

# Edward Vick's Passion for Theology

by Ron Walden

The following is the first in a projected series of articles on Seventh-day Adventist theologians which will appear at irregular intervals in the pages of SPECTRUM. The series marks an attempt to encourage theological reflection by taking the work of theologians seriously.

The Editors

Edward W. H. Vick is an unusual figure among Seventh-day Adventist theologians because he has worked out his theological interests in a more exacting and consistent fashion than his teachers or contemporaries within the denomination. This article is devoted to an exposition and analysis of Vick's published works. It will try to report what his interests are, to trace certain themes that bind them together, to situate Vick's work within the development of Adventist theology, and to isolate those features of his work which seem most promising.

For Adventists, at least, the main novelty of Vick's writings is methodological. The positions he takes on the issues, though often refreshing, are less interesting than the reasons he takes them. His innovations may be considered by

reference to the concepts "theology," "system," and "context."

First, theology. Seventh-day Adventism has come late to this discipline, at least in its restricted sense. Most doctorates held by Adventists in the broad field of religion have been earned since World War II. Adventist doctorates in theology are more recent still; Vick's own, which was one of the first, was finished in 1965. When Bible teachers from Adventist colleges first began earning doctorates in the 1940s, occasionally in spite of the objections of their administrators, they did not usually pick a directly theological field. A more typical choice was speech. When they did turn to the general area of religious studies, it was more likely an historical field (such as Church History, or Ancient Near Eastern History, or New Testament and Christian Origins) which attracted them rather than doctrinal or systematic theology. That is why it is only now, in the late 1970s, that Adventist theology has developed enough to permit a series such as the one in which this article appears.

This is not to suggest that the church had no doctrines, or no clear thinking about them, before the arrival of academically trained theologians. Nor does it mean that there was no vitality to Adventist religion before Adventists got doctorates in "religion." The point here is simply that theology is an intellectual (and reli-

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gious) discipline with an academic tradition of its own; that it has developed certain standards which teaching or writing must meet before it can be called theology; and that Seventh-day Adventists have more or less ignored theology in this restricted sense until about 20 years ago.

Some Adventist scholars in religion were trained and active in fields other than theology, however. An early favorite was biblical studies. The distinction between biblical studies and theology is easier to use than to state, and is always clearer in theory than in practice. Briefly, when scholars in Christian studies speak of theology, whether systematic, doctrinal, or dog-

matic, they mean the constructive and synthetic discipline which makes proposals about Christian faith today, as opposed to the descriptive and analytical activity which investigates the Christian past. The first is "theology"; the second, depending on the period or collection of documents studied, is "church history" or "New Testament" or "history of Christian doctrine."

Both theologians and biblical scholars are concerned with the text of the Bible; but biblical scholars ask what it meant, while theologians ask what it means. Both theologians and historians of doctrine consider the Christian tradition; but historians describe it while theologians

## About Edward Vick

Edward W. H. Vick grew up in England, where he worked as a minister from 1950-1954. In 1955, he earned a B.A. in theology from Southern Missionary College in Tennessee; in 1956, he received an M.A. in New Testament Greek from Andrews University.

He taught at Canadian Union College from 1956-1964, during which time he earned a B.D. with honors from the University of London. In 1965, after taking an appointment at the Seminary at Andrews University, he received the doctorate in theology from Vanderbilt University. Since 1969, he has taught in England at Wymondham College and at Forest Fields College. In 1970, he received the B. Litt. degree from Oxford University in contemporary philosophical theology.

Between 1951 and 1960, Dr. Vick published numerous articles in *The Bible and Our Times*, an evangelistic publication of Seventh-day Adventists in Great Britain. He also published many articles in *Insight*, a Seventh-day Adventist youth magazine, between 1970 and 1973. Among his scholarly publications are the following:

### Articles:

"A Plea for Theological Seriousness, I," *The Ministry*, September, 1962, pp. 21-23.

"A Plea for Theological Seriousness, II," *The Ministry*, October, 1962, pp. 16-20.

"Resurrection or Immortality?" *The Ministry*, June, 1962, pp. 13, 14.

"A Definition of the Concept of Systematic Theology," *Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts and Letters*, Vol. XI, 1966, pp. 471-483.

"John Wesley's Teaching Concerning Perfection," *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, Vol. IV, No. 2, pp. 201-217.

"Faith and Evidence," *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, Vol. V, No. 2, pp. 181-199.

"Observations on the Adventism of Seventh-day Adventists," *The Stature of Christ*, book privately published by Gary Stanhiser and Vern Carner, Loma Linda, California, 1970, pp. 196-204.

"A Recent System of Theology," *The Modern Churchman*, June, 1971, pp. 244-258.

"Liberal and Radical Attitudes to Christianity," *The Modern Churchman*, July, 1972, pp. 224-235.

### Books:

*Theological Essays* (duplicated), Michigan: Andrews University, 1965.

*Let Me Assure You*, Mountain View, California: Pacific Press, 1968.

*Quest: An Exploration of Some Problems in Science and Religion*, London: Epworth Press, 1975.

advance it. Of course, in real life there is almost no scholar who is exclusively one or the other. Historians do effectively advance the tradition, and biblical scholars do wonder what the text means now, while theologians do make historical judgments as well. The distinctions are conceptual, not personal.

Considered in the light of these distinctions, though, Edward Vick is a theologian, one of Adventism's first. It is intriguing to compare his development with that of the church's scholarship as a whole. His M.A. thesis,<sup>1</sup> written at the old Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in Washington, was presented not to the department of theology, but to the department of biblical Greek. With the exception of one chapter, it is devoted to a word study of the biblical words for "power," especially in the expression "the power of God." It shows that when Vick turned to scholarship as a young man, he, like the church as a whole, began with an historical field, and with biblical studies in particular. But the motives that drove him were profoundly theological, as were the church's own.

A word study is an effort to trace the changing nuances of a word through the variety of its

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contexts. In biblical studies, this effort may lead one at a gallop through many centuries and many styles of literature, for the biblical documents exhibit no unity of period or genre, whatever one may say about their unity of doctrine. And if for comparative purposes one adds ancient, classical and Hellenistic usages of the biblical word, the situation becomes even more complex. In recent decades, doubts have arisen about the usefulness of the whole word-study technique, but we cannot hold Vick responsible for ignoring them. Understandably, word studies

seemed very promising to the Adventist biblical scholars who taught Vick (e.g., Lohsbe). The curriculum in "Bible" which Adventist schools had offered was rich in the approaches typified by Smith's *Daniel and the Revelation*,<sup>2</sup> in which biblical apocalyptic is laid alongside secular history, or by *Bible Readings for the Home Circle*,<sup>3</sup> in which a fragment of the Bible is laid alongside another fragment on the same topic. In both cases, one ranges far and wide through the varied parts of Scripture, in a curious application of the maxim "Line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little" (Isaiah 28:10, 13).

With this evangelistic background, Adventist seminary teachers came to the non-Adventist biblical scholarship of the period 1920-1960 and found a natural affinity with such works as Kittel's monumental *Theological Word Book of the New Testament*.<sup>4</sup> These works, like the sermons of Adventist evangelists, moved freely among the different parts of the Bible in an effort to find *the* meaning of a word, or at least to catalogue the variety of its meanings. The use of the technique on the Greek or Hebrew word for "spirit," for example, might help to establish the Adventist position on the state of the dead. Or close attention to the expression "forever and ever" might demonstrate that the fires of hell will one day be quenched after all. So the word-study technique seemed to lend scholarly respectability to the concerns that already agitated Adventist scholars.

Adventist scholarship, then, was driven to biblical studies in the 1950s by motives that were at least doctrinal, even if they were not "theological" in the strict sense. Vick came to biblical studies for much the same reasons, but even his choice of a word to study set him apart from his teachers. In his master's thesis, he settled on the expression "the power of God," which in Hellenistic Greek serves as a technical term for a miracle, and he thereby took on one of the knottiest problems in the philosophy of religion since the rise of the modern natural sciences in the seventeenth century. Already, as a seminarian, he was concerned with modern problems that exceeded the boundaries of Adventism, problems shared by all Christians, which could not be solved by the normal Adventist

“Bible doctrines” approach. He was on his way to becoming a theologian.

Two-thirds of the thesis is devoted to a catalogue, in word-study fashion, of the uses of the expression “power” in the Old Testament, classical Greek and the Septuagint, and an analysis of its New Testament uses, with a passing glance at the terms for “sign” in the fourth Gospel. Yet Vick’s real aims are stated in the first paragraphs of the introduction. There he says that one of the purposes of the thesis is “. . .to demonstrate that a belief in miracles is not inconsistent with the demands of reason, but rather that it illuminates the meaning of the universe” (p. 1). The final chapter of the thesis, on “The Laws of Nature,” seeks to fulfill the philosophical promise stated here, that “the demands of reason” will be satisfied. It is perhaps too ambitious, but it is much the most interesting passage in the work. And it is theology.

By the time that Vick began teaching in the seminary, his interest in theology was mature. In a short book of *Theological Essays*,<sup>5</sup> published in mimeographed form in 1965, he wrote the most passionately argued and best articulated apology for theological education ever offered by an Adventist. By “theological education” Vick meant ministerial training centered around systematic theology. The collection of *Essays* has two main goals, defending the seminary and defining systematic theology.<sup>6</sup>

As the next section will suggest, three of the articles in the book, taken together, are a good starting place for the general reader curious about theology. Though I suspect Vick has modified his views since he wrote them, the *Theological Essays* are still the best description by an Adventist of the craft of systematic theology.

For Vick, however, they were not simply an introduction to theology for the idly curious, but a salvo fired in a deadly serious war. He saw theology and the theological seminary as beleaguered institutions in the Adventist church (as indeed they still are), in need of the most vigorous possible defense. In the first of the *Essays*, “A Plea for Theological Seriousness” (reprinted from *Ministry*), and in the second, “Is the Theological Seminary Necessary?” (originally a sermon in seminary chapel), Vick reminds his readers that ignorance is not piety, that hard thinking is indispensable, that especially in the

pulpit the alternative to good theology is not no theology but bad theology, and that the world is changing. All obvious points, but unfortunately ones that needed to be made.

Vick evidently saw these papers and the rest of his work as an Adventist scholar and teacher as part of an important job in the church. He had great hopes for theology. Apart from taming the anti-intellectual excesses of his students, he hoped it would produce a greater coherence and power in Adventist preaching, provide a reasonable, integrated, satisfying set of motives for Adventist life, and generally result in better ministers, better Christians and better people.

Vick’s sustained interest in the coherence and integration of theology make him the most “systematic” theologian in the church. In the *Essays*, he not only defends the seminary but also defines what he thinks should be the center of its curriculum, namely, systematic theology. His view of the discipline owes a great deal to the speculative tradition in occidental philosophy.

From the time Aristotle discovered logic until the twentieth century, western philosophy has purported to offer descriptions of the world: value-neutral, general, true, interconnected propositions in the indicative. That is why, at the beginning of the modern period, philosophy could give birth to the various natural sciences, which are themselves systematic descriptions of aspects of the world. Philosophy might have come to resemble contrasting kinds of human discourse—poetry, laws, rituals, stories, grammar, prayers, riddles, or epigrams. Instead, it sets out to offer information.

The remarkable thing is that theology has also tried to offer a set of descriptions, but of a different range of objects, such as God, the universe as creation, human nature, angels, and the like, and from a different “source of knowledge,” revelation. In this context, the Bible is sometimes seen as a long but somewhat unsystematic string of true sentences, and inspiration as the divine guarantee that they are true. Then it is the business of theology to reorganize the information in Scripture, highlighting those features to which the age must attend. This is the vision of systematic theology which dominates in the systematics department at the seminary

today. While Vick's view is more subtle, even in his earlier works, and while his ideas on this point have changed dramatically judging by the most recent evidence, some such notion is present in the *Essays* as well.

The picture of theology which emerges from the articles on "Theological Methodology" and "A Definition of the Concept of Systematic Theology" has many of the systematic, indicative features of western philosophy. Here Vick defines systematic theology as "that genre of theological production which relates the data of the Christian theological tradition organically on a comprehensive scale, by means of isolable principles of unity" (p. 36). Among the criteria mentioned here or expanded elsewhere in the *Essays*, three in particular recall the speculative tradition in philosophy. The first criterion is completeness: "System is the comprehensiveness of organic unity" (p. 40). It is essential "to see the thing whole"; no Christian affirmation can be omitted from the system. Systematic theology is not a mere listing of the propositions, however, but a coordinated and interrelated set of propositions. So another criterion is unity, which is brought about by some principle which above all other features distinguishes theological systems from one another. The next is relevance (pp. 27-28); systematic theology relates the different aspects of the faith not only among themselves but also to the "whole of life," in a given historical situation. Thus far, the criteria resemble the familiar standards of speculative philosophy, such as clarity, adequacy and coherence.

A remaining criterion, orthodoxy, introduces the specifically Christian element in the enterprise. Vick's definition deals with "the data of the Christian theological tradition" and requires that they be related "organically," without heretical distortion. The norms which insure orthodoxy are the usual ones of Scripture, the Christian past and the judgment of the contemporary church (p. 27).

**T**o date, Vick has written no systematic theology, so we cannot tell exactly how he would fulfill the programmatic prescriptions given in the *Essays*. His longest book, however, shows another side of his interest in systematic theology. It is not designed for an academic readership, but for ministers and educated laymen who want an

introduction to academic theology. The title, *Let Me Assure You*, with the subtitle, *Of Grace, of Forgiveness, of Freedom, of Fellowship, of Hope*,<sup>7</sup> hints at some of the pastoral warmth of the book. Here is a man who believes that doctrinal theology has something comforting to say to ordinary people, and that high intellectual standards make it more comforting, not less. To my knowledge, it is the best book specifically designed to explain some of the classical categories and distinctions of systematic theology ever published by an Adventist press.

Vick does not try to cover all the divisions of the theological system, but limits his attention to "some of the essential themes of the church" (Introduction). In a gentle, plain-spoken way, he takes up the doctrines of grace, the atonement, the experience of salvation, the covenants and the law, the church, and last things, showing what differences alternative positions make in Christian life. The result is a pattern of exposition that falls strangely on ears unfamiliar with Christian instruction. This is writing situated within a coherent and almost clannish tradition. It is like a talmudic disputation; to an outsider, the style of argument and the choice of topics are curious, almost folkloric, while to an insider they are what matters most. Here, the distinctions invoked by medieval monks (pp. 42-43), the disputations of ancient councils (p. 40n), and the pamphlet wars of the sixteenth century (pp. 98-100) still rouse passions. Here, people struggle with guilt and grace and God, as they do everywhere, but here they call them "guilt" and "grace" and "God." And the search for an understanding of these things follows well-blazed trails; the author of *Let Me Assure You* is an independent thinker, but he is not an original one. The modern world need not be a partner in every conversation, however, and in other works Vick shows his ability to move in other than Christian circles.

Here his concerns are those of a Christian in Christendom. They are, first of all, the concerns of the Bible, which Vick approaches not in the familiar proof-text fashion but in a more agile and nuanced way. In this book, his treatment of Scripture still bears the marks of his old interest in biblical languages and word studies. He moves in circles around a topic: he approaches the experience of salvation, for example (ch. 3), by discussing a group of biblical words that cluster

about it—justification, faith (as assent and as trust), forgiveness, confession, restitution, conversion, regeneration—and by entering discussions and using contrasts first found in the Bible—faith and works, Paul and James, election and free will, divine grace and human effort.

Then there are the concerns of the Christian theological tradition, in which Vick is also conversant. The classical distinctions are drawn simply, and are sometimes footnoted (Arminianism and the later Calvinism, p. 58n), and sometimes invoked without attribution (the *assensus/fiducia* contrast, pp. 48-50). The author is obviously most at home in the Reformation traditions and, while he never flaunts his learning, he employs the categories and characteristic terms of Protestant and Anglican Christianity with skill, adroitly juxtaposing the various strands of Reformed theology. The chapter on the church, in particular, has a typically

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Protestant cast; and the very choice of the book’s topics recalls the lives of the Reformers.<sup>8</sup>

If there is any movement within Protestantism favored in *Let Me Assure You*, it is perhaps Methodism, with its warm concern for the subjective appropriation of grace. The lovely chapter on “The Experience of Salvation” is the longest in the book. This is one way in which Vick shows his sensitivity to his Adventist readership, for its piety and worship are very Wesleyan. There are also whole chapters (such as ch. 4, “The Covenants and the Law”) as well as occasional paragraphs (see p. 24, where the disagreement between Andreasson and the authors of *Questions on Doctrine* arises) in which Vick explicitly treats topics that have agitated Seventh-day Adventists.

On the whole, though, he pays little attention

in this book to modern intellectual currents or even to modern theology. With the exception of a few passages (pp. 20, 161n) and a short appendix (pp. 170-176) on the “historicity” of the Christian faith—a problem that did not arise in that form before the nineteenth century—most of the book uses categories that were well developed 200 years ago, by the time the revivalist and pietist movements were mature. A glance at the references (pp. 177-178) is instructive. In some ways, the positions which Vick stakes out within this circle are less interesting than the fact that he never leaves the circle.<sup>9</sup>

In a later article, however, Vick’s exacting attention to methodological questions results in some substantive positions that are extraordinary, though they are formulated with tantalizing brevity. The piece is entitled “Observations on the Adventism of Seventh-day Adventists.”<sup>10</sup> The intention of the Seventh-day Adventist church, Vick writes at the end of the article, is “to represent adequately the apocalyptic interests of the biblical canon”; this constitutes “the distinctive contribution of Adventism to the Christian Church” (p. 204). Even in these short quotations, something striking has appeared. Vick sees Adventism within the context of the Christian Church. It is not identical with the Christian Church. While other Adventist teachers and preachers have felt that their primary loyalty was to the wider church and that their Adventist loyalties were intelligible only in the setting of the church as a whole, few have stated their position as directly as Vick does here; fewer still have worked out as consistently the implications of their larger loyalty. Because Adventism must be set in the context of Christian theology as a whole, biblical interpretation must be placed in the context of systematization of doctrine. Adventist preaching, especially evangelism, must proceed from its wider context in the life of a working and witnessing church.

Most striking of all, the predictive oracle heard in apocalyptic prophecy must be heard in the context of the history of the community, both the community which the prophet originally addressed and the community which interprets the prophecy now. And the history of the

community, finally, can be understood only by reference to its context, which is the salvation history of the whole world, a history centered in the story of Jesus Christ.

Vick knows that the results of such a theological program would be a radical recasting of traditional Adventism. In a new and wider context, familiar Adventist doctrines might take on a strange appearance. Many Adventist habits might need modification. All of Adventist life would be subjected to profound and renewing criticism. But the implication of Vick's suggestions is that the Gospel requires just such a critical renewal—the Gospel, not some other, “modern” message. It is not because Vick is embarrassed by an Adventism that is out of date that he suggests a revolution in its thinking, but because he fears for an Adventism that betrays its Lord by its cowardly and unreflective conservatism. His critique of Adventism is that it is not faithful enough to its own inner meaning, which is found not in its narrow little life and work, but in the richness of the larger church and, finally, in the richness of Jesus's life and death. By insisting on the larger context, he criticizes traditional Adventism on the basis of the truer Adventist tradition.

It would be fascinating to read some of Vick's specific proposals for the recasting of Adventist life and doctrine. In this article, he makes very few. One can imagine what some of his suggestions would be, but a book on the topic, by a thinker as orderly and meticulous as he is, would be welcome indeed.

Vick's latest book, *Quest*,<sup>11</sup> is on a quite different topic, but it too provides evidence of Vick's concern for the context of religious thought. *Quest* does not have the external form of a theological treatise, and its style is intentionally simple and “popular.” The book is an introductory textbook in the philosophy of religion. Its chapters are short, with discussion questions at the end of each. It is designed for a readership different from that of Vick's earlier books. Unlike *Let Me Assure You*, which moved in Christian circles and used classical Christian categories, *Quest* is a very modern book, written for nonspecialists who are largely ignorant of religious matters and who use popular misconceptions of science to justify their scorn for, or

indifference to, religion. The book is also helpful for religious people who feel threatened by modern science.

In the first half, Vick sets the stage for a “nonpartisan” discussion of religious questions by unraveling some misconceptions about science and religion, such as: “Science is based on facts, while religion is a matter of feeling,” and “Science proves things but religion doesn't,” and “Miracles are scientifically impossible.” He

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does so by suggesting some distinctions among different ways of proving, by pointing out contrasts among kinds of explanation, by discussing the scientist's need for a theory at every stage of confrontation with the facts, and so on. Such considerations clear the air for Vick's treatment, in the last half of the book, of a series of concerns that characterize religion—creation, eschatology, revelation and faith.

In dealing with these topics, he never fails to insist on the differences between the concerns of a scientist and those of a religious believer. The contrast between the scientific context (the aims, interests and procedures of science) and the religious context results in different sets of contentions about the beginning of the universe, the possibility of miracles, the destiny of living things and the reasonableness of faith. In developing this contrast, Vick is trying to teach his readers a new idiom. His goal is not to persuade them of any particular religious assertion, but to help them see the force of all religious assertions. This understanding is blocked as long as the context of language is ignored, and as long as terms shared by religion and science (“the beginning of the world,” “death,” “laws,” “reasonable”) are assumed to be interchangeable. Vick is saying the two kinds of discourse are not

coordinate and, therefore, certain contradictions between them are impossible.

The technique Vick adopts here recalls the style of the analytic philosophers, especially the students of Ryle and Wittgenstein, who now dominate philosophy in British universities. It thus represents a break from the speculative, synthetic tradition which held sway over western philosophy before the twentieth century and over Vick's own earlier work. Instead of stating positions and interrelating assertions in the style of systematic philosophy, Vick now offers a series of *ad hoc* remarks designed to clear up a particular confusion, or to loosen the grip of a specific misunderstanding. Instead of seeking to answer all possible questions, he limits himself to the few questions that people actually raise. If religious discourse still remains coherent, he now seems to believe, it does so because of its connection with its own context, that is, with the coherent activity of religious people, not because its propositions are interconnected as premises and conclusions independently of religious life.

In adopting the approach of a group of philosophers who see philosophy as an activity rather than a set of conclusions or a body of metaphysical doctrine,<sup>12</sup> Vick shows his awareness of the central problem theology faces today. The problem is not that particular religious assertions are opposed as false, but that all religious language is dismissed as meaningless. Many moderns do not see the point of talking about God; such language has no sense to them; they do not see what use it has. To employ Langdon Gilkey's formula, the problem Chris-

tians and other religious people face today is not the problem of truth, but the problem of meaning.<sup>13</sup> Vick's careful attempts in *Quest* to show what the force of religious language is and to train his readers in its use demonstrate his awareness of this problem.

In spite of this dramatic shift in approach, however, there are continuities between *Quest* and the earlier books. All of Vick's work illustrates his conviction that religion, and Christianity in particular, is worth taking seriously; and that unrelenting, patient thinking about it is richly repaid. This twin commitment to religion and to rationality is a constant motif in his books. The preoccupation with the relations between science and religion, evident in the last of the *Essays* and in the thesis on miracles, is present in *Quest* as well.<sup>14</sup>

If Edward Vick, who is not now teaching at an Adventist college, had received more sustained encouragement, he might have developed more fully some of the intriguing hints dropped in his published work and the Advent movement would undoubtedly have benefitted. As it is, perhaps, we may hope for more from his pen, and especially for works in which his extraordinary methodological suggestions are worked out to their substantive conclusions. If Adventist ministers, leaders and scholars were seriously to confront such a body of theological literature, agreeing where appropriate and disagreeing where necessary, but never relaxing the effort to understand these matters, the church could only be better for it.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. *A Linguistic and Philosophical Study of the Power of God as Related to the Miracles of the Bible* (Unpublished M.A. thesis, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Washington, D.C., 1956).

2. Uriah Smith, *The Prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation* (Rev. Ed.; Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1944).

3. *Bible Readings for the Home Circle* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association).

4. Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, tr. and ed. (9 vols.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1964-1974). German original, 1933-1938.

5. *Theological Essays* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Theological Seminary, 1965).

6. Although the last essay aims at something else, namely, to trace part of the boundary between theology and the natural sciences.

7. (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1968).

8. Roman Catholic theology fares less well. On pp. 145-146 and especially pp. 98-100, Vick adopts without much examination a caricature of Catholic doctrines of grace. It was not the teaching of Thomas Aquinas that the natural virtues were for laymen and the theological virtues only for the clergy, nor that "one can never finally be sure of his salvation" (p. 98). It is also questionable whether "for the Catholic, justification is the goal, the end of a long process, impossible without the church," or whether the "treasury of merits" theory is



part of the authentic Catholic tradition (p. 99). Such descriptions of Catholicism pass along the partisan perceptions of the Reformers and their lesser followers, formed during the Renaissance, when (as even Catholic scholars now agree) the Catholic church was extremely corrupt and most church practices and much theory were neo-Pelagian. In those days, Thomas Aquinas was a revered but forgotten figure; Luther never read him much and misunderstood what he did read; it was not until the twentieth century that Aquinas was rescued from the Thomists. So to draw the picture of Catholicism that Vick draws and then to attribute it to Aquinas is to ignore the undeniable changes the church has undergone since the Renaissance, especially in our century, and to neglect the riches of the Catholic centuries before the Reformation, including the works of Aquinas himself. Even one's enemies deserve better.

On the virtues, see the *Summa theologiae*, 1a2ae.62; 2a2a3.1-46 and 55-70. On assurance of salvation, see 2a2ae.18.4, especially ad2. On justification and merit, see Otto Hermann Pesch, *Theologie der Rechtfertigung bei Martin Luther und Thomas von Aquin: Versuch eines systematisch-theologischen Dialogs* (Mainz: Matthias-Grunewald-Verlag, 1967).

9. The discussion on p. 35 of the death of Jesus does seem to bear in mind the "Quest for the Historical Jesus," Schweitzer, Bultmann, and the New Quest; and

Vick is clearly well acquainted with twentieth-century theologians, especially Reformed and Anglican ones; but generally his categories are not modern.

10. In *The Stature of Christ: Essays in Honor of Edward Heppenstall*, Vern Carner and Gary Stanhiser, eds. (Loma Linda, 1970), pp. 196-204.

11. *Quest: An Exploration of Some Problems in Science and Religion* (London: Epworth Press, 1975).

12. Ludwig Wittgenstein would contrast "empirical" and "grammatical" remarks and claim that his philosophy consisted of the latter. This distinction, now common in British philosophy, is the one we wish to invoke. See Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, G. E. M. Anscombe, tr. (3rd ed.; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1968), secs. 90, 251, and passim.

13. *Naming the Whirlwind: The Renewal of God-Language* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969), pp. 13-21 especially.

14. Here there is even (chs. 12 and 13, especially pp. 101, 105) a dependence on one of the great systematicians of our century, Paul Tillich, although Vick uses Tillich's analysis of religious symbols in an unsystematic (and to that extent, un-Tillichian) way. It serves to point out still another difference between scientific and religious language, rather than providing the beginnings of a general systematic theory of being.