

## ancient-future worship :: rediscovering worship for all the senses

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### what do you mean "ancient-future"?

the term has been thrown around for several years, probably "coined" by robert webber of the institute for worship studies (author of *ancient-future faith*). basically, it refers to christians in the now rediscovering the ancient roots of their faith - looking again at and using the tools which have been used for centuries to help draw us into a full-orbed worship experience with God. the "-future" would imply that its not merely a matter of doing old things for the sake of doing old things, but of weaving these ancient stable things in with what's going on now. i like to look at it as "free-flowing liturgy." liturgy (means "the work of the people" - certain forms of worship) which is not heavily rigid - which is connected with the ancient way but adaptable to our current circumstances, and to the Holy Spirit.

it is about recapturing forgotten things, things which have been stripped out of some of our christian traditions. during the protestant reformation some unfortunate things happened. the churches were stripped of all art, all representation, all symbols - everything except a bible and a pulpit. some of us have been raised in this atmosphere, where everything is about words - it was all in the mind, never in the guts. God created all our senses. He reveals Himself to us through them all if we pay attention.

the other part of this is about where we are - in this post-modern era. we may not totally know what that means yet, but we do know what we've moved away from: rationalism and an over-emphasis on figuring everything out to a logical certainty. we are back, it seems, to being a more mystically oriented people, open to spiritual things which may not have a full explanation. so, these ancient means of worship are more relevant than ever - they mesh well with what's going on in the world now.

### so what are we talking about here - practically?

we're talking about things which engage the whole person in worship - not just the mind or the hearing of words in preaching or teaching. those things are a part of the whole but not the whole itself. we're talking about visual things such as icons, candles, the use of film, art in its various forms. we're talking about getting your body into the experience in ways such as crossing yourself, using your hands in other symbolic gestures, kneeling, laying on the floor, etc. it may mean we even get the sense of smell into this thing by using incense to symbolize the sweet smell of the sacrifice of our lives rising up to God, or the smoke with the smell as our prayers rising up to him as we see in the scriptures. using these things in tandem with each other in the midst of free-flowing elements, in planned installations, and as a regular part of our gathering times can go far in re-introducing our whole selves into the lifetime worship event.

i think it may also mean that many of us who have never lived in this way as christians, rediscover the power of sacraments (avenues of grace). the other things we have been talking about are sometimes referred to as "sacramentals" - they are outward things which point to spiritual realities - things we use and perhaps

do with our bodies to help cultivate communion with God. the sacraments are events, avenues which God has given us through which we can constantly come in a physical and a spiritual way combined, to receive more of His grace. the chief of these sacraments in the history of the church has been the eucharist - aka, communion or the Lord's supper. in the eucharist we have been given a tangible way to receive Jesus, His sacrifice for us, His gift of grace to us, for strength in our lives to be transformed into His image.

- :: a moving back
- :: a moving forward
- :: recapturing and mixing
- :: connecting with contemporary mystical mindset
- :: not just to be cool
- :: connecting with/communing with God on multiple levels, through multiple senses = a fuller experience, a more thorough worship

mind  
hearing  
visual  
touch/body  
smell  
taste



*all these things are part of who we are - our whole created being should be involved in communing with God.*

**words** ::: spoken - sung - poetry - stories - teaching - exhortation - intimate conversation

**mind** ::: meditation - silence

**visual** ::: art - icons - visual symbols - stations of the cross - candles - crosses/crucifixes

**touch/body** ::: body postures - kneeling - lying prostrate - hands raised

**smell** ::: incense

**taste** ::: "eucharist" - other symbolic tastes - salt - bitter herbs

**acting out - not just sitting and listening**

**Q** ::: how do some of you do this now?

**Q** ::: how do you see it helping you?

**Q** ::: what new things might you see doing now that you may not have seen before?