

Foreword

IN 1970, James D. G. Dunn's University of Cambridge PhD dissertation was published as *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, beginning the debate that is the subject of this book. For over a decade, it lay neglected by Pentecostals as they were nonresponsive to Dunn's thesis that the baptism in the Holy Spirit occurred at and, in fact, effected conversion in the believer. That changed in 1984 with the emergence of the next generation of Pentecostal scholars and, particularly, with the publication of Roger Stronstad's *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke*. The strong works of Robert P. Menzies and James B. Shelton would shortly follow. Also in 1984, Howard M. Ervin weighed in again with a *seriatim* response to Dunn's work.¹ On the other side of the Atlantic, David Petts and the early Max Turner would make important contributions to the debate with Dunn. These scholars, and more, you are about to be introduced to through this excellent work by the Rev. Dr. William P. Atkinson, Associate Research Fellow at the London School of Theology and Associate Minister of Braintree Elim Pentecostal Church (United Kingdom).

It gives me great pleasure to introduce to North American biblical scholarship the author of the award-winning book, *The "Spiritual-Death" of Jesus: A Pentecostal Investigation* (Leiden: Brill, 2009). With equally thorough research, careful analysis, and nuanced commentary, Dr. Atkinson has now turned his pen to this debate with Dunn, which is still lively after forty years.

I am especially impressed by his balanced approach to Dunn's critics. While siding with them when they are correct, he does not hesitate to label their arguments *weak, misguided, or ill-founded* when deserving.

1. Ervin, a neo-Pentecostal, had published *These Are Not Drunken, As Ye Suppose* in 1968 (revised as *Spirit-Baptism: A Biblical Investigation* in 1987). At the time Dunn wrote, Ervin's book was the best exegetical defense of the Pentecostal position. But although it was more than adequate against Unger, Hoekema, Gromacki and the like, Dunn's work ramped the debate to another level.

And he sides with Dunn—when he believes he is correct. These disarming features, combined with the irenic spirit that pervades the work, will no doubt win over many readers, although Atkinson confesses that he writes for the edification of the Pentecostal and not to persuade non-Pentecostals.

As you may have guessed, by culling and amassing the strongest arguments of Dunn's critics, little by little Atkinson effectively erodes Dunn's thesis. Well, not quite. The Pauline corpus—with its silence on what Luke stresses—still presents a problem to the Pentecostal thesis, but Atkinson's novel handling of this provides a resolution. By carefully considering the contributions of the three major New Testament writers—Luke, Paul, and John—he successfully synthesizes a theology while respecting the individual voices of each writer—something that Dunn has been unwilling to do. It is not so much that Atkinson rebuts Dunn; rather, he provides a superior perspective of the biblical writers.

Although Dr. Atkinson writes with the acumen of a scholar, he also writes with the heart of a pastor. With fellow pastors in mind, as well as interested laypersons, he crafts the book to make it accessible to them: heavy technical jargon is avoided; Greek words are both transliterated and translated into English; helpful summaries occur at the end of sections and chapters; and principal arguments of the debaters are clearly restated.

Through this work, Atkinson demonstrates that Luke taught that new believers should expect and receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit, which provides power to witness and serve, and they should receive urgent attention if it is not forthcoming. With this new contribution to Pentecostal literature, I see no reason why any Christian leader would oppose such an experience. The baptism in the Holy Spirit is biblical, reasonable, and responsible. This may not have been clear in 1970; it most certainly is now.

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