

Christianity in the Making: Beginning From Jerusalem

Part Nine

Dunn's second volume of his projected three volume magnum opus opens its concluding section with an examination of Paul's end, (an end which Dunn calls his 'Passion' and which he likens to the Passion of Jesus). He, as has been his custom to this point, simply follows Acts, retelling its tale and supplementing it when possible with extra-biblical information.

Unlike some others, Dunn attributes Philippians, Philemon, and Colossians to the Roman imprisonment (p. 1009). This assertion is followed by (as we saw in part 8 in reference to 1-2 Cor. And Romans) veritable 'mini-introductions' to those books.

Dunn then turns his attention to the lesser apostles, Peter, James, and John. Dunn remarks 'In comparison with the mission of Paul, what we know of Peter's mission is lamentably little' (p. 1058). Actually what we know of Paul's mission is lamentably little as well. Acts is, after all, not interested in 'history' and nearly all that we know of Paul's missionary endeavors are drawn from that book.

James (the brother of Jesus) gets a bit of attention (his treatment spanning pages 1077- 1104). From here Dunn takes a look at the pseudo-paulines and the other late materials contained in the New Testament and especially focuses on the letters of James and 1 Peter (which I'm a bit surprised he didn't treat during his examination of Peter, given his fairly conservative bent).

The tome concludes with what must surely be the opening salvo of the final volume in the trilogy- with a glance at the reason that Christianity and Judaism parted company.

Given the information Dunn offers in this volume, I have to conclude by saying that it is very much worth reading. Not simply because it offers so much material, but as well because there's so much here to question. Dunn's willingness to follow the bread crumb trail laid by Acts is really astonishing. Nonetheless, he's done a lot of work and that work deserves to be rewarded by a careful, diligent reading.