

**Pneumatological Doxology:
A Scriptural Case for Worshiping the Holy Spirit
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Evangelical arguments for worshiping the Holy Spirit frequently begin with an assumption that no explicit biblical warrant exists for this practice.¹ As a result, Spirit worship is frequently justified in the following fashion: (1) The Bible says we should worship God. (2) The Bible teaches the Holy Spirit is God. (3) Therefore, Christians should worship the Spirit.² In this argument, the practice of worshiping the Spirit merely represents a logical inference from biblical teaching concerning the Spirit's deity. While this argument is sound, it gives up too quickly on the biblical witness.

In conversation with the Cappadocian theologian Basil of Caesarea,³ I will argue that substantial biblical warrant exists for worshiping the Spirit. My essay is

¹ For example, "Since the Holy Spirit is divine, is it proper to worship him? Yes, in fact, it is wrong *not* to worship him. As the song says, 'Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.' We should point out, though, that there are no biblical examples or precedents for addressing the Holy Spirit directly in praise or prayer." Jack Cottrell, *The Faith Once for All: Bible Doctrine for Today* (Joplin, M.O.: College Press, 2002), 186. Evangelicals like Cottrell would concur with the judgment of Arthur Wainwright: "There is no evidence in the New Testament that the Spirit was worshipped or received prayer." Arthur W. Wainwright, *The Trinity in the New Testament* (London: SPCK, 1962; Eugene, O.R.: Wipf and Stock, reprint), 228.

² A Catholic might cite the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed as warrant for worshiping the Spirit but this solution is less satisfying to Protestants who want to anchor this practice in the teaching of Scripture (while nonetheless affirming that conciliar statements like the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed represent faithful summaries of scriptural teaching).

³ For an introduction to Basil's life and theology see Stephen M. Hildebrand, *Basil of Caesarea*, The Early Church Fathers series (New York: Routledge, 2018). I selected Basil of Caesarea for three reasons. First, there was a debate in his church about the legitimacy of worshiping the Spirit. Second, in response to this debate, he wrote a

divided into three sections. In part one, I explore Basil's engagement with the fourth-century debate concerning the legitimacy of worshiping the Spirit to see what we can learn from him. In part two, I make a biblical case for worshiping the Spirit by drawing attention to the presence of "pneumatological doxology" in the New Testament. I conclude by exploring how the Spirit might be rightly honored in public worship.

Worship Wars: Learning from the Past

Worship wars aren't merely a twenty-first century phenomenon. A dispute took place in the fourth century that centered on the legitimacy of worshiping the Holy Spirit. Basil of Caesarea (c. 330-379) was a key figure in this controversy.⁴ In his book, *On the Holy Spirit*,⁵ Basil likens this debate to a fierce naval battle in which it is difficult to distinguish friend from foe.⁶

book in which he argues at length for the legitimacy of worshiping the Spirit. Finally, the biblical argument I will develop below was inspired by my engagement with Basil.

⁴ Popular portrayals of Nicaea sometimes leave one with the impression that the conciliar statement, issued in 325, definitively solved the "Arian" problem. The reality is that the battle over the Trinity continued for fifty years among Greek and Latin speaking Christians. Basil of Caesarea played an important role in the paving the way for the reaffirmation of "Nicene" faith in 381 at the Council of Constantinople. See John Behr, *The Formation of Christian Theology, vol. 2, The Nicene Faith* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary, 2004), 263-324.

⁵ All citations of this work will be taken from St. Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit*, trans. David Anderson (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary, 1980). For a discussion of the theological context for this work, see Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (New York: Oxford, 2004) 211-21.

⁶ Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 30.76, 113-14.

The immediate backdrop for *On the Holy Spirit* was a liturgical dispute among Greek-speaking Christians. In public worship, Basil's church used two doxologies: "Praise to the Father through (διὰ) the Son in (ἐν) the Holy Spirit" and "Praise to the Father with (μετὰ) the Son together with (σὺν) the Holy Spirit"⁷ One might imagine those who claimed the Holy Spirit should not be worshiped would object to both doxologies—however, this was not the case. Basil's opponents accepted the first doxology but rejected the second.⁸ They asserted that the first doxology, using the prepositions "through" (διὰ) and "in" (ἐν), was "biblical" while the second doxology, using the prepositions "with" (μετὰ) and "together with" (σὺν), was not. Why the dispute over prepositions? According to Basil's opponents, Scripture consistently uses the propositions "through" (διὰ) and "in" (ἐν) to relate the Son and Spirit to the Father. They believed consistent difference in preposition (in the biblical text) implied ontological difference.⁹ On this basis, they concluded that the Son's

⁷ Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 1.3, 17.

⁸ "They insist that we must give glory to God *in* the Holy Spirit, but never *and to* the Holy Spirit, passionately clutching this one word as if it contained the power to lower the Spirit." Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 25.60, 92.

⁹ "Their contention is that any mention of Father, Son and Holy Spirit as dissimilar makes it easy to demonstrate that they are different in nature. . . . This pestilence of a heresy depends entirely upon the subtleties of these men concerning the above prepositions. They assign the words 'from whom' to God the Father as if this expression was His one special allotment; for God the Son they select the phrase 'through whom,' and for the Holy Spirit 'in which,' and they say that this assignment of prepositions must never be interchanged, in order that, as I have already said, one prepositional phrase is always made to indicate a corresponding nature." Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 2.4, 18-19.

nature and the Spirit's nature were inferior to that of the Father.¹⁰ Thus, their objection to the second doxology was not merely grammatical but also theological. Whereas the first doxology was compatible with a subordinationist understanding of the Spirit, the second was not.¹¹ "The Lord has delivered to us a necessary and saving dogma," writes Basil, "the Holy Spirit is to be ranked with the Father. Our opponents do not agree; instead they divide and tear away the Spirit from the Father, transforming his nature to that of a ministering spirit."¹²

In response to their textual arguments, Basil demonstrates that Scripture is flexible in relating prepositions to the divine persons. "From," "through" and "in" cannot be univocally mapped on Father, Son and Holy Spirit. For example, Paul uses "from whom" not merely with the Father (1 Cor. 8:6) but also with the Son (Eph. 4:15-16) and Holy Spirit (Gal. 6:8). "Through whom" is used not merely with the Son but also with the Father (1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 4:7) and Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 1:14; 1 Cor. 12:8). The preposition "in" (ἐν) is used not merely with the Spirit but also with the Father (2 Thes. 1:1; Rom 2:17) and Son (2 Thes. 1:1). Basil explains that when a

¹⁰ Commenting on the way his opponents relate biblical prepositions to the Son and Spirit, Basil explains, "What is the result of this technical discussion? Cause has one nature, an instrument another, and place yet another. So the Son's nature is alien to the Father's, since the tool is by nature different from the craftsman, and the nature of the Spirit is foreign to both, since place and time are different from tools or those who handle them." Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 4.6, 22.

¹¹ Basil's opponents "insist[ed] that the Spirit must not be ranked with the Father or the Son, but under the Father and the Son." Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, 6.13, 29.

¹² Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 10.25, 46.

biblical text assigns differing prepositions to divine persons (e.g., “from” with the Father, “through” with the Son and “in” with the Holy Spirit), this does not imply difference of *nature* but merely indicates a distinction of *person*.¹³

Basil’s opponents also asserted that nowhere in the Bible do we see the Son and Spirit glorified “with” the Father (as is the case in his second doxology). In response, Basil identifies two biblical texts in which all three divine persons are set in equality of honor: Matthew 28:19 (“baptizing in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”) and 2 Corinthians 13:14 (“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”). One might object that these texts use the Greek equivalent of conjunction “and” rather than “with.” Basil anticipates this concern. He explains that when Scripture coordinates several objects using the conjunction “and” (καί), it has the same meaning as “with” (μετά). For example, when Paul wrote “Paul and Silvanus and Timothy” (2 Thess. 1:1), he could equally have said, “Paul with Silvanus and Timothy” without changing the meaning.¹⁴ Thus, when Jesus says, “the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19), the meaning is the same as saying “the Father and the Son with the Holy Spirit.” Similarly, when Paul speaks about the

¹³ Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 5.7, 22.

¹⁴ Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 25.59, 90.

“grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit” in 2 Corinthians 13:14, “and” could easily be changed to “with” without altering the meaning.¹⁵

Basil is not merely interested in showing that Scripture glorifies the Spirit. Humans receive glory in the Bible (Ps. 8:5) but they are not worshiped.¹⁶ He wants to demonstrate that Holy Spirit receives the same glory accorded to the Father and Son. To argue the Spirit is equal in “rank,” “dignity,” “glory” and “honor” with the Father and Son,¹⁷ Basil focuses on three themes: “If we ponder the meaning of His name, and the greatness of His deeds, and the multitude of blessings He has showed on us and all creation, it is possible for us to understand at least partially the greatness of His nature and unapproachable power.”¹⁸ The title, “Holy Spirit,” points to his divine identity.¹⁹ He is “holy” like the Father and Son. The word “Spirit” suggests one whose nature is not subject to change (John 4:24). Titles like “Spirit of God” and

¹⁵ Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 25.59, 90-91. According to Basil’s opponents, the fact that beings are listed with the Father and Son does not mean they are worthy of the same glory. For example, angels are sometimes listed with the divine persons in Scripture (e.g., “In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you” in 1 Tim. 5:21). In response, Basil points out that one must look at what Scripture teaches respectively about the nature of angels and the Holy Spirit to understand why the inclusion of angels in 1 Tim. 5:21 is different from the inclusion of the Holy Spirit in the baptismal formula.

¹⁶ Basil’s opponents pointed out that humans beings are glorified in Scripture. They suggested that provides a lens for how we think about the glorify the Bible offers toward the Holy Spirit. “Now it is true that some of them are willing to glorify the Spirit, but not with the Father and the Son.” Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 24.55, 87.

¹⁷ Basil uses these terms more or less interchangeably throughout his discussion.

¹⁸ Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 19.48, 76.

¹⁹ Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 9.22, 42.

“Spirit of truth” also gesture toward the greatness of the Spirit. The divine works the Spirit performs further suggest equality of honor with the Father and Son.²⁰

Scripture teaches that the Spirit created all things with the Father and Son (Ps. 33:6).

The Spirit works miracles, drives out demons and heals with the incarnate Christ.

The gift of the Spirit brings forgiveness of sins and sanctification. The Spirit brings

believers into communion with God (Gal. 4:6). The Spirit brings the dead to life. The

Spirit speaks with divine authority (Acts 10:20; 13:2). “Understanding all this,” asks

Basil, “how can we be afraid of giving the Spirit too much honor?”²¹

Basil concludes by explaining how both doxologies are necessary to rightly

glorify the Spirit.²² The first doxology (“praise to the Father *through* the Son *in* the

Holy Spirit”) glorifies the Spirit by highlighting his work in the lives of believers.

Reflecting on the significance of the preposition “in” (ἐν), Basil explains that

Scripture speaks about the Spirit “in terms of *place*—a place in which people are

²⁰ Like other pro-Nicenes, Basil maintains that the Holy Spirit acts inseparably with the Father and Son. Commenting on Peter’s words to Ananias in Acts 5 (“you have not lied to men but to God”), Basil explains, “Understand from this that in every operation, the Holy Spirit is indivisibly united with the Father and Son.” Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 16.37, 61. Inseparable operation flows from divine simplicity. Here Basil affirms both simplicity and inseparable operation in the context of the Father/Son relationship: “He who has seen me has seen the Father;’ this does not mean that he has seen the image and form of the divine nature, since the divine nature is simple, not composed of various parts. Goodness of will is a current in the stream of the divine essence, and thus is perceived to be the same in the Father and the Son.” Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 8.21, 41.

²¹ Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 19.49, 78.

²² “Both doxologies are used by the faithful, and so we use both; we believe that either one ascribes perfect glory to the Spirit.” Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 25.59, 90. Implicit in these two doxologies is a distinction the work of the triune God in creation and redemption (often called the “economic Trinity”) and God’s life apart from creation and redemption (often called the “immanent Trinity”).

made holy.”²³ Scripture also affirms that the Holy Spirit dwells *in* believers.²⁴ The second doxology (“praise to the Father with the Son together with the Holy Spirit”) glorifies the Spirit by highlighting his eternal relation to the Father and Son.

Whereas the Spirit dwells “in” created things, “it is more appropriate to say that He dwells *with* [the Father and Son], rather than *in* them.”²⁵ The preposition “with” draws attention to the hypostatic distinction between the Spirit and the other divine persons as well as his union with them.²⁶ “[W]hen we consider the Spirit’s *rank*, we think of him as present *with* the Father and the Son, but when we consider the working of His grace on its recipients, we say that the Spirit is *in* us.”²⁷ Summing up, “The preposition *in* expresses the relationship between ourselves and the Spirit, while *with* proclaims the communion of the Spirit with God. Therefore we use both words: the latter expresses the Spirit’s dignity, while the former describes the grace we have been given. We glorify God both in the Spirit and with the Spirit.”²⁸ Basil’s

²³ Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 26.62, 94.

²⁴ “The Spirit is indeed the dwelling-place of the saints, and the saint is a suitable abode for the Spirit, since he has supplied God with a house, and is called a temple of God.” Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 26.62, 95.

²⁵ Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 26.63, 95

²⁶ “But *with* is an especially useful work because it testifies to eternal communion and unceasing operation. If we say that the Son is *with* the Father, we mean two things: first, that their persons are distinct, and second, that they are inseparably united in fellowship.” Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 25.59, 91.

²⁷ Basil continues, “If we say, ‘glory to the Father through the Son *in* the Holy Spirit,’ we are not describing the Spirit’s rank, but confessing our own weakness, since we show that we are not capable of glorifying God on our own; only *in* the Spirit is this made possible. In him we are able to thank God for the blessings we have received. . . . If we offer glory to God *in* the Spirit, we mean that the Spirit enables us to fulfill the requirements of true religion.” Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, 26.63, 96 (italics original).

²⁸ Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, 27.68, 102.

pneumatology is reflected in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (A.D. 381) when it affirms that the Holy Spirit “with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified.”²⁹

“Recounting His Own Wonders” Pneumatological Doxology in the New Testament

In the discussion that follows, I will argue that substantial biblical warrant exists for worshiping the Spirit. However, this warrant won’t be found by doing a concordance search for verses with the words “worship” and “Spirit.” Instead, one must pay attention to the way Scripture itself glorifies the Holy Spirit. Basil helps us see this:

[The Spirit] is divine in nature, infinite in greatness, mighty in His works, good in His blessings; shall we not exalt Him; shall we not glorify Him? I reckon that his ‘glorifying’ is nothing else but the recounting of His own wonders. Our opponents’ arguments would force us never even to mention the blessings that flow from Him to us. Obviously this is absurd, so the opposite is true: to describe his wonders gives Him the fullest glorification possible.³⁰

The first sentence may sound like the traditional argument (“we should worship the Spirit because the Spirit is God”) but we need to keep reading. What does it mean,

²⁹ For a discussion of the pneumatology of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, see Franz Dünzel, *A Brief History of the Doctrine of the Trinity in the Early Church*, trans. John Bowden (New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 117-31.

³⁰ Basil continues, “The same is true for the God and Father of our Lord Christ and the Only-Begotten Son Himself; we are only able to glorify them by recounting their wonders to the best of our ability.” Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, 23.54, 86.

asks Basil, to glorify the Spirit? “I reckon that his ‘glorifying’ is nothing else but the recounting of His own wonders. . . . to describe his wonders gives Him the fullest glorification possible.” Basil helps us see that the Spirit is glorified anytime we recount his manifold works in creation and redemption. This leads us to ask a follow-up question: Where do we see the wonders and works of the Holy Spirit recounted? Answer: Holy Scripture. The Bible is not merely a book containing theological propositions about the Spirit but also a doxological mode of divine speech. When we sing songs of worship to the Holy Spirit, we praise his wonders. The Bible does the same thing: it “glorifies” by the Spirit by speaking doxologically about his divine works in creation and redemption as well as describing his identify (i.e., his oneness in being with the Father and Son). Thus, rather than looking for exhortations to worship the Spirit, we need to see how the Bible is already glorifying the Spirit and join in.³¹ With this perspective in mind, let’s look at some concrete examples.

Our first example of pneumatological doxology is found in 2 Corinthians

13:14. “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of

³¹ One might ask, “Doesn’t this argument make the mistake of flattening out the biblical witness? After all, Scripture contains a wide variety of genres. There is a genre called ‘psalms’ but we don’t read the whole Bible as one big psalm.” This is an important question. Two things can be said by way of response. First, to see how Scripture glorifies the Spirit, we need to broaden our understanding of “worship.” While formal examples of songs to the Spirit are lacking in Scripture, there are many examples of the Spirit being praised in the manner described above. Second, the Spirit can be glorified in the context of a wide variety of genres.

the Holy Spirit be with you all" (ESV).³² There are four things we should observe about this text. First, it takes the form of a prayer. Paul concludes his letter by praying his readers would experience grace, love and fellowship. Second, this prayer is Trinitarian.³³ Paul typically ends his letters with a Christological prayer of blessing, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you" (e.g., 1 Cor. 16:23; Gal. 6:18; Phil. 4:23; 1 Thes. 5:28; 2 Thes. 3:18; Philemon 25). Here he concludes with a prayer of blessing addressing all three divine persons.³⁴ There is no blessing like this in Paul's other letters. Gordon Fee suggests this benediction represents "the most profound theological moment in the Pauline corpus" because of the way it summarizes Paul's soteriology and frames his doctrine of God.³⁵ Third, this prayer is doxological, honoring all the divine persons.³⁶ Paul isn't exhorting his readers to praise the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He himself is glorifying the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit for their work of redemption. The Father ("God") is called upon and praised for his "love" that gives rise to salvation. The incarnate Son ("Lord Jesus

³² Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture references will be taken from the English Standard Version.

³³ For a discussion of the Trinitarian theology of 2 Corinthians 13:14, see Malcolm B. Yarnell III, *God the Trinity: Biblical Portraits* (Nashville: B&H, 2016), 33-56.

³⁴ Although outside the scope of this essay, this text also represents an example of a prayer offered to the Holy Spirit. That the Holy Spirit is the recipient of prayer points to his identity as one worthy of worship.

³⁵ Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, M.A.: Hendrickson, 1994), 363.

³⁶ "The apostle's prayer for Trinitarian grace, love and fellowship indicates that this is a doxological text, a text authoritatively used in Christian worship." Yarnell, *God the Trinity*, 36.

Christ”) is called upon and praised for his life, death and resurrection that gives concrete expression to divine “grace.” The Holy Spirit is called upon and praised as the one who brings humans into “communion” with the triune God.³⁷ There is a question whether “of the Holy Spirit” (τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος) in v. 14 should be understood as a subjective genitive (i.e., Spirit as the source of human fellowship with God) or an objective genitive (i.e., Spirit as the object of human fellowship with God). Most commentators believe Paul intends to communicate that the Spirit is both the source *and object* of human communion with the triune God.³⁸ Finally, the divine persons are set in parallel through the Greek conjunction καὶ (“and”), which reflects the theological grammar of Basil’s second doxology.

Our next example is found in Matthew’s version of the Great Commission: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19).³⁹ Here we see the Trinitarian faith of the church expressed in embryonic form. While we do not have the creedal language of “person” and “nature,” we encounter three (Father, Son and

³⁷ “Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the living God, God has now arrived in the new creation as an abiding, empowering presence—so that what most characterizes the Holy Spirit is κοινωνία, which primarily means ‘participation in,’ or ‘fellowship with.’” Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 363

³⁸ Yarnell, *God the Trinity*, 50.

³⁹ For a helpful discussion of the Trinitarian theology of Matthew 28:16-20, see Yarnell, *God the Trinity*, 1-32.

Holy Spirit) who share a single “name” (ὄνομα).⁴⁰ God’s “name” represents God’s identity. In the Old Testament, God revealed that his “name” was “Yahweh.” Here we learn that the “name” of God is “Father, Son and Holy Spirit.” Reading the two Testaments as one book, we are pressed to recognize that Yahweh is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.⁴¹ It is not merely the case that this text propositionally identifies the Holy Spirit with the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This text also glorifies the Spirit (along with the Father and Son) as one who shares in the “name” of God. Moreover, the Spirit is not subordinated to the Father and Son but coordinated with them through the Greek conjunction καὶ (“and”). This text offers the strongest theological parallel to, and justification for, Basil’s second doxology (“praise to the Father with the Son together with the Holy Spirit”).⁴² Finally, we should note that baptism itself is an act of worship: each time someone is baptized in the threefold “name,” the Spirit is glorified as one with the Father and Son.

⁴⁰ David Yeago’s distinction between “concepts” and “judgments” is helpful in reading this passage theologically. See David S. Yeago, “The New Testament and the *Nicene* Dogma: A Contribution to the Recovery of Theological Exegesis,” *Pro Ecclesia* 3 (1994): 152-164.

⁴¹ For more on reading the two testaments of Scripture as one book in relation to the Trinity, see C. Kavin Rowe, “Biblical Pressure and Trinitarian Hermeneutics,” *Pro Ecclesia* 11 (2002): 295-312.

⁴² “[T]he use of καὶ in Matthew 28 and 2 Corinthians 13 to connect the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit is perhaps the strongest indication of equality among the three. These three are treated as one God. In Matthew 28, the three are named and connected directly as divine subjects, while in 2 Corinthians 13, the three are connected as subjects through divine operations. In both of these biblical passages, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are treated coequally and coextensively as God.” Yarnell, *God the Trinity*, 44-45.

A third example of pneumatological doxology can be found in Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth. In the context of addressing sexual immorality, Paul reminds them that their physical bodies matter because they will be raised from the dead (1 Cor. 6:14). Since their bodies have been joined to Christ, they must never be joined to a prostitute (1 Cor. 6:15-17). After exhorting them to flee sexual immorality (1 Cor. 6:18), Paul gives them two additional motivations to live sexually pure lives, one pneumatological and the other Christological: "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body" (1 Cor. 6:19-20). Paul's reference to the temple takes us back to the Old Testament. The temple was the dwelling place of God among his people. In the New Covenant, believers, both corporately (1 Cor. 3:16) and individually (1 Cor. 6:19), are the dwelling place of God.⁴³ Notice that Paul calls their bodies a "temple of the Holy Spirit" implying not only that their body is a holy but also identifying the Spirit as the one they potentially honor (or dishonor) with their bodies. The concluding exhortation to "glorify God in your body" (v. 20) could equally be understood as "glorify the Holy Spirit who lives in you" (an exhortation to worship of the Spirit).

⁴³ Paul wants them to understand that their bodies are holy because God dwells in them by his Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 4:30 represents yet another example of pneumatological doxology: “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” The opposite of “grieving” the Holy Spirit is glorifying him by obeying his divine directives. One might ask, “But why does Paul speak about ‘grieving’ rather than ‘honoring’ or ‘glorifying’ the Holy Spirit?” The answer is found in Isaiah 63:10. “But they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit; therefore he turned to be their enemy, and himself fought against them.” Paul warns his readers not to make the same mistake God’s people did in Isaiah’s day. This text also glorifies the Spirit by drawing attention to his divine identity. Reading Ephesians 4:30 and Isaiah 63:10 together, we are pressed to ask, “What does this text reveal about the Spirit’s identity?” On the one hand, the Spirit is identified as divine. At the same time, the Spirit is distinguished from God: Paul calls him “the Holy Spirit of God” (subjective genitive), such that the Spirit is “from God” (which potentially reflects both his eternal relation to the Father and his temporal sending in the economy of salvation).⁴⁴

Another example of pneumatological doxology can be found in Acts 5. Ananias and Sapphira sold some property and pretended to give all the proceeds to the church while keeping back some of it for themselves. Peter explains to Ananias

⁴⁴ “[T]he Spirit is described to be *of God*, not in the sense that all things are of God, but because He proceeds from the mouth of Father and is not begotten like the Son.” Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 18.46, 73.

that by withholding part of the proceeds he “lie[d] to the Holy Spirit” (Acts 5:3). Reiterating this point, Peter affirms, “You have not lied to man but to God” (Acts 5:4). Peter is essentially saying, “Rather than glorifying the Holy Spirit by speaking truthfully, you lied to the Holy Spirit, who is God, and will face divine judgment.” This text glorifies the Spirit by drawing attention to his divine identity. Read ethically, it also invites believers to honor the Holy Spirit by speaking truthfully.

In 1 Corinthians 2, Paul glorifies the Holy Spirit by describing how the Spirit reveals divine truth (1 Cor. 2:10). The reason the Spirit can do this is because the Spirit knows the thoughts of God. Just as a person’s private thoughts are known only to that person’s spirit, “so also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God” (1 Cor. 2:11b). Although Paul does not describe the ontological significance of these claims, the implication seems clear: only if the Holy Spirit is God can he reveal the thoughts of the triune God.⁴⁵

Sometimes we think about glorification among the divine persons as one-directional: the Spirit glorifies the Son (e.g., John 16:14) and the Son glorifies Father (John 17:4)—yet we observe that the Father glorifies the Son (John 17:5-6) and the Son glorifies the Spirit. One example of the Son glorifying the Spirit can be found in

⁴⁵ “But the greatest proof that the Spirit is one with the Father and the Son is that He is said to have the same relationship to God as the spirit within us has to us: ‘For what person knows a man’s thoughts except the spirit of that man in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.’” Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 16.40, 67.

Matthew 12. Jesus warns that “blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven” (Matt.12:31). Whoever speaks against Jesus can be forgiven but “whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come” (v. 32).⁴⁶ To blaspheme the Spirit is the opposite of glorifying him. Moreover, the fact that blaspheming the Spirit has eternal consequences indirectly glorifies him.

Our final example of pneumatological doxology is found in Philippians: “For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh” (Phil. 3:3). This text is sometimes seen as a liability by those looking for biblical evidence that Christians should worship the Spirit. After all Paul doesn’t say Christians should *worship* the Spirit but rather that they worship *by the Spirit* (πνεύματι, dative case) which seems to make the Spirit a *means* of worship rather than an *object* of worship. Nevertheless, this text glorifies the Spirit by identifying him as the divine person who makes Christian worship possible. After all, as Paul explains elsewhere, “no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’” (a central expression of Christian worship) “except in the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:3). Thus, the Spirit is glorified both as God (as we have seen elsewhere) and as the one who enables us to glorify God (Phil. 3:3). The theological thrust of Philippians 3:3 is

⁴⁶ Commenting on this text, Basil writes, “The Spirit is glorified by communion with the Father and the Son, and by the testimony of the Only-Begotten: ‘Every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men: but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.’” Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, 18.46, 74.

captured in Basil's first doxology ("praise to the Father through the Son *by the Holy Spirit*").

Having looked closely at several examples, it will be helpful to suggest how this argument might be expanded. Essentially, any text that glorifies the Spirit by speaking of his identify, describing his divine works or enumerating the divine blessings could potentially represent an example of pneumatological doxology.⁴⁷

The following list represents a starting point:

- Texts that speak of the Spirit acting inseparably with the Father and Son in creation (Gen 1:2; Ps 33:6)
- Texts that speak of the Spirit bringing about the birth of Jesus (Luke 1:35)
- Texts that speak of the incarnate Son casting out demons by the power of the Spirit (Matt 12:28)
- Texts that speak of the Spirit raising the Son from the dead (1 Pet 3:18)
- Texts that speak of the Spirit concurring with other divine persons in judgment (Heb. 10:26-31)
- Texts that speak of the Spirit as the divine author of Scripture (Mark 12:36; Acts 1:16; 4:25; Heb. 3:7; 10:15; 1 Pet. 1:11)
- Texts that speak of the Spirit bringing about new birth (John 3:5; Rom. 8; Titus 3:5)
- Texts that speak of the Spirit giving divine direction (Acts 13:2; Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22)
- Texts that speak of the Spirit scattering gifts to the church (1 Cor 12:1-11)
- Texts that speak of the Spirit applying salvation to the elect (Eph 1:3-14)
- Texts that honor the Spirit as the "gift" of God (Luke 11:13; Acts 2:38)

⁴⁷ "If we ponder the meaning of His name, and the greatness of His deeds, and the multitude of blessing He has showered on us and all creation, it is possible for us to understand at least partially the greatness of His nature and unapproachable power." Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 19.48, 76.

- Texts that speak of the Spirit forming God’s people into a temple where God dwells by his Spirit (Eph 2:21-22)

This list is not meant to be exhaustive but simply to indicate the wide variety of biblical material that could be encompassed under the rubric of pneumatological doxology. Cumulatively, the preceding texts reveal that the Holy Spirit is worthy of the same glory and worship as the Father and Son.⁴⁸

“Praise God from Whom All Blessing Flow” Rightly Honoring the Spirit in Worship

Some of Basil’s opponents conceded that Scripture glorifies the Spirit but insisted that this does not provide warrant for singing doxologies to him: “‘Even if this is true,’ they answer, ‘glory should not be given to the Spirit to such an extreme that we must sing doxologies to him.’”⁴⁹ After recounting the Spirit’s titles, divine deeds and salvific blessings, Basil asks, “Understanding all this, how can we be afraid of giving the Spirit too much honor? We should instead fear that even though

⁴⁸ I have used several terms in talking about the pneumatological doxology in the New Testament (honor, glory and worship). As Basil’s fourth-century opponents rightly noted, these concepts are not identical. For example, humans and angels can receive honor (and even glory) in Scripture but they are never worshiped. I am not suggesting that every example of pneumatological doxology in the New Testament rises to the level of divine worship (although some do). To view these examples in proper context, it is necessary to attend to what the New Testament teaches about the work and person of the Holy Spirit (e.g., the fact that the Spirit works inseparably with the Father and Son and is indivisibly united to them). Rather than focusing on the terms (honor, glorify, worship) it is more helpful to content of the honor, glory or worship: for what is the Spirit being praised? At the end of the day, there are only two options: either we “rank [the Spirit] with God” or we “push Him down to a creature’s place.” Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 16.37, 61,

⁴⁹ Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, 19.48, 75-76.

we ascribe to Him the highest titles we can devise, or our tongues pronounce, our ideas about Him might still fall short.”⁵⁰ In this final section, I want to consider three ways we might rightly honor the Holy Spirit in public worship.

First, Spirit-honoring worship should be Trinitarian. What we believe about God should determine the pattern of our worship.⁵¹ If the Spirit is inseparably one with the Father and Son (both in agency and being), this reality should shape both the form and content our worship.⁵² We might assume that to rightly glorify the Spirit in public worship we simply need to more “Spirit” songs; however, such a conclusion would be unwise. Rather than adding songs exclusively adoring the Spirit, we need more songs that glorify the Spirit *with* the Father and Son, just like Basil’s doxologies. In the history of Christian worship, there is a pattern of songs with four stanzas adoring the Trinity. The first verse adores the Father, the second

⁵⁰ Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, 19.49., 78

⁵¹ Of course, it is also true that how we worship the Spirit reflects and proclaims what we believe about him. My point is not descriptive but prescriptive. The traditional Latin phrase, *Lex orandi, lex credenda* (“the law of praying [is] the law of believing”) draws attention to the way liturgy shapes the theology of church from a descriptive perspective. From a prescriptive standpoint, I would want to reverse the order and say that the “law of believing,” (formed by Scripture) should shape the “law of praying” (or, in this case, singing).

⁵² Because the Spirit is one with the Father and Son, we cannot worship him without also worshipping other divine persons. As John Owen explains, “The *divine nature* is the reason and cause of all worship; so that it is impossible to *worship any one* person, and not worship the *whole* Trinity. . . . The proper and particular object of divine worship and invocation is the *essence of God*, in its excellency, dignity, majesty, and its causality, as the first sovereign cause of all things. . . . All adoration respects that which is common to all; so that in each act of adoration and worship, all are adored and worshiped. . . . [W]hen any work of the Holy Ghost (or any other person), which is appropriated to him (we never exclude the concurrence of other persons), draws us to worship of him, yet he is not worshiped exclusively, but the whole Godhead is worshiped.” This does not mean that we cannot distinctly worship the Spirit: “These cautions being premised, I say that we are distinctly to worship the Holy Ghost.” John Owen, *Communion with the Triune God* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 419-20.

exalts the Son, the third honors the Spirit and the fourth praises all three.⁵³ Isaac Watts' hymn "We Give Immortal Praise" reflects this pattern. Unfortunately, much contemporary worship in evangelical churches is not intentionally and explicitly Trinitarian.⁵⁴ To glorify the Spirit, we need more songs that are Trinitarian.⁵⁵

Second, within a Trinitarian context, Spirit-honoring worship will adore the Spirit both for who he is and what he does. Basil's first doxology focuses on the latter (praising the Spirit's work in creation and redemption) while his second doxology accomplishes the former (adoring the Spirit in relation to the Father and Son). The Spirit can be adored for any divine act appropriated to him.⁵⁶

Finally, Spirit-honoring worship will involve more than singing songs. When Christians hear the word "worship," they tend to think about music—yet public worship involves more than singing. We can glorify the Spirit in our call to worship as we acknowledge that he enables us to rightly worship the triune God (Phil. 3:3). We can glorify the Spirit in intercessory prayer as we acknowledge his intercession

⁵³ Robin Parry calls these "substantially Trinitarian songs." See Robin A. Parry, *Worshipping Trinity: Coming Back to the Heart of Worship*, 2d ed. (Eugene, O.R.: Cascade, 2012), 99-104.

⁵⁴ See Parry, *Worshipping Trinity*, 114-15.

⁵⁵ This is not to suggest that every worship song needs to be explicitly Trinitarian. See Parry, *Worshipping Trinity*, 105-11.

⁵⁶ Because Father, Son and Holy Spirit work inseparably, the Holy Spirit is involved in every divine act. Nevertheless, Scripture appropriates certain acts to the Holy Spirit (e.g., regeneration). For a discussion of appropriation, see Gilles Emery, O.P., *The Trinity: An Introduction to Catholic Doctrine on the Triune God*, trans. Matthew Levering (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America, 2011), 161-68.

on our behalf (Rom. 8:26-27). We can honor the Spirit in the preaching of the Word by acknowledging him as the divine voice speaking through the human authors of Scripture as well as drawing attention his divine work in the passages we preach.⁵⁷ We can glorify the Spirit in the Lord's Supper by acknowledging we have communion with the Father through the body and blood of Christ and the Spirit is the one who fills our hearts with gratitude and grace. Finally, we can honor the Spirit in our benediction by using texts like 2 Corinthians 13:14, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."

Conclusion

Is there biblical warrant for worshiping the Holy Spirit? Many evangelicals claim that no direct warrant for this practice can be found in Scripture. The best we can do is draw a logical inference from biblical teaching concerning the Spirit's deity. Basil of Caesarea helps us see that Scripture is already glorifying the Spirit by "reckoning His own wonders." We simply need to join in the pneumatological doxology already taking place.

⁵⁷ For example, a sermon series from Ephesians could highlight his redemptive work at a number of points: Spirit as inheritance in 1:13-14; Spirit as the one who enables us to know God in 1:17; Spirit as means of access to the triune God in 2:18; and the church as dwelling place of God by the Spirit in 2:22.