

# **John Skepp**

**{Divine Energy; or the Efficacious Operations  
of the Spirit of God upon the Soul of Man, in  
His Effectual Calling and Conversion, Stated,  
Proved, and Vindicated. 1722}**

## **Efficacious Operations of the Spirit of God in Conversion**

If there be such an exceeding greatness of power put forth upon the hearts and souls of God's elect in conversion, as the scriptures do abundantly manifest, and as hath been declared; then we infer hence, very justly, that conversion is no such easy thing, nor so common as most persons count it to be. Some persons, yea, many, as I showed under the first head, mistake conversion and faith, and look upon reformation, and external holiness to be conversion; and that faith is no more, than an assent to this or some other doctrinal truth or proposition; whereas conversion work, is an internal change; as hath been shown. It begins in the heart, and ends in the life. There may be a reformation when there is no true, thorough conversion. There may be morality, a just, good, moral conversation between man and man; a religious conversation, a conscience made about performance of the duties of religion; and yet the heart unchanged. Who more zealous in religion than the Pharisees? Who more strict? Yea, some were in their conversations very exact. Saul for one, while in a state of unregeneracy, yea, as touching the righteousness of the law, as in the common notion of the Pharisee, blameless. He had as much to boast of and trust in, as to attainments in religion, as most men; yea, he ventures to say, I more than they; and yet {saith he} all this was short for he was but like a painted sepulchre. Conversion-work is not so easy and common as the generality of persons imagine; who think they want only to be told of their duties, and if they will attend, they may perform all that is told them; for this corrupt

notion has got footing in the hearts of men, that God will require no more than they are able to perform; but I have shown, that the law of God requires more than the creature is able to give; for otherwise righteousness would be by the law, and Christ would have died in vain. The law calls for a clean heart; "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness," Jeremiah 9:14. And by the prophet Ezekiel, the law calls upon the sinner and saith, "turn yourselves and live ye; make you a new spirit and a new heart," Ezekiel 18:31. These scriptures, I have shown, are the voice of God's law, discovering that the law calls for internal purity; and that external sanctity will not satisfy its demands. Now, though these demands are made upon the creature, the creature, being fallen, is unable for the performance of them. Therefore, there is a covenant of free grace made between the Father and the Son on the behalf of the elect; in which God hath promised, that he will give a pure, new, and clean heart; that he will work a special saving change upon the soul; which promises would be useless and insignificant, if the creature could give himself this new heart; whatever thoughts men may have of their own power in a state of nature, they will find other things, if the Spirit of God comes to work effectually upon them. I have often compared the state of man by nature, with respect to his notion or ability, to a person in a fever, who thinks that he is stronger than other people; he tells them that he is well, and as strong as anybody, &c.; but alas; they that sit by him pity him; knowing that it all proceeds from the height of the distemper. Let but that be abated, and the man begins to feel a real weakness; he that was so strong that others could hardly hold him in his bed, cannot now so much as raise himself. When the Spirit of God comes to convince a sinner, he shows the soul its own weakness, and insufficiency. Now it is to be feared, there are but few among professors that have been made, from a felt experience of their own weakness, to cry out, "Turn me, and I shall be turned;" and but few to be found who are constant supplicants at the throne of grace, as David, saying, "create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me," Psalm 51:10. Professors are many. Many have the lamp, but few the oil. How few among the heap of professors have known the effectual work of God upon their souls. Conversion is a great work; and among the many professors, it is to be feared, that sound true converts are but few. Secondly, if there be such an exceeding greatness of power, to be put forth upon the hearts of those who shall be converted, in order to turn them effectually; we may, without breach of charity, infer, that those who oppose and deny the power of the gospel are destitute of this work. Such men set themselves against the work of the Spirit; they cast contempt and reproach upon his person and office, and on the work of the Spirit of God upon the heart; being destitute of that Spirit, they blaspheme and reproach him. They who have seen an excellency in the person of Christ, and the need of him, as their alone Saviour, cannot speak slightly of him; and they who have also seen the need of a new heart and a new spirit, and

that this is a special work of the Spirit of God in and upon the soul, cannot speak slightly of the Spirit and his operations. No person that ever knew what the new birth was, can ever speak slightly or reproachfully of the Holy Spirit, either with respect to his person, office, or operations; therefore it is an inference very just to say concerning these; they have a form of Godliness, but deny the power; they are destitute of the Spirit of God; they are like those Laodiceans, who conceived they were "rich, and full, and had need of nothing," Revelation 3:17, whereas, indeed, they were "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." The worst was, they knew it not, and neither would they believe it. Thirdly if there be such an exceeding greatness of power put forth upon the hearts and souls of those who believe, then the Spirit of God, in his work and office, ought to be greatly prized and valued by those who have felt anything of his power and operations upon their souls. They ought also to have a high esteem for that ministry, for that gospel, and for that Spirit's work and office, which others speak so slightly and reproachfully of. Those who never saw a beauty in, and need of Christ, may speak slightly of him; but can those who have seen the need of a Saviour, and have had him discovered to them so gloriously, as one full of grace and truth; can they, I say, disesteem him? Surely no! To you who believe, he is precious, while to others he is a stone of stumbling. So those who are ignorant of the Spirit's work, may stigmatize him; but those who have felt his work upon their hearts, can they speak slightingly of the Spirit? Can they hear him reproached? No, surely. They love him, and value him above all. Those who have come under the Spirit's work, it is their duty, in point of gratitude, to love and value him; to esteem his person and office, and all his operations and undertakings. But; fourthly, if there is such an exceeding greatness of power put forth upon the souls of those who believe; then we may infer hence, the need of the Spirit of God to accompany the ministry of the word. There is a generation of professors, who tell us in so many words' that God hath made known his mind so plainly and clearly in the holy scriptures, as that any man who will attend to them, may read it, and know it; as there needs no more than a close application on our part; and this they do to decry the teachings of the Spirit; it is done to advance nature, and nature's abilities, and to reproach them who profess to be under the Spirit's teachings. Indeed, if there was no work of God put forth in conversion, then the word without the Spirit might do; but forasmuch as there must be a mighty power put forth upon them who believe, there must be the Holy Spirit. The Spirit and the word together make the gospel the power of God to salvation. There is a need of the Spirit, that so the Spirit and the word may go together; that wherever the gospel is received by any, it may be received not in word only; "for our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance," 1 Thessalonians 1:5. Assurance here I do not take to be that which is personal; though that comes in the gospel and by the Holy Ghost;

but that evidence and demonstration of the truths delivered; that they came with such power and authority, being backed by the Holy Spirit, upon the hearts of those who heard them, that they were assured these were the truths of God; that it was not enthusiasm; but that there was a reality in those truths, and they were agreeable to the mind of God. But what I would particularly take notice of is, that they received it not in word only; it is a sad thing to be left to a gospel only of words, though they are never so well put together; it will have no success; it may please the ear, but it will never reach the heart. "When ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of man, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe," 1 Thessalonians 2. ver. 13. Here is the internal power which the Spirit of God, with the word, hath upon the soul. The word of man only reaches the ear. The word of man always supposes a power in the subject to perform what is called for, but the word of God doth not, for the Lord hath said, "Let there be light, and it was so;" but it could not be supposed that the creature could make itself; man cannot make the new creature; man can only use words, and recommend what he hath to say with close argument; but it must drop if a power do not accompany it. But the word of God is made effectual to conversion when the Spirit of God works with it.