



laetus in praesens

Alternative view of segmented documents via Kairos

24 December 2024 | Draft

Condemnation of Protest evoked by Places of Worship Implications for academies, think tanks, laboratories, arenas and bodies cultivating patterns of belief

-- / --

Introduction

Varieties of worship as variously understood?

Worship recognized and cultivated outside religion

Places of "worship" and the protest they may evoke?

Questionable categorization of devotion and worship

Legislative assemblies as places of worship evoking protest -- worthy of condemnation?

Enabling "salvation" nationally and globally via places of worship?

References

Introduction

The Victorian Premier Jacinta Allan has announced a series of measures to crack down on protests, following antisemitic attacks in Melbourne. As a part of those measures, the government of Victoria (Australia) has stated that it would consider legislating safe zones to block protests outside places of worship. ([Victoria to ban face masks and certain flags at protests in response to antisemitic attacks](#), *SBS News*, 17 December 2024; [Laws on masks, places of worship being considered to stop protesters spreading hate](#), *The Age*, 15 December 2024; [Australian state proposes ban on protests at places of worship to fight rising antisemitism](#), *AP News*, 17 December 2024).

A relevant comment from "down under" has been made by Binoy Kampmark ([The Strawman of Antisemitism: banning protests against Israel down under](#), *Global Research*, 19 December 2024). This cites a [joint study](#) by three Australian universities surveying 75 mosques which found that 58.2% had experienced violence between 2014 and 2019.

The Australian initiative is consistent with legislative measures against protest in a number of countries:

- [Europe: Sweeping pattern of systematic attacks and restrictions undermine peaceful protest](#) (*Amnesty International*, 8 July 2024)
- [Europe: Urgent need to protect the right to protest](#) (*Article 19*, 1 July 2024)

- [Anti-Protest Laws in the United States](#) (*First Amendment Watch*, 28 June 2024)
- Nora Benavidez, et al: [Anti-Protest Proposals Index "Our Methodology"](#) (*PEN America*)
- Gareth Hutchens: [Australia leads the world in arresting climate and environment protesters](#) (*ABC News*, 15 December 2024)

Of particular interest in the case of the new Australian initiative is the question it raises as to how "places of worship" are to be defined in light of the variety of possible understandings of "worship". As defined by *Wikipedia*:

Worship is an act of religious devotion usually directed towards a deity or God. For many, worship is not about an emotion, it is more about a recognition of a God. An act of worship may be performed individually, in an informal or formal group, or by a designated leader.

An obvious concern in formulating those legislative measures is how the definition of worship applies in the case of so-called "atheist churches" (Jacqui Frost, [Church without God: How secular congregations fill a need for some nonreligious Americans](#), *The Conversation*, 19 January 2024; Brian Wheeler, [What happens at an atheist church?](#) *BBC News*, 4 February 2013; [What are atheist churches?](#) *The Week*, 21 May 2018). The latter notes that the number of "godless congregations" is growing across the Western world.

The matter is far from trivial in that a number of religions continue to encourage very strong measures against unbelievers (or [infidels](#)), namely those accused of unbelief in the central tenets of a religion. Each religion may well appropriate an understanding of "worship" to its own practices -- deprecating the practices of others as dangerously misguided, if not inherently "evil". Historically this has resulted in a systematic pattern of harassment and violence instigated by religions against those framed as [heretics](#) -- readily reminiscent of those currently held to be "terrorists". In modern literature, the term infidel includes in its scope atheists, polytheists, animists, heathens, and pagans. A willingness to identify other religious people as infidels corresponds to a preference for orthodoxy over pluralism. Such doctrinal beliefs are not subject to sanction by legislative measures notable for their promotion of [freedom of religion](#) and [freedom of speech](#).

Religions have long engaged in violence against those worshipping otherwise, and more specifically against their places of worship. India, for example, continues to be witness to acts of violence perpetrated by Hindus against Muslims, and by Muslims against Hindus. Christianity is remarkable for encouraging and ensuring the destruction of the places of worship of other faiths -- and resisting their construction. The process of "[church planting](#)" by Christians merits comparison with the protest evoked by proposals for mosque construction by Muslims.

Of particular interest with respect to the deprecation of one form of worship from the perspective of another is the degree to which any narrowly defined form of worship may well be displaced from a religious focus to some other focus entirely -- then "worshipped" quite otherwise. The term "worship" may well be used to describe it, and the focused cultivation of that activity may be recognized by others as a form of worship -- and possibly deprecated as such. From a more fundamental perspective, any form of worship -- as practiced by others -- may be perceived as a misleading indulgence in [misplaced concreteness](#), readily deprecated as [idolatry](#).

Whereas attention may be given to "interfaith worship", it remains unclear what "faiths" are included or excluded from the processes envisaged -- or the varieties of worship which might be appreciated in [interfaith worship spaces](#). Examples include those envisaged by the Australian Consultation on Liturgy ([Guidelines for Multi-Faith Worship](#), *Catholic Australia*) and the scouting community ([A Guide to Running Inclusive Interfaith Services](#), *Gamehaven*, July 2023). Despite the initiative of the [Parliament of the World's Religions](#) to engender a [Global Ethic](#), no effort seems to have been made to recognize the variety of forms of worship that such an ethic could imply -- an ecology of worship.

Varieties of worship as variously understood?

Efforts are made by individual religions to distinguish the varieties of worship (as with the *Salah* of Islam). As might be expected, these typically honour only a particular genre of worship (and ignoring others), as partially indicated by the following:

- Christianity:
 - *Sermons about the Varieties of Worship* (Sermon Central)
 - *Different Forms of Worship* (Seneca)
 - *Worship in Comparative Religious Contexts* (Alphacrucis College)
 - Tai Mcguire: *The Different Types of Worship in Christianity* (Just Disciple)
 - Shawn P. Stapleton: *The Varieties of Worship* (Center for Congregational Leadership)
 - Duke Taber: *Exploring 3 Types of Worship in Christianity: A Guide for Passionate Believers* (Answered Faith, 23 March 2024)
- Judaism:
 - *Exploring the 7 Types of Worship in the Bible* (A Worshipper's Devotional) -- noting *towdah*, *yadah*, *barak*, *shabach*, *zamar*, *halal*, and *thillah*.
 - *Tefillah*: Structured daily prayers performed three times a day, with additional prayers on Shabbat and holidays
 - Torah study: Considered a form of worship through engaging with sacred texts
 - Singing of *piyyutim* (liturgical poems) and *niggunim* (wordless melodies)
- Islam: recognizes several key forms of worship beyond Salah (ritual prayer):
 - *Dhikr*: The practice of remembering and repeating the names and attributes of Allah, which can be done individually or collectively, silently or vocally
 - *Du'a*: Personal supplication and informal prayer that can be performed at any time
 - *I'tikaf*: A period of spiritual retreat, typically in a mosque, especially during Ramadan
- Buddhism: has worship practices which vary by tradition but include:
 - Meditation (*bhāvanā*): Various forms including mindfulness, loving-kindness, and analytical meditation
 - Puja: Ceremonial offerings and devotional practices, particularly common in Mahayana traditions
 - Chanting sutras and mantras, which can be done individually or as part of group ceremonies
- Hinduism: worship takes many forms under the umbrella term "puja":
 - Aarti: The ritual waving of lights before deities while chanting hymns
 - *Bhajan* and *kirtan*: Devotional singing, often performed communally
 - Meditation and yoga: Considered forms of worship when done with spiritual intent
 - Home shrine worship: Daily offerings and prayers performed at personal altars
- Sikhism: primary forms of worship include:
 - *Kirtan*: Communal singing of hymns from the Guru Granth Sahib
 - *Ardas*: Formal prayer recited at the beginning and end of significant undertakings
 - *Seva*: Selfless service as a form of worship through actions

Worship recognized and cultivated outside religion

Potentially problematic in distinguishing "places of worship" is the manner in which the process of "worship" is then defined -- and what is associated with that understanding in psychosocial terms. This is most evident from its metaphorical use, as indicated by the following examples. These exclude the manner in which **Christian authors have developed an extensive literature in which any preoccupation is reframed as an act or opportunity for (Christian) worship** -- thereby precluding recognition of other understandings of worship. Those so deprecated are then readily framed in terms of idolatry -- on which commentary may be indicative of the questionable nature of the worship in question.

The experiential subtleties of what may be understood as "worship" include what may well be recognized as associated with "devotion" to whatever substitutes for deity in that engagement. Again however Christian authors have endeavoured to appropriate any such sense as primarily focused on their preferred deity.

In no particular order:

- **Military** worship (and "worshipping the military"), complicated by the role of military chaplains and the extent of military "hero worship" celebrated in memorials. A sense of devotion to the military may be readily recognized and cultivated.
 - Mara Karlin and Alice Hunt Friend: *Military worship hurts US democracy* (*Brookings*, 24 September 2018)
 - Danny Sjrursen: *The Hazards of Military Worship* (*Huffpost*, 11 May 2017)
 - *Military Worship in America and its Inherent Problems* (*Medium*, 5 August 2019)
 - *Military Chaplaincy* (*Multifaith Chaplaincy*)
 - *Why is there such a strong "military devotion" culture in the U.S?* (*Reddit*)

- **Sports** worship (and "worshipping sport"), especially in the case of Australia priding itself on being a sporting nation. The sense of devotion to a sport is commonly recognized.
 - Jeremy Dover: *Sport as Worship* (*Christian Today*)
 - Matt Beardmore: *Is it Safe to Worship Athletes?* (*Psychology Today*, 12 October 2013)
 - Julie Caldwell: *Sports As Worship* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014)
 - Kevin Mitchell: *Australian Open brings chance to worship at Church of Roger Federer* (*The Guardian*, 11 January 2013)
 - *Sports Chaplaincy* (*Multifaith Chaplaincy*)
 - *Worshipping Sport* (*University of Western Australia*, 21 November 2007)
 - *Chappells' house a place of cricket worship* (*The Australian*)

- **Science** (and "worshipping science"), which may be more commonly recognized in terms of devotion to science, especially with respect to particular individuals.
 - Jennifer Wiseman: *Science as an Instrument of Worship* (*BioLogos*, 7 March 2019)
 - Guy J. Consolmagno: *Science is an act of worship* (*YouTube*, 2019)
 - Paul Quiram: *Can You Worship God in the Science Lab?* (*Institute for Faith and Culture*, 29 January 2024)
 - Lilith Helstrom: *I'm An Atheist Who Worships Science* (*Deconstructing Christianity*, 26 November 2023)
 - Marie Mischel: *'Doing science is an act of worship,' Vatican astronomer says* (*Catholic News Service*, 2016)
 - Charlie Ebersole: *I Need a Hero? Inspiration and Hero-Worship in Science* (*Psychology Today*, 23 September 2019)
 - Randal Rauser: *Do atheists worship science?* (*The Tentative Apologist*, 4 December 2020)
 - Herbert Spencer: *Devotion to science is a tacit worship -- a tacit recognition of worth in the things one studies; and by implication in their cause* (*LibQuotes*)
 - *Devotion to Science* (*Scientific American Magazine*, 8, 1853, 32),

- **Arts** (and "worshipping art"), notably in the light of the extensive literature on the role of the arts in worship, and the many so-called "Worship Arts", as with the *WorshipArts Lab* offering a variety of opportunities for students to rethink and reimagine worship. Many readily perceive themselves as devoted to the arts or to a particular art -- or are so described.
 - John Tusa: *Thou Shalt Worship the Arts for What They Are* (*Arts Education Policy Review*, 104, 2003, 3)

- **Music** (and "worshipping music"), as with the arts more generally, music has long been associated

with the process of religious worship -- distinct from the worship of music independent of religion. The sense of devotion to music is widely recognized.

- Nicholas Groves: *The Music of Worship -- or the Worship of Music* (Academia, 2019)
 - Adam Cole: *The Worship of Music*
 - John David Hart: *Art and music as therapy and devotion* (LinkedIn, 29 November 2016)
 - *Worship of Music* (Creative Arts Television, 1972)
 - *The worship of music: Reading David Mitchell's Utopia Avenue* (The Muser, 23 September 2022)
- **Nature**, especially understood as **nature worship** (also known as naturism or physiolatry), namely any of a variety of religious, spiritual and devotional practices that focus on the worship of the nature spirits considered to be behind the natural phenomena visible throughout nature. This may well be described in terms of devotion to nature or to a garden.
 - C. Sanders: *Wicca's Charm: Understanding the Spiritual Hunger Behind the Rise of Modern Witchcraft and Pagan Spirituality* (Crown Publishing Group, 2009)
 - James George Frazer: *The Worship of Nature* (Gifford Lectures, 1926)
 - Lawrence E. Sullivan: *Worship of Nature* (Encyclopedia of Religion, 2005)
 - **Land** (and "worshipping the land"): Whereas some faiths worship the divine in a building, indigenous peoples often worship the land as divine. This could well be described in terms of devotion to the land as being characteristic of many farmers
 - Natasha Bakht and Lynda Collins: *"The Earth is Our Mother": Freedom of Religion and the Preservation of Indigenous Sacred Sites in Canada* (McGill Law Journal, 62, 2017, 3) argue that sacred sites play a crucial role in most indigenous cosmologies and communities; they are as necessary to indigenous religions as human-made places of worship are to other religious traditions
 - Jens Korff: *Meaning of land to Aboriginal people* (Creative Spirits) argues that Aboriginal people have a profound **spiritual connection** to land. Aboriginal law and spirituality are intertwined with the land, the people and creation, and this forms their culture and sovereignty. Elsewhere it is noted that the relationship Aboriginal people have to their country is a deep spiritual connection that is different from the relationship held by other Australians (*The Land - Working with Indigenous Australians*, June 2020)
 - Barry Strauss: *Jewish Roots in the Land of Israel/Palestine* (Hoover Institution, 6 February 2024) argues that the indigeneity of Jews and their spiritual bond with the land is fundamental to ongoing conflicts
 - *Worship of the Land* (Astroshastra)
 - **Employment** may be cultivated as a form of worship, notably in some traditions of craftsmanship. This is now especially evident in some corporations seeking to ensure the dedication of employees and a cohesive work culture. The engagement of individuals with their work, as in the case traditional crafts, may be difficult to distinguish from more conventional forms of worship. The term devotion may well characterize this sense.
 - Ali Stigall: *How to know when you're worshipping your work* (New Spring Church)
 - Kamalini Kumar: *Work as Worship* (17 September 2020)
 - Jennifer Gerlach: *An Excessive Devotion to Work Camouflages and Drives Anxiety* (Psychology Today, 25 October 2023)
 - Carrie Oelberger: *Work Devotion as Identity Armor?* (Organization Science, 17 January 2024)
 - Dana Mattioli: *When Devotion to Work Becomes Job Obsession* (The Wall Street Journal, 23 January 2007)
 - *Daily Work as an Act of Worship* (Mount Evelyn Christian School, 2023)

- **Wealth**, exemplified by riches and [money worship](#), is readily recognized as the focus of a form of "worship -- as with the worship of the wealthy. Material success may then as the highest goal with prosperity as a virtue.
 - Jerry M Lawson: [Our Worship of Wealth](#) (*Medium*, 21 February 2020)
 - Asad Zaman: [The Third Poison: Worship of Wealth](#) (*An Islamic WorldView*, 16 February 2019)
 - Yiftah Elazar: [Adam Smith and the Wealth-Worshipping Spectator](#) (*Journal of the History of Economic Thought*, 45, 2023, 2)
 - Christyl Rivers: [Why We Worship Billionaires](#) (*Medium*, 27 January 2022)
 - Cameron Lee Cowan: [The New Aristocracy or Why We Worship Billionaires](#) (*Medium*, 24 May 2024)

- **Law** as a focus of worship, potentially as embodied in religious law. A sense of devotion -- especially to justice -- may be considered more meaningful
 - Garret Epps: [Worshipping the Law and Denying its Spirit](#) (*The Atlantic*, 26 November 2019)

- **Life** is readily understood as "worshipped", especially in contrast to death. Christians typically cultivate the "worship of life" as integral to their particular beliefs -- ignoring the manner in which life may be worshipped otherwise.
 - Bror Erickson: [The Worship of Life in the Face of Pandemic](#) (*Christ for You*, 20 March 2020)
 - John Piper: [All of Life as Worship](#) (*Desiring God*, 30 November 1997)

- **Heritage** / Lineage / Bloodline: Readily confused with "worship heritage" and its cultivation, heritage may be "worshipped" in relation to family, tradition, ancestry, lineage or bloodline -- with considerable implications for leadership and membership of groups. This may include [ancestral worship](#) and [veneration of the dead](#)

- Technological worship (in contrast to the use of technology in worship), namely obsession with latest devices/innovations and the salvation they (or their leaders) may offer
 - Virginia Heffernan: [A Short History of Technology Worship](#) (*Wired*, 26 February 2018)
 - Scott Timberg: [Don't Trust People Who Worship Technology](#) (*Open Debate*, 10 March 2016)

- **Celebrity** worship (and media personality cults), in the form of star idolization, lifestyle emulation of the famous -- with fame framed as an ultimate achievement. Recognized problematically in terms of [celebrity worship syndrome](#)
 - [Fan or Obsession? All About Celebrity Worship Syndrome](#) (*PsychCentral*)
 - Kerry Justich: [Celebrity Worship: what it is and why we do it, according to experts](#) (*YahooLife*, 15 November 2023)
 - Pete Ward: [Gods Behaving Badly: Media, Religion, and Celebrity Culture](#) (Baylor University Press, 2011)

- **Body/Health** worship, namely an extreme focus on youth, beauty and fitness -- a wellness ideology -- the pursuit of physical perfection:
 - Jefferson B. Fletcher: [The Religion of Beauty in Woman](#) (*The Atlantic*, October 1908)
 - Annabelle Church-Soulard: [From the Worship of God to the Worship of Beauty?](#) (*Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 33, 2010, 2)

- **Knowledge** advancement and the worship of knowledge, namely the veneration of pure reason and its expression by intellectuals, notably extending to credential fetishism. Any discipline might well be considered a form of worship by its practitioners.
 - [Significance of Devotion to Knowledge](#) (*Wisdom Library*)

- **Political/Ideological** worship, notably expressed in party/movement dedication and framing the primacy of political identity -- readily recognized in terms of devotion
 - Iain Clowes: *Ideology: The Modern Day Cult* (*Medium*, 16 July 2018)
 - Elliot Ritzema: *The Idolatry of Ideology* (16 June 2012)
 - John A. Dick: *When People Worship Ideology* (*Another Voice*, 7 August 2011)
- **Self/Ego** worship, expressed through extreme individualism and obsession with personal development, deprecated as the tendency to narcissism
 - Thaddeus Williams: *Self-Worship Is the World's Fastest-Growing Religion* (*The Gospel Coalition*, 10 November 2021)
 - John Hendryx: *Self-Worship* (*Monergism*)
 - Tim Jennings: *Identity and the Worship of Self* (*ComeAndReason Ministries*, 27 October 2022)
- **Power** worship:
 - Michael Lucchese: *Christianity Against Power-Worship* (*Acton Institute*, 26 November 2024)
 - Peter Gelderloos: *Worshipping Power: An Anarchist View of Early State Formation* (AK Press, 2017)

Places of "worship" and the protest they may evoke?

In addition to churches, mosques, temples, synagogues and the like, the following may be variously understood as places of worship -- and so experienced -- in the light of the above articulation. In no particular order:

- **Sacred sites** and the land may be especially valued in ways in complete contrast to more conventional understanding of "worship" and where it may be appropriately practiced. This is notably the case for the Aboriginal peoples of Australia. However they may be held to be worshipped through alternative understanding, it is clear that they can evoke protest -- especially when their location is held to impede development (or has to be protected from such development)
- **Arenas** where thousands may gather can be recognized as evoking a form of worship -- whether for sports, entertainment, or their stars. On a much smaller scale this may be evident in the engagement with fitness in gymnasias. Protest is most evident in the case of discontented supporters of competing football teams, or perceived deficiencies in the ticketing process.
- **Military bases**, given the manner in which the military may be worshipped, these indeed could be recognized as places of worship -- especially given the cultivation of worship therein in anticipation of confrontation with an enemy framed as "evil". Weapons and vehicles (aircraft, tanks, etc) may be 'worshipped' by the teams which operate them -- an attitude cultivated to ensure their most effective operation. Such bases have long been a focus of ban-the-bomb and related protests, typically deemed a threat to national security.
- **Laboratories**, can evoke considerable devotion by those effectively worshipping the advancement of knowledge or the development of technology for the safeguarding or destruction of human life (as with weapons of mass destruction). Laboratories may evoke protest for that reason, as exemplified by the actions of animal rights movements, especially anti-vivisectionists.
- **Factories**, as environments for long-term employment by staff devoted to their work, can be recognized as places of a particular kind of worship -- notably defined by technical excellence. Protests with that focus typically take the form of strikes in the quest for higher wages or better working conditions -- or with request to their pollution of the environment.

- **Fashion shows** can be recognized as contexts in which the latest developments of design are exhibited -- widely "worshipped" by those eager to adopt the latest fashions. Protests there may be made by the models exploited there, or by those concerned with the exploitation of those in developing countries from which materials are sourced.
- **Museums / Memorials / Art galleries**: As exhibited there, art in its various forms may be variously "worshipped". The art exhibited may well evoke protest as exemplifying the disparity between the exceptional monetary value attached to exhibits in contrast with the impoverished conditions of those elsewhere -- or to make a political point, as in the case of "climate change". Protests may focus on those exhibits held to celebrate problematic individuals, as with those associated with slavery or other forms of abuse.
- **Law courts** can be recognized as environments in which the law is "worshipped" in some manner -- where the devotion to justice is held to be assiduously cultivated. They tend (as with **prisons**) to be a focus for protest in the case of controversial cases, whether in favour of the defendant or in quest of more radical treatment such that justice may be served.
- **Theatre / Opera**: Such contexts may well be recognized as "places of worship", most notably the Bayreuth Festival Theatre where the works of Richard Wagner are celebrated. These may evoke protests due to the manner in which they are held to celebrate racial stereotypes, for example.
- **Natural parks / Gardens**: These can be recognized as places where nature can be variously worshipped. This is exemplified by the **sacred gardens** associated with temples of particular faiths, most notably in India. Protests against the faith in question may result in their desecration
- **Cults** may offer a place -- a "space" -- in which unconventional forms of worship are cultivated, as with the rituals of many secret societies -- exemplified by Freemasons, Scientologists and Wiccans, at different extremes.. These may evoke protests focused on the extent to which they are deemed sat antic or exploitative or their members.
- **Banks** and associated financial institutions may be framed as places in which money worship is assiduously practiced. These may evoke protest, as was exemplified by the **Occupy Movement** in 2011. Christians accord particular significance to the gospel account of the violent **cleansing of the temple** instigated by Jesus -- which would now prove problematic for envisaged legislative measures against protest.
- **Hospitals** and health clinics: These environments can be recognized as places where life is worshipped -- often at any cost -- whether by practitioners, patients or their relatives. The pro-life movement is renowned for the protests such environments evoke when they offer facilities for abortion.

Somewhat ironical, given current controversies regarding the nature of "worship" (both in the light of deprecation of idolatry and sexual abuse where worship is practiced), are the early rituals of **sacred prostitution** in places of worship -- a controversial matter of continuing study (Emily Whitmore, *Sex in the Religion: Sacred prostitutes to Vestal Virgins, Academia*; Mary Beard, *The Sexual Status of Vestal Virgins, The Journal of Roman Studies*, 70, 1980). The irony is all the greater in that search engines now offer references to relevant **homophones** resulting from predictable misspellings of "worship".

From a functional and systemic perspective, reference is readily made to "Vestal Virgins" and "Sacred Cows" in "places of worship". The term "sacred cow" appears more frequently in business and policy contexts, while "vestal virgin" tends to appear in academic or cultural criticism. Both terms share the implication of excessive reverence and protection of practices or principles that should perhaps be open to challenge and change.

Of ironic relevance to any condemnation of protest in relation to places of worship (as conventionally understood) has been recent documentation of the remarkable extent of unconstrained sexual abuse within those contexts -- and the manner in which any protest has been systematically suppressed by authorities with protection of the perpetrators (*Study reveals prevalence of child sexual abuse in religious settings*, *Phys.org*, 5 August 2024; Geoff McMaster, *Researchers reveal patterns of sexual abuse in religious settings*, *Phys.org*, 6 August 2020; Dylan Stefanich, *Religiosity as a Predictor of Attitudes Towards Pedophilia*, *Psyche*, 1, 2022; Amber Fraley, *Why is pedophilia and sexual abuse so rampant in houses of worship?* *Medium*, 12 June 2023).

Questionable categorization of devotion and worship

Any legislative measures envisaged are confronted by a number of unresolved challenges in categorizing places of worship. Whilst legislation may make provision for a variety of conventional forms of worship as practiced in churches, temples, mosques and synagogues, this takes little account of the extent to which primacy may be given to a particular religion and therefore to its privileged places of worship -- as is the case in many jurisdictions. That consideration may encourage worship to be categorized in hierarchical terms with that of the most favoured at the top.

Any hierarchical approach could pose particular difficulties in relation to those engaged in other forms of worship as indicated above -- given the relative consideration it may be appropriate to give to them: military bases vs banks, hospital vs laboratories, etc. The challenge could be usefully recognized as deriving from the relative importance accorded to the variety of human preoccupations evoking devotion if not worship -- a matter on which there is little consensus, as with that of the relative significance of the main religions.

Distinguishing the forms of devotion and worship against which protest might be inappropriately made can then be understood as a far more fundamental challenge of the relative classification of human preoccupations -- which may itself evoke some form of protest against it (*Functional Classification in an Integrative Matrix of Human Preoccupations*, 1982). Given the potentially problematic manner in which preoccupations may be configured, other approaches merit consideration (*Interactive Polyhedral Configuration of Preoccupations*, 2023; *Visualizing the Coherent Configuration of Incommensurable Cognitive Modalities*, 2024). Any such configuration raises questions as to how particular forms of worship and devotion are to be distinguished as more "fundamental" -- with others deemed to be "secondary" (if not to their practitioners), or even "illegitimate". Curiously this could be understood as a design challenge of "worship architecture".

Precluding secondary and inappropriate forms of devotion, theologians and others tend to frame any such configuration through a mysterious understanding of "confluence" in defiance of experiential reality (Teilhard de Chardin, *The Confluence of Religions*, *Theology Today*, 27, 1970, 1; Todd E. Johnson, *Wisdom at the Confluence of Worship, Theology, and the Arts*, *Fuller Studio*; W. Jardine Grisbrooke, *Compenetration of Rites and Confluence of Worship: Ecumenical Perspectives*, *Studia Liturgica*, 26, 1996, 2; Bimala Candra Datta, *Sri Ramakrishna Tirthas: Confluence of Devotion and Service*, Ramakrishna Vivekananda Institute of Research and Culture, 1980).

Legislative assemblies as places of worship evoking protest -- worthy of condemnation?

The strategic initiatives of legislative assemblies are increasingly a focus of popular protest against which they see themselves righteously obliged to elaborate measures for their prohibition. Curiously in the light of the above argument -- and surprisingly -- such assemblies could well be held to be "places of worship". In the case of Australia, for example, both houses of the Federal Parliament are required by standing orders to commence their daily proceedings with a recitation of the *Lord's Prayer* of Christianity (*Prayers in the Senate: abolition, retention or change?*; *Why is the Lord's Prayer read at the beginning of each day in the House of Representatives and Senate if Australia is a secular nation?* *Parliamentary Education Office*). Any oath of government office typically invokes the Christian deity.

Curiously also, the leader of the country may be variously nicknamed as "God" -- whether visibly seated in the assembly as prime minister, or absent from it as president. The pattern is especially evident in France (*Emmanuel Macron mocked after comparing himself to two Gods in bizarre speech*, *Express*, 25 May 2022). Those elected to such roles, if especially religious, may frame their task as a "soldier of God". Prayer may be a feature of cabinet meetings, or as a prelude to them (*George W. Bush - Faith in the White House; Prayer in Bush Administration*, *The Forerunner*, 1 March 1989).

A degree of controversy has been associated, for example, with Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison as a devout Pentacostalist, especially following his [secretive appropriation of five ministerial portfolios](#) (Philip C. Almond, *Five aspects of Pentecostalism that shed light on Scott Morrison's politics*, *The Conversation*, 23 May 2019). Suspicions in that regard were notably exacerbated by the commitment of Pentacostalists to societal dominance under the *Seven Mountain Mandate* (Steve Davies, *Australia's Pentecostal Extreme World Makeover Exposed*, *The AIM Network*, 13 February 2020; Fernando Mora-Ciangherotti, *The Widening, Deepening, and Lengthening of the Seven Mountains Mandate (7MM) Network: the role of network apostolic leadership* *Religions*, 15, 2024, 11).

Biblical deprecation of [worship of a sacred calf](#), calls for comparison with contemporary reference to a "sacred cow" in legislative discourse (Katherine V.W. Stone, *Arbitration -- From Sacred Cow to Golden Calf: three phases in the history of the Federal Arbitration Act*, *Pepperdine Dispute Resolution Law Journal*, 23, 2023, 113; Tracy Mitrano, *Sacred Cows and Golden Calves: free trade, technology and citizenship*, *Inside Higher Ed; Important Insights about Sacred Cows Gleaned from the Golden Calf*, *Lifeway Research*, 9 November 2017;). A sacred cow implies an unspoken agreement or consensus among political actors that certain topics, practices, or individuals are off-limits to criticism or reform (*Sacred Cow*, *Political Dictionary*). Opposing political parties readily deprecate the agenda of the other in terms of a "sacred cow" -- whilst potentially worshipping their own "golden calf".

If legislative assemblies invite recognition as places of worship, of relevance is the considerable debate recently evoked by incidences of sexual harassment of those who might well be understood as performing a temple function corresponding to that of the Vestal Virgins of Ancient Rome (*One in three parliamentary staffers say they have faced sexual harassment*, *SBS News*, 30 November 2021; Hannah Moore, *Bombshell parliament workplace report detailing sex assault allegations 'not surprising'*, *News.com*, 10 November 2024). Such harassment contrasts with the high esteem in which the Vestal Virgins were historically held (Inge Kroppenber, *Law, Religion, and Constitution of the Vestal Virgins*, *Law and Literature*, 22, 2010, 3). Rather than "golden calf", and as with "golden globes", there is the supreme irony of the implication that it is "golden calves" which are thereby worshipped (Heather Creekmore, *Worshipping Calves: what the Old Testament can teach us about body image, Compared to Who?* 9 March 2020; *Contrasting clusters of operational meaning of "ass"*, 2003).

There is a particular irony in the case of the Parliament of the State of Victoria which (as noted above) may well formulate legislation with regard to prohibition of protest in the vicinity of places of worship. Despite controversy in that regard, that Parliament is also required to commence its proceedings with the *Lord's Prayer* (Angus Tonkin, *Prayer in Parliamentary Proceedings*, *Parliament of Victoria*, 3, 2024, March; *Should Australian parliaments axe the Lord's Prayer? In Victoria it's up for debate*, *The Guardian*, 17 January 2024). That parliament has however been obliged to recognize formally the need for protection of its own personnel from harassment by its own members within its own services (*Parliamentary Workplace Standards and Integrity Bill 2024*, *Parliament of Victoria*, 18 July 2024).

Enabling "salvation" nationally and globally via places of worship?

Whilst clearly not held to be places of worship in a conventional sense, there is a degree of merit to the argument that the dedication and devotion evoked in some by the proceedings of such places could be seen as a contemporary collective quest for "national salvation" -- even "global salvation" -- however this might be

understood in secular terms. The rhetoric of politicians may well imply this -- if not explicitly -- a prospect readily encouraged in those who pray for some such outcome, as claimed by some presidents and prime ministers (*White House Prayer for Our Nation 1998-2025*; *Prayer for the Salvation of the World*, Catholic News Agency).

It is therefore profoundly curious that the quest for "salvation" articulated by conventional religions should be only too evidently associated with conflict between their adherents -- exemplified by the politics of such religions with regard to the places of worship of other conventional religions. "Our Way -- Or No Way!" From that perspective any purported quest for "global salvation" merits particular examination through the manner in which other "unconventional" forms of worship (as indicated above) are deprecated or ignored -- as with their "places of worship". As with conventional religions, such distinctive forms of dedication and devotion exhibit a degree of mutual suspicion and deprecation -- contrary to any token quests for "interdisciplinarity" and the like.

It is especially intriguing to recognize legislative assemblies as being effectively places of worship in quest of "national salvation" -- a quest undermined by the highly problematic dynamics between political parties accusing each other of focusing on "sacred cows", whether or not this extends to effectively worshipping "sacred calves". This dynamic is reproduced within the United Nations and its Specialized Agencies -- appropriately recognized in their own right as "places of worship" in quest of "global salvation" (Jodok Troy, *Salvation by Legitimation in the United Nations*, SSRN Electronic Journal, 2017).

Glibly employed, it is far from clear what "salvation" is then understood to signify. From the argument above, there is the implication that it lies at the confluence of inter-faith, inter-disciplinary, inter-cultural, and international discourse -- all of which are fundamentally challenged individually, irrespective of any assumptions regarding their collective "salvatory" or "redemptive" function, or how it might be comprehended and communicated. There is an implication that national and international institutions could focus their devotion on resolution of the multitude of global problems now framed as a polycrisis. Anticipation of that possibility is framed by some in terms of a singularity, itself variously to be understood and called into question (*Emerging Memetic Singularity in the Global Knowledge Society*, 2009; *Comprehension of Singularity through 4-fold Complementarity*, 2024).

In a period in which "end times" are variously envisaged, of particular relevance to any consideration of global salvation are the contrasting interpretations of biblical prophecies regarding the salvation of the nations, notably as to whether this will exclude the gentiles and pagans (Isaiah M. Gillette, *Salvation of the Nations in Isaiah*, *NEXUS: the liberty journal of interdisciplinary studies*, 1 2024, 2; Jaap Dekker, *Salvation for Israel and the Nations: Disputing the Interpretation of Isaiah 25:6-8 as an Announcement of Doom*, *Bulletin for Biblical Research*, 31, 2021, 2; J. Severino Croatto, *The 'Nations' in the Salvific Oracles of Isaiah*, *Vetus Testamentum*, 55, 2005, 2).

References

Susan C. Karant-Nunn (Ed). Varieties of Devotion in the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Brepols, 2003

Stephen R. Prothero. God is Not One: the eight rival religions that run the world. HarperOne, 2011
[[summary](#)]

Aaron Segal and Samuel Lebens (Eds.). The Philosophy of Worship: Divine and Human Aspects. Cambridge University Press, 2025 [[contents](#)]

Charles Taliaferro. On Divine Dedication: Philosophical Theology with Jeremy Taylor. *Christian Philosophy: Conceptions, Continuations, and Challenges*, 2018. [[abstract](#)]

Nicholas Rescher. The Strife of Systems: An Essay on the Grounds and Implications of Philosophical Diversity. University of Pittsburgh Press, 1985



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).

For further updates on this site, [subscribe here](#)