
- 8 What is Nonsense?
- 9 What is Religion?
- 10 Interaction
- 11 Science and the Future
- 12 Religion and the Future
- 13 The Question about Beginnings
- 14 Revelation
- 15 Faith
- 16 The Pattern of the World

Edward W. H. Vick

THE FOX AND THE GRAPES

49 Articles and Sermons

From the introduction

I have gathered together these pieces from over a period of many years, several decades in fact (1950-2004). Some of them have been given as talks. Others have appeared in print. None of them is 'academic.' I intended them for the ordinary serious Christian who from time to time wonders and thinks, asks questions, needs comfort, help and sometimes

stimulus. I hope that they prove to be interesting and that you will have satisfaction in reading them.

Over the period these writings represent I have not 'stood still' in my thinking. But I believe that each piece in its way has a relevant message and may be helpful. It is in this hope that I have taken time to assemble and present them. I have altered them as little as possible. In most cases they appear here just as they were originally spoken or written.

SCHOLARLY ARTICLES

Edward W. H. Vick

SCHOLARLY ARTICLES: A SELECTION

The Concept of Revelation
Revelation in Contemporary Theology
Four Worlds: From Aristotle to Darwin
Theological Essays
Self-deception
Miracles and the Laws of Nature
Origen the Educator
Forgery and Fakes
Aristotle on Immortality

Edward W. H. Vick

SEVEN ARTICLES

(published papers)

Creation: Theologian and Scientist
Faith and Evidence
Attitudes to Christology
Recent System of Theology
Systematic Theology defined
Wesley on Perfection
Transposition

Edward W. H. Vick

THE REASONABLENESS OF FAITH

Twelve Essays

The Problem of Meaning, Language about God, The Reasonableness of Believing, Experience, Going Beyond, Creation, Agnosticism and Atheism, History and Christian Faith, Good and Evil, Revelation, On Defining Religion, Datum for Christian Theology

BOOKS (MSS) FOR SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

Edward W.H. Vick

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS AND THE BIBLE

An issue and a case study

This short book presents an important issue: Can inspiration establish authority? Is the question of inspiration the same as the question of authority?

The idea of inspiration has often been at the centre of attention when the Bible has been under discussion. In particular at the time of the Reformation when it was a question of defending the authority of the Bible against the claims of tradition, and in the nineteenth century discussions about science and religion. People who then defended a theory of inspiration believed very firmly that inspiration of a writing could be demonstrated. They also believed that the inspiration, so demonstrated, established the authority of the writing beyond question and that it could be established in no other way so well. No wonder they defended the doctrine of inspiration with such energy.

Our question is whether the idea of inspiration can do what its proponents believed it could. Can appeal to inspiration establish the authority of the primary source, the Bible? Can it, by extension, establish the authority of a secondary source, for example the teacher, the prophet, the charismatic figure in a religious group?

Christian churches have made and continue to make such claims. So much so that we can assert that it is a widely held belief. But is it a worthy belief? Since we have now come to understand the Bible historically, can a doctrine which approaches the Bible in a non-historical way be adequate?

By taking a case study we can focus clearly issues of a general kind and hopefully by doing so, to ecclesiastical understanding. The case study is the interesting one of the Seventh-day Adventist; who as well as claiming that inspiration establishes the authority of the Bible also claims that inspiration establishes the claim of the modern prophet in that church.

The first part, about half, of the book discusses the case study. The second part considers the issue it raises as a general theological issue. What is interesting is that contemporary theological discussion, except in conservative circles, has little to say about the problem. Even to speak of inspiration is something of an anachronism. But it perhaps depends on *how* you talk about it.

Edward W. H. Vick

INSPIRATION, REVELATION AND THE BIBLE

In answering the question, 'Why does Scripture have authority?' the book deals with the following issues:

What Sort of Book is the Bible? Why are there just sixty-six books in our Bible? The Canon and the question of Inspiration. What is Inspiration theory? Inspiration and Doctrine. Inspiration Theory in its setting. The Inspiration Text. The Prophet as the Model of Inspiration. The Function of Inspiration Theory. Inspiration and Authority. Word and Spirit. Interpretation and Authority. Propositions and Propositional Revelation. What a Doctrine of Revelation must explain. Basic Statement of the Christian Doctrine of Revelation. Inner History. Inspiration or Revelation? A Revelation Model. Christian Faith and the Revelation of God.

Addendum: Revelation in Recent Theology.

Edward W. H. Vick

ARTICLES FOR SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

History and Christian faith
The Adventism of Seventh-day Adventists
Good old fashioned Adventism in a new context?
Must we keep the sanctuary doctrine?
A future for Adventist theology
Something of a disappointment
Reflections of a seminary teacher
God, hope and history
Judgment
Jonah: introduction
Daniel
Jesus victor
The nature of hope
A plea for theological seriousness
Is the theological seminary indispensable?
The theologian, the scholar and the church.

Edward W. H. Vick

THE ADVENTISTS' DILEMMA

This book is about Seventh-day Adventist eschatology. By definition, an Adventist is one who hopes for the literal return of Jesus Christ, in the near future. Not all Adventists have the elaborate system of prophetic fulfilment that Seventh-day Adventists do. But they all share the basic conviction.

So it is also about Adventist eschatology, where Adventism is defined in the more general way. So much of what is said here has application to Adventism in the defined sense, but without the elaborations of Seventh-day Adventism. From now on, in using the term Adventism, the reference will be to Seventh-day Adventism. Where appropriate the application can readily be made to other forms of Adventism.

Eschatology is talk about the future, about the end-time. Adventists talk about the end-time. Adventists say that the Advent is soon. To say the Second Advent is soon leads to a dilemma. The Adventist dilemma can be expressed in various ways.

(1) If you use *soon* in the ordinary sense, you can't go on saying the Advent is *soon*.

If you say the Advent is *soon* in a qualified sense, the claim becomes meaningless.

So, the claim that the Advent is soon is either false or meaningless.

(2) Adventists can go on talking about the Advent as they always have, or, they can talk about it in a new way.

If they go on talking about the Advent as they always have, they are incredible. If they talk about it in a new way, they repudiate their heritage (must revise their teaching).

So, they are either incredible or they repudiate their heritage (must revise their teaching).

Note that this is a real logical dilemma. One has to choose between two unfavourable alternatives.

The dilemma is that Seventh-day Adventists must either preserve good old fashioned Adventism and go on saying the incredible, or admit error and rethink the whole structure of eschatological doctrine, i.e. produce a new Adventism.

COURSES

These two writings represent courses given at the Theological Seminary of Andrews University.

INTRODUCTION TO THEOLOGY

This course is intended to serve as an introduction to theology. As such it will attempt to provide guide-lines which may serve to clarify what the job of theology is and how the job is to be tackled if it is to prove fruitful. For, of course, we are interested that our labours be fruitful and that our performance of theological tasks be of benefit and not of hindrance to the cause of Christ, which is to the witness of the church.

The question thus becomes, How best can an introductory course, such as this be presented to obtain maximum benefit for a theological student at the outset of his Seminary career? So we discussed the following themes: What is theology? Branches of Theology: historical theology, biblical theology, systematic theology; Orthodoxy and norms of interpretation; Authority; Theology and philosophy; Theological method; Theology and preaching.

RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH

This document represents the content of a course I gave during my days at the Theological Seminary of Andrews University. It was very well received, and I am now happy to put the content of that course into some shape with a minimum of change. I have done so without making serious alterations to the content of the course as given. So it is not a 'book' in the sense that it has had all the (I hope not too frequent) repetitions ironed out. Let's then call it a 'writing'! When one is teaching it is sometimes advisable to engage in a judicious amount of repetition. For repetition is the mother of memory. (It can also be the father of indifference!) One can repeat while approaching materials from a different angle, as is in evidence here. I believe that the manuscript is suggestive and useful simply by being what it is, largely a transcription of the spoken words in front of a group of students. I have provided frequent headings, to make it easy to recognise, find and use the materials.

Outline of Course: Introduction, Faith the Starting Point, The Righteousness of God, The Knowledge of God, The Grace of God, Jesus Christ the Object of Faith, Faith, 'By Faith Alone', Justification, The Works of Faith, Sanctification, Faith, Freedom and Works, All is of God.

MEMOIR

Edward W.H. Vick
FROM MY POINT OF VIEW.

An account of my relations with Andrews University Theological Seminary, 1968.

Dr. Vick taught New Testament Greek and theology for many years at Canadian Union College in Alberta, and at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in Michigan, as well as summer schools at Newbold College. He is a graduate of Andrews, London, Vanderbilt, Oxford and Nottingham Universities.

Dr. Vick is the author of numerous articles, book reviews and several books: *Let Me Assure You*, *Jesus the Man*, *Speaking Well of God*, *Is Salvation Really Free?* *Our Lord's Prayer*, *Quest: An Examination of Some Problems in Science and Religion*, *The Adventists' Dilemma*, *History and Christian Faith*.
