

Assignment Title: Reading Report – The Word and Power Church

The Word & Power Church / Doug Banister

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Evangelicals and Charismatics have, historically, had what seem to be conflicting views of faith, however Doug Banister, the author of *Word and Power Churches* is trying to show how embracing the strengths of both practicing groups can lead to a more efficient, more complete church. “Word and power churches draw together the best of both evangelical and charismatic traditions.”¹ Banister starts by illustrating how the Pentecostal movement was met with push back from fundamentalists, leading to major in-fighting. This is in dichotomy with the current trend, portrayed by Banister, of people seeking out word and power churches; churches that combine the truth of evangelical churches, with the power of charismatic churches. Banister provides the history for context, but clearly wants to highlight how history doesn’t, and shouldn’t, define the relationship between evangelicals and charismatics.

Banister goes on to argue that evangelicals and charismatics are fundamentally almost identical: “Charismatics are clearly evangelicals... The only doctrinal area that separates evangelicals from charismatics is the charismatics’ belief that the baptism of the Holy Spirit occurs after conversion.”² The movements, and historical figures that are shared in this chapter are also given to show the reader how much there is in common between the modern evangelical and charismatic churches. He then celebrates the strengths of both evangelicals and charismatics, while simultaneously encourage appreciation of the other’s strengths.

Banister’s transitions from talking about the tension between the two histories to talking about the tension between people with specific giftings and those without. While explaining the spiritual gift of tongues, he is still quick to point out that, “The Bible clearly teaches that not

¹ Doug Banister, *The Word & Power Church*, (Zondervan, 1999), 90.

² *Ibid.*, 45.

everyone will speak in tongues.”³ Banister makes a switch from tongues to “Spiritual language.”⁴ This shift in language is used to highlight the importance of language for communication, that leads to intimacy which leads to love. Banister is trying to bridge the gap between evangelicals and charismatics, and he recognizes the tensions held between them, however he believes that biblically these two groups should be able to coexist and flourish in love: “Yet we have forgotten why he [Paul] wrote the words in the first place– to teach people who speak in tongues and people who don’t speak in tongues how to get along.”⁵

Facts and faith alone are not enough, but to really excel we need emotions and passion to fuel us. Banister shows how we need the strengths of both traditions, “to equip us to speak to the next generation.”⁶ The final chapter read similarly to the one about having a spiritual language. It felt as if Banister was trying to make the same point as in that chapter, that yes and no to a request for either a spiritual healing or a spiritual tongue can be used for God’s greater glory.

Having been at the church that I’m at for a while, I was able to use the lens of this book to appreciate how we’ve moved from a charismatic church to one that is radically middle. I agreed with Banister when he said “The bottom line is love... This is the only law that is needed.”⁷ I think that I am firmly in Banister’s camp, and don’t strongly disagree with him, I do think that this book would do little to change the mind of a cessationist, but that is addressed in the appendix. I do believe that Banister makes a compelling argument for most, and personally he has reminded me to “embrace the full diversity of the body of Christ.”⁸

³ Ibid., 112.

⁴ Banister, *The Word & Power Church*, 115

⁵ Ibid., 117.

⁶ Ibid., 149.

⁷ Ibid., 120.

⁸ Banister, *The Word & Power Church*, 118.

With integrity, I have read this book (circle one):

Thoroughly and Entirely_____%

Quickly but Completely 100 %

Thoroughly but NOT Entirely_____%

Quickly and NOT Completely_____%

Not at all

Signed: Henry Williams

Bibliography

Doug Banister, *The Word & Power Church*, (Zondervan, 1999),