

## WHO SURPRISED WHOM? THE HOLY SPIRIT OR JACK DEERE?<sup>16</sup>

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*Dr. Jack Deere, a former professor at Dallas Theological Seminary and a highly visible convert from the cessationist to the noncessationist position regarding miraculous acts of God through men, recounts his journey in Surprised by the Power of the Spirit. He reasons that cessationists have argued more from silence than from Scripture, have twisted Scripture, and have no one single Scripture passage that proves their point. In this brief analysis of his work, it is apparent that Deere, not cessationists, has made these interpretive errors in coming to his biblically unfounded conclusion that the miraculous acts of God have continued beyond the apostolic age—but with lesser quality and frequency.*

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In three places in his volume *Surprised by the Power of the Spirit*,<sup>17</sup> Dr. Jack Deere sets forth something like the following hypothetical

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<sup>16</sup>Jack Deere, *Surprised by the Power of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993). A subsequent volume, *Surprised by the Voice of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994) should be released in late fall 1994, according to *Surprised by the Power*, "Epilogue: Hearing God speak Today" 209-15. The goal of this review is not to be unabridged, but rather to comment representatively on major features of Deere's work. Concluding that Deere's position is biblically indefensible does not logically mean that the cessationist position is thereby *vindicated*. It too must rise or fall on what the Scriptures teach.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 54, 99, 114.

scenario. What is your reaction to it?

If you take a new convert, who prior to his conversion knew nothing about the history of Christianity or the New Testament, and you lock him in a room with a Bible for a week, he will come out believing that he is a member of a body that is passionately in love with the Lord Jesus Christ and a body that consistently experiences miracles. It would take a clever theologian with no experience of the miraculous to convince this convert differently.<sup>18</sup>

At first glance and without much thought, one might agree. But for this reviewer another look at the statement quickly causes it to become an *agree/disagree* situation. He *agrees* that a new convert who is totally unknowledgeable of history, who has no experience interpreting the Bible, and who has no study tools might conclude that the church today experiences miracles like the first-century church.

But he totally *disagrees*, along with you too probably, that the new convert would be correct. Since when is a new convert with nothing but a Bible an authority on the correct theological analysis of a subject so complex as miracles? Further, why would the theologian have to be "experienced" in the miraculous to be credible if the Scriptures are sufficient, without recourse to experience, to articulate clear doctrine (2 Tim 3:16-17)?

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 114.

This raises an even bigger question about Deere and those like him: why do some trained theologians, who do have a knowledge of history and who do have the capabilities to use good Bible-study tools, come up with the same immature conclusion as a new believer who knows nothing? Could it be that they have used a combination of experience and a redetermined<sup>19</sup> theology to override otherwise reasonable conclusions?

Not so according to several men whom the author and/or publisher solicited for endorsements. Wayne Grudem, professor of Biblical and Systematic Theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, writes, "This is the most persuasive answer I have ever read to the objections of people who say that miraculous gifts like healing and prophesy are not for today."<sup>20</sup> Since Grudem holds the highest of scholastic credentials, one can reasonably assume that he has read all the best volumes on this subject and finds Dr. Deere's book making the superlative contribution to this subject.

Other well-known men have offered equally glowing comments. "It is truly a landmark book!"<sup>21</sup> C. Peter Wagner of Fuller Theological Seminary has written. R. T. Kendall, minister of Westminster Chapel in London, has enthusiastically suggested, "Simply written, brilliantly argued, Dr. Deere's thesis is, in my opinion, irrefutable."<sup>22</sup>

Given Deere's well-publicized conversion to noncessationism and his highly visible relationship with John Wimber and Paul Cain, plus these exceptional recommendations, one who takes the ministry of the Holy Spirit seriously must read Deere's book, using the "Berean approach" of examining the Scriptures to see whether these things are so (Acts 17:11).<sup>23</sup> Does Deere's word correspond to God's Word?

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<sup>19</sup>I have purposely used "redetermined" in contrast to "predetermined." When one changes his theology as radically as Deere has (from a cessationist to a non-cessationist persuasion), it does not free him altogether from predetermination; but he also bears the additional weight of a less than objective approach (by reaction) that fuels "redetermination." At best, he is now equally as subjective as he was as a cessationist, and at worst, more—not less—vulnerable to possible error.

<sup>20</sup>Jack Deere, *Surprised by the Power*, endorsement page prior to page 1.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., back dust cover.

<sup>23</sup>Others who have reviewed Deere's work include Robert A. Pyne, *BSac* 151/602 (April-June, 1994):233-34; Larry L. Walker, *Mid-America Theological Journal* 18 (1994):126-27; R. Fowler White, "'For the Sparrow in the Hurricane,' A Review of Jack Deere's *Surprised by the*

## AUTHOR'S BACKGROUND

Deere holds several degrees: an AB from Texas Christian University and a ThM and a ThD from Dallas Theological Seminary. He taught at Dallas Theological Seminary from 1976 until 1987 when the institution dismissed him because of his noncessationist views (37-38).

According to the author, he originally held strong cessationist views in line with his training and teaching experience at Dallas Theological Seminary. After a year's study leave in Germany (1984-1985), he returned to DTS for the 1985-1986 school year (15). While inviting Dr. John White, a British psychiatrist, to preach at a church conference, Deere had his life-changing, twenty-minute phone conversation with White in January 1986 (13, 22).

White had been worshipping at the Vineyard Fellowship of Anaheim pastored by John Wimber since mid-1985 (33). White came to Fort Worth in April 1986, to hold the conference Deere writes about in Chap. 2 (25-32). Several weeks later Deere attended a Wimber<sup>24</sup> meeting in Fort Worth (33). As a result, Deere and Wimber became good friends; Deere visited the Anaheim Vineyard Fellowship on several occasions during 1986-1987 (37).

After departing from DTS in fall of 1987, Deere also became acquainted with the Kansas City Fellowship pastored by Mike Bickle (38). He then made plans to move to Anaheim and become a full-time associate of John Wimber (38).

Deere remained with Wimber into the early 1990's, when he returned to the Dallas-Fort Worth area. According to the dust jacket, Deere now writes and lectures worldwide on the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

By Deere's own testimony, John Wimber, British psychiatrist John White, and Paul Cain have had a major influence on him (33-41).

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*Power of the Spirit*" (unpublished paper presented at the 1994 ETS Eastern Regional Meeting).

<sup>24</sup>To see what Deere has been exposed to in his relationship with John Wimber, read John Wimber and Kevin Springer, *Power Evangelism*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1992), and John Wimber and Kevin Springer, *Power Healing* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987). In this reviewer's opinion, the most substantial defense of John Wimber's thinking has come from Gary S. Greig and Kevin N. Springer, eds., *The Kingdom and the Power* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1993).

In addition, four months of intense Scripture study`January to April 1986 (22) and his experiences (13-41)`have combined to convince him that miraculous gifts still operate in the church as they did in the first century.

### SYNOPSIS

Deere divides his presentation into three distinct sections with three appendixes:

1. Shocked and Surprised (13-41).
2. Shattered Misconceptions (45-159).
3. Seeking the Gifts and the Giver (163-215).

The appendixes address,

- A. Other Reasons Why God Heals and Works Miracles (219-27).
- B. Did Miraculous Gifts Cease With the Apostles? (229-52).
- C. Were There Only Three Periods of Miracles? (253-66).

In addition, he includes a helpful Scripture Index.<sup>25</sup>

#### *Shocked and Surprised*

Deere begins with a three-chapter, twenty-nine page confession of how, in January 1986, his best cessationists arguments, accumulated over numerous years of pastoring, doctoral study, and postgraduate theological seminary experience did not hold up in a twenty-minute conversation with psychiatrist John White (16-22). Over the next four months of studying Scriptures, Deere became a noncessationist who believes that God heals today and speaks today (23). At some undesignated time in the past, Deere's wife, Lessa, had embraced the noncessationist position (15) and had been praying frequently for his conversion (15-16).

Chapter two recounts White's conference at Deere's church in Fort Worth (25-32). As a result of White's ministry and introduction of Deere to Wimber's ministry, Deere visited a Wimber meeting in Texas (33). As a result of the meeting, Deere became a close friend of Wimber (37) and subsequently met Paul Cain, then a Wimber associate

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<sup>25</sup>For correcting future reprints, the publisher should note that all references from Mark 9:40 to the end of Mark (16:20 in Deere's opinion) have been omitted (296). Citations from Luke 10:9 through 24:49 stand erroneously in their place.

(cf. 167).

This section, which autobiographically recounts Deere's odyssey, closes with a clearly stated purpose (41):

In the following pages I want to share with you some of the things I have learned over the last few years, both in the Scriptures and in practical experience, that may help you to learn how to pursue and experience the reality of the gifts of the Spirit without all the hype and abuses that have plagued others who have attempted to minister in the power of the Spirit. I also want to share with you the biblical and theological objections that I had to the present-day supernatural ministry of the Holy Spirit, and the answers that removed those objections for me. Finally, I want to discuss the fears and the hindrances I experienced in trying to minister in the power of the Holy Spirit, and how these have been and are being removed.

### *Shattered Misconceptions*

Deere continues with his autobiographical narration through Chap. 4 "The Myth of Pure Biblical Objectivity" (45-56) when he concludes, "No cessationist writer that I am aware of tries to make his case on Scripture alone" (55).

Chapters 5-6 recount his three major reasons why Bible-believing Christians do not believe in the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit today:

1. They have not seen them (55, 57-71).
2. They cannot find New Testament-quality miracles in the history of the church (71-76).
3. They are confused by the misuse, or the perceived misuse, of the gifts in contemporary churches and healing movements (77-86).

Chapter 7, "Scared to Death by the Holy Ghost," argues from (1) the Azusa Street ministry, (2) John Wimber and Jonathan Edwards, (3) selected Scriptures, and (4) personal experience in an attempt to validate the theory that God is giving physical manifestations today.

The crux of Deere's case comes in Chaps. 8-10, "Were Miracles Meant to be Temporary?" "Why Does God Heal?" and "Why God Gives Miraculous Gifts?" Deere concludes, "Nor can we say that God did miracles to authenticate the Apostles, or to prove the authority of Scripture" (114). He adds, "In James 5:14-16, God commissioned the whole church to heal. . . ." (129). Further he says, "1 Corinthians 12-14

gives us six reasons that apply just as much today as they did in the first century . . ." (142).

In Chap. 11 "Why God Doesn't Heal" Deere stops short of denying that some good can come from sickness (155-57). He concludes that (1) apostasy, (2) legalism, (3) lukewarm faith, and (4) unbelief thwart God's plan to heal (147-55). He ends by appealing to 2 Chr 7:14 as a promise that he believes is valid for today (159).

### *Seeking the Gifts and the Giver*

The final chapters deal with a Christian's passion and love for Christ. The section in which Deere warns against splitting churches over the issue of gifts (174-77) is commendable. Chapter 13, "A Passion for God," recounts Deere's lack of passion as a cessationist (184, 186-87) and how he regained his passion as a noncessationist (189-93). The final chapter "Developing Passion and Power" reasons that (1) passionate love for God is the key to power (201-2) and (2) cessationists have no power; therefore cessationists have no passionate love for God (184). He attempts to prove his point with a five-page illustration he received second hand (203-6). One wonders, then, why John the Baptist whom Jesus said was the greatest born of women (Luke 7:28) did no miracles in his ministry (John 10:41)?

In his epilogue "Hearing God Speak Today" (209-15) Deere defers this discussion to a forthcoming book. Those who want to know what and why the author believes in continuous revelation from God will have to wait for his sequel, *Surprised by the Voice of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994) reportedly ready for release in the fall of 1994.

In the three Appendixes, Deere argues against Benjamin B. Warfield,<sup>26</sup> John MacArthur, and Peter Masters, all of whom have written from a cessationist perspective. He reasons that supernatural gifts seen in the gospels and Acts were not limited to just a few (230-41) and that an apostleship of lesser quality than the original apostles still exists today (241-52). In Appendix C "Were There Only Three Periods of Miracles?" Deere takes issue with John MacArthur's understanding of miracles (253-66).

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<sup>26</sup>This reviewer will not attempt to defend Warfield against Deere's charges, other than to say that Deere does not adequately represent Warfield's position. Those interested may read Warfield in *Counterfeit Miracles* (reprint, London: Banner of Truth, 1972), especially Chap. 1, "The Cessation of the Charismata" (3-31).

## HERMENEUTICS AND EXPERIENCE

By selective reading, one might perceive that Deere has reached his noncessationist conclusions primarily through a careful survey of Scripture (22-23, 75, 99, 101). Deere testifies, "This shift in my thinking was not the result of an experience with any kind of supernatural phenomenon. *It was the result of a patient and intense study of the Scriptures*" (23).

Yet, his own discussions cast serious doubt on the accuracy of this perception. For instance, in describing his conversion from a cessationist to a noncessationist position (13-41), he lists ten major experiences to bolster his testimony:

1. phone conversation with Dr. White (13-23)
2. his cessationist history (13-15)
3. his charismatic wife who prayed for him (15-16)
4. Dr. White's conference (25-30)
5. a demon possessed Christian (26-30)
6. a woman healed of an aneurysm (31-32)
7. his John Wimber relationship (33-37)
8. a woman healed of back problems (35-37)
9. his Paul Cain relationship (38-41)
10. the healing of Linda Tidwell (39-41)

In this twenty-nine page description of one experience after another, he does not discuss or explain a single Scripture passage. At best, he cites only eight texts:

1. Phil 2:25-27 (19)
2. 1 Tim 5:23 (19)
3. 2 Tim 4:20 (19)
4. Matt 18:3-4 (29)
5. Luke 8:26 (30)
6. James 5:14-16 (30)
7. 1 Cor 14:24-26 (35)
8. 1 Cor 14 (37).

He sets forth three premises in the section after this (45-86), in which he reasons that if cessationists meet these conditions, they will convert as he did:

1. If they see the authentic miraculous in real experience (55, 57-71).

2. If they find New Testament-quality miracles in church history (56, 71-76).
3. If they find a sane use of miraculous gifts in the church (56, 77-86).

Let the reviewer return to the hypothetical situation mentioned at the beginning of this article. Deere argues, "If you were to lock a brand new Christian in a room with a Bible and tell him to study what Scripture has to say about healing and miracles, he would never come out of the room a cessationist" (54). He follows in the very next sentence, "I know this from my own *experience*." That is shocking! The very thing he denies *experience* influencing his theology (22-23) he here admits. This is a very serious contradiction. Even more amazing, this was not originally "his *experience*." He testifies in the same paragraph that from the time of becoming Christian at age seventeen until his conversion, he remained a cessationist. Later he refers to "a clever theologian with no *experience* of the miraculous to convince this young convert differently" (114). He makes His unintended point quite well: Jack Deere believes that without *experience* one will not be a noncessationist. He writes, "My *experience* has brought me to the opposite conclusion than that of MacArthur and his researchers" (274).

Consider this conclusion in the very widely distributed review of Deere's work:

Certainly Deere's view of the role of the prophet and the "apostolic dimensions" of ministry (especially as manifested by Paul Cain) prompts significant questions about his reading of the New Testament: In laying aside Scofield's grid, has Deere replaced it with another that is equally or more manipulative in its use of God's Word?

Deere suggests that when *experience* and argument converge, people open themselves to a life of infinite surprises in engagement with the Holy Spirit. And his personal experiences punctuate each chapter. Indeed, there is almost a sense in which the book affirms that the power of the Spirit is real primarily because Deere experienced and saw it. He comes precariously close to using *experience* as a form of expanded translation of the biblical text.

Ultimately, *Surprised by the Power of the Spirit* is another contribution to a growing body of literature that unites the power of personal testimony with a hermeneutic that offers dispensational fundamentalists a fresh way of approaching the biblical text. But, although Deere offers a welcomed alternative to the Scofieldian reading of Scripture, he unfortunately leaves the reader with the

impression that it is the religious experience itself that validates what he argues.<sup>27</sup>

Although for reasons outlined in the next section it is difficult to know with certainty, it is possible that Deere has *unintentionally* fallen into two major hermeneutical errors. The first is that of generalizing, i.e., believing the occurrence of a miracle in the past means that nothing prevents it from happening again, and therefore expecting its recurrence. The second is experientializing, i.e., accepting someone's claims to have a miraculous experience today of the kind that appeared in biblical history, then letting that experience prove that God is presently working the same kind of miracles. The first involves a biblically unwarranted hermeneutic that reasons, unless Scripture denies the continuance of an experience, that experience has continued and will do so. The second reads experience into Scripture so that experience validates Scripture rather than the reverse.

Deere never deals with the counterfeit miracles that have existed throughout church history. He does not deal with those who claimed to do great miracles but were rejected by Christ (Matt 7:21-23). Perhaps this is why he does not openly confront the obviously false teachers of noncessationist persuasion like Kenneth Hagin and Benny Hinn.

After reading the first five chapters, this reviewer concluded that Deere converted to a noncessationist position because of the logic of a British psychiatrist, the healings of John Wimber, and the prophecies of Paul Cain. Despite his pleas otherwise and because of his own carefully scripted testimony, it seems likely that Scripture took a back seat in the process of his change.

#### EXEGESIS AND EXPOSITION

If the above analysis relating to "Hermeneutics and Experience" is remotely correct, then as its corollary, Deere excels at selective proof-texting, but has done too little solid exegesis and exposition of key biblical texts. That is a serious charge neither reached hastily nor to be treated lightly. An illustration is in order.

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<sup>27</sup>Edith L. Blumhofer, "Dispensing with Scofield," *Christianity Today* 38/1 (January 10, 1994):57. Let the record show that dispensationalism is not a determining issue in this discussion. Many dispensationalists and non-dispensationalists strongly affirm a cessationist view of the miraculous gifts.

A purpose of a significant part of Deere's work is to deal with healing.<sup>28</sup> The subtitle of the book, "A Former Dallas Seminary Professor Discovers That God Speaks and Heals Today," gives the impression that the author intends to deal definitively with healing.

Anyone, new converts included, who desires to understand fully God's involvement in healing *must* interact with two major biblical texts`Isaiah 53 and James 5. Not to do so is unimaginable. So the lack of attention to Isaiah 53 is a great surprise to this reviewer. Only one paragraph in 299 pages mentions Isaiah 53. Nowhere does Deere attempt to explain this most significant text. Associated texts`Matt 8:14-17 and 1 Pet 2:24 likewise suffer from neglect.

Deere acknowledges Jas 5:13-20 more than he does Isaiah 53, but his approximately seven references do little more than cite the passage he never explains James 5. He recounts how the elders of his church called for the sick, supposedly in obedience to James 5 (30). Yet James 5 says, "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church. . . ." That is just the opposite of Deere's practice. Further, Deere claims that in Jas 5:14-16 God commissioned the whole church to heal (129). Though 5:16 does involve "praying for one another," more as a preventative measure than a corrective one, the major point of the passage focuses on elders, *not* the congregation.

A work on healing cannot ignore James 5. However, it must not merely recognize the passage and then conform it to one's predetermined theology and/or experiences, as Deere has apparently done. Nowhere does the author attempt to deal with the text in order to answer probing questions such as, "Is the passage limited to the first century or is it applicable today? Does it apply to all humanity or just Christians? Does it extend to all Christians or just some? Is its purpose to prepare people to die or to restore people to quality living? Does it refer to physical, emotional, or spiritual problems? Is the practice to be done in a public service or privately? Does the intent involve medicinal or symbolic anointing? Is the healing miraculous or providential? Is the promise absolute or conditional?"

Deere uses obscure texts such as those found in Jer 32:20 or Gal 3:5 to establish his own thesis and to discredit those with whom he disagrees. For instance, he cites Gal 3:5 on at least eight occasions to support the idea that miraculous gifts of healing were given to the church as a continuing ministry up to the present. Yet nowhere does

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<sup>28</sup>See the reviewer's recent release, *The Healing Promise* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1994), for a thorough discussion of what the Bible says about physical healing.

he inform the reader of interpretations of this passage that are at least equally credible (and possibly more so) and that do not involve the miraculous. Nor does he ever tell his readers that the word translated "miracle" can just as easily be translated "power" and refer to the power of God in salvation (Rom 1:16; 1 Cor 1:18; 2 Cor 6:7; 1 Thess 1:5; 2 Tim 1:8).

He cites Jer 32:20 to prove that miracles extended through Jeremiah's day. But he does not tell the reader that those skilled in the Hebrew language and specialists in OT studies do not agree on the correct interpretation of the passage.<sup>29</sup> The same characteristic applies to his comments on 2 Cor 12:7 (288) and Mark 16:9-20 (277).

Deere suggests that Rom 11:29 "For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" teaches that the miraculous gifts of the Spirit did not cease with the apostles, but continue on to this very day because they are irrevocable (289). However, the context of Romans 11 requires that the subject matter refer to Israel and her spiritual heritage, not to spiritual gifts in the church. The *charismata* ("gifts") of Romans 11:29 look back to God's grace gifts for Israel, recited in Romans 9:4-5. This is the clearest example of his inaccurate prooftexting.

In summary, Deere's treatment of Scripture leaves something to be desired. For example, he does not interpret major texts such as Isaiah 53 and James 5. He makes much out of passages that contribute little because their interpretation has several legitimate, non-miraculous alternatives e.g., Jer 32:20 and Gal 3:5 and resorts at times to inappropriate prooftexting. He majors on passages that are obscure and minors on passages that are definitive of the issue, while giving neither category the kind of detailed attention he gives to experiences.

#### ON HEALING

Deere looks to 1 Corinthians 12 as a major biblical text to explain healing for today (64-68). He reasons that since (1) the apostles were the most gifted of all people in the church, (2) spiritual gifts range in strength and intensity, and (3) miraculous gifts were not limited to

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<sup>29</sup>Compare C. F. Keil, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.) 8:54, who supports Deere's treatment of Jeremiah 32:20, with Charles L. Feinberg, *Jeremiah* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982) 228, and J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah* in *NICOT* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 591, who both limit the comment on "signs & wonders" to Moses' time.

the apostles but distributed throughout the church, then (1) there is a distinction between signs/wonders and "gifts of healings," and (2) it is wrong to insist that apostolic miracles set the standard by which to measure today's healings. He concludes (1) that healings today will not be as spectacular as Paul's or Peter's, (2) that healings might not be as abundant as in the apostolic era, and (3) that this allows for some failure in attempted healings.<sup>30</sup>

The reviewer's response is that Deere has developed a theory more from what Scripture *does not* say than from what it *clearly* says. His theory fails for several reasons:

1. The phrase "gifts of healings" is so ambiguous in its context that no one can really know for sure what it means (1 Cor 12:9, 28, 30). Certainly something as important as a theology of physical healing should not rest on such a treacherous foundation.
2. His theory does not explain the decline in quality and quantity of even the apostolic healings as the apostolic age drew to a conclusion.
3. His theory does not adequately account for "gifts of healings" appearing only in the 1 Corinthians 12 gift list.
4. His theory does not anticipate the total lack of instruction in the epistles on the matter of healing, with the exception of what is found in James 5. The reviewer's suggestion is that James 5 and 1 Corinthians 12 have no connection in their contexts through exegesis or by logic.
5. His theory assumes throughout that if Scripture does not prohibit healing or does not speak directly about a cessation of apostolic healing, then implicitly the Scriptures teach healing for today (18-19, 99-115). Since it is impossible to interpret the white spaces of the Bible, this is inadmissible in the discussion.
6. He seems to contradict his own theory when he writes, "I believe that God is doing New Testament-quality miracles in the church today, and I believe He has done them throughout the history of the church" (58). The only quality of miracles we know of from Acts are those of the quality of the ones done by the apostles. Yet Deere later theorizes that the

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<sup>30</sup>For an in-depth analysis of Deere's theory that the miraculous continued beyond the apostles but at some sub-standard level, read Thomas R. Edgar, "An Analysis of Jack Deere on a Less Efficient Order of Miraculous Gifts" (unpublished paper presented at the 1991 ETS Eastern Regional Meeting).

miracles of the church were substandard compared to those of the apostles (66-67). Both cannot be true.

7. Given the well-documented biblical history of miracles in Scripture, Deere never explains why "lesser" periods did not come after Moses, Elijah, or Christ. He just asserts that a continuing, substandard period of miracles follows the apostles and continues to this day. His argument from silence falls short of good interpretation and makes him the perpetrator of the exegetical fallacy of which he accuses cessationists (19).

### ON MIRACLES

In general, Deere's discussion of major theological themes lacks a logical, systematic, and categorical quality. Take miracles for instance. About one-half of his discussion comes in the Appendixes, which by definition involve "subsidiary matters at the end of a book." But let the reader decide whether discussions of the following questions are primary or subsidiary in regard to miracles: "Did Miraculous Gifts Cease With The Apostles?" and "Were There Only Three Periods of Miracles?" Discussion of both issues is in the Appendixes. In contrast, Chap. 5 where Deere gives his opinion about "The Real Reason Christians Do Not Believe in the Miraculous Gifts" is clearly a subsidiary issue that should have been an Appendix.

Deere states this about cessationists' major tenet that miracles ceased with the conclusion of the apostolic age:

Yet here they faced not only a formidable obstacle but an insurmountable obstacle, for they could not produce one specific text of Scripture that taught that miracles or the spiritual gifts were confined to the New Testament period. Nor has anyone else since then been able to do that (101).

In light of the above assertion, one would assume that Deere is about to produce one or more specific texts of Scripture to teach that miracles and spiritual gifts were to continue throughout the church age in the same manner as seen in Acts. However, Deere *cannot* produce that verse because it does not exist. Neither side wins or loses the cessationist/noncessationist debate based on a single passage, but on deductive conclusions from numerous passages. By using Deere's logic with the doctrine God's triunity, blasphemous conclusions regarding that doctrine could result that Deere would not tolerate.

This reviewer will not tolerate his conclusion regarding miracles because of his skewed logic.

Deere claims, "No cessationist writer that I am aware of tries to make his case on Scripture alone" (55). In fact, just the opposite is true.

Deere builds his case for current-day miracles primarily on experience (13-41). Cessationists are willing to build their case and stand on it with Scripture alone. The appeal to history is not to establish their theology, but rather to test it.<sup>31</sup>

This reviewer would have expected to see Deere thoroughly interact with the well-known work, *Perspective on Pentecost*, by Richard Gaffin, especially Chap. 5, "The Question of Cessation" (89-116). However, Deere makes no significant comment on Gaffin's reasoning.

He does interact with John MacArthur's *Charismatic Chaos* in Appendix C (253-66). He begins with this observation: "John MacArthur is a modern-day proponent of the view that there were only three periods of miracles in the biblical record" (253). Later he derisively writes, "But most ludicrous of all, on MacArthur's view we could not call the resurrection of Jesus Christ a miracle" (263).

Earlier in the book Deere tells of leading a doctoral-program applicant through questioning about miracles, which Deere would have the reader believe characterizes the supposed sophomoric logic of cessationists (47-52). In Appendix C, he charts seven pages of miracles in the OT (255-61) in an attempt to prove that MacArthur has seriously underestimated the miraculous element of the OT.

Several brief comments on Deere's discussion are in order:

1. MacArthur would affirm every supernatural event cited by Deere and so would all other conservative cessationist Bible teachers.
2. Deere mistakenly accuses MacArthur of saying that all miracles in the Bible were limited to three periods (253). Amazingly, Deere undermines his own charge by correctly quoting MacArthur as saying, "*Most* biblical miracles . . ." (253).
3. What MacArthur and other cessationists want to establish is the biblical fact that God's supernatural work, mediated through men, occurred primarily, not exclusively, in three

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<sup>31</sup>When someone reads Deere's discussion of miracles in post-biblical history (73-76) and compares it to the historical citations provided by Walter J. Chantry, *Signs of the Apostles*, 2nd ed. (London: Banner of Truth, 1976) 140-46, he wonders what history books Deere has read.

- periods. Deere even admits this (263).<sup>32</sup>
4. Deere can quibble over definitions related to the supernatural and the miraculous (263); nonetheless, everyone recognizes the difference between the supernatural enacted directly by God and the supernatural mediated by God through men, which is the element of the supernatural that Deere tries to establish as normative.
  5. Deere writes, "MacArthur does not want to accept as normative any of the supernatural events from the previous table" (264). One might ask Deere the same question, "Do you want to accept creation, the flood and Babel as normative? Do you want to accept the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah as normal? Do you want to accept the plagues of Egypt as normative?" Certainly not! Just because a specific act occurred once, does not necessarily demand that God must repeat it.
  6. Deere asserts that "*you cannot find any period in Israel's history when supernatural events were not common among the people of God*" (263). To correct this statement, during at least two periods supernatural events were uncommon: (1) the almost 300-year gap between Gen 50:26 and Exod 2:1 and (2) the over 400-year gap between Mal 4:6 and Matt 1:1 in which one finds no evidence of God working supernaturally. This is not to mention the thousands of years that Genesis 1-12 represents, most of which the record does not cover.

#### ATTITUDES AND MISREPRESENTATIONS

Seemingly, Deere structured his work to sound and flow more like an emotionally charged testimony or debate than a well-reasoned, biblically based discussion of miracles.

##### *Attitudes*

Sprinkled throughout the book are overdone, self-deprecating remarks made by the noncessationist Jack Deere about the former cessationist Jack Deere. He implies that what he once was, all cessationists still remain. Here's a sample:

1. ignorantly prejudiced against charismatics and Pentecostals

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<sup>32</sup>As do most theologians. Compare J. Oliver Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962) 1:177: "The great majority of miracles recorded in the Bible fall into three great epochs."

- (267)
2. arrogant (28, 46-46)
  3. damaging the church (28)
  4. deceiving, manipulating, playing at church (29)
  5. deceived into thinking his theology is exceptionally good, even flawless (15, 35)
  6. spiritually anemic (184)
  7. rationalistic (184)

Yet Deere would have the reader believe that after he converted to the noncessationist position, he had a dramatic turn around in attitude and approach to Scripture. He suddenly became an open-minded, patient, and intent student of Scripture (22-23, 47, 75). The apparent implication is that Deere had not been this way as a cessationist nor can any other cessationist.

He criticizes cessationist scholars for not being able to read the original, historical writings of the church fathers in Greek and Latin (273). Is he suggesting that most noncessationists can? If they could, would it help their exegesis/exposition of the biblical text? When he predicts that in his own lifetime a majority of the church is going to believe in and practice the miraculous gift of the Spirit, does he expect people to believe this on his word alone (173)?

He would have the reader believe that to the sincere open-minded seeker of truth, Scripture, history and experience all point to a noncessationist position (56). His assertions, however strongly made or frequently repeated, do not prove the point. Perhaps he reflects his attitude toward the whole issue when he compares the cessationist's case to the noncessationist's position as having the strength of a sparrow in a hurricane (102).

### *Misrepresentations*

Former cessationist Jack Deere, now a leading spokesman for the noncessationist side, portrays the cessationist more in caricature fashion than accurately. The following points illustrate this:

1. Deere would intimate that all cessationists believe that spiritual gifts are not operating today (135).
2. Deere would paint cessationists as so spiritually anemic that they are quite vulnerable to gross sexual improprieties such as pornography (80-81, 133, 184) and homosexuality (82).
3. Deere would contend that cessationist seminary professors are close-minded and arrogant (22-23, 45-46). Thus their students, even those approaching the doctoral level of study,

are stumbling and backwards when it comes to good theological thinking (47-52).

#### A FINAL QUESTION

If Deere, as he admits, was so prejudiced, so close-minded, so arrogant, so spiritually anemic, and so theologically off-base as a cessationist, what reason is there to believe that he is now humble, unprejudiced, open-minded, spiritually dynamic, and theologically correct? Is it because he now embraces a noncessationist theology? Does he give such compelling evidence of a real, dramatic turnaround that everyone else should abandon what they believe the Scriptures teach, to embrace the conclusions that Deere found at the end of his spiritual odyssey?

Is it because he relies on Scripture rather than experience to develop his beliefs? Is it because he fairly and accurately represents those who differ with him? Is it because he displays exemplary hermeneutical style and exegetical skills in coming to biblical conclusions? Is it because he does not engage in debate technique to make his point, but rather relies on well-reasoned dialogue with full disclosure of the facts? Is it because his case is biblically convincing?

As have others, this reviewer believes that Jack Deere's work, in the main, is theologically defective. Rather than resembling a careful study by an open-minded, trained theologian, it is more like the product of an immature new convert who, after reading the gospels and Acts for the first time, concludes that what took place in the first century will continue throughout the church age.

So I ask, "Who surprised whom?" Did the Holy Spirit surprise Jack Deere, or was it vice versa?