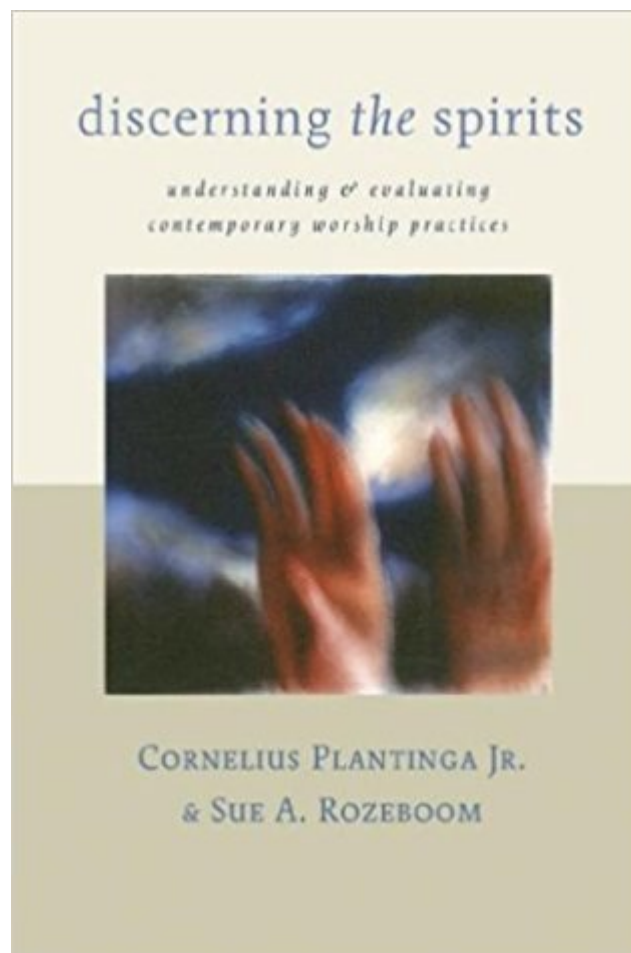




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# Discerning The Spirits: A Guide To Thinking About Christian Worship Today (Calvin Institute Of Christian Worship Liturgical Studies)



## Synopsis

Christian worship in North America has undergone great change in recent years. But change always brings uncertainty -- at times even division -- about what constitutes "authentic worship." This important book reviews a wide variety of current perspectives and offers a fresh outlook on the contemporary practice of Christian worship. In order to provide the widest, most insightful discussion on present-day worship practices yet assembled, the authors gathered a team of church musicians, ministers, worship leaders, and educators from eight church traditions. *Discerning the Spirits* is the fruit of their work. Shaped by the wisdom of men and women like Marva Dawn, Justo Gonzalez, C. Michael Hawn, and John Witvliet, this book broadens today's "worship wars" into a bigger, richer discussion that moves from arguments over musical tastes to good thinking about the overall purpose of worship in relation to church life and God himself. Sidebar articles and quotes are meant to draw readers and study groups into dialogue on these issues. Whether one plays a leadership role in church worship or is simply grappling with questions about it, *Discerning the Spirits* is a must-read.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

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contemporary practice of Christian worship. In order to provide the widest, most insightful discussion on present-day worship practices yet assembled, the authors gathered a team of church musicians, ministers, worship leaders, and educators from eight church traditions. "Discerning the Spirits is the fruit of their work. Shaped by the wisdom of men and women like Marva Dawn, Justo Gonzalez, C. Michael Hawn, and John Witvliet, this book broadens today's "worship wars" into a bigger, richer discussion that moves from arguments over musical tastes to good thinking about the overall purpose of worship in relation to church life and God himself. Sidebar articles and quotes are meant to draw readers and study groups into dialogue on these issues. Whether one plays a leadership role in church worship or is simply grappling with questions about it, "Discerning the Spirits is a must-read.

Beyond Doubt, Not the Way It Always Is

This is a comprehensive look at our worship theology and praxis. Unfortunately my reading it was spoiled by the many typographical errors in the text. Nevertheless I have found it helpful and stimulating.

I was expecting a guide and study on discerning the spirits whether they are of God or not. But this book is all about worship style within the church. This book would be good for a worship pastor or director.

Another book for a class this fall. The syllabus has not been emailed so that I do not know when we will read it.

One might be tempted, reading the newspapers or listening to news broadcasts, to think the most pressing issues of the church today revolve around issues of sexuality and gender. James White of Drew University states that this is not so, but rather the most pressing questions revolve around appropriate styles and functions for worship in the Christian context. In many ways, from this all else derives. Cornelius Plantinga Jr. is president of Calvin Theological Seminary in Michigan, and Sue A. Rozeboom is a doctoral student at Notre Dame - together they have put together a collection of essays and articles addressing the history, theology and practice of worship in Christian churches. Drawing on many with long experience in congregational leadership and development, Plantinga and Rozeboom have put together a collection of thought-provoking and practice-inspiring

articles. Each of the offerings is short and to the point; for example, Dorothy Sayers is included among the authors, and her piece on *The Greatest Drama Ever Staged*, taken from her classic book *'Creed or Chaos'*; other authors such as Justo L. Gonzalez and Marva J. Dawn have several entries, relating in different ways to Hispanic and African-American worship perspectives respectively. It is difficult to classify Plantinga and Rozeboom as authors or editors, as in fact they serve a dual role. There is a basic narrative strand to each of the primary chapters, punctuated as it were with the articles from outside contributors as pull-quotes, side-bar and highlighting pieces. It is quite a unique arrangement, in which the articles included both speak for themselves as well as support the general theme of the chapters. This is a text meant for congregations and church leaders; while it is helpful as a text book for those studying liturgy, worship and the culture of the church, the real strength of the text is in its ability to stimulate conversation, and inspire congregations to revisit their worship times as a communal experience shared by all. To that extent, the method of the text involves both community voice and leadership voice, without one overpowering or lessening the other. Worship is a communal action, a common experience, involving individuals who come together for a purpose and take away things both individual and shared. The process of discernment is one in which wisdom is gained - the getting of wisdom is not a process that follows a prescribed, set pattern for all individuals or all communities of people, but there are general guidelines, and the authors gently lead the reader through the basic principles and practices for the understanding and growing in the life of faith. In the final chapter, the authors make the statement that *'Worship is narrative engagement with the triune God.'* As with any statement like this, the terminology needs to be understood among all the participants - what is meant by worship? What does narrative mean? What does engagement look like, particularly with God? The discernment of worship is as much about taking care for the questions posed as developing answers, and leaving no details unexamined, while still holding in mind the overall purpose and unity. Christian worship is unity in diversity, no matter how homogeneous a congregation may seem; the experience of Christianity is a worldwide experience, stretching across the globe and across the millennia, going into a future both unsure of details and certain of promise. This book will help congregations discover their true calling as worshipping communities. As a final note, a special word goes to the articles included from Frank Burch Brown, professor of culture and theology at my seminary, and Ted Gibboney, late of the seminary as director of chapel music and instructor of hymnody. These articles are good examples of the kind of personal and theological reflection that makes this text a useful and graceful text.

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