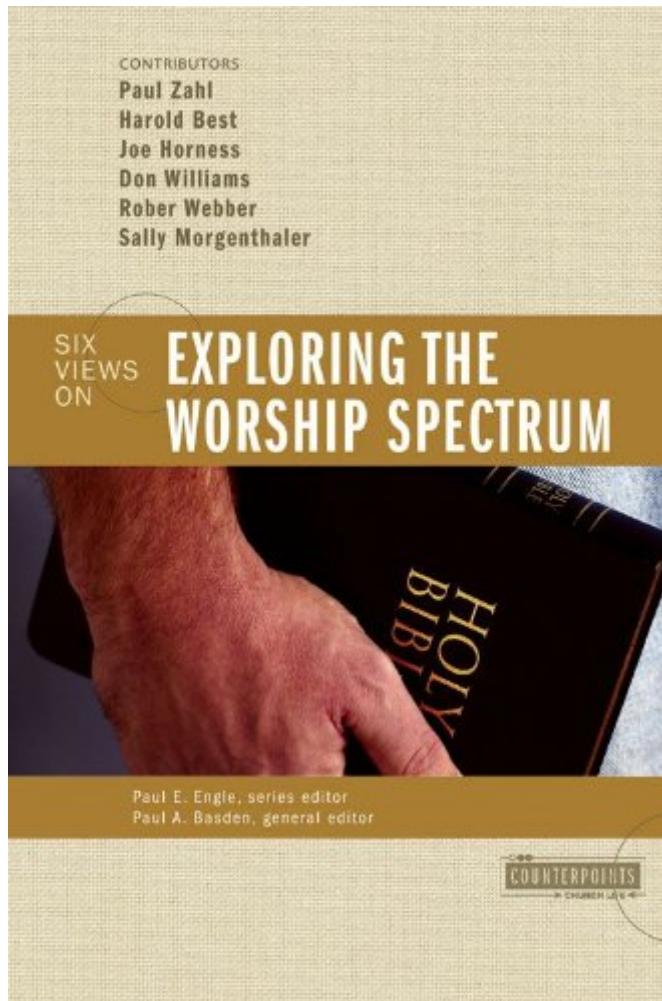


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Exploring The Worship Spectrum: 6 Views (Counterpoints: Bible And Theology)



Synopsis

What does worship look like? Is there just one truly right way to worship? Are there any wrong ways? To what extent should our unity as believers manifest itself in unified public worship? Sadly, disagreement over how we should worship our loving God has sparked some most unloving attitudes among Christians. Exploring the Worship Spectrum seeks to correct this. It provides a forum for presentation, critique, and defense of six prominent worship styles: • Formal-Liturgical • Paul Zahl • Traditional Hymn-Based • Harold Best • Contemporary Music-Driven • Joe Horness • Charismatic • Don Williams • Blended • Robert Webber • Emerging • Sally Morgenthaler. This unique format allows those with a heart for worship to compare different perspectives and draw their own conclusions on what the Bible teaches. It engages the reader's faculties of critical thinking in a way that allows him or her to understand the various approaches to worship, carefully evaluate their strengths and weaknesses, and make personal choices without adopting a judgmental spirit. The Counterpoints series provides a forum for comparison and critique of different views on issues important to Christians. Counterpoints books address three categories: Church Life, Exploring Theology, and Engaging Culture. Complete your library with other books in the Counterpoints series.

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Customer Reviews

"Exploring the Worship Spectrum" lives up to its carefully chosen title. Notice that the verb used is "exploring" - rather than "debating." The editors apparently chose the contributors carefully, and instructed them carefully, to insure the essays would not be a platform for "worship wars." The writers are usually upbeat and affirming of one another. The other carefully chosen word is "spectrum." There are not two, not three, but SIX different worship styles discussed. Each style is presented by its proponent, followed by responses from each of the five other writers. The styles are: formal-liturgical, traditional hymn-based, contemporary music-driven, charismatic, blended, and emerging. I think the book will prove helpful to most readers. If you tend to think only in terms of traditional, contemporary, and blended worship, you will certainly have your worship categories expanded. Each essay is thought-provoking in its own way. If you are aware of your own bias before you read this book, you will hopefully find the critiques, though gentle, to be helpful. And you will hopefully be made to better appreciate why others worship differently. One of the book's weaknesses is the lack of rich biblical discussion. It appears it was entrusted to an editor to include a biblical discussion of worship in his brief introduction. However, it would have been more helpful if each contributor offered a his/her biblical understanding of worship prior to discussing their preferred worship style. There are some exceptions to this, and there are plenty of examples of broad theological principles being employed; but I had hoped for more. Also, the writers often try TOO hard to compliment each other.

My guess is that if you're thinking of buying a book by this title, you have probably been bothered greatly by the worship wars of the past couple of decades. Further you're probably wondering who, if anyone, is right. Most of all, you're probably wanting to figure out what, if anything, you can do about it, if not in a church-wide sense, at least in the sense of how you personally should worship, what kind of church you should be attending, and so forth. You won't find these questions answered here. Pretty much all the contributors here follow the same pattern and have the same problems. The pattern: They wax eloquent about the nature and importance of worship. (I don't mean that totally sarcastically. Some of these guys really are eloquent.) Then they move into what they and the participants in their preferred worship styles are particularly concerned with -- the things they

want to accomplish, the problems they want to correct. Then they spend some time describing what their preferred worship "looks like." The problems: The actual connection between the goal of the worship style and the methods used in the worship is rarely made clear. What's worse, pretty much every "worshiper" here claims much the same goals, such as "bringing the congregation into an awareness of the presence of God." But never do any of the writers actually say clearly how their own particular style accomplishes these goals in a particularly effective way. Nevertheless, the book is not entirely unhelpful. Though the writer's are not particularly good apologists for their own styles, they are pretty representative of the mindsets behind the communities that support each style.

Zondervan has been publishing the Counterpoints Series edited by Paul E. Engle in which conflicting views of different topics are laid out in one volume. Each view has a prominent author compiling arguments supporting it, and then each alternate view's author writes an evaluation of the arguments. Exploring the Worship Spectrum: 6 Views was edited by Paul A. Basden, and it presents six views of worship: formal-liturgical, traditional hymn-based, contemporary, charismatic, blended, and emergent. The strength of this book lies in having in one place the concise reasoning for each view as presented by its supporters. One can reference quickly the primary arguments for certain worship styles as argued by those who promote and use them. Furthermore, with a critique of each argument available, one can easily assimilate a vast amount of information and views on the topic. In this area, the book excels, although one must read the entire book to access all of the arguments and views pertaining to each style of worship. Embedded in many of the critiques are further supporting arguments for each view, so one will not have the entire picture through reading only the chapter pertaining to his or her area of interest. The weakness of the book is an extension of its strength, and can be summed up best by Best: "The current worship scene, to my way of thinking, is more an apples/oranges affair than a right/wrong one." (p. 237). One almost gets the idea that the writers are all part of a gentleman's club and are afraid to really stand against the shortcomings of the other views, although some genuine differences do surface. They spend so much time patting each other on the back that it gets rather tedious by the end of the book.

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