

**TOWARD A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF GOD'S PRESENCE IN
CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY: A STUDY OF HOW DIFFERENT
INTERPRETATIONS OF THE DIVINE PRESENCE
AFFECT LITURGY**

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Problem

In spite of the universal agreement on the importance of the divine presence as the central aspect of liturgy, there are three conflicting ways in which the presence of God relates to liturgy. They broadly correspond to the main liturgical traditions: Sacramental (Roman Catholic), Kerygmatic (Protestant) and Charismatic (Pentecostal and Interdenominational). In our current situation, how does this universal agreement about the presence of God as the central aspect of liturgy relate to the conflicting means by which congregations assess his presence?

Purpose

The purpose of this study was (1) to describe how the three diverging views relate the presence of God to liturgy, (2) to ascertain the cause/s of this divergence by focusing on the divine presence as the central component, and (3) to overcome this divergence by examining the possibility of developing a theology of the divine presence on the basis of Scripture.

Methodology

The methodology in this study included an historical overview of the nature and extent of liturgical conflict in Christianity, a phenomenological method that discovered all of the parts of liturgy, a model method that grouped all the parts of liturgy around the divine presence, a hermeneutical method that revealed the macro hermeneutical presuppositions that each model interprets, and an exegetical and systematic method of the selected OT and NT Scriptures.

Findings

The most significant finding revealed by the historical overview was that Protestants and Charismatics who employ the terms real presence and musical transubstantiation to describe the divine presence in preaching and music have never challenged the interpretation of the divine presence via transubstantiation championed by the Catholic Church. This has led to contradictory views of the divine presence, the rest of the liturgical components, and the ecumenical search for unity. As a result, this study concluded that there are two main

causes of liturgical pluralism and disunity in Christian liturgy. The first is the intentional use of timeless Being via the transubstantiation hypothesis by the Sacramental model. The second is the failure of the Kerygmatic and Charismatic models to deconstruct the transubstantiation hypothesis, and to apply the Sola Scriptura principle to the divine presence, the rest of the liturgical components, and to the ecumenical search for unity.

Since the previous models failed to apply the Sola Scriptura principle to all of the liturgical components, the aim of the Biblical Sanctuary model was to employ a phenomenological exegesis to the selected OT and NT passages in which the liturgical components are found. This exegetical and systematic method allowed the data in each passage to unfold its meaning by rendering groundless the hermeneutical role of timeless Being. Furthermore, employing a phenomenological exegesis led to the discovery of God's infinite analogical temporal Being as the framework for interpreting the divine presence. This discovery allowed the heavenly sanctuary to function as the macro hermeneutical presupposition that grounds the temporal relationship between the divine presence, the rest of the liturgical components, their complex interrelationships, and the biblical search for unity. Hence, by employing the exegetical and systematic methods that are grounded in the Sola Scriptura principle, the Biblical Sanctuary model reveals that it is possible to build a theology of the divine presence within the context of the search for unity.