

DIVINE ENERGY



JOHN SKEPP

DIVINE ENERGY

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.
Wherein the real Weakness and Insufficiency of Moral Suasion, without the
Superaddition of the exceeding Greatness of God's Power, for Faith and
Conversion to God, are fully evinced.
BEING
AN ANTIDOTE AGAINST THE PELAGIAN ERROR.

By JOHN SKEPP,
LATE MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL.

With a Recommendatory Preface
BY THE LATE JOHN GILL, D.D.

The Third Edition.
REVISED BY JAMES UPTON.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth. *Rom. i. 16.*

"That these things are now despised and laughed to scorn, is no part of the happiness of the present times; as the event will manifest." *Dr. Owen on the Spirit.*

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Thou hast given a standard to them that fear thee;
that it may be displayed because of the truth.
— *Psalms 60:4*

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THE WALDENSIAN EMBLEM

lux lucet in tenebris

“The Light Shineth in the Darkness”

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P R E F A C E.

THE Editor of the present Edition of **SKEPP'S DIVINE ENERGY**, thinks that it is quite unnecessary to trouble the Reader with a long Preface.

Were any reasons necessary to countenance his own decided opinion of the excellence of the Work, and for his publishing a new Edition, the earnest solicitations of his brethren, deacons of the church, which he has the happiness to serve, might justly be assigned as a sufficient motive; while the kindness and respect with which they are expressed in a letter, from which he begs leave to introduce the following extracts, call for his affectionate acknowledgements.

“DEAR SIR,

“To the honor of the British Nation, persons who confederate to devise systems of Christian exertion, having for their object the benefit of mankind, rather than the mere advancement of a denomination, need only exhibit the possibility of success to ensure prompt and sufficient support. This strong and peculiar benevolence, which now characterizes our favoured country, and presents her a

worthy example to surrounding kingdoms, is that, Sir, to which your life is devoted; so much so, that whoever points out a way of conferring new benefits on the Church of God, may be confident of your assistance and thanks. We, your brethren, enjoy this confidence, and expect a manifestation of your approbation by compliance with a request having for its object the diffusion of evangelical principles.

“ Far be it from us to depreciate the productions of modern Christian writers: without intending the slightest reflection on their talents, we think some pieces written by their predecessors might be reprinted with the hope of advantage. Such is the treatise written by Mr. SKIPP, on *Divine Energy*. This work we now respectfully solicit you to republish. The importance of the subject we might urge in support of our application; for if the word “important” can ever be used with propriety and energy, it may be so employed here. Take the work of the Spirit from the gospel system, and every other part becomes weak and useless. The mere letter of scripture, aided by the Christian ministry, though the apostles were the preachers, can effect no more than a barren change of opinion, or the suppression of a few open vices, leaving the heart and character under the dominion of sin. Further, we think the worthy author happy in the management of his sub-

ject. In common with all sober-minded persons, Mr. SKEPP felt his subject to be surrounded with difficulties, owing, in part, to its sublime and unfathomable nature. In the general we consider him judicious in his terms, distinctions, and arrangements of thought. On the whole we think this small work the best of the kind we have yet read, and worthy of being better known.

“Arguments for the republication of this work on you, Sir, would be thrown away; you are thoroughly convinced of its intrinsic worth, beyond our ability to represent; we therefore only add, that, in our opinion, no subject could be more seasonable. Whence those mighty efforts to subjugate the world to the Son of God? We ascribe them to the energy of the Holy Spirit. And we are ready to conclude that the man who is most under the Spirit’s supernatural and sanctifying influence, will be the readiest to learn his obligations, and the most prompt in confessing them to the glory of God.

“Not only is Mr. SKEPP’S treatise adapted to strip us of glorying in the flesh, when contemplating our exertions, but to hold us absolutely dependant on the gracious influences of the Spirit for their success. That Paul planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase, are confessions which the inspired apostles were continually making, and that with the design that the faith and hope of their hearers might

be in God; and no truly gracious soul will be hindered from working out his own salvation, when told that it is God who worketh in him, to will and to do of his good pleasure. Paul knew that the tendency of the principle was to promote zeal and diligence, and with this belief we shall be pleased to hear that our respectful request has not been made in vain.

“ We have the happiness to be, Dear Sir,
 “ Your affectionate brethren in Christ,

WM. SPENCER.	CHARLES BROAD.
JAMES BUTTERS.	RUSSELL PONTIFEX.
THOMAS KING.	GEORGE FARR.”

London, June, 1815.

The work of the Holy Spirit, is certainly essential to the existence of vital Christianity. It is He who quickens, enlightens, sanctifies, comforts and seals the children of God unto the day of redemption; and he is to them the earnest of their eternal inheritance. It is also under his sacred influence that sinners are “ turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God,” through the preaching of the everlasting gospel. The holy scriptures abound with precious promises, and delightful declarations with reference to his Divine operations: “ I will pour water upon him that

is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thy offspring.—Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.—I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications, and they shall look on me whom they have pierced.—When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, *he* will guide you into all truth; for *he* shall not speak of *himself*; but whatsoever *he* shall hear that shall *he* speak; and *he* will shew you things to come. HE shall glorify me, for *he* shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.’’ These and similar promises have greatly encouraged the heart of the Editor in preaching the gospel of Christ, and in endeavouring to enlarge his spiritual kingdom; and he earnestly recommends it to all his brethren, to endeavour to accompany all their affectionate and faithful addresses to the consciences of their hearers with a spirit of devotion, agreeably to that admirable specimen delivered by Paul to King Agrippa, “I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds!’’ May the Holy Spirit succeed with his divine blessing all the labours of the ministers of Jesus Christ, of every denomination, until the whole earth be filled with his glory! Amen and amen.

THE EDITOR.

September 9, 1815.

TO THE

Church of Christ, over whom, by Divine Providence and Designation, the DEDICATOR, though unworthy, is placed as Overseer, greeting.

DEARLY BELOVED,

MY present care, and, who I hope will be, my future crown in the day of the Lord Jesus. I persuade myself, that that which was so acceptable, being made useful for comfort and stability to your souls from the pulpit, will not be unwelcome to you from the press.

That which first led my thoughts to study and treat of this subject, were the hearing and reading of so much slight and contempt, thrown upon the doctrine and preaching of the Spirit's work and office in the church, and with the gospel-ministry, as the great efficient of all our spiritual abilities, as to principles and performances; as though there were no need now of the Holy Spirit to accompany the word, when read or preached; in order to make it powerful and successful, for illumination,

conviction, and conversion, as well as carrying on the work of faith with power.

A sad day indeed it is! when men, to make themselves popular, take upon them to hector, and run down the Spirit's work in regeneration and conversion: as if all experimental religion, and divine efficiency, were not only to be denied, and the vindicators thereof, though dead, railed on; but must just now, by a set of pretended rationalists, be hissed out of the churches and Christian world. A set of men, who, some of them, make as bold with the bible, as to the gospel part thereof, as one of the senate-houses sometimes do with a bill sent them from the other, i. e. spy faults and make amendments, only to clog the same, and render it obscure and intricate, that so it may sink it at last.

And, indeed, when men bring in another gospel, they had need have another sort of bible, or strangely metamorphose and curtail this, that is now in our hands. Now, the consideration of these things, and not knowing where, through the Divine permission, they might end; and remembering that the church of God is styled the basis and pillar of truth, and on which it stands engraved, as in capitals, to be known and read of all men; I thought it my duty, yea, my honour to hold forth this doctrine ministerially amongst you. Not so

much for your information as for your encouragement, consolation and stability ; and for the public advantage of others. I say, not so much for your information ; for the nature and power of the DIVINE ENERGY you have already known and believed, having known and received the grace of God in truth. Nor have I, through grace, as yet found you wavering or unsettled, nor that you needed to have the foundation laid again, as though the first was faulty, or you gone off from it. I both hope and pray, that none will ever be permitted, by God, or you, nor your survivors, so much as to attempt to lay among you any other foundation than that which is already laid, which is Jesus Christ : nor to be left to build wood, hay, and stubble, upon such a bottom.

Your foundation, as to gospel-order, was skilfully and successfully laid, in the very beginning of the troublesome time, by the indefatigable pains and care of that eminent servant and sufferer for Christ, Mr. Hanserd Knollis : and your walls were not only reared but beautified, by the labours and success of that evangelic son of consolation, Mr. Robert Steed. These two were the chief master-builders, by whose blessed ministry you were built, and continued, upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.

And now, seeing Christ and you have done me the honour to call and fix me in the pastoral charge, I look upon it my duty to take heed what I build; that it is agreeable to, though full short, through my weakness and insufficiency of what you once sat under.

Now, that I may be kept faithful, serviceable, and acceptable in my ministry, and successful in my labours amongst you, in Christ's gospel, is what I most earnestly desire; and hope I shall always labour after: and that I may attain the same and an everlasting crown of glory with you, and your aforesaid pastors, with Christ above, brethren and sisters, strive with me in your prayers for me at the throne of grace.

“Now to him that is able to keep you and I from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding great joy; to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. *Amen.*”

Thus concludes, dear souls,

Your unworthy pastor,

Loving brother, and

Humble servant,

JOHN SKEPP.

The first Edition of this work appears to have been published in the year 1722; the second in 1751, by the late venerable Doctor GILL, with the following

RECOMMENDATORY PREFACE.

THE worthy author of the ensuing treatise being personally and intimately known by me, and his memory precious to me, as it is to many Christians now living, have induced me, upon this edition of it, to write a short preface in its recommendation; though it is sufficient to speak for itself, and needs no letters of commendation to those who knew the writer of it, or have read the work.

Mr. JOHN SKEPP was a man of singular talents and abilities; of very quick, strong, natural parts; of great diligence and industry in acquiring useful knowledge; a warm and lively preacher of the gospel; a zealous defender of the special and peculiar doctrines of it; whose ministry was blessed to many souls, for the conversion of some, and for the edification of others.

The subject-matter of this treatise, which is the only one he ever published, is of the greatest moment and importance, viz. the Conversion of Man;

without which he must be miserable, and which he cannot effect of himself, and must be done only by the invincible power and efficacious grace of God; as is clearly held forth in the Scriptures, and fully proved in the following discourses. Nothing is more common than to mistake in this great affair, and nothing more fatal; the *mistakes* about conversion and faith are plainly pointed out herein, and the true nature of them in their principles and actings declared; by which it may be known by men whether they are partakers of them or no. The insufficiency of *moral suasion* to produce these things is most clearly proved; the nature, use, reach, and compass of it are truly stated; and by undeniable arguments and instances it is shewn that there are such lets and hinderances in the way of a sinner's conversion to God and faith in Christ, as that it is impossible and impracticable for moral suasion ever to remove them; and which only can be done by the power and efficacy of Divine Grace. And though this work is effected by Divine Omnipotence, yet without forcing the will, and destroying its natural liberty; but instead of that, restoring its moral freedom, and making it truly free by the grace of God; where this worthy author rightly distinguishes between the *natural* and *moral* liberty of the will; and gives such an account of the human soul and spirit, and of their several faculties,

and the various operations of them, as is very entertaining and instructive; as well as shews by what means sin seized and overspread them, and in what manner efficacious grace gains upon them, particularly the will, and proves victorious, without infringing its liberty. And whereas this work of conversion and faith is the work of the Spirit of God, as the active efficient cause of it, and not the creature; it is most clearly demonstrated that Man is passive in the reception of the Spirit as a spirit of conviction and saving grace, in regeneration, as effected by him, in a soul's vital union to Christ, and in the first beginnings of spiritual motions of grace, and even in some parts of the Spirit's work after effectual calling and conversion; as also the necessity of almighty power and invincible and efficacious grace being exerted in the conversion of a sinner is abundantly proved from scripture-metaphors and scripture-instances; and the whole is closed with an account of the peculiar work of the Spirit of God under the New Testament, and who has therefore peculiar epithets given unto him.

I have nothing more to add, only that I have divided these discourses into chapters, to facilitate the reading of them; and have summed up the contents of each chapter, which may help the understanding, and refresh the memory. And now I heartily recommend this work to the perusal of

every serious Christian that is desirous of knowing the nature of true conversion, and of answering to himself that important question, *Am I born again?* or, *Am I a converted person?* And I doubt not, with the blessing of God, but he will find the reading of it pleasant and profitable to him.

JOHN GILL."

C O N T E N T S.

CHAP. I.

*The Connection of the Words with the preceding ;
the Explication of them ; the Doctrine from them,
and Method of treating it.* p. 1.

CHAP. II.

*Shewing the Mistakes about true Conversion and saving
Faith ; and wherein they both consist.* p. 14.

CHAP. III.

*Shewing the Insufficiency of Moral Suasion to effect
true Conversion to God, and Faith in Christ.* p. 56.

CHAP. IV.

*Proving that the Will of Man in true Conversion, and
Faith, is not forced, nor its natural Liberty in the
least infringed, but is by the Grace of God made
truly free.* p. 158.

CHAP. V.

*Shewing the Passiveness of Men in several Parts of the
Spirit's Work upon their Hearts, both in and after
Conversion.* p. 206

CHAP. VI.

*Shewing the absolute Necessity of the exertion of Al-
mighty Power, and invincible and efficacious Grace
in the Conversion of a Sinner.* p. 256.

CHAP. VII.

*Shewing the peculiar Work of the Spirit, and the pe-
culiar Epithets he bears with respect to Conversion,
under the New Testament, with the Use and Appli-
cation of the whole.* p. 278.

"Far be it from us to depreciate the productions of modern Christian writers and without intending the slightest reflection on their talents, we think some pieces written by their predecessors might be reprinted with the hope of advantage. Such is the treatise written by Mr. Skepp, on *Divine Energy*. This work we now respectfully solicit you to republish. The importance of the subject we might urge in support of our application; for if the word 'important' can ever be used with propriety and energy, it may be so employed here. Take the work of the Spirit from the gospel system, and every other part becomes weak and useless. The mere letter of scripture, aided by the Christian ministry, though the apostles were the preachers, can effect no more than a barren change of opinion, or the suppression of a few open vices, leaving the heart and character under the dominion of sin . . . Not only is Mr. Skepp's treatise adapted to strip us of glorying in the flesh, when contemplating our exertions, but to hold us absolutely dependant on the gracious influences of the Spirit for their success. That Paul planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase, are confessions which the inspired apostles were continually making, and that with the design that the faith and hope of their hearers might be in God."

THE DEACONS of the Baptist Church, Church Street, Blackfriars Road, Surrey,
Preface, *Divine Energy*, by John Skepp (London: James Upton, 1815), 4-6

"I heartily recommend this work to the perusal of every serious Christian that is desirous of knowing the nature of true conversion, and of answering to himself that important question, *Am I born again?* Or *Am I a converted person?* And I doubt not, with the blessing of God, but he will find the reading of it pleasant and profitable to him."

JOHN GILL, D.D.,

Recommendatory Preface, *Divine Energy*, by John Skepp
(London: James Upton, 1815) 15

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