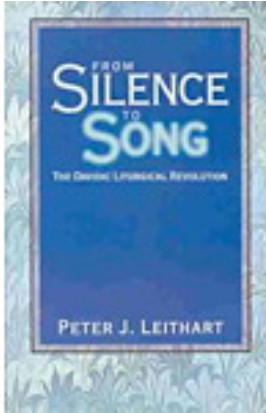


BOOK NOOK



From Silence to Song The Davidic Liturgical Revolution

by Peter Leithart (Canon Press, 2003)

So many of the current flood of books on worship are thin on biblical content. That's what makes this book refreshingly different. It is full of fascinating insights and well-supported arguments based on a careful reading and study of the biblical text. (This is illustrated by the fact that the slim 130-page text is accompanied by a Scripture Index of eight full pages!) In the process he makes the book of 1 Chronicles come alive with interest and relevance—no small accomplishment!

Leithart shows what an enormous debt we owe to King David for his innovations in musical worship:

From what we can learn in the Pentateuch, Israel's worship in the Mosaic period was virtually silent. . . . Trumpets were blown over the morning and evening ascension offerings (Num. 10:9-10), but no other liturgical music is explicitly mentioned. By contrast, as we shall see (chapter 4), the worship of the Davidic tabernacle was mainly worship in song, and the Levitical choir and orchestra was later incorporated into temple worship in the days of Solomon. When Christians sing hymns and psalms in worship, when we play organs or pianos, guitars or trumpets, we are heirs of the Davidic "liturgical revolution." (15-16)

Through a study of numerous passages in 1 Chronicles, Leithart traces that "revolution," the remarkable development of music in Israel's worship, and the leading role of Levites in that new focus. He makes a good case that, whereas the Levites were charged with lifting and carrying the Ark of the Covenant during its years of migration (Deut 10:8), their role evolves when the Ark settles in Jerusalem, becoming one of "lifting up" the Name of the Lord in song (63).

During David's reign this worship centers around the new tabernacle that he erected on Mount Zion in Jerusalem (2 Sam 6:17; 1 Chron 16:1), where he places the Ark of the Covenant, even while the original tabernacle of Moses resided in Gibeon as another center of the nation's worship (1 Chron 16:39-43; the Ark and the rest of the tabernacle furniture are later reunited in Solomon's temple: 1 Kings 8:1-11; 2 Chron 5:2-14). He notes this curious juxtaposition, and sees David's tabernacle as pointing to the future (especially since it rested on Mount Zion, which figures so prominently in Old Testament prophecy's views of the future; whereas the temple itself would be built elsewhere in Jerusalem, on Mount Moriah).

Leithart attempts to unravel the difficult prophetic reference to the restoration of the Davidic tabernacle that is found in Joel 9 and (quoting Joel 9) at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15. Leithart does not buy into the assertion of a few charismatic writers that the modern-day charismatic movement and its (undisputed) influence on the Church's worship was in fact the restoration of David's tabernacle; he rightly points out that James in Acts 15 clearly sees the fulfillment as having already happened in his day. Leithart suggests that the restoration is one of future-looking, Gentile-welcoming worship such as (he shows) was practiced on Mount Zion under David. (He makes the fascinating observation that, until the time of David, Jewish references to the Gentiles were almost exclusively hostile, rather than the invitation to the nations to worship and bow down before Israel's God, which is the predominant bearing in Chronicles and throughout the Psalms.)

Leithart's careful exegesis unfortunately gives way at one point to a risky typology when he attempts to make direct connections to New Testament worship (99-100), illustrating once again what a treacherous minefield typology can be. His leanings toward a preterist eschatology (which sees many of the biblical end-time prophecies fulfilled by the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.) also lead him to some questionable conclusions (99-100). These small detours are a reminder of the importance of the kind of exegetical rigor which is so admirably displayed in the rest of the book.

In the last chapter of this stimulating study, Leithart draws a set of helpful and insightful biblical principles from his study, which may helpfully inform and inspire our use of music in worship, in grateful acknowledgment of the legacy of David's liturgical revolution.

GLOBAL WORSHIP

In Memoriam Thomas L. Avery (1949-2008)

On Tuesday August 12, the world of ethnodoxology lost a giant. Tom Avery died of a sudden health problem in Dallas, Texas, USA.

Tom was well known as a leader in ethnomusicology with Wycliffe/SIL. For many years he worked in Brazil, helping Amazonian Indians develop Christian songs using their tribal heart musics. No one will ever forget the Canela Indians' version of "It Is God's Word That Makes Me So Very Happy," which Tom introduced around the world to great amazement and amusement. In later years he worked in various parts of Latin America, holding workshops, leading seminars, training interns, and being a shining light. He learned multiple music styles of Latin America, from very urban to very rural.

In the cause of using "heart music" in worship, Tom had a huge impact around the world—in fact, he was the one who popularized that phrase in missions.

For about ten years, Tom taught ethnomusicology for Wycliffe/SIL. Some of Tom's materials are used probably everywhere in the world where a course on "music and missions" is taught today. He was also SIL's first International Coordinator for Ethnomusicology. In that role he shepherded ethnomusicologists (novices and professionals), helping to develop the department into the powerhouse it is today.

Tom studied under Vida Chenoweth at Wheaton College, and received his doctorate in ethnomusicology from Indiana University. He later had the vision to develop computer programs based on the melodic analysis method that Vida had created.

In many innovative ways, Tom helped to promote missions in general and "heart-music worship" in particular. He was a co-founder of the Wycliffe World Music Band, which performed global Christian music for many thousands of people. He was also among the founders of the Global Consultation on Music and Missions, which gave rise to a series of important milestones in ethnodoxology.

Tom directly inspired, challenged, trained, influenced and encouraged thousands of people around the world, and untold hundreds of thousands through those. He was very good at multiplying his efforts. We think of him now floating, bobbing, shouting, laughing, exalting—singing with the Logos, playing his charango to the Lover of his Soul, doing the stomp dance with the Bright and Morning Star, playing panpipes with the angels, drumming a sanctified samba in the glory cloud—and we envy him. Let's rejoice with Tom's good fortune, grieve the real loss to his family and to us, and work to extend his passion to millions more—that passion to help the peoples of the world know God, love him, and worship him fully.

—Paul Neeley & Brian Schrag