

### **Reading Report: The Word and Power Church**

“God is bringing together the best of the charismatic and evangelical worlds to create word and power churches, churches anchored in the Word and alive in the Spirit. We have always been a people of the Book and the Wind, the law and the Spirit, the logos and the *ruach*.”<sup>1</sup> In his 1999 book, *The Word and Power Church: What Happens When a Church Seeks All God Has to Offer?*, Pastor Doug Bannister examines the historical roots and emergence of Word and Power churches—i.e. churches that seek to bring together the best of both the charismatic and evangelical worlds—in the mid-to-late twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> Bannister’s central thesis is God’s vision of the church, as reveal in Scripture, is one that synthesizes the characteristics of the evangelical and charismatic traditions. Bannister aims to reconcile both camps by using biblical and historical evidence to demonstrate how complement one another. This study of the Word and Power church is interwoven with his own story of his shift to Word and Power oriented Christianity, along with his church, Fellowship Church of Knoxville Tennessee.

I grew up in the Wesleyan Holiness and CMA traditions where my family and church leaned more toward evangelical characteristics, while embracing some aspects of the charismatic movement. I recall during a sermon, one of my pastor’s remarking on how A.B. Simpson embraced both the evangelical and charismatic traditions in a way of coexisting with one another, but not necessarily melding together the characteristic of both sides. As a result, I have learned to tolerate family, friends and other churches that lean more charismatic. This book revealed that I have ranked the characteristics of the evangelicalism—particularly expository preaching and intellectualism— higher than the characteristics of charismatic/Pentecostal traditions. For most of my life I operated as a “Bible Deist”—someone who believes that God has revealed his will for us in the Bible, but that he is not personally involved in how

---

<sup>1</sup> Douglas Banister. *The Word and Power Church. What Happens When a Church Seeks All God Has to Offer?* Grand Rapids, M.I.: Zondervan, 1990 (p. 28).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 14

we live those principles out.”<sup>3</sup> Since enrolling in ATS in 2017, I believe that God has awakened in me a faith relies more on the empowering of the Spirit while holding fast to the principles of Word-centered Christianity. Initiation to Spiritual Formation (ISF), introduced me to the prophetic gift speaking words of knowledge. In 2019 during my ISF retreat, one of the spiritual mentors spoke a word of knowledge over me that detailed specific information about my life, my church and struggles with my calling that could have been revealed by the Holy Spirit. Since that experience, my yearning to hear God speak in various has grown. Meditation, listening prayer, sharing words of knowledge in small groups are among the spiritual practices God is using to bring new life and freshness to my faith.

Bannister’s book is dated—published in 1999; republished in 2002—offering helpful insight into how the Word and Power church is to evangelize Generation X but offering no content that specifically addresses Millennials and Generation Z. Lacking are voices from non-white Christians and more largely the voices of the global church—more specifically global Pentecostalism. Concurrent with the Holy Spirit revival of Azusa Street, the restoration and revival of the Spirit empowered church of Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, India and China. According to Allen H. Anderson, Pentecostal revival movements were taking place throughout the globe in twentieth century’s first decade, and that these movement occurred “simultaneous rather than sequential” in its order. While people were experiencing Spiritual Baptism and Speaking in new tongues during the Azusa street Revival, indigenous revival movements in Asia, Africa and Latina America born too.<sup>4</sup> The Word and Power church needs to be informed by believers of color and the global church which encounters Word and Power from cultural perspectives different from predominantly White and western evangelical and charismatic cultures. Questions such as “How does the Word and Power church do “justice ministry?”” and “What is the role of the Word and Power church in engage sociopolitical, economic and cultural issues both within the church and in the world?” and not addressed by in *The Word and Power Church*.

---

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 15

<sup>4</sup> Allan Heaton Anderson. *To the Ends of the Earth: Pentecostalism and the Transformation of World Christianity* (Oxford Studies in World Christianity) New York, NY. Oxford University Press, 2013 (p. 32, 36).

*The Word and Power Church* offers a balanced model for ministries seeking to blend both Evangelical and Charismatic traditions. Bannister offers theological correctives to both sides on issues such as the gift of prophecy—arguing NT prophecy, but that “Scripture and not prophetic utterances are the primary means of spiritual growth and guidance” and discounting the notion that the gift is designated to specific people—and the gift of healing—he balances a theology of healing with a theology of suffering, dispels four healing myths from the Charismatic tradition, and offers principles for effective healing prayer—tongues and other revelatory gifts. A starting place for incorporating the lessons and insights of *The Word and Power Church* into my ministry context would be my church leadership embracing the “ten checklist items for the Word and Power church” and the “seven keys to a highly passionate church” discussed in chapters 6 and 7.

With integrity, I have read this book  
Thoroughly and Entirely 100 %  
Jonathan Springer

## **Bibliography**

Allan Heaton Anderson. *To the Ends of the Earth: Pentecostalism and the Transformation of World Christianity* (Oxford Studies in World Christianity) New York, NY. Oxford University Press, 2013.

Banister, Douglas. *The Word and Power Church: What Happens When a Church Seeks All God Has to Offer?* Grand Rapids, M.I.: Zondervan, 1999.