

**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 justified on theological grounds 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 This argument thus concludes that 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 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. In part two, I make a biblical case for worshiping the Spirit by drawing attention to the presence of “pneumatological doxology”

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¹For 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, MO: College Press, 2002], 186). Evangelicals like Cottrell would likely concur with the judgment of Arthur W. Wainwright: “There is no evidence in the New Testament that the Spirit was worshipped or received prayer” (*The Trinity in the New Testament* [London: SPCK, 1962; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001], 228).

²A 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).

³For an introduction to Basil’s life and theology see Stephen M. Hildebrand, *Basil of Caesarea*, ECF (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 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.

in the NT. I conclude by exploring how the Spirit might be rightly honored in public worship.

I. 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

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: "Glory to the Father through (διά) the Son in (ἐν) the Holy Spirit," and "Glory to the Father with (μετά) the Son together with (σύν) 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" (διά) and "in" (ἐν), was "biblical" while the second doxology, using the prepositions "with" (μετά) and "together with" (σύν), was not. Why the dispute over prepositions? According to Basil's opponents, Scripture consistently uses the prepositions "through" (διά) and "in" (ἐν) to relate the Son and Spirit to the Father. They believed the consistent difference in biblical prepositions implied a corresponding ontological difference.⁹ On this basis, they concluded that the Son's

⁴Popular portrayals of Nicaea sometimes leave one with the impression that the conciliar statement, issued in AD 325, definitively solved the "Arian" problem. The reality is that the battle over the Trinity continued for fifty years. Basil of Caesarea played an important role in 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, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary, 2004), 263–324.

⁵All citations of this work will be taken from St. Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit*, trans. David Anderson (Crestwood, NY: 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.

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

⁷Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 1.3, 17.

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

⁹Their 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

nature and the Spirit's nature were inferior to that of the Father.¹⁰ Thus, their objection to the second doxology was not ultimately grammatical but rather 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" (ἐξ οὗ) 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" (δι' οὗ) 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 Thess 1:1; Rom 2:17) and Son (2 Thess 1:1). Basil explains that when a biblical text assigns differing prepositions to divine persons (e.g., "from" [ἐκ] with the Father, "through" [διά] with the Son and "in" [ἐν] 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: Matt 28:19 ("baptizing in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit")¹⁴ and 2 Cor 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").¹⁵ One might object that these texts use the Greek conjunction καί ("and") not the preposition μετά ("with"). Basil anticipates this objection. He explains that when Scripture coordinates several

prepositional phrase is always made to indicate a corresponding nature" (Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 2.4, 18-19).

¹⁰Commenting 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).

¹¹Basil'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).

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

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

¹⁴βαπτίζοντες αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος (Eberhard Nestle et al., *The Greek New Testament*, 27th ed. [Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993]).

¹⁵Ἡ χάρις τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἡ κοινωνία τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος μετὰ πάντων ὑμῶν (Nestle et al., *The Greek New Testament*).

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 written, “Paul with Silvanus and Timothy,” without changing the meaning.¹⁶ 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 “grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit” in 2 Cor 13:14, “and” (καί) could easily be changed to “with” (μετά) without altering the meaning.¹⁷

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.¹⁸ Basil wants to demonstrate that Holy Spirit receives the *same* glory accorded to the Father and Son. To argue the Spirit is equal in “rank” (τάξις), “dignity” (ἄξια), “glory” (δόξα), and “honor” (τιμή) with the Father and Son, 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 showered on us and all creation, it is possible for us to understand at least partially the greatness of His nature and unapproachable power.”¹⁹ The title, “Holy Spirit,” points to his divine identity.²⁰ Continuing this line of reasoning, he notes that the Spirit is “holy” like the Father and Son. The word “Spirit” suggests one whose nature is not subject to change (John 4:24). Titles such as “Spirit of God” and “Spirit of truth” also gesture toward the greatness of the Spirit. The divine works that the Spirit performs further suggest equality of honor with the Father and Son.²¹ Scripture teaches that the Spirit created all

¹⁶Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 25.59, 90.

¹⁷Basil, *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” 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.

¹⁸Basil’s opponents pointed out that human beings are glorified in Scripture. They suggested that this provides a lens for how one ought to think about the glory offered to the Holy Spirit in Scripture. “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).

¹⁹Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 19.48, 76.

²⁰Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 9.22, 42.

²¹Like 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

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?”²²

Basil concludes by explaining how both doxologies are necessary to glorify the Spirit properly.²³ The first doxology (“glory 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 made holy.”²⁴ Scripture also affirms that the Holy Spirit dwells *in* believers.²⁵ The second doxology (“glory 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.”²⁶ The preposition “with” draws attention to the hypostatic distinction between the Spirit and the other divine persons as well as his union with them.²⁷ “[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.”²⁸ 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

divine essence, and thus is perceived to be the same in the Father and the Son” (Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 8.21, 41).

²²Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 19.49, 78.

²³Both 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 between the work of the triune God in creation and redemption (“economic Trinity”) and God’s life apart from creation and redemption (“immanent Trinity”).

²⁴Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 26.62, 94.

²⁵The 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).

²⁶Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 26.63, 95.

²⁷But *with* is an especially useful word 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).

²⁸Basil 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” (*On the Holy Spirit*, 26.63, 96 [italics original]).

God both in the Spirit and with the Spirit.”²⁹ Basil’s pneumatology is reflected in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (AD 381) when it affirms that the Holy Spirit “with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified.”³⁰

II. “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. This warrant, however, won’t be found by doing a concordance search for verses containing the words “worship” and “Spirit.” Instead, one must pay attention to the way in which 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.³¹

The first sentence may sound like the traditional evangelical argument (“we should worship the Spirit because the Spirit is God”) but we need to keep reading. What does it mean, 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.”³² 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” the Spirit by speaking doxologically about his divine works in creation and redemption as well as his identity (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

²⁹Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, 27.68, 102.

³⁰For 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.

³¹Basil 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” (*On the Holy Spirit*, 23.54, 86).

³²Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, 23.54, 86.

already glorifying the Spirit and join in.³³ With this perspective in mind, let's look at some concrete examples.

Our first example of pneumatological doxology is found in 2 Cor 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."³⁴ 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.³⁵ Paul typically ends his letters with a christological prayer of blessing, such as "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you" (e.g., 1 Cor 16:23; Gal 6:18; Phil 4:23; 1 Thess 5:28; 2 Thess 3:18; Phlm 25). Here, however, he concludes with a prayer of blessing addressing all three divine persons.³⁶ 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.³⁷ Third, this prayer is doxological, honoring all the divine persons.³⁸ Paul isn't exhorting his readers to praise the Father, the Son, and the 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 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.³⁹ There is a question whether "of the Holy Spirit" (τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος) in v. 14 should be

³³One 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 of 'psalms' but we don't read the whole Bible as one huge 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 literary forms (e.g., gospel, letter, etc.).

³⁴Unless otherwise indicated, English Scripture references will be taken from the ESV.

³⁵For a discussion of the Trinitarian theology of 2 Cor 13:14, see Malcolm B. Yarnell III, *God the Trinity: Biblical Portraits* (Nashville: B&H, 2016), 33–56.

³⁶This 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.

³⁷Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 363.

³⁸"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 III, *God the Trinity*, 36).

³⁹Through 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).

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.⁴⁰ Finally, the divine persons are set in parallel through the conjunction “and” (καί), which reflects the theological grammar of Basil’s second doxology.⁴¹

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).⁴² 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 Holy Spirit) who share a single “name” (ὄνομα).⁴³ God’s “name” represents God’s identity. In the OT, God revealed that his “name” was “Yahweh” (Exod 3:14–15). In Matt 28:19 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.⁴⁴ 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 καί (“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”).⁴⁵ Finally, we

⁴⁰Yarnell III, *God the Trinity*, 50.

⁴¹“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ [Son] and the love of God [Father] and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (2 Cor 13:14), parallels “glory to Father with the Son together with the Holy Spirit.” Basil explains that no difference exists in meaning between the prepositions “and” and “with” when it comes to honoring the divine persons. See Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 25.59, 90.

⁴²Matthew 28:19: πορευθέντες οὖν μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, βαπτίζοντες αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος (Nestle, et al., *The Greek New Testament*). For a helpful discussion of the Trinitarian theology of Matt 28:16–20, see Yarnell III, *God the Trinity*, 1–32.

⁴³David 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,” *ProEccl* 3 (1994): 152–64.

⁴⁴For 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,” *ProEccl* 11 (2002): 295–312.

⁴⁵“[T]he use of καί 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 III, *God the Trinity*, 44–45).

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.

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 the Corinthian believers 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 OT. 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. Paul calls their bodies a “temple of the Holy Spirit,” implying not only that their body is 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).

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 may be found in Isa 63:10. “But they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit; therefore he turned to be their enemy, and himself fought against them.”⁴⁶ 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 Eph 4:30 and Isa 63:10 together, we are pressed to ask, “What does this text reveal about the Spirit’s identity?” On the one

⁴⁶Gordon Fee claims that the language of Eph 4:30 (“grieving the Holy Spirit of God”) echoes Isa 63:10 and connects to the larger context of Isa 63:1–19. Although the Greek verb Paul uses in Eph. 4:30 (λυπέω, “to grieve”) is conceptually closer to the Masoretic text (עָצַב, to grieve) than the LXX (παροξύνω, “to provoke”), Fee nonetheless argues that Paul is dependent on the LXX. Differences in the wording between Eph 4:30 (λυπεῖτε τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον τοῦ θεοῦ) and the LXX (παρώξυναν τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον αὐτοῦ) are easily explained: “Paul substitutes τοῦ θεοῦ for αὐτοῦ because in Paul’s sentence the pronoun would have no antecedent (but in making the substitution he keeps the word order of the LXX). Paul substitutes λυπεῖτε for a form of παροξύνω because the latter means ‘irritate’ or ‘vex,’ and Paul understands the Hebrew עָצַב to mean ‘grieve’ (correctly so; this is the only instance in the LXX where עָצַב is rendered with παροξύνω)” (Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 713).

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).⁴⁷

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 that by withholding part of the proceeds he lied 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.

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 the 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 Matt 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).⁴⁸ 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), 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

⁴⁷As Fee notes, this is only place in Paul’s writings where he uses the phrase, “Holy Spirit of God” (τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον τοῦ θεοῦ). This language represents “an emphatic declaration that the *Holy Spirit* is none other than the *Spirit of God*,” which draws attention to the Spirit’s relation to God (Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 714 [italics original]). Commenting more generally on the language “Spirit of God,” Basil explains, “[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” (*On the Holy Spirit* 18.46, 73).

⁴⁸Commenting 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’” (*On the Holy Spirit*, 18.46, 74).

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 Phil 3:3 is 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 identity, describing his divine works, or enumerating his divine blessings, could potentially represent an example of pneumatological doxology. 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)
- 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.⁴⁹

III. "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.'"⁵⁰ 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 we ascribe to Him the highest titles we can devise, or our tongues pronounce, our ideas about Him might still fall short.⁵¹

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 our pattern of worship.⁵² If the Holy Spirit is inseparably one with the Father and Son (both in agency and being), this reality should shape both the form and content of our worship.⁵³ We might assume that to rightly glorify the

⁴⁹I have used several terms in talking about pneumatological doxology in the NT, including honor, glory, and worship. As Basil's fourth-century opponents rightly noted, these terms 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 cited above 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 NT teaches about the person and work 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 merely focusing on the terms (e.g., honor, glory, worship), it is important to focus on the context 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).

⁵⁰Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, 19.48, 75-76.

⁵¹Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, 19.49, 78.

⁵²From a descriptive perspective, 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 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).

⁵³Because he is one with the Father and Son, we cannot worship the Spirit 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

Spirit in public worship we simply need to sing 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 exalts the Son, the third honors the Spirit, and the fourth praises all three.⁵⁴ Isaac Watts’s hymn, “We Give Immortal Praise,”⁵⁵ exemplifies this pattern:

We give immortal praise
to God the Father’s love
for all our comforts here,
and better hopes above:
he sent his own
eternal Son,
to die for sins
that man had done.

To God the Son belongs
immortal glory too,
who bought us with his blood
from everlasting woe:
and now he lives,
and now he reigns,
and sees the fruit
of all his pains.

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 [italics original]).

⁵⁴Robin Parry calls these “substantially Trinitarian songs” (*Worshipping Trinity: Coming Back to the Heart of Worship*, 2nd ed. [Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2012], 99–104).

⁵⁵Tim Ruffner, ed., *Ancient and Modern: Hymns and Songs for Refreshing Worship* (London: Hymns Ancient and Modern, 2013), 277–78.

To God the Spirit's name
 immortal worship give,
 whose new-creating power
 makes the dead sinner live:
 his work completes
 the great design,
 and fills the soul
 with joy divine.

Almighty God, to thee
 be endless honours done,
 the undivided Three,
 and the mysterious One:
 where reason fails
 with all her powers,
 there faith prevails,
 and love adores.

The word “immortal” is one of the threads binding together the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in this song. The Spirit receives “immortal worship” alongside the Father and Son. Unfortunately, much contemporary worship in evangelical churches is not intentionally and explicitly Trinitarian. Robin Parry carefully documented this reality when he reviewed twenty-eight worship CDs and discovered that only 1.4 percent of the songs adored all three divine persons.⁵⁶ To glorify the Spirit, we need more songs that are robustly Trinitarian.⁵⁷

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.⁵⁸ In Watts's hymn above, the Spirit is adored in his work of bringing dead sinners from death to life (regeneration), completing the Trinitarian plan of salvation, and giving joy to believers.

Finally, Spirit-honoring worship will involve more than singing. When Christians hear the word “worship,” they tend to think about

⁵⁶Specifically, 51.1 percent were “you Lord” songs (naming no divine person); 31.8 percent were “Son” songs; 8.8 percent were two-person songs; 5.5 percent were “Father” songs; 1.4 percent were “Spirit” songs; and 1.4 percent were three-person songs (Parry, *Worshipping Trinity*, 114–15).

⁵⁷This is not to suggest that every worship song needs to address all three persons. A song can reflect a Trinitarian understanding of God while still focusing on one divine person. See Parry, *Worshipping Trinity*, 105–11.

⁵⁸Because 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, DC: Catholic University of America, 2011), 161–68.

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 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 to his divine work in the passages we preach. For example, a sermon series from Ephesians could highlight his redemptive work at a number of points: Spirit as inheritance (1:13–14); Spirit as the one who enables us to know God (1:17); Spirit as means of access to the triune God (2:18); and the church as dwelling place of God by the Spirit (2:22). 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 that 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 Cor 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.”

IV. CONCLUSION

Many evangelicals believe that no clear “biblical” warrant exists for worshipping the Holy Spirit. Justification for this practice can *only* be made on “theological” grounds: because the Spirit is divine, Christians should worship him. If this theological inference was all we had, it would represent a sufficient reason to worship the Holy Spirit. However, in conversation with Basil of Caesarea, I have shown that a “biblical” argument can also be made for this practice. Basil reminds us that Scripture represents a doxological mode of speech. When we sing songs in Christian worship to the Holy Spirit, we glorify him. The Bible does the same thing: it “glorifies” the Spirit by speaking doxologically about his supernatural works and divine identity. Rather than searching the Scriptures for exhortations to worship the Spirit, Basil invites us to see that from the Gospels to the letters of Paul, Scripture is already glorifying the Spirit by “reckoning His own wonders.” Thus, we simply need to join in the pneumatological doxology already taking place. May God raise up a new generation of worship leaders with a vision for courageously honoring the Spirit in public worship.