

For me, the most exciting part of cracking a book is discovering new bits of knowledge that I had never before explored. But, I confess, I've read so extensively on the emergent movement that I may have become prideful of what I had sampled. To my delight, [The Worship Mall](#) by Bryan D. Spinks was just what I needed to regain some humility about how little I really still know about the movement. Dr. Spinks' book is absolutely crammed with new material that I have, up to this reading, not encountered.

From blended to radically alternative worship, from the interest in Celtic worship to the contemporary praise experience of megachurches, from snake-handling to post-Vatican II liturgies, *The Worship Mall* visits them all. Dr. Spinks sets the stage by examining the culture of what we are now calling post-modernity, comparing it to modernity wherever helpful. An important observation that he makes is that consumerism, born in the Enlightenment, is still alive and well in post-modern culture. The church and its individual faith communities attempt to attract the consumers and raise up a positive message that will attract converts. The challenge is to address how a faith community should respond in an authentic way to this consumerist culture.

Subsequent chapters look at an array of alternative liturgies including the well-known U-2 Eucharist. The author includes orders of worship and explanations of how the music is used in many of the examples. A more complete knowledge of music styles and specific alternative or praise hymns is desirable and sadly lacking in my repertoire of talents. For the musically gifted, these descriptions of changes in tempo and style to accompany changes in mood would be a feast for the senses.

Wow! And if that wasn't enough, Dr. Spinks examines the misconceptions of neo-Celtic spirituality, the counter-culture world of Amish worship and the relatively new tradition of snake-handling. Ultimately, the author winds back to the post-Vatican II mass, its successes and failures in the vernacular and recent revisions. While many have criticised Vatican II as a late manifestation of modernity, there will certainly be disagreement as to whether revisions are a reflection of post-modern sensibilities or a reactionary step backward. Those privileged enough to participate in Dr. Spinks' class at Yale will, no doubt, delve much deeper into this fascinating range of faith styles at the 'Worship Mall.' This book offered me an eye-opening introduction.

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