

Yesterday's Worship Leaders Speak To Worship Leaders Today

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Before we get started

- #1 rule: everything is up for open discussion.

Before we get started

- Remember that we'll be looking at a variety of kinds of materials. Thus how they main inform us will vary.
- Some of it will be direct instruction, some descriptions of worship, and some interesting worship texts.
- None comes from musicians; at least, none comes from musicians who aren't also pastors.

Before we get started

- This will be an imaginative exercise on our part since there's no way that Christians 1500-2000 years ago could have anticipated our worship today.

As we get started

- Remember the basic shape of their worship:
 - Weekly
 - Gathering, Reading and Preaching, Dismissing unbaptized, Tabling (intercessions, offering of food and money, exchange of peace, Creed, Thanksgiving, eating) , Sending
 - Music was not a separate thing but a basic way of doing the key action of worship.
 - Daily: Christians prayed several times a day, initially in domestic settings and later together in larger churches
 - Yearly: not much of the rhythms of the year until the 4th century when the calendar explodes into a shape close to what we have

Paul, mid-1st Century

“If one members suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it....if [I] do not have love, I am nothing.”

I Corinthians 12:26, 13:2b

Didache, Early 2nd Century, Syria

“But let no one eat or drink of your Lord’s Supper, unless they have been baptized into the name of the Lord; for concerning this also the Lord has said, ‘Give not that which is holy to the dogs’.”

(Compare Matthew 7:6.)

Justin Martyr, mid-2nd Century, Rome

“...so likewise have we been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His word,...is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh.”

The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus, 3rd Century

“If a catechumen (someone in preparation for baptism; the *Apostolic Tradition* recommends 3 years of preparation) is arrested for the name of the Lord, let him not be in two minds about his witness. For if he suffers violence and is killed before receiving baptism...he has received baptism in his blood.”

The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus, 3rd Century

“We render thanks to you, O God, through your beloved child, Jesus Christ, whom in the last times you sent to us as Savior and Redeemer and angel of your will; who is your inseparable Word, through whom you made all things, and in whom you were well pleased. You sent him from heaven into the Virgin’s womb; and, conceived in the womb, he was made flesh and was manifested as your Son, being born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin. Fulfilling your will and gaining for you a holy people, he stretched out his hands when he should suffer, that he might release from suffering those who have believed in you....”

Eusebius, early 4th Century, Caesarea

“So more sweetly pleasing to God than any musical instrument would be the symphony of the people of God, by which, in every church of God, with kindred spirit and single disposition, with one mind and unanimity of faith and piety, we raise melody in unison in our psalmody.”

Apostolic Constitutions, mid-4th Century, Syria

“If a poor person or someone of low social rank or a stranger comes upon you, whether that person be old or young, and there is no place for them, the deacon shall find a place for even these, and that with all his heart. Instead of worrying about what others will think, let deacons and deaconesses be more concerned that their ministry toward God may be pleasing.”

Apostolic Constitutions, mid-4th Century, Syria

- You who bound the strong man and despoiled him of all his goods,... who have delivered the serpent, that murderer of men, bound into our hands as a sparrow into the hands of children; you whom all things dread, trembling before the face of your power...you whose look dries up the deep, and whose threatening melts the mountains, and whose truth abides for ever; you whom infants praise and sucklings bless, whom the angels hymn and worship; you who look upon the earth, and make it tremble, who touch the mountains and they smoke, who threaten the sea and dry it up, and turn all rivers into deserts; you for whom the clouds are dust beneath your feet, you who walk on the sea as on dry land: Only-begotten God, Son of the great Father, rebuke the evil spirits, and deliver the works of your hands from the power of the hostile spirit...

John Chrysostom, 4th Century, Syria

“Hell took a body (i.e., the buried body of Christ) and came upon God. It took earth and encountered Heaven.”

Ambrose, Late 4th Century, Milan

“With what great effort is silence maintained in church during the readings! If just one person recites, the entire congregation makes noise; but when a psalm is read, it is itself the guarantor of silence because when all speak [in the response] no one makes noise.

Basil the Great, Late 4th Century, Cappadocia

Describing the practice of monks worshipping in the middle of the night: “At first they divide themselves into two groups and sing psalms in alternation with each other, as once intensifying their carefulness over the sacred texts, and focusing their attention and freeing their hearts from distraction. And then they entrust the lead of the chant to one person, while the rest sing in response. After thus spending the night in a variety of psalmody with interspersed prayer, now that the light of day has appeared, all in common as if from one mouth and one heart offer the psalm of confession to the Lord, while each fashions his personal words of repentance.”

Theodoret, Early 5th Century, Cyprus

“Since Harmonios, the son of Bardesanes, had composed some songs long ago, and mixing the sweetness of melody with his impiety had beguiled his audience and led them to their destruction, Ephrem took the music for his song, mixed in his own piety, and thus presented his listeners with a remedy both exceedingly sweet and beneficial.”

Augustine, Early 5th Century, N. Africa

“Hymns are praises of God that are sung. They are songs that praise God. If there is praise but not praise of God, then there is no hymn. If there is praise and praise of God and if it is not sung, then it is no hymn. To be a hymn, there must be praise, praise of God, and singing....Whoever sings praise, not only praises but does so with gladness; whoever sings praise, not only sings but also loves the person about whom one sings. In praise the one confessing speaks out; in singing there is the ardor of the one who loves....”

Augustine, Early 5th Century

N. Africa

“When the body of the Son prays, it does not separate its Head from itself; and it is the one Savior of his body, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who prays for us, and prays in us, and is prayed to by us. He prays for us as our priest; he prays in us as our Head; he is prayed to by us as our God. Let us therefore recognize our words in him and his words in us.”

Augustine, Early 5th Century

N. Africa

“If you, therefore, are Christ’s body and members it is your own mystery that is placed on the Lord’s table! It is your own mystery that you are receiving! You are saying Amen to what you are – your response is a personal signature, affirming your faith. When you hear ‘The body of Christ’ – you reply ‘Amen.’ Be a member of Christ’s body, then, so that your Amen may ring true....Be what you see, receive what you are.”

Leo I, mid-5th Century, Rome

During an Ascension day sermon:

“What was conspicuous in the Redeemer has passed over into the ~~sacraments.~~”

worship life of the church.”

Leo I, mid-5th Century, Rome

“We know everything that the Son of God did and taught for the reconciliation of the world not just as a history of past actions, but we also experience the force of their works in the present.”

Romanos, 6th Century, Constantinople

“Bethlehem has opened Eden.”

Discussion

- What would you say are some of the top worship values in the early church?
- What strikes you as a very different sort of perspective as compared to today?
- What might we learn?