

The Doctrines of Elias Hicks

a Chapter from the
History of the Religious Society of Friends,
from its rise to the year 1828
Vol 4

by
Samuel M. Janney

originally published in 1867 in four volumes.

'Hicksite' Friends are held responsible by some for the Quaker schism of 1827–28. After this separation Elias Hicks's followers called themselves the Liberal branch of the Society of Friends, but orthodox Quakers labeled them Hicksites. Both the name and the philosophy of this branch of Quakerism continue today in 'unprogrammed' meetings, many of which are currently associated with Friends General Conference.

Unfortunately the theology or doctrines preached by Elias Hicks are not easily accessible today, and it is important to have the words of this foundational Quaker made available again.

This pamphlet incorporates a portion of Volume 4 of Janney's *History* with modifications solely for readability. The complete *History of the Religious Society of Friends* can be found on books.google.com Readers who are interested in pursuing this topic further might be interested in finding the following volumes:

Elias Hicks: Quaker Liberal by Bliss Forbush (1957)

Quakers in Conflict: The Hicksite Reformation by Larry H. Ingle (1986)

25. Letters of E. Hicks, pp. 76, 77.
26. John xiv. 16, 17, and xvi. 7.
27. Luke ii. 52.
28. Matt. iii. 16.
29. Letters of E. H., pp. 203, 204.
30. Letters of E. Hicks. pp. 54, 55.
31. Foster's Report, Vol. II. p. 422, being Exhibit No. 37, by the orthodox party.
32. Letters of E. Hicks, p. 124 to 126.
33. Letters of E. Hicks, p. 170.
34. Quaker, Vol. I. p. 62
35. I. Pennington, Vol. III. p. 34.
36. G. Whitehead, *Light and Life of Christ*, Phila. ed. 1823, p. 34
37. G. Fox. *Doctrinals*, p. 646, and *Am. ed. Vol. V. p. 365.*

Republished electronically 2008 by Quaker Heron Press

<http://pamphlets.quaker.org/>

email: webmaster@pamphlets.quaker.org

Notes

1. Testimony of Jericho Monthly Meeting of Friends.
2. Barclay's Apology, Prop. VI.
3. Rom. i 19.
4. Letters of E. Hicks, New York, 1834, p. 25.
5. Ibid. p. 188.
6. Barclay's Apology, Prop. III.
7. Letters of E. Hicks, p. 215.
8. Answer to Six Queries, Letters of E. Hicks, p. 227.
9. Letters of E. Hicks, pp. 43-50.
10. Works of George Fox, IV, 3.
11. Letters of E. Hicks, pp. 174-5.
12. These extracts may be found in "A Declaration," &c., published by order of the Yearly Meeting of "Orthodox Friends," held in Phila., in the year 1828. For a refutation of the charges contained in that Declaration, see a Review by Wm. Gibbons, published by T. E. Chapman, Philadelphia, 1847.
13. Works of I. Pennington, London, 1761, Vol I. p. 268.
14. *Phila. Sermons*, pp. 129, 130.
15. I. Pennington's Works, I. 13.
16. *Phila. Sermon*, p. 314.
17. Apology, Prop. III. §7.
18. Letters of E. Hicks, p. 213.
19. *The Quaker*, I. 56.
20. See, also, recapitulation in Chapter VII. Section 4.
21. Letters of E. Hicks, p. 55.
22. *The Quaker*, I. 68, 72.
23. Ibid. W. Penn, Vol. V. p. 385.
24. Antidote against the Venom of Snake in the Grass, London, 1697, p: 191.

The Doctrines of Elias Hicks

In America, the Society of Friends, during the first quarter of [the Nineteenth] century, generally held the views inculcated by Fox, Penn, Pennington, and Barclay, and were accustomed, in their ministry, to lay great stress on the Grace of God or Spirit of Christ revealed in the soul, as the efficient cause of salvation. It is believed that the ministry and writings of Job Scott had much influence in promoting this spiritual view of Christianity; and Elias Hicks, who began his ministry about the year 1775, had long been a distinguished advocate of the same doctrine. He had travelled much as a minister of the gospel, and for more than forty years his services had been highly esteemed throughout the Society, there being then little or no opposition to his religious views.

"In declaring what he believed to be the counsel of God, he was bold and fearless, and his ministry, though unadorned with the embellishments of human learning, was clear and powerful. In argument he was strong and convincing, and his appeals to the experience and convictions of his hearers were striking and appropriate,"¹

In private life he was a bright example of the Christian virtues; a peacemaker, a friend to the poor, and especially concerned to bear an uncompromising testimony against the enslavement and oppression of the African race.

The doctrinal views of Elias Hicks have been diversely understood or construed by different individuals according to the point of view from which they were contemplated. By his adversaries he was charged with holding and promulgating doctrines at variance with the fundamental principles of

Christianity; while on the other hand his friends maintained, that his views were generally in accordance with the Scriptures of Truth, and with the writings of the early Friends.

A fair and candid investigation of this subject requires a thorough examination of his writings and acknowledged discourses; and in making selections to illustrate his views, a due regard will be had to the context, and to the general scope of his remarks.

God in the soul, is the blood of the soul, and the life of God is the blood of God; and so it was the life and blood of Jesus Christ his son. For he was born of the spirit of his heavenly Father, and swallowed up fully and completely in his divine nature, so that he was completely divine. It was this that operated in that twofold state, and governed the whole animal man, which was the son of Abraham and David – a tabernacle for his blessed soul.”³⁴

In the year 1829, “Six Queries” were proposed by Thomas Leggett, Jr., of New York, and answered by Elias Hicks. The last was as follows:

Sixth Query. What relation has the body of Jesus to the Saviour of man? Dost thou believe that the crucifixion of the outward body of Jesus Christ was an atonement for our sins?

Answer. “In reply to the first part of this query, I answer, I believe, in unison with our ancient Friends, that it was the garment in which he performed all his mighty works, or as Paul expressed it, ‘Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you,’ therefore he charged them not to defile those temples. What is attributed to that body, I acknowledge and give to that body, in its place, according as the Scripture attributeth it, which is through and because of that which dwelt and acted in it.

“But that which sanctified and kept the body pure (and made all acceptable in him) was the life, holiness, and righteousness of the Spirit. ‘And the same thing that kept his vessel pure, it is the same thing that cleanseth us.’³⁵

“In reply to the second part of this query, I would remark that I ‘see no need of directing men to the type for the antitype, neither to the outward temple, nor yet to Jerusalem, neither to Jesus Christ or his blood [outwardly], knowing that neither the righteousness of faith, nor the word of it doth so direct.’³⁶

“The new and second covenant is dedicated with the *blood, the life of Christ Jesus*, which is the alone atonement unto God, by which all his people are washed, sanctified, cleansed, and redeemed to God.”³⁷

Immediate Revelation

It has been shown in Chapter I, sections 9 and 10, that according to the writings of the early Friends there is “an evangelical principle of light and life, wherewith Christ hath enlightened every man that cometh into the world.”²

On this point, Elias Hicks writes as follows:

“God is a Spirit, invisible and incomprehensible to every thing but spirit, agreeably to the doctrine and conclusive argument of the Apostle Paul, ‘What man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man which is in him? even so, the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God;’ and again, ‘the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually,’ and only spiritually, ‘discerned.’ It therefore necessarily follows that man, with all the wisdom he can acquire, aided by human science, however elaborately studied, and with the further assistance of all the books and writings in the world, if void of *immediate divine revelation*, never has known, nor ever can know God, in relation either to his essence, or those excellent attributes which are in correspondence and unison with his pure, holy, and unchangeable nature; for that which may be known of God is manifest within man,³ and that not by his reasoning powers, but by the immediate impression and unpremeditated sensations which the immortal spirit of man feels and sees, by being brought into contact with and under the certain and self-evident influence of the Spirit of God upon it. And hence a man is enabled to attribute to God his due only from sensible and self-evident experience.”⁴

“Hence the necessity of every individual rallying to the standard, the light within, for in that only can we as a people unite our strength; that being our only standard principle from

the beginning; and if we desert that or add anything to it, as essential, besides good works, we shall become a broken and divided people, and must remain so until all recur to this first principle as our only rule of faith and practice; and prove by our fruits that we are led and guided by it, that is, by our just and righteous works, doing unto all others as we would that others should do unto us.”⁵

Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead,’ (outwardly,) ‘by the glory of the Father, even so we,’ having by the spiritual baptism witnessed a death to sin, shall know a being raised up spiritually and so walk in newness of life.”³²

In a letter of later date he writes: “As to the advantage the reviewers have taken or pretended to take, on what they construe as an admission on my part, in my letter to Dr. Shoemaker, that the death of Christ merely of itself was an atonement at all, I had no such idea; for I believe I rested it principally *on the effects of his mission and death*.

“As is very clear, not only from the apostle’s testimony where he asserts that Jesus had abolished the law, and ‘blotted out the handwriting of ordinances, nailing them to his cross,’ &c.; but also by the facts which followed, some of which were manifest while he was with his disciples, in justifying them for a breach of their shadowy Sabbath, and divers other things in their conduct which made a breach upon the letter of their law. By which the design of his mission is proved, that it was purposely to put an end to that law and covenant, and to introduce a better: not another outward one, but an inward one, agreeably to the prophecy of Jeremiah. And this he clearly and amply did in his sermon on the mount, as is before shown, but was finished by his last act of surrender on the cross, when he bowed his head and said, ‘It is finished.’ At which time the vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.”³³

In his sermon at Pine Street, Philadelphia, delivered 12th month 10th, 1826, Elias Hicks, after referring to “the blood of the Lamb,” by which the soul “is washed clean,” proceeds as follows: “And what is the blood of the Lamb? It was his life, my friends; for as outward material blood was made use of to express the animal life, inspired men used it as a simile. Outward blood is the life of the animal, but it has nothing to do with the soul; for the soul has no animal blood, – no material blood. The life of

up in one all the outward atoning sacrifices of the shadowy dispensation and put an end to them all, thereby abolishing the law, having previously fulfilled all its righteousness, and, as with the apostle, 'He blotted out the handwriting of ordinances nailing them to his cross;' having put an end to the law that commanded them, with all its legal sins, and abolished all its legal penalties, so that all the Israelites that believed on him, after he exclaimed on the cross, 'It is finished,' might abstain from all the rituals of their law, such as circumcision, water baptisms, outward sacrifices, Seventh-day sabbaths, and all their other holydays, &c., and be blameless: and the legal sins that any were guilty of, were now remitted and done away by the abolishment of the law that commanded them, for 'where there is no law there is no transgression.'

"But those that did not believe on him, many of them were destroyed by the sword, and the rest were scattered abroad in the earth. But *I do not consider that the crucifixion of the outward body of flesh and blood of Jesus on the cross, was an atonement for any sins but the legal sins of the Jews;* for as their law was outward, so their legal sins and their penalties were outward, and these could be atoned for by an outward sacrifice; and this last outward sacrifice was a full type of the inward sacrifice that every sinner must make, in giving up *that sinful life of his own will*, in and by which he hath, from time to time, crucified the innocent life of God in his own soul; and which Paul calls 'the old man with his deeds,' or 'the man of sin and eon of perdition,' who hath taken God's seat in the heart, and there exalteth itself above all that is called God, or is worshipped, sitting as judge and supreme.

"Now all this life, power, and will of man must be slain and die on the cross spiritually, as Jesus died on the cross outwardly, and *this is the true atonement*, which that outward atonement was a clear and full type of. This the Apostle Paul sets forth in a plain manner, *Romans vi. 3 and 4.* 'Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death?

The Holy Scriptures

The views of the early Friends in relation to the Scriptures have been exhibited in Chapter II of this treatise. They believed in the authenticity and divine authority of the sacred writings, and expressed a willingness that "all their doctrines and practices should be tried by them." Nevertheless, "because they are only a declaration of the fountain and not the fountain itself, therefore they are not to be esteemed the principal ground of all truth and knowledge, nor yet the adequate primary rule of faith and manners." They are "a secondary rule, subordinate to the spirit from which they have all their excellency and certainty."⁶

Elias Hicks writes as follows:

"As to the Scriptures of Truth, as recorded in the book called the Bible, I have ever believed that all parts of them that could not be known but by revelation, were written by holy men as they were inspired by the Holy Ghost, and could not be known through any other medium, and they are profitable for our encouragement, comfort and instruction, in the very way that the apostle testifies; and I have always accounted them, when rightly understood, as the best of books extant. I have always delighted in reading them, in my serious moments, in preference to any other book, from my youth up, and have made more use of their contents to confirm and establish my ministerial labors in the gospel than most other ministers that I am acquainted with.

"But at the same time, I prize *that from whence they have derived their origin*, much higher than I do them; as I 'that for which a thing is such, the thing itself is more such.' And no man, I conceive, can know and rightly profit by them, but by the opening of the same *inspiring spirit by which they were written*; and I apprehend I have read them as much as most other men, and few, I believe, have derived more profit from them than I have."⁷

In another letter he says: “As respects the Scriptures of Truth, I have highly esteemed them from my youth up, have always given them the preference to any other book, and have read them abundantly more than any other book, and I would recommend all to the serious and diligent perusal of them. And I apprehend I have received as much comfort and instruction from them as any other man. Indeed they have instructed me home to the sure unchangeable foundation – the light within, or spirit of truth, the only gospel foundation that leads and guides into all truth, and thereby completes man’s salvation, which nothing else ever has, or ever can do.

“But why need I say these things, as all men know that have heard me, that I confirm my doctrine abundantly from their testimony: and I have always endeavored sincerely to place them in their true place and station, but never dare exalt them above what they themselves declare; and as no spring can rise higher than its fountain, so likewise the Scriptures can only direct to the *fountain from whence they originated – the spirit of truth*: as saith the apostle, ‘The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God;’ therefore when the Scriptures have directed and pointed us to this light within, or Spirit of Truth, there they must stop – it is their ultimatum – the top stone of what they can do. And no other external testimony of men or books can do any more.

“And Jesus, in his last charge to his disciples, in order to prevent them from looking without for instruction in the things of God, after he had led them up to the highest pinnacle that any outward evidence could effect, certified them that this light within, or spirit of truth, by which only their salvation could be effected, dwelt with them and should be in them. And this every Christian knows to be a truth; and there never was a real Christian made by any other power than this spirit of truth; and everything that can be done by man without it, must fail of effecting his salvation.”⁸

“Therefore he inspired many of his servants to testify of these things amongst them before they came to pass, as warning and caution, that so those who were seeking after the right way, might be preserved from taking any part therein, while those who wilfully hardened their hearts against reproof might suffer the penalties resulting from their crimes, which they had committed in their own free choice, contrary to the counsel and will of their Creator.”³⁰

In a letter to Dr. Nathan Shoemaker, Elias Hicks wrote as follows:³¹ “By what means did Jesus suffer? The answer is plain – by the hands of wicked men, and because his works were righteous and theirs were wicked. Query. Did God send him into the world purposely to suffer death by the hands of wicked men? By no means; but to live a righteous and Godly life (which was the design and end of God’s creating man in the beginning), and thereby be a perfect example to such of mankind as should come to the knowledge of him and his perfect life.

“For if it was the purpose and will of God that he should die by the hands of wicked men, then the Jews by crucifying him would have done God’s will, and of course would all have stood justified in his sight, which could not be. But it was permitted so to be, as it had been with many of the prophets and wise and good men that were before him, who suffered death by the hands of wicked men for righteousness’ sake, as ensamples to those that came after, that they should account nothing too dear to give up for the truth’s sake, not even their own lives.

“But the shedding of his blood by the wicked Scribes and Pharisees and people of Israel, had a particular effect on the Jewish nation, as by this, the topstone, and worst of all their crimes, was filled up the measure of their iniquities, and which put an end to that dispensation, together with its law and covenant. That, as John’s baptism summed up in one, all the previous water baptisms of that dispensation, and put an end to them, which he sealed with his blood, so this sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ, summed

Salvation By Christ.

The doctrine of salvation by Christ, as held by the early Friends, has been exhibited in the fifth Chapter of this treatise, and recapitulated in the fifth section of Chapter VII.

The views of Elias Hicks on this subject are expressed in the following passages from his letters and sermons:

“All the persecution and cruel deaths that have transpired in the world among mankind; not only the persecution and crucifixion of Jesus Christ; but also all the sufferings and martyrdom caused by wicked men, have had their rise and spring from man’s unjust and unrighteous use of his liberty and power, conferred upon him only to do his master’s will in all things.”

“Had the Israelites all been faithful to the outward covenant given them through Moses, they would all have been prepared to have received their Messiah in the way of his coming, as did those that believed on him, and by which the end of his coming would have been much more fully answered; as all Israel then, like the disciples of Jesus Christ, would willingly have passed from the old, and cheerfully entered into the new dispensation. Hence no crucifixion, no suffering or death of Jesus Christ would have taken place.

“But when his ministry on earth was finished, by fulfilling the law and abolishing that outward covenant, and turning the minds of the people to the inward, to the law written in the heart, and when, by a life of perfect righteousness and self-denial, he had introduced his disciples into the gospel, he would then have been (like Enoch and Elijah) translated, without suffering the pains of death. But as Divine Wisdom foresaw that his people Israel would revolt from his commandments, and rebel against his law and become cruel and hard-hearted, so likewise he foresaw that the wicked among them would cruelly persecute and slay many of the righteous, and his son Jesus Christ among the rest.

These passages, written in the year 1829, may be considered as expressing the settled opinions of Elias Hicks in the last year of his life. It is much to be regretted that in some letters of an earlier date, written apparently without due consideration, and in the confidence of friendship, (which proved to be misplaced,) he expressed sentiments apparently at variance with those above quoted.

In a letter to Phebe Willis, dated 5th mo. 19th, 1818, and first published by his opponents without his consent, the following passages are found: “Among other subjects I have been led, I trust carefully and candidly, to investigate the effect produced by the book called the Scriptures since it has borne that appellation ; and it appears from a comparative view, to have been the cause of fourfold more harm than good to Christendom, since the apostles’ days, and which I think must be indubitably plain to every faithful honest mind that has investigated her history free from the undue bias of education and tradition.

“Mark the beginning of the apostasy. When the professors of Christianity began to quarrel with and separate from each other, it all sprung from their different views and different interpretations of passages of Scripture; and to such a pitch did their quarrels arise, as that a recourse to the sword was soon deemed necessary to settle those disputes. And the strongest party in that line finding, that as long as the people were at liberty, and had the privilege of searching the Scriptures and putting their own interpretations upon them, and making them their rule, diversity of opinion and differences would increase, this led the strongest party to that disagreeable and unchristian alternative of wresting them out of their hands, and forbidding their being read by the people at large. And this state of things continued for many years, until the beginning of the Reformation by Martin Luther.

“It will be now necessary to consider whether the Scriptures were in any wise accessory to this infant beginning of reformation?

I think it is clear they were not; but as Luther and his adherents gained strength, they began to shake off the yoke of papal oppression, and among other things, the restriction on the Scriptures was taken off, and every citizen that joined Luther's party had the privilege of reading the Scriptures at his pleasure.

“And what was the result? A diversity of sentiment respecting what they taught, which soon set the reformers one against another and produced such divisions and animosities among them that recourse was again had to the sword to settle disputes. In this condition things continued until Geo. Fox was raised up to bear testimony to the light and spirit of truth in the hearts and consciences of men and women as the only sure rule of faith and practice, both in relation to religious and moral things, and which was complete and sufficient without the aid of books or men, as his doctrine and example clearly evinces, as his reformation was begun and carried on without the necessary aid of either.”

“What I have written has been done in scraps of time that I have, as it were, stolen from my other many avocations, without any time to copy it, or *give it much examination*; therefore I hope thou wilt excuse the improprieties that may have escaped my notice, believing that thou wilt be able to apprehend the main drift of the arguments, and be willing to put the best construction on such parts as may, to thee, appear erroneous.”⁹

In considering this ill-digested letter, the query naturally arises: If the Scriptures “have been the cause of fourfold more harm than good to Christendom,” why was the “forbidding their being read by the people at large,” an “unchristian” act. The remark in relation to the Protestant Reformation, that the Scriptures were not “in any wise accessory” to its beginning, is also founded in mistake; for it appears that the New Testament was, through divine grace, made instrumental to enlighten the mind of Luther and discover to him the errors of Romanism.

As to George Fox, we know that the Bible was his constant companion; his writings are replete with Scripture texts, and

natural to suppose that he would be ushered in by some miraculous display of divine power. Hence the reason, likewise; of the many miracles that Jesus was empowered to work among them, as they were too outward and carnal to receive evidence through any other medium. And we likewise see that none but those who believed on him as their promised Messiah were prepared to receive and obey his last counsel and command to turn from outward and external evidence to that which is inward and spiritual;²⁶ the latter being as much above the former as the gospel state is above the law state, or the spirit above the letter.”

“As to the divinity of Jesus Christ the son of the virgin — when he had arrived at a full state of sonship in the spiritual generation, he was wholly swallowed up into the divinity of his Heavenly Father, and was one with the Father, with only this difference: his Father's divinity was underived, being self-existent; but the Son's divinity was altogether derived from the Father, for otherwise he could not be the Son of God, as in the moral relation to be a son of man, the son must be begotten by one father, and he must be in the same nature, spirit, and likeness of his father, so as to say, I and my father are one, in all those respects.

“But this was not the case with Jesus in the spiritual relation until he had gone through the last institute of the law dispensation, viz., John's watery baptism, and had received additional power²⁷ from on high by the descending of the Holy Ghost upon him as he came up out of the water.²⁸ He then witnessed the fulness of the second birth, being now born into the nature, spirit, and likeness of the Heavenly Father, and God gave witness of it to John, saying, ‘This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.’”²⁹

outwardly; by which is typified the crucifixion of the old fallen man with all his deeds, which is affected by the cross of Christ, as saith the apostle: 'Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ,' that is, into the Spirit and power of God, 'were baptized into his death?' Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up, outwardly, 'from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should' be spiritually raised up to 'walk in newness of life.'

"And this outward ascension as it was manifest to the external senses of his disciples, must have been the outward man, as the immortal spirit of the Saviour never was, nor ever could be seen by outward eyes, – hence this outward ascension was a complete type of the inward or spiritual ascension of the immortal soul of man from an earthly to a heavenly state; by which it regains Paradise, and which must and will be regained by every redeemed soul on this side the grave."²⁵

In another letter written by Elias Hicks, less than three years before his decease, he says: "Thy next query respecting the miraculous conception, &c., is to me a very plain, simple thing. All the external miracles of the Jewish covenant had but one aim and end; and the miraculous conception of Jesus, and of law and John the Baptist were among the greatest; all of which were intended to prove to that dark and ignorant people, debased by their bondage, that there was a living and invisible God; for such was their degraded state that no other means seemed calculated to awaken them, and raise in them a belief in that invisible power that made and governed the world, but an external manifestation thereof, through the medium of outward miracles.

"And as Moses and the prophets had foretold of the coming of their last great prophet, it was of singular importance to that people, that they should know and believe in him when he came; and as they depended on outward miracles as the highest evidence under that dispensation, so it is not only reasonable, but even

probably no other teacher ever referred more constantly to the sacred volume. It was "his frequent advice to Friends, to keep to Scripture language, terms, words, and doctrines, as taught by the Holy Ghost, in matters of faith, religion, controversy, and conversation, and not to be imposed upon and drawn into unscriptural terms, invented by men in their human wisdom."¹⁰

Justice towards Elias Hicks requires that we should give due weight to the extenuating circumstances that attended the writing and publication of his letters to Phebe Willis, whom he regarded as a cordial friend. If he erred in writing them, how much more blameworthy were they, who gave them publicity without his consent!

He stated his views more explicitly in a letter to Moses Brown, dated 3d mo. 30th, 1825, as the following passage will show, viz. : "As to what thou sayest of my contradicting myself, by saying at one time, that the Scriptures were the best book, and at another time, that it does more hurt than good; if this is, to thee, a paradox, it is one, I conceive, thy own common sense and every day's observation would easily solve. For it is my candid belief, that those that hold and believe the Scriptures to be the only rule of faith and practice, to these it does much more hurt than good. And has anything tended more to divide Christendom into sects and parties than the Scriptures? and by which so many cruel and bloody wars have been promulgated [promoted]. And yet at the same time, may it not be one of the best books, if rightly used under the guidance of the Holy Spirit? But, if abused, like every other blessing, it becomes a curse. Therefore to these it always does more hurt than good; and thou knowest that these comprehend far the greatest part of Christendom."¹¹

There is, however, sufficient evidence to show that a vast amount of good has been derived from the proper use of the Scriptures: if evil has resulted from their abuse, it is no more than may be said of other precious gifts received from a bountiful Creator.

A number of passages extracted from the printed sermons of Elias Hicks, have been published and circulated by his adversaries, most of which, being separated from the context, give an erroneous view of his religious opinions. Some of these extracts relating to the Scriptures are here subjoined, together with a portion of the context. The sentences extracted by his opponents are included in brackets,¹² viz.:

“We find, that although these things are so plainly written in the book which we call the Bible, yet we feel and know certainly that there is *no power in it* to enable us to *put in practice* what is therein written. [One would suppose that, to a rational mind, the hearing and reading of the instructive parables of Jesus would have a *tendency* to reform, and turn men about to truth, and lead them on in it. *But they have no such effect.*]” In the following paragraph he says: “We may read of this; but has the letter ever turned any one to the right thing, *unless the light opening it to the understanding* has helped him to *put in practice* what the letter dictates?”

The meaning intended to be conveyed by the speaker is evidently the same as thus expressed by Isaac Pennington:

“Life cannot be received from the Scriptures, but only from Christ the fountain thereof; no more can the Scriptures give the rule, but point to the fountain of the same life, where alone the rule of life, as the life itself, can be received. The Scriptures cannot ingraft into Christ nor give a living rule to him that is ingrafted; but he that hath heard the testimony of the Scriptures concerning Christ, and hath come to him, must abide in him and wait on him for the writing of the law of the Spirit of life in his heart, and this will be his rule from the law of sin and death, even unto the land of life.”¹³

Another garbled quotation from the Sermons of Elias Hicks, when united with a portion of the context, reads as follows:

David after the flesh; born of an Israelitish *virgin*, brought up and nursed by his parents, and was subject unto them until he arrived at the state of manhood; complying faithfully with all the requisitions and ordinances of the Jewish law, by which he justified his Heavenly Father in giving that law and those commandments; proving by his faithfully fulfilling all of them, that it was within the capacity and power of every Israelite to have done the same, had they faithfully improved the ability they had received for that end; and by which he condemned their unfaithfulness.

“And the last ritual was John’s water baptism, by complying with which he fulfilled all the righteousness of the outward law and testament, and was then prepared for entering upon his mission by the more full effusion of the Holy Spirit, which descended upon him as soon as he had finished all the work of shadows relative to the law state, and which qualified him for his gospel mission, in which he went forth clothed with power from on high, preaching the glad tidings of peace and salvation.

“Very few, however, understood or believed his doctrines, being so outward and worldly-minded. And when he had finished his ministration, in which he fulfilled the righteousness of both the law and the gospel, setting thereby an example to all his followers, – showing them that by faithfulness to the operations of the same spirit and power, *according to the measure received*, they might do the same; yea, he assured his immediate followers that even greater works than these which he had done, should they do.

“When he had thus finished his course, he surrendered himself to his enemies who crucified him, that is his outward body, which was all they could do. But when he gave up the ghost, his immortal spirit rose superior to all their malice, and ascended immediately into Paradise. This ascension was not visible to the outward senses; his body was laid in the tomb, – and to complete the figure of our redemption, it was *raised again*

George Whitehead writes: “Christ, as God, his soul was increated. As man, *his soul or spirit was not the Deity*, but formed and assumed by the Word. The Word or Son of God who made the world, was not a creature. because he made all creatures.”²⁴

The following passages, from the letters of Elias Hicks to some of his intimate friends, disclose his sentiments in relation to the Divinity of Christ, his miraculous conception, miracles, resurrection and ascension, viz.:

“Jesus Christ in his *outward manifestation* was more blest and abundantly more glorified than any other man, *and was above all*, and *therefore was the representative of God on earth*, visible to the external senses, although the power by which he did his mighty works was the invisible power of God, conferred upon him for that end, he being the instrument through whom God, by his power, wrought all those mighty works, that declared him to be the Son of God with power; but it was only the effects of the power, and not the power that was visible to the outward senses of his disciples and the people.

“Hence it was expedient that he should leave them as to his visible appearance, as nothing short of that could open the way for their reception of the Holy Spirit as a leader. And in another respect he stood in the place of God to that people, in raising their dead outwardly, and healing all their outward maladies, and forgiving those he healed of all their legal sins, by which he qualified them to enjoy all the privileges and good things of their outward Heaven [Canaan], and all the happiness it comprehended. In which he and his mighty works outwardly wrought were a complete figure of the work of God on the believing soul; raising it from the death of sin, healing it of all its spiritual maladies, and fitting it for the enjoyment of the divine presence, which is Heaven in the substance.

“And as he stood in the place of God outwardly to Israel, so he was likewise a real and true man, as the Scriptures abundantly assure us, being the son or offspring of Abraham and

“O that the spirit that dwelt in David might dwell in us; that, from a sense of our impotence and weakness, our prayers might ascend like his; ‘Lord show me my secret faults.’ And what are these faults that are so various and so many? Why, some are led sway to the worship of images by being deceived and turned aside by tradition and books; they worship other gods beside the true God. [They have been so bound up in the letter, that they think they must attend to it to the exclusion of everything else. Here is an abominable idol worship of a thing with out any life at all, – a dead monument!] Oh! that our minds might be enlightened, – that our hearts might be opened, – that we might know the difference between thing and thing. Most of the worship in Christendom is idolatry, dark and blind idolatry; for all outward worship is so, – it is a mere worship of images. For if we make an image merely in imagination, it is an idol.”¹⁴

In this passage the censure intended to be conveyed was not against the use, but the abuse of the Scriptures. The same idea is expressed in the following quotation from Pennington.

“They run to the Scriptures with that understanding which is out of the truth, and which never shall be let into the truth; and so being not able to reach and comprehend the truth as it is, they study, they invent, they imagine a meaning; they form a likeness, a similitude of the truth as near as they can, and this must go for the truth; and this they honor and bow before as the will of God; which being not the will of God, but a likeness of their own inventing and forming, they worship not God, they honor not the Scriptures, but they honor and worship the work of their own brain.

“And every scripture which man hath thus formed a meaning out of, and hath not read in the true and living light of God’s eternal spirit, he hath made an image by, he hath made an idol of; and the respect and

honor he gives this meaning is not a respect and honor given to God, but to his own image, to his own idol.”¹⁵

The following passage from a sermon of Elias Hicks has been selected by his opponents to show that he and his friends assert “that the direction of our Lord to search the Scriptures is not correct,” viz.: “Now the book we read in says, ‘Search the Scriptures.’ But this is incorrect; we must all see it is incorrect; because we have all reason to believe they read the Scriptures, and hence they accused Jesus of being an impostor.”¹⁶

The remainder of the paragraph was withheld; it reads as follows: “They were more intent upon reading the Scriptures than any other people under heaven. They read them, thinking that through them they should become wise by the letter.”

The learned Adam Clark affirms, that the text here referred to should be translated, “Ye search the Scriptures diligently;” and adds: “Perhaps the Scriptures were never more diligently searched than at that very time.”

Barclay says: “That place may be taken in the indicative mood, ‘Ye search the Scriptures;’ which interpretation the Greek word will bear; and so Pasor translatheth it: which, by the reproof following, seemeth also to be the *more genuine interpretation*; as Cyrillus long ago hath observed.”¹⁷

in us, we are dead, because we are not under the law of the spirit of life. For the ‘law is light, and the reproofs of instruction the way of life.’”

After Elias Hicks took his seat, Jonathan Evans, an elder of Pine Street Meeting, arose and declared that the Society of Friends believed in “the atonement, mediation, and intercession of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” “We believe him,” said he, “to be King of kings and Lord of lords, before whose judgment-seat every soul shall be arraigned and judged by him. We do not conceive him to be a mere man; and we therefore desire that people may not suppose that we hold any such doctrines, or that we have any unity with them.”

Isaac Lloyd, another elder of the same meeting, said: “I unite with Jonathan Evans, – we never have believed that our blessed Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, came to the Jews only, for he was given for God’s salvation to the ends of the earth,”²²

Elias Hicks added, “I have spoken; and I leave it for the people to judge, – I don’t assume the judgment-seat.”

On this point Wm. Penn writes as follows: “The coming of Christ in that blessed manifestation [in the flesh] was to *the Jews only*: he says it himself, ‘He was not sent but to the lost sheep of *the house of Israel*.’ *Matt. xv. 24*. Again: ‘He came unto his own, and his own received him not.’ *John i. 11*.”²³

Isaac Pennington, on behalf of the Friends, writes: “Now they distinguish, according to the Scriptures, between that which is called *the Christ* and the bodily garment which he took. The one was flesh, the other spirit. ‘The flesh profiteth nothing,’ saith he; ‘the Spirit quickeneth, and he that eateth me shall live by me, even as I live by the Father.’ *John vi. 67, 63*. This is the manna, itself the true treasure; the other but the visible or earthen vessel which held it. The body of flesh was but the veil. *Heb. x. 20*. The eternal life was the substance veiled. The one he did partake of as the rest of the children did; the other was he which did partake thereof. *Heb. ii. 14*.”

prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?’

“Now we cannot suppose that the Apostle meant that outward man, that walked about the streets of Jerusalem; because he is not in any of us. But what is this Jesus Christ? He came to be a Saviour to that nation, and was limited to that nation. He came to gather up and look up the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But as he was a Saviour in the outward sense, so he was an outward shadow of good things to come; and so the work of the man Jesus Christ was a figure. He healed the sick of their outward calamities, – he cleansed the leprosy, – all of which was external and affected only their bodies, – as sicknesses don’t affect the souls of the children of men, though they may labor under all these things. But as he was considered a saviour, he meant by what he said, a saviour is within you, the anointing of the Spirit of God is within you: for this made the ways of Jesus so wonderful in his day, that the Psalmist in his prophecy concerning him exclaims: ‘Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity, therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.’

“He had loved righteousness, you perceive, and therefore was prepared to receive the fulness of the Spirit, the fulness of the divine anointing; for there was no germ of evil in him or about him: both his soul and body were pure. He was anointed above all his fellows, to be *the head of the church*, the *top stone*, the *chief cornerstone*, elect and precious. And what was it that was a saviour? Not that which was outward; it was not flesh and blood: for ‘flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven:’ it must go to the earth from whence it was taken. It was that life, that same life that I have already mentioned, that was in him and which is the light and life of men, and which lighteth every man, and consequently every woman that cometh into the world. And we have this light and life in us; which is what the apostle meant by Jesus Christ; and if we have not this ruling

The Original And Present State Of Man

By reference to the third chapter of this treatise, it will be seen that the commonly received doctrine of original sin was not held by the early Friends.

In accordance with their views, Elias Hicks writes as follows: “As to the doctrine of original sin, according to the acceptation of some professors of Christianity, that we are under the curse for the transgression of our first parents, I abhor the idea, as it casts a great indignity on the divine character to think that a gracious and merciful God should condemn us for an act that was wholly out of our power to avoid! I consider it very little short, if any, of blasphemy against God. For I have never felt myself under condemnation for any sin but my own, neither have I felt any justification for any righteousness but what has been wrought in me by the grace of God: believing with the apostle, that ‘by grace we are saved through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast;’ that is, not any works of our own, ‘for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.’”¹⁸

In a sermon, at Pine Street Meeting, Philadelphia, Elias Hicks is reported to have spoken as follows, viz.: “He [the Most High] gives us the grace of repentance, and enables us so to walk as to be reconciled to him, and gain a greater establishment in himself, and in the truth, than when we first came out of his creating hands. For although man was made pure and without defilement, – for He declares that all that he made ‘was very good,’ – yet man had no virtue, for he had no knowledge: we bring no true knowledge into the world with us.

“But God, in his infinite wisdom and goodness, saw that the only way in which man could rise and be a communicant

with Him, was to place him in a state of probation, and furnish him with means whereby he might go on in the warfare that this state of probation opened in his soul. For having endued his creature man with propensities both of body and mind, these propensities tempted him to turn aside from the will of his Creator. Here was immediately a warfare begun – God was on one side, and everything good was united with him and in him. The creature – the rational creature, as it was united to the animal body, was of the earth and therefore earthy.

“As the apostle says: ‘The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man,’ that is the birth of God in the soul, is spiritual. Every one that is born of God has this inward birth; as we read, ‘that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.’ And here now, this has been the experience of every rational soul under heaven: and it is the only medium whereby we can ever be united again to God. And if man had not fallen, as we come into the world without knowledge and capacity to do anything, though innocent: so we must know another birth – a birth of the immortal spirit, which is as invisible as God himself. We must come to witness a birth of the Spirit, a second birth, as Jesus declared to Nicodemus, ‘Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.’”¹⁹

On The Divine Being

It has been shown in the fourth chapter of this treatise, that the early Friends rejected the commonly received doctrine of the Trinity, or distinct and separate personality of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and that they acknowledged the Divinity of Christ as taught in the Scriptures.²⁰

In order to institute a comparison between their doctrines and those of Elias Hicks, the following selection has been made from his writings and reported discourses.

“The doctrine of the Trinity, as held by many professing Christians, I also consider a weak and vulgar error: that of three *distinct persons* in one God, and that each of these persons is whole God, as, I think, is inserted in some of the confessions of faith. As I believe there cannot be a greater absurdity than to apply *personality* to God, in any right sense of the word, as personality implies locality, which signifies limited to place, which would be very impious to say of the infinite Jehovah; it is also a doctrine unwarranted by Scripture, as the word Trinity is not to be found in the Bible; for although the apostle is made to say, agreeably to our present translation, that there are three that bear record in Heaven, yet he assures us that *these three are but one*.”²¹

The following extract from a Sermon delivered by Elias Hicks in Pine Street Meeting, Philadelphia, 12th month 10th, 1826, is one of the passages on which a charge against him of promulgating “anti-Christian doctrines” was made by the ruling party in that meeting, and sent by a committee to his own monthly meeting, viz.:

“I say, dearly beloved, my soul craves it for us, that we may sink down and examine ourselves; according to the declaration of the Apostle: ‘Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith;