



# The Dangers of Prayer Wheel Worship!

—Ralph D. Winter, Editor

**W**hat is most important is worship. Therefore what is most important to falsify—from Satan’s point of view—is also worship.

In the Bible, the pinnacle of devotion is the angels in heavenly worship. But what is “heavenly” for angels may not always be the reality with human weakness in the picture.

Worship “experiences” are pervasive and virtually everywhere in the cults and various non-Christian religions of the world, but, even in the Bible, worship is both highly prized and profoundly mistrusted.

I have often thought that the most anti-religious paragraphs in all of the world’s literature can be found in the first chapter of Isaiah, where the text clearly condemns worship that had devolved to a sham and fraud utterly detestable to God:

Your celebrations of the new moon and Sabbath day, and your special days of fasting—even your most pious meetings—are all sinful and false. I cannot stand the sight of them. When you spread out your hands I will refuse to look. Even though you offer many prayers I will not listen. (Isa. 1:14-15)

Dazzling and impressive forms of worship abound. The worship of spiritually-minded, Muslim Sufis has led to their being called “Whirling Dervishes.” On a small Caribbean island, the worshipers of a god “Zo” paint those two letters on every square inch of their naked bodies and gyrate for intoxicated hours of fervent “worship experience.”

It is not strange that throughout the Bible, especially in the gospels, we are often startled and sobered by the harsh

condemnation of phoney or empty religious practices.

Yet none of this is in opposition to true worship. Consider the exalted language which conclude 1 Timothy:

He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords; who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light; whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen. (1 Tim 6:15,16)

Or, take Paul’s expression of true worship at the end of Romans 11:

Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable ways! ... For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen. I urge you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies [not animals] a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. (Rom. 11:33-12:1)

Yet, even though animal sacrifices had been legitimate symbols in the past, Psalm 51:17 declares that:

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart.

Perhaps it is a measure of our mindlessness in worship that many people do not realize that some worship songs are essentially a *proclamation* to other human beings, while other things we sing are actually *prayers* directed to God.

We religiously shut our eyes when we pray, but we don’t always realize that often the words we sing—with our eyes wide open—are also prayers to the Living God.

Our public prayers may start out addressed to God, but end up talking about Him. For example, we might

say, “We thank you, Oh God, for your mercies to us, and we want, above all else, for God to rule in our lives.” If we were consciously speaking to God, we would say, “We want *You* to rule in our lives.”

The place where we worship is not magical. We dedicate “sanctuaries” or “worship centers” but the Bible says,

Where is the house you will build for me? ... On this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at my word. (Isa. 66:1-2)

What is the actual basis of worship?

Worship is, in part, the public, verbal acknowledgement of His “worth.”

That worth, that true glory, is seen most clearly “in the face of Jesus Christ.” But the heavens also declare the glory of God. His creation displays his handiwork. The Old Testament word for “glory” describes the spectacular retinue of horsemen and chariots accompanying a king.

How long does it take for new insights into His glorious creation (such as only can be seen in microscopes or telescopes) to affect our worship lyrics? Recently, we have been astonished by breakthrough after breakthrough into the incredible complexity within the human cell.

But do our hymns lead us to reflect on mitochondria or DNA molecules? Apart from the person of Christ, nothing could testify more clearly to the astounding wonder of our Creator God. Should we be ignorant of such things and not allow them to heighten our awe before the Living God?

Worship must not be centered in what we want or seek but upon Who He is and the blessed, loving marvel that He is. Prayer wheels and verbal mantras are centered on what we want. Activities of worship can express the highest devotion based on the deepest understanding, or they can be one of the most dangerous of all forms of phoneyess. Worship can be dangerous! Prayer wheels are not merely found in Tibet. 🌐