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Editorial

James D.G. Dunn (1939–2020)

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My first encounter with James D.G. Dunn, as for many Pentecostals, was through the pages of his *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, one of the first volumes of academic theology, in this case biblical studies, to take seriously the theology and experience of Pentecostalism. This ambitious volume sought to do nothing less than examine the entire NT for its thought on the phenomenon of baptism in the Holy Spirit, a distinctive hallmark of Pentecostal faith and practice. It almost goes without saying that the volume's appearance was a *tour de force* in many respects.

I first actually met James Dunn at a Society for Pentecostal Studies meeting organized by Cecil M. Roebuck at Fuller Theological Seminary in the Autumn of 1982. After Professor Dunn's lecture that evening, through some set of events I still do not quite understand, I found myself at a local sandwich shop around a table with Mel Roebuck, Harold Hunter, Bill Faupel, and James Dunn himself! It was in this context where I first met James Dunn, who immediately became Jimmy – though I was reticent to use such a familiar greeting for some time still. Seeing him in the flesh, so to speak, I discovered him to be a very personable and engaging individual. It was, of course, an honor to meet Jimmy and needless to say he left quite an impression on me. In the intervening years, I would not only reread his *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, but also became acquainted with his *Jesus and the Spirit*, a volume that extended his earlier monograph in any number of helpful ways for Pentecostals (and others!) interested in pneumatology.

My next encounter of moment with Jimmy was during the 1988 SBL Annual Meeting, where in the book stalls we made plans for a visit to Durham to consider it as a possible place to finish my PhD thesis. With the date and time set, I began the train ride from Northampton, full of anticipation and hope. When I arrived in Durham, I made my way up the cobblestone street to the University and Cathedral, alongside which the Divinity School stood. Sadly, Jimmy was nowhere to be found. The secretary even rang his home to enquire as to his whereabouts saying – using words I overheard, 'Mrs Dunn, I am afraid we have

misplaced Professor Dunn, do you happen to know where we might find him?' But alas, she did not. As I made my way back to the rail station through picturesque Durham, I was naturally disappointed, but enjoyed the beautiful scenery very much indeed. Arriving at the rail station I needed to make an enquiry where I found myself standing in the queue next to Jimmy's wife, Meta, who was purchasing a ticket for her daughter, I believe! Not wanting to be a bother, and not knowing what to quite make of this surprising turn of events, I simply smiled and said nothing. When I returned to the USA, I discovered that a letter from Jimmy was awaiting me – email was not yet in my orbit – saying that he had been co-opted by the Bishop of Durham for lunch and that sadly he could not keep our appointment. Apparently, the letter and I passed one another somewhere over the Atlantic!

It was whilst writing my thesis in Sheffield (fortunately Andrew Lincoln had not been so co-opted) that I encountered the Dunn volume that would have the greatest impact of all his work on my own hermeneutical approach. It was the wonderfully helpful *Unity and Diversity in New Testament Thought*, a monograph that pointed the way forward as a way of allowing one to take note of the great diversity within NT thought whilst also taking seriously its essential unity. Though our approaches would themselves take different directions – his more historical, mine more literary-theological – this volume became a most important part of my own constructive interpretive paradigm.

It would be a few years later when I once again met Jimmy in the book stalls at SBL. At this time, *JPT* had been just launched and I spoke with him about serving as one of our outside dialogue partners, specifically engaging the Pentecostal scholarship that had responded to his *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, an invitation which he immediately accepted. So, together we made our way to the various booths asking each of the publishers for a copy of their relevant work. This dialogue piece was published in *JPT* 3 (1993), pp. 3–27. This engagement would be followed by others over the years, sometimes in conferences in the UK, sometimes in print. Of course, there were other meetings as well, SBL and SNTS – epically the Durham meeting in 2002, where we would bump into one another, always friendly, always having time for a quick chat.

As the fortieth anniversary of Jimmy's *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* approached, the editors of *JPT*, in conjunction with the organizers of SPS at SBL, invited Jimmy to participate in a conversation to commemorate the event. Thus, in November 2009 several leading Pentecostal and Charismatic scholars gathered in New Orleans for a conversation with Professor Dunn. Amongst those who wrote papers for the occasion were Roger Stronstad, Janet Everts, Max Turner, and Jimmy. These papers were published in *JPT* 19.1 (2010), pp. 1–43. It was a wonderful event and Jimmy was at his best. I began the session by thanking

him for attending, before noting that we would have had the session in any case – though we wouldn't have been nearly as kind! I still remember how hard Jimmy laughed at that remark. As most students of this volume know, over the years Jimmy had not moved very far from his initial interpretive decisions reached over forty years earlier with regard to Spirit Baptism, though his movement on a variety of other theological and interpretive topics were well documented. As a way of acknowledging that reality, I closed my presentation on that occasion by observing, 'I suppose what I would really like is to sit down and have a conversation about Spirit Baptism in the New Testament with the Jimmy Dunn who wrote *Unity and Diversity in New Testament Thought*!' And once again Jimmy laughed that really endearing laugh. It seems that this desired conversation will now have to wait a bit longer.

At the end of the day, James D.G. Dunn's role in the generation of Pentecostal NT scholarship may well be unrivaled. I will miss our dialogue partner and thank God for his friendship and contributions. May these somewhat random remarks serve as an honor of sorts to someone who despite any interpretive disagreements served to make us all better at the theological task.