The Relevance of St. Basil's Pneumatology to Modern Pentecostalism

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1. INTRODUCTION

Pneumatology is immensely important for modern Pentecostalism.[2] The modern Pentecostalism emerges out of making an explicit connection between spiritual tongues and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The former is thought of the initial evidence of the latter.[3] This is a quite new understanding, which is foreign to other established churches. It is nonetheless a distinctive theological mark of the early stage of Pentecostalism. Although the neo-pentecostalism that has appeared since 1960 does not insist spiritual tongues as the only sign of the baptism of the Holy Spirit as the old-line (or classical) Pentecostalism did,[4] the baptism and gifts of the Holy Spirit still remains as the central[5] predominant subject of Pentecostalism as a whole. Pentecostalism is described with the one word, “pneumobaptistocentric.”[6]

A serious criticism has been made to Pentecostalism due to the narrowness of its theological scope and interest. Pentecostalism is so preoccupied with the doctrine of the baptism and gifts (i.e., speaking in other tongues). Anthony A. Hoekema criticizes that Pentecostalism can not be sustained without this doctrine.[7] There is naturally an attempt to illustrate its diverse theological concerns and aspects in various places.[8] The modern Pentecostalism tries to adopt various theological traditions of the Evangelical church as its own stands, so that it may assert its theological and historical continuity with this church and thereby its evangelical orthodoxy.[9]

Pentecostals’ acceptance of other Christian traditions has not been always appreciated among scholars. It is not very helpful for them to maintain and understand their theological particularity.[10] Moreover, it lacks their own theological creativeness.[11] “Most Pentecostal teachers used theologians from other traditions. Their own efforts have been casual, sporadic, feeble, and neglected.”[12] David W. Faupel thus states that “a Pentecostal Theology has never actually been written.”[13] His statement does not naturally mean that there is no written Pentecostal theology at all.[14] He never forbids Pentecostals to use other orthodoxy Christian traditions to demonstrate their theological position. The main intention of his statement here seems to stress that Pentecostals fail to produce comprehensive doctrinal work that could represent the distinctive stands of Pentecostalism in the major areas of Christian theology.[15] It is thus a high time for Pentecostals to apply their theological distinctiveness to the whole system of Christian doctrine in order to demonstrate their theological creativeness.

This paper tries to relate St. Basil’s De Spiritu Sancto to modern Pentecostalism by illustrating the educational implication of the former to the latter. It is necessary for Pentecostals to learn from traditional Christian theology that adheres to the biblical and apostolic teachings. Their learning is essential not only to maintain their theological soundness but also to broaden their theological perspectives. This is a way of overcoming the criticism of their theological narrowness. The paper also views Basil’s thought from the Pentecostal perspective to propose a possible creativeness and contribution of Pentecostalism to Christian theology.[16] The purpose of this paper will be achieved by treating the nature of Basil’s pneumatology, its conceptual basis, its distinction between the ousia and hypostasis of the Holy Spirit, and its presentation of the distinctive hypostasis of the Spirit and His divine unity with God the Father and the Son.
2. A TRINITARIAN PNEUMATOLOGY

The Scripture talks about the action and the being of the Holy Spirit in fairly simple forms. The narrative character of its records evidences this fact well. The pneumatological formalization gradually takes place along with the systematic development of Christian Trinitarian theology by the early fathers of the church[17] such as Tertullian, Origen and Athanasius. Basil’s pneumatology is one of the outstanding examples of this development. It has been regarded as the most prominent and influential theology of the Holy Spirit in the earliest stage of Christianity.[18] Thus it can certainly contain the educational implication for Christian pneumatology throughout the church history.

Basil (330-379), the bishop of Caesarea, is the leading figure of the Cappadocian fathers, who played a vital role in forming the trinitarian orthodoxy of the early church.[19] He formulated De Spiritu Sancto in 374 or 375[20] at the request of his friend, Amphilochius (the bishop of Iconium), for there was a great upsurging of the Pneumatamachians (the Spirit-Fighters),[21] who would recognize the deity of the Son, but renounced that of the Holy Spirit by regarding him as a creature. His pneumatology specifically aimed to renounce one of the prominent Pneumatamachians, Eunomius,[22] who was the disciple of the leader of Arianism, Aetius, at that time.[23]

The focus of Basil’s pneumatology rests on demonstrating the deity of the Holy Spirit. His deity is argued by stressing His unity with God the Father and the Son.[24] The pattern of this argumentation governs the form and content of Basil’s pneumatology.[25] His pneumatology is neither formulated for itself, nor an independent doctrine from others. Its presentation and argument adopts “a tight trinitarian logico-theological pattern.”[26] It is designed to claim the deity of the Holy Spirit from His trinitarian unity. Basil formulates pneumatology in the light of the doctrine of the Trinity in order to defend this doctrine. His pneumatology is the integral component of the doctrine of the Trinity. Its orientation and formation is highly trinitarian.

Pentecostals should learn from Basil that pneumatology should not be treated as an isolation doctrine from others. There is a theological and systematic link between pneumatology and the doctrine of the Trinity. It is impossible to have a proper view of the former without the latter, or vice versa. The core subject of pneumatology is the action and being of the Spirit of the triune God. The particularity of His action and being cannot be mentioned without considering His relationship with God the Father and the Son. The doctrine of the Trinity should be constitutive and relational to and for Pentecostal pneumatology.[27]

The constitutiveness of the doctrine of the Trinity to pneumatology is apparently dismayed by oneness Pentecostalism, which is one of the major aspects of modern Pentecostalism.[28] The oneness Pentecostalism that explicitly manifested itself in 1913[29] has a highly christocentric[30] pneumatology. It eventually denies its trinitarian nature that Basil professes. Its adherents (e.g., Frank J. Ewart) insists on the baptism of the Holy Spirit (and water) only in the name of Jesus on the basis of Acts 2:38,[31] for the name of Jesus is the singularly revealed name of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The primary clue of this interpretation is that Matthew 28:19 uses “the singular form of the word ‘name’ with reference to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”[32] The baptismal formula of Matthew 28:19 consequently receives its full theological meaning and justification in a unitarian concept of God in Jesus.

Oneness Pentecostals’ christocentric concept of baptism denotes their unitarian concept of baptism in Christ. Their unitarian concept of baptism gives rise to their unitarian concept of
God.[33] Although they present Jesus Christ as the key to understand the nature of God, they do not consider him as the second person of the Trinity. Jesus Christ, who is also called Father and Holy Spirit elsewhere, is only the fully dispensed and revealed name of the one God of the Old Testaments. They are more recently moving to “Christian monotheists”[34] in a sense that they would not affirm the distinctive beings of the Trinity by treating them merely as three different forms or modes or revelations of the one God. There is also a tendency of modelism in the oneness Pentecostalism.

Its adherents do not realize that the trinitarian concept of God is intrinsic to Christian theology and faith. This concept is vital for the early fathers of the church to differentiate Christianity from other religions.[35] The orthodoxy of Christianity is built upon its trinitarian theology that is traditionally developed from the trinitarian baptismal formula. Basil develops the trinitarian concept of God the Holy Spirit on the basis of the baptismal formula in the Scripture and church rites.[36] He teaches us that any christological emphasis must not negate the trinitarian nature of Christian theology. The christocentric character of his pneumatology is apparent, as he asserts the unity of the Son with God the Father as the precondition of that of the Holy Spirit with God the Father.[37] If the Son’s unity were rejected, it would not be possible to defend the Spirit’s unity. The christocentric character, however, never nullify the trinitarian character of his pneumatology. The distinctive action and being of the Holy Spirit is affirmed in terms of His relation to God the Father and the Son. The pattern of this affirmation is the predominant feature of his pneumatology. Its christocentric character is mentioned within its trinitarian framework.

His pneumatology is educational for us to develop our whole theology (including pneumatology) in terms of christocentric trinitarianism. The christocentric trinitarianism, if I may say so, is to present Christian theology (pneumatology) from the perspective of Jesus Christ (Christology) without undermining the trinitarian concept of God (the doctrine of the Trinity).[38] If the distinctive character of Pentecostalism is to highlight the theological implication of the baptism and consequent gifts of the Holy Spirit,[39] Pentecostals could have the most promising position to produce the most outstanding trinitarian form of theology. The baptism of the Holy Spirit furnishes us with the most concrete and actual knowledge of the trinitarian being and action of God. We are baptized with the Holy Spirit in the reality of God the Father and the Son Jesus Christ. God the Father grants every benefit of the Spirit to us and for us though the Son Jesus Christ.[40] The demonstration of a consistent trinitarian theology from the epistemological actuality of the triune God in the baptism of the Holy Spirit could be Pentecostals’ remarkable contribution to Christian theology. Their theological creativeness can be recognized in applying the theological implication of the baptism of the Holy Spirit to the formation of trinitarian theology.

3. FAITH AS THE NOETIC AND CONCEPTUAL POSSIBILITY OF PNEUMATOLOGY

The false concept of baptism and God in the oneness Pentecostalism entails its false interpretation of the Scripture. It asserts the literal meaning of the biblical language, that is, Matthew’s use of the singular form of the word ‘name’ for the reference of the Trinity, as the supporting evidence of its unitarian concept of baptism and God. This is a fundamentalist interpretation that determines the being of the triune God in baptism on the basis of external evidences of the biblical language.[41] Pentecostals should distance themselves from this kind of
fundamentalism once for all. There is a serious fault in this. It fails to differentiate language from being in the sense that it determines the being of God directly from the human language of the Bible. Pentecostals take seriously Basil’s treatment of fundamentalists, who consider a particular form or various expressions of the biblical language itself as the theological basis, as heretic.[42]

His pneumatology begins with the indication that his opponents criticize him due to his use of doxology to God the Father in both forms, at one time, “with the Son and together with the Holy Spirit” and at another “through the Son in the Holy Spirit.”[43] They wrongly think that these two forms are contradictory to each other. The latter form that attributes glory only to God the Father is only biblical and legitimate, while the former that ascribes glory also to the Son and the Holy Spirit with God the Father is innovative and thus unbiblical and illegitimate. The scriptural use of various prepositions and syllables for God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as they suggest, is the conclusive evidence for the variation of their nature.[44] The main intention of their suggestion is to deny the deity of the Holy Spirit (and the Son) by differentiating his nature from the divine nature of God the Father. Thereby they declare that God the Father alone is truly divine, and he is only worthy to be glorified.[45]

Basil strongly opposes their view, for it is wrong and heretic to explain the triune nature of God through a systematic investigation of various linguistic prepositions and syllables of the Bible. This is “an old sophism, invented by Aetius, the champion of this heresy.”[46] Its argument derives from unpractical pagan philosophy and vain delusion.[47] It involved a deep and convert design against the sound doctrine of the divine Spirit.[48] Basil claims that the biblical writers use various linguistic prepositions, phrases, and syllables to express the trinitarian nature and action of God in diverse ways and circumstances.[49] In other words, they have no intention to propose a diverse nature of God through these in order to deny the deity of the Holy Spirit (and the Son).

For instance, the phrase “by or through” is used not only to describe the Son but also the Father and the Holy Spirit.[50] It seems that the biblical writers do not give the great concern and significance to linguistic phrases. “Scripture varies its expressions as occasion required, according to the circumstances of the case.”[51] St. Paul expresses the same subject, our Lord the Word of God, in the words “of him and through him and to him are all things” in Rom 11:36.[52] The preposition “in” is deployed to describe God the Father in Eph 3:9 and 2 Thess 1:1.[53] Paul uses the preposition “of whom” in Gal 6:8[54] and “by or through whom” in 1 Cor 1:9 to indicate the being and action of the Holy Spirit.[55] There is a great effort to argue the applicability of the phrase “through whom” to all members of the Trinity.[56]

Basil teaches us to formulate our pneumatology on the basis of our actual and living experience of the Holy Spirit in faith. This is not naturally meant to encourage us to dismay the importance of the Scripture for our theology. He seriously considers scriptural references about the Holy Spirit for his pneumatology. His pneumatology is the hermeneutical outcome of these references in the light of the living experience of the Holy Spirit in faith. It attempts to harmonize the living experience of the trinitarian unity of the Spirit in faith with its scriptural witness in the baptismal formula. Its conceptual basis in faith seems to be the very reason for him also to take the unwritten tradition of trinitarian doxology in the church rite (e.g., the eucharistic and baptismal service) as the supporting evidence of the trinitarian unity of the Spirit.[57] For this unwritten tradition that ascribes glory and might to God the Father and the Son with the Holy Spirit by the early fathers (e.g., Dionysius of Alexandria, Origen)[58] is the confession of faith.
The preposition “in” states the truth rather relatively to ourselves; while “with” proclaims the fellowship of the Spirit with God. . . Thus we ascribe glory to God both “in” the Spirit, and “with” the Spirit; and herein it is not our word that we use, but we follow the teaching of the Lord as we might a fixed rule, and transfer His word to things His word to things connected and closely related, and of which the conjunction in the mysteries is necessary. We have deemed ourselves under a necessary obligation to combine in our confession of the faith Him who is numbered with them at Baptism, and we have treated the confession of faith as the origin and parent of the doxology.[59]

Faith is the noetic and conceptual possibility of Basil’s pneumatology, which is aimed to defend the deity and the equal glory and might of the Spirit through the assertion of His trinitarian unity. The significance of its conceptual basis in faith is remarkable. It not only prevents us from falling into scriptural formalism, but it also enables us to presuppose theological dynamism and actualism and objectivism.[60] The content of faith which Basil suggests is the dynamic and actual experience of the objective reality of the Trinity. The objective ontology of the Spirit determines our epistemology, knowledge and conceptualization of Him in faith which the Bible testifies. For Basil, the main purpose of the Bible is to refer their ultimate truth beyond their language to the objective reality of the triune God. There is no autonomous power to witness His objective reality in the Bible itself, as fundamentalists imply. It belongs to the internal witness of God the Holy Spirit, as the Reformed theologians (e.g., Calvin and Karl Barth) also stress.[61]

The commitment to theological objectivism is vivid at the outset of Basil’s pneumatology. Here he firmly states that he allows his exposition of the pneumatological subject to be guided by the objective reality of the Holy Spirit Himself.[62] His commitment here is indispensable for the creditability of his pneumatology. It decisively forbids his pneumatology falling into mere rational and speculative intellectualism. There is also the dogmatic freedom, autonomy and positivity in the conceptual basis in faith.[63] Faith has its freedom that is granted by the freedom of the Holy Spirit. Basil apparently admits that his fidelity to the guidance of the Holy Spirit in freedom is the decisive fact that makes him free from bondage to the mere scriptural words for his pneumatology.[64] The dependence of the freedom of the Holy Spirit in faith generates his dogmatic freedom, autonomy and positivity to formulate various biblical and ritual expressions of Him in accordance with the actual experience of Him in faith. It has to be meanwhile said that Basil’s serious consideration of biblical and ritual references for theological formulation is not unimportant, for it prohibits him to involve in any kind of theological spiritualism and mysticism that does not have its scriptural and ecclesiastical references and bases. Theology is the product and service of the church in faith. It must be referred to the Scripture, which is the canon of the church.

The importance of our dependency on the sovereign freedom of God the Holy Spirit in our theological formulation is this. It enables us to maintain the objective reality of God in the subjectivity of our faith. This maintenance, claims D. W. Hardy and D. F. Ford,[65] is the vital fact for us not only to evade a subjective formalism (which is noticeable in Schleiermacher’s theology)[66] but also to uphold a theological dynamism, actualism and objectivism. The maintenance of the objective reality of God in the subjectivity of our faith is a scientific method of theology.[67] It presupposes the determinative role of the objective and rational reality of God the Holy Spirit in our theological investigation, knowledge and conceptualization of His true nature, just as a scientific investigator depends on the inherent intelligibility of the object for knowledge of its true nature. The scientific method would not allow us to associate with any kind
of speculative pneumatology that imposes any a priori philosophical and theological presupposition for knowledge of the true being and action of the Holy Spirit.

It is a time for Pentecostals to formulate their theology in a scientific method. They need to demonstrate the scientific nature of their theology in an intelligent, cogent and systematic way, so that their Pentecostal theology would be no longer regarded as unsystematic, unconvincing, unscientific and unintelligent. Pentecostals could have the most promising ground for a scientific pneumatology, for they could claim the most concrete knowledge of the objective reality of the Holy Spirit in baptism as the starting point of their pneumatology. The dynamic objectivity of the Spirit in their subjectivity of faith allows them to declare genuine dynamism and objectivism of their pneumatology. Its objectivism is crucial for the evidence of its creditability. Their theological objectivism gives rise to their theological actualism, preventing them from falling into a speculative theology that discusses the being and action of the Spirit without actual experience of them.

4. THE DISTINCTION OF THE OUSIA AND THE HYPOSTASIS

Basil asserts that diverse prepositions and phrases for the expression of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in Scripture illustrate their distinctive hypostases. Their intention is not to introduce the diversity of the nature or essence (ούσια) of the Trinity that implies some form of tritheism. Their scriptural usage is geared to make out the distinctiveness of each hypostasis (υποστάσεις) of the Trinity, so that their notion may not to be confounded.[68] Basil helps us to see the distinctive connotation between the ousia and the hypostasis of the triune God. The ousia of God the Father is the origin or source of the three hypostases of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.[69]

The significance of this distinction is that it offers a doctrinal possibility of the distinctiveness of each member of the Trinity. Their threefold distinctiveness is not possible without acknowledging the qualitative distinction between the hypostasis and the nature or essence of God. Basil’s distinction here “is the first and most famous assertion and defense of it”[70] in the history of the earliest trinitarian doctrine of the church. His Origenistic[71] assertion of the three hypostases of the Trinity would not be acceptable to those (e.g., Athanasius) who would like to express the trinitarian relationship in terms of the doctrine of the homoousion at Nicaea,[72] and understood the ousia in terms of the hypostasis.[73] His assertion is greatly influential for the outcome of the Council of Constantinople.[74]

The one essence (μία ούσια) of the Trinity denotes a real existence for Basil. There is, however, no explanation of the nature of the ousia. This is the inner reality of God that transcends our cognition. It is known only to God himself, remaining as mysterious to us. Basil warns us not to treat the ousia as a separable reality from the Trinity, for the ousia is the essence of God the Father. Their inseparability decisively eliminates any suggestion of a fourth reality of God apart from the Trinity. It is important to notice that Basil does not propose the one substance (μία ούσια) as the one God, as Augustine would do.[75] For him, the one true God is the Father himself. The one substance (μία ούσια) of God the Father is the source of the three hypostases of the Trinity.[76] The one substance (μία ούσια) of God is not regarded as the source of the Trinity. This suggests a division between the oneness and the threeness of God that implies a fourth reality of God.

The implication of the designation of the Father as the only cause of the Godhead is highly remarkable. As John D. Zizioulas says, “this would make the Trinity a matter of ontological
freedom.” Aiming at understanding freedom in ontology is “something that Greek philosophy had never done before.”[77] For God the Father in His sovereign freedom and will brings about the generation of Son and the procession of the Holy Spirit. The three hypostases of the Trinity are no longer seen as the ontological necessity of the one divine substance. Moreover, the designation of God the Father as the source of the Godhead inspires us to interpret the oneness of God in terms of the one personal God the Father, although Basil himself does not do so. His recognition of the conscious individuality of God the Father in His will certainly encourages us to think of Him as a conscious personal being and subject.[78] His one personal conscious being and subject is indispensable to affirm the genuine involvement of his oneness in action.

The knowledge of the three hypostases of the Trinity is not mysterious and abstract for Basil. We can encounter and perceive their distinctiveness, as they reveal themselves in the subjectivity of our faith through their distinctive works.[79] The major aim of the conceptual use of the hypostasis is to underscore the fullness and ontological integrity of each member of the Trinity. It is to stress the actual existence of the distinctive individual[80] beings of the Trinity. There is a specific goal in this. This is to evade Sebellian modalism that denies the substantial beings of the Trinity by interpreting them as three different modes and roles of the one God. This is the reason, says Zizioulas,[81] that Basil refuses to use the term “person” (πρόσωπον, persona) which Tertullian and Athanasius would use. It is loaded with connotation of the masked person on the theatrical stage, acting someone else. It consequently dismays the actual and distinctive substance and being of the acted person.

Each hypostasis of the Trinity has its self-will for Basil.[82] It would not be difficult for us to understand their each hypostasis in terms of a conscious personal being and subject. The existence of their self-will would not be possible without the existence of their conscious personhood and subjectivity. Basil does not realize the important reason for this understanding. It is, however, vital for us, for we can not acknowledge the distinctive beings of the Trinity and their genuine involvement in their distinctive actions without presupposing their distinctive conscious personhood and subjectivity. It does not seem to be very difficult for Pentecostals to acknowledge the distinctive personal being and subject of each member of the Trinity. They could encounter the distinctive personal being and subject of the Holy Spirit through their conversation with Him, as they experience the gifts of the Spirit (e.g., speaking in other tongues and prophecies) by His baptism. These gifts of the Spirit require a certain kind of intelligent communication between ourselves and Him.[83] Their intelligent communication is unthinkable without presupposing their distinctive personal beings and subjects. Pentecostals could present the distinctive personal being and subject of the Holy Spirit as the conceptual basis of that of the Son and the Father. This could be seen as their theological creativeness and contribution to the whole church.

5. THE DEFINITION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The distinctive character of the Holy Spirit can be defined in two ways. One is to do this in the light of the trinitarian relationship of the Spirit. Basil, like Athanasius, defines the distinctiveness of the Holy Spirit in terms of His relation to God the Father and the Son.[84] The status and position in their relationship defines the distinctiveness of each member of the Trinity. The definition of this kind occupies the major part of Basil’s treatise of pneumatology. The other is to treat the distinctiveness of the Spirit in terms of His own distinctive action. Basil’s treatment of this kind is rather short.[85] It is nevertheless very helpful for us to understand the distinctive being and action of the Holy Spirit.
God’s spirit, which the Old Testament mentions, is not the distinctive and proper name for Basil. It conveys the connotation of an acting power or instrument of God. His concept of the Holy Spirit is based on the New Testament’s concept of the individual being. He wants us to consider the Holy Spirit as His proper and particular title. The nature of the Holy Spirit is distinctively spiritual and appropriate to everything that is incorporeal, purely immaterial, and indivisible. He makes God’s people spiritual by dwelling in their souls through their spiritual fellowship, and has a particular individual living substance and being[86] that is intelligent, eternal, omnipotent, and omnipresent. His pure, intelligent, and supermundane power perfects the creative will and cause of God the Father and the Son.[87] The Holy Spirit is the Perfecter and Executor of the will and cause of God the Father and the Son.

Basil encourages modern Pentecostals to uphold the Holy Spirit as an intelligent, conscious and individual person. The Holy Spirit is not a mere impersonal divine power. His assertion of the Spirit as the self-sufficient being is noticeable. His nature is not subject to any kind of change and variation like the nature of a creature. He does not lack anything for the self-existence that needs not to be resorted and added for a full growing. As the fully self-established being, his distinctive character is the Giver of life, grace, all-good gifts, and power of God according to the proportion of faith. Although there is no detailed description of what these gifts are, there is no doubt that Basil means all the gifts that the Scripture mentions about (e.g., tongues, the interpretation of tongues, healing, prophecy, the working of miracles, the utterance of wisdom and knowledge). If he opposed their actual occurrence, he would definitely say so.

In fact, Basil explicitly states that the Holy Spirit distributes all gifts of God (including tongues, prophecy, healing and miracles) together with God the Father and the Son to those who need and seek them.[88] He seemingly supports for modern Pentecostals’ claim of the possibility of the actual occurrence and experience of all the gifts of the Holy Spirit which the Scripture testifies. It is difficult to find the substantial evidence of denial of their actual experience and occurrence until his time, although there would be a serious question over their authenticity.[89] The major issue and argument regarding the Holy Spirit up to his time was the reliability of his divinity. The cessation theory of the scriptural gifts of the Holy Spirit, which Pentecostals so strongly oppose, was explicitly proposed a few decades later by Chrysostom (347-407)[90] and Augustine (354-430)[91] for the first time in the history of the church.

Basil does not seek for the initial evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit from any one of His gifts, as the classical Pentecostals do. His recognition of the baptism of the Spirit is, however, vivid by differentiating it from the baptism by water. They give raise to a different degree and kind of God’s grace. This is, however, just to distinguish the water-baptism of John and the baptism of the Holy Spirit from Jesus Christ.[92] Basil neither separates the water-spirit baptism, nor stresses the two different stages of God’s grace in conversion and in the baptism of the Holy Spirit, as modern Pentecostals argue. Basil treats the water-spirit baptism, faith and baptism as a simultaneous event for salvation. The water-baptism signifies the surrender of ourselves to Christ, while the spirit-baptism empowers and renews our souls to put off our sinful desires in order to live a holy and spiritual life. The baptism of the Holy Spirit also occurs in the event of conversion and regeneration for Basil.

Baptism then symbolically signifies the putting off of the works of the flesh; as the apostle says, ye were ‘circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: buried with in Baptism. . . . Hence it follows that the answer to our question why the water was associated with the Spirit is clear: the reason is because in baptism two ends were proposed; on the one hand, the destroying of the body of sin,
that it may never bear fruit unto death; on the other hand, our living unto the Spirit, and having our fruit in holiness; the water receiving the body as in a tomb figures death, while the Spirit pours in the quickening power, renewing our souls from the deadness of sin unto their original life. This then is what it is to be born again of water and of the Spirit. . . For baptism is ‘not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God.’ So in training us for the life that follows on the resurrection the Lord sets out all the manner of life required by the Gospel, laying down for us the law of gentleness, of endurance of wrong, of freedom of the defilement that comes of the love of pleasure, and from the covetousness, to the end that we may of set purpose win beforehand and achieve all that the life to come of its inherent nature possesses.[93]

Having said the above, one could find Basil’s interesting comment that the Holy Spirit distributes His “energy according to the proportion of faith.”[94] This implies that the effect of the baptism of the Holy Spirit could be varied in accordance with the different stages of faith. The variation of its effect seem to suggest that Basil could also support Pentecostals’ claim of the different stages and kinds of the grace of the Holy Spirit in Christian life. One is His grace in conversion, and the other is His grace in furnishing the believer with His power through His various gifts by His anointing baptism in order to serve the will and glory of God by witnessing the Gospel of Christ.

The major effect of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is expressed in terms of our holy and spiritual life for Basil.[95] He presents the distinctive being of the Spirit as the Sanctifier from the perspective of His distinctive work of sanctification. His doctrine of sanctification adheres to the gradual progress of holiness. It is not certainly Wesleyan. It does not suggest the perfect eradication of sin of the flesh by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, as the Wesleyan doctrine of holiness presupposes. Rather it supports the Keswick doctrine of holiness that underscores the endowment of the power of the Spirit in baptism to resist sinful desires for service of the will of God that the Gospel witnesses.[96] There is also insinuation of His distinctive being as the Inspirer and Illuminator from his distinctive work of inspiration and illumination of God’s truth in the scriptural revelation. The Holy Spirit as the Paraclete helps us to search and understand the truth of God by inspiration and illumination. Above all, the eschatological character of his pneumatology is perceivable. The Holy Spirit renders foreknowledge of the future to and for us, bringing about our ultimate salvation in the heavenly Kingdom of God.[97]

6. THE DIVINE UNITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

There is a persistent emphasis on the unity of the Holy Spirit with God the Father and the Son. His trinitarian unity is vital for Barth to defend the deity and equality of the Spirit with God the Father and the Son. His chief opponents are Arianists (i.e., Eunomius) who regard the Holy Spirit as a creature by denying His deity, for they refuse to admit His essential togetherness and unity with God the Father and the Son. Basil’s defense of the deity of the Holy Spirit does not seem to be very satisfactory. He does not explicitly assert that the Holy Spirit is God Himself, thus he has a divine essence, as he does so in the case of the Son.[98] The pattern of his argument for the deity of the Spirit is implicit and indirect. His deity is only implied by highlighting His trinitarian unity. This is perhaps because Basil would not use the doctrine of the homoousion (όμοούσιον) for claiming His deity. The doctrine, which implies the same divine substance of the Holy Spirit with God the Father and the Son, would render a better position to profess the deity of the Spirit.
Basil’s concept of the trinitarian unity of the Holy Spirit sharply differs from that of his predecessor, Athanasius’. It is the same substance (ομοόσιος) for Athanasius, while Basil understands it as the conjunction (συνάφεια). The inherent difficulty of Athanasius’ concept is that it is hard to demonstrate the distinctive beings of the Trinity in their same substance (ομοόσιος). Basil’s concept of the trinitarian conjunction provides a solid ground for us to overcome this difficulty. The conjunction denotes the togetherness and co-existence of the distinctive hypostases of the Trinity. The concept of the trinitarian conjunction enables us to depart from any suggestion of Sabellius’ modelism that nullifies the distinctive beings of the Trinity by regarding them as merely three different modes or revelations of the one God. For Basil, the distinctive individual being of each member of the Trinity is integral and constitutive to this union, in a sense that it is indispensable for their mutual fellowship and union. The unity of the Trinity does not negate the distinctiveness of each member.

The meaning of the conjunction of the Trinity is expounded by applying it to the connotation of the preposition “with” (μετά). His equality with God the Father and the Son in glory and dignity is argued from the perspective of their eternal conjunction, for He creates all things, baptizes and redeems us, distributes all gifts of God, and judges the world in the end with God the Father and the Son. It is thus wrong to propose the sub-numeration of the Holy Spirit under God the Father and the Son in all these things, for all have the one nature. The Holy Spirit should be thus dignified, honored, praised, glorified and worshiped in equality with God the Father and the Son.

One may say, meanwhile, that it is difficult to find the convincing impression of the genuine union of the Trinity in Basil’s concept of the trinitarian conjunction. It predominantly conveys the connotation of the co-existence of the three distinctive beings of the Trinity in God. He is well aware of this difficulty. He makes an explicit attempt to resolve it by adopting the doctrine of the principium (beginning) of the Father. The one God the Father is regarded as the beginning and origin of the Trinity in order to stress their genuine unity, for the Trinity are rooted in the one source (μοναρχία) of God the Father. The genuine oneness and unity of the Trinity is asserted on the basis of their one source (μοναρχία) of God the Father. The reason that he rejects the Western doctrine of the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son (filioque) is that it implies the existence of two sources (άρχαι) of the Godhead, and consequently its division. The rejection here does not disregard the inseparable relation between the Spirit and the Son. The recognition of the Spirit’s procession through the Son is apparent. The involvement of the Spirit in all the redemptive events of the Son is also mentioned.

In his support for the older doctrine of the μοναρχία of God the Father, Basil guards against the charge of tritheism, affirming the oneness of God as the conceptual basis of the unity and the equality of His Trinity. This enables him to overcome the Origenist problem of trinitarian subordinationism. Wolfhart Pannenberg would not adhere to this. Trinitarian subordinationism is inherent to the doctrine of the μοναρχία of God the Father. The doctrine forbids us to understand the unity of God as a mutual constitution of the Trinity. It highlights the derivation of the Son and the Spirit always from God the Father, the only source of the Godhead. They are thus subordinate to God the Father. I find that the idea of a mutual constitution of the Trinity is seemingly absurd. It implies that the Father also derives from the Son and the Holy Spirit because they are one. Basil would prohibit the idea of a mutual constitution of the Trinity, for it could presuppose three sources of God implying tritheism, although Pannenberg opposes to it on the ground of the oneness of the Trinity. But the Bible definitely supports the doctrine of the one source of God the Father rather than that of the mutual
constitution of the Trinity. There is no problem to argue the genuine unity and oneness of God through the doctrine of the μοναρχία of God the Father, if its intention is accepted.

In his assertion of this doctrine that proposes the inseparable oneness and unity of the Trinity, Basil seems to claim the ontological participation of each member of the Trinity in the other two.[118] Their oneness is the basis for affirming their simultaneous movement and presence and involvement in all things. It is the basis for implying the so-called doctrine of co-inherence, perichoresis (περιχώρησις), which claims that each member of the Trinity possesses the being and action of the other two in their genuine unity and oneness of their nature.[119] There is no indication that Basil proposes the derivation of the Father from the Son and Holy Spirit on the basis of their mutual oneness and unity, as most of modern theologians (e.g., Karl Barth, Pannenberg, and T. F. Torrance) do.

The important fact is that the oneness of God which Basil talks about is the constitutive unity of the distinctive beings of the Trinity. The three distinctive hypostases of the Trinity are of one substance or nature (μία ούσία) of God. There is a simultaneous acknowledgement of the Trinity and Unity of God. Their dialectical relation and tension is never nullified. The emphasis rests on the threeness in the oneness rather than vice versa. Its evidence is that Basil speaks of the oneness of God in terms of the constitutive unity of the three distinctive hypostases of the Trinity. This signifies that the acting subject of God is attributed to the Trinity in one essence rather than vice versa.

The decisive reason for this attribution is that the epistemology of the oneness (μία ούσια) of God is impossible to us. The genuine oneness of the three distinctive hypostases is the inner reality of God that is known only to Himself. It transcends our cognition, remaining as a mystery to us. “The question as to how the individuality of the each hypostasis is related to the ousia, does not interest”[120] Basil. For him, we encounter and perceive the distinctive hypostases of the Trinity from the revelation of their distinctive actions. God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are respectively designated as the Causer, the Sender, and the Distributor on the basis of their distinctive action of causing, sending, and distributing.[121] Thus the epistemology determines the concept of the trinitarian ontology of God for Basil. This is precisely because we should not talk about His trinitarian ontology without our actual epistemology and knowledge of it. It is the divine energy of the Holy Spirit that enables us to perceive the trinitarian ontology of God.[122]

7. CONCLUSION

Basil’s pneumatology is very relevant and educational to modern Pentecostalism. It stimulates Pentecostals to maintain the systematic relevance of their pneumatology to the doctrines of Christology and the Trinity. The maintenance enables them to widen their theological spectrum as well as to affirm the soundness of their theology. They could demonstrate their theological creativeness by illustrating their living experience of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in baptism as the basis of Christian trinitarian theology. Basil teaches them that faith should be the noetic and conceptual possibility of their pneumatology. It is the only way of obtaining their theological freedom, creditability, actualism, dynamism, objectivism and scientism that casts away any accusation of their theology as too mystic and unintelligent.

The best way of discussing the distinctive character of the Holy Spirit is to view it from His trinitarian relationship. Basil clearly teaches that the Spirit is not a mere acting power or instrument of God. He is the self-sufficient and intelligent being, the Giver of life and all good
gifts to us and for us. He never professes cessation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in baptism. We could find the crude of his support for Pentecostals’ claim of the two stages and kinds of the grace of the Spirit in baptism. His doctrine of holiness is closer to the Keswick than the Wesleyan doctrine.

Basil educates Pentecostals that the affirmation of the distinction and unity of the Holy Spirit is essential to form a trinitarian pneumatology. They can use his concept of the trinitarian conjunction as their conceptual basis for the distinctiveness of the Trinity. His conceptual distinction between the ousia and the hypostasis is also educational for them to assert the trinitarian distinction. The doctrine of the one source (μοναρχία) of God the Father can be used as the conceptual ground for the genuine unity and oneness of the triune God. It seems that this doctrine is more acceptable and educational than the doctrine of the mutual constitution of the Trinity, for the former is much more faithful to the trinitarian spirituality of the Scripture.

The importance of the conceptual development of conscious personhood and subjectivity of the Trinity is not noticed by Basil. This development is, however, vital to resist against any materialistic insinuation of the trinitarian being of God. Pentecostals’ intelligent communication with the Holy Spirit in baptism could be a good starting point for claiming the distinctive personal being and subject of the Spirit. The assertion of His distinctive personal being and subject as the model for that of God the Father and the Son could be regarded as the theological creativeness and contribution of Pentecostals to the Christian world.

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[1] An earlier version of this paper was presented at the First Annual Meeting of the Asian Pentecostal Society held at Gospel Theological Seminary, Taejon, Korea, May 21, 1999. It was published in the journal of The Spirit and Church (Taejeon: Gospel Theological Seminary, 1999).


[5] Marty states that the centrality of Pentecostalism is the baptism of the Holy Spirit “which has to be added to water baptism. This is integral to all Pentecostals’ and Charismatics’ self-definition,” “Pentecostalism in the Context,” p. 209.


[7] Hoekema mentions that “the central doctrine of Neo-Pentecostalism is its teaching on the baptism in the Holy Spirit. So basic is this teaching to the Neo-Pentecostal movement that if you take this doctrine away from it, what you have left is no longer Neo-Pentecostalism,” Holy Spirit Baptism (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), p. 10.


[11] Marty thinks that there is a belief of Pentecostalism without its theology. Pentecostalism and charismatic movements “were in no sense theologically inventive, nor were they constituted on intellectual or cognitive foundation,” “Pentecostalism in the Context,” p. 205.


[14] He mentions Pentecostals’ theological works in various topics (e.g., the Holy Spirit, Glossalalia, divine healing, prophecy, redemption, mission) in his treatment of their theological distinctiveness, The American Pentecostal, pp. 33-41.

[15] Faupel says that “the majority of scholarly works on the Pentecostal movement are written an historical perspective,” The American Pentecostal, p. 10.

[16] The comment on the possible creativeness and contribution of Pentecostalism here will be very belief. The space of this paper does not allow me to deal with this point in greater detail. The major concern of the paper is to illustrate the educational implication of St. Basil’s pneumatology to modern Pentecostalism.


[18] Basil Studer suggests that Basil’s pneumatology is better than Athanasius’, although the latter (359) is earlier than the former (374/5). Athanasius did not explicitly discuss the nature of the Spirit’s origin that is the essential part of pneumatology, as Basil did, Trinity and Incarnation, ed. Andrew Louth (Edinburgh, England: T & T Clark, 1993), pp. 148-49. We could regard Basil as “the most prominent theology of the Holy Spirit in the Eastern Church. This honorary title is confirmed by the fact that the second ecumenical council in its remaking of the Nicene Creed essentially restates St. Basil’s teaching on the Holy Spirit,” pp. 148-49.

[19] There are two more Cappadocian fathers known to us well. One is Basil’s younger brother, Gregory of Nyssa who became the bishop of Nyssa, and the other one is Basil’s friend, Gregory of Nazianzus, the bishop of Constantinople. They all came from the Romean providence of Cappadocia, in modern Turkey. They vigorously opposed any kind of Arianism that regarded the Son or the Holy Spirit as a creature by developing the doctrine of the Trinity from the
Origenist trinitarianism. They, like Origen, asserted God the Father as the only source of the Godhead, and the existence of three hypostases in one being of God. Their assertion remains as the formal pattern of the Eastern trinitarianism, Tony Lane, Christian Thought (Herts, England: Lion Concise, 1984), pp. 22-34, 55.


[21] Tony Lane states that Basil’s De Spiritu Sancto was written to oppose the Macedonians, who recognized the deity of the Son, but refused the Holy Spirit’s professing him as a creature, as the Homoeousian bishop of Constantinople, Macedonius did, Christian Thought, p. 34. J. N. Kelly, however, seems to say a different thing that the name of the Macedonians was existed and used only after 380. There is thus no connection between Mecedonius, the Homoeousian bishop of Constantinople, and Macedonianism. It is more appropriate for us to consider the Pneumatomachians (Spirit-Fighters) as the ones who denied the deity of the Holy Spirit just before the formulation of Basil’s De Spiritu Sancto. They were the left wing of the Homoeousians who emerged by distancing themselves from Athanasius’ assertion of the Homoousion of the Holy Spirit with God the Father at Alexandria, Early Christian Doctrine (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1958), p. 259.

[22] Bethune-Baker mentions that Aetius was the leader of Arianism at his time. He propagated Arianism with his two prominent disciples, Eunomius and Eudoxius, An Introduction to the Early, p. 178.


[24] This point will be spelled out in detail later.

[25] McIntyre, The Shape of Pneumatology, p. 85. Studer implies that the assertion of the deity of the Holy Spirit from his unity with God the Father and the Son is also the pattern of Basil’s other writings, e.g., the third book of his Contra Eunomium 362/3 or 365 and his letter De fide, The Shape, p. 149.


[27] As a matter of fact, all Pentecostal doctrines must have a trinitarian orientation. The Christian theological activity is, as I see, nothing but understanding, interpreting and conceptualizing all things in the light of the action and being of the triune God.

[28] William W. Menzies describes the Oneness Pentecostalism as one of the major non-Wesleyan origins of the Pentecostal movement, “The Non-Wesleyan Origins of the Pentecostal Movement,” Aspects of Pentecostal-Charismatic Origins, pp. 81-98. David Reed also states that “the oneness movement began within and has remained an integral part of the modern Pentecostal phenomenon in America,” “Aspects of the Origins of Oneness Pentecostalism,” in Aspects, p. 154. He says that the movement caused a major schism at the Fourth General Council of the Assemblies of God held in St. Louis in 1916. Over one-fourth of its members, who supported the movement, left it after the Council that condemned the movement. “The new movement [of oneness Pentecostalism] reappeared within a year in organizational form. Its growth to one-half million members in over twenty organization in the United States can still be traced to the appeal it had in 1913,” p. 165. The bracket is mine. Menzies says from the perspective of the Assemblies of God that the permanent shape of the traditional Pentecostal movement emerged in 1916. Its fourth Council in 1916 declared the statements of its faith that set it apart from the Holiness-Pentecostal bodies as well as the oneness segment of American
Pentecostalism. “The basic configuration of traditional American Pentecostalism has remained fairly constant since that time,” “The Non-Wesleyan Origins,” p. 83.

[29] Frank J. Ewart admits that he openly taught the oneness pentecostalism (e.g., the oneness of the Godhead and baptism in Jesus’ name only) to his people for the first time in the world-wide camp meeting, which was held in Arroyo Seco, Cliforn in 1913, The Phenomenon of Pentecost (Houston, Texas: Word Aflame Press, 1947), pp. 108-109. Fred J. Foster indicates that there was also a remarkable open propagation of the oneness pentecostalism in Western Canada in Winnipeg in November 1913, where the “Annual Pentecostal Convention” was held. The guest speaker of the convention, R. E. McAlister of Eastern Canada, who was the assistant evangelist of Frank J. Ewart, delivered the message of the exclusive rite of water baptism in Jesus’ name only, and Frank Small baptized thirty candidates in this particular fashion, Think It Not Strange: A History of the Oneness Movement (St. Louis: Pentecostal Publishing House, 1965), p. 60.

[30] Reed thinks that the oneness movement was, in fact, rooted in “the Christocentrism of the millenarian movement of the last century,” “Aspects of the Origins,” p. 157. Although many Pentecostals regarded it as a radical innovation, “there were elements within the early revival itself that were conducive to the emergence of such a movement.” Reed also states that “a full-orbed Christocentrism in worship, thought, and practice was undoubtedly a major factor in the appearance of the oneness movement,” p. 157.

[35] The early fathers of the church endeavored to defend the triune concept of God. It was the basis for them, e.g., Justine Martyr, not only to introduce and defend Christianity to the world, but also differentiate it from Judaism and Hellenistic religion and philosophy that were very influential for its formation, i.e., Apology I, chs. 21-23, 36-60 and Dialogue with Trypho the Jew, chs. 10-23, 33-142 in Anti-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 1, eds., A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1993), pp. 159-270.

[36] De Spiritu Sancto, §68.
[37] Basil’s trinitarian pneumatology begins with clarifying the relationship of the Son, Jesus Christ, with God the Father. Their relationship affects the state of the Holy Spirit in the triune God. Considerable space (De Spiritu Sancto, §13-21) is allocated to deal with it. Basil declares the ever togetherness of the Son with God the Father in creation, redemption, and eschaton from the Scripture (e.g., John 1:13-14), and stresses their co-existence and equal glory and dignity by exploring the meaning of the preposition “with,” which is used for expression of their relationship (De Spiritu Sancto, §13-16). The Son is described as the Lord God the Creator or the Image, Wisdom, and Power of God without any hesitation (De Spiritu Sancto, §17-20).

[38] The Reformers (including Calvin) were not conscious of formulating their theology from the perspective of christocentric trinitarianism in a systematic and consistent way. Karl Barth, who is commonly regarded as one of the best theologians of this century, consciously attempts to do this in his Church Dogmatics. He certainly succeeds in presenting a christocentric theology. His christocentric theology, however, fails to justify the trinitarian concept of God. There is no illustration of the distinctive personal beings of the Trinity in his Dogmatics. For more detail, see Sang-Hwan Lee, The Revelation of the Triune God in the Theologies of John Calvin and Karl Barth (Ph.D. dissertation; Durham, England: Durham University, 1995), pp.
397-401. It is difficult to find Pentecostals who succeed in formulating their theology (i.e., the nature of the creator-God) in terms of christocentric trinitarianism. In order words, the implication of the human and trinitarian nature of Jesus Christ is not fully applied to the nature of the creator-God by any Pentecostal theologians so far.


[40] Eph 1:3ff. and 3:24ff.

[41] William W. Menzies apparently indicates the formative influence of fundamentalism in early Pentecostalism, “Non-Wesleyan Origins of Pentecostal Movement,” pp. 83-5. He states that “the strong sense of kinship with fundamentalism remained acute in the Pentecostal movement, even after the World Christian Fundamentals Association at a convention in Chicago in May, 1928,” p 85, and “did affect the eventual shape of a significant part of the Pentecostal movement,” p. 96. Meanwhile, it is fair to say that the oneness pentecostals are not fundamentalists in nature, in a sense that they do not claim the cessation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit (e.g., speaking in other tongues and healing and prophecy) as fundamentalists do. Faupe says that the dispensational fundamentalists were the strongest critic of the pentecostal movement at its beginning. They insisted that the manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit (e.g., speaking in other tongues and healing) in the twentieth century were dispensationally impossible, for they were ceased with the Apostles, The American Pentecostal Movement: A Bibliographical Essay, p. 28.

[42] De Spiritu Sancto, §4. According to Basil, Aetius regards the three phrases, “of whom,” “by or through,” and “in whom” in 1 Cor 8:6 as the specially designed ones to express the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They verify the particular nature of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and thus they can not be exchangeable, De Spiritu Sancto, §5-6.


[45] Basil thus concludes that “they may establish the difference of nature, have laid down the law that this phrase befits the Father alone,” De Spiritu Sancto, §6.

[46] De Spiritu Sancto, §4. According to Basil, Aetius regards the three phrases, “of whom,” “by or through,” and “in whom” in 1 Cor. 8:6 as the specially designed ones to express the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They respectively verify the particular nature of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and thus they cannot be exchangeable, §5-6.


[48] De Spiritu Sancto, §4-5.
De Spiritu Sancto, §6.

De Spiritu Sancto, §7.

De Spiritu Sancto, §6.

De Spiritu Sancto, §7.

De Spiritu Sancto, §11.

Basil gives other references, Matt 1:20, John 3:6, 24, and 1 Cor 2:10 for this, De Spiritu Sancto, §9.

De Spiritu Sancto, §7-12.

The unwritten tradition which Basil refers here is thought of the apostolic tradition that existed before the Council of Nicaea in 325. His argument of the trinitarian unity of the Holy Spirit from the perspective of this unwritten tradition is tactical and deliberate. The perspective provides a logical basis for him to attack the logical weakness and the evidential limitation of his opponents. They deny the unity of the Trinity not only because of their heretic interpretation of the Bible but also because of their conceptual basis in the written tradition until the Nicaea Creed which does not indicate the trinitarian unity. See Henry Chadwick, The Early Church (London: Penguin, 1967), 149. Kelly says that Basil’s assertion of the unwritten apostolic tradition as the basis of theological argument is not conventional, Early Christian Doctrine, p. 46. Chadwick commends this, for it achieves a great contribution to the development of trinitarian argument, The Early Church, p. 149.

De Spiritu Sancto, §72-4.

De Spiritu Sancto, §68.

My view.


“Wherefore now with the help, if I may so say, of the Holy Spirit Himself, I will approach the exposition of the subject,” De Spiritu Sancto, §2.

My view.

“We acknowledge that the word of the truth has in many places made use of these expressions; yet we absolutely deny that the freedom of the Spirit is in bondage to the pettiness of Paganism,” De Spiritu Sancto, §6.


Schleiermacher formulates his theology by depending entirely on the conscious religious feeling of his subjectivity, The Christian Faith, ed. H. R. MaCkintosh and J. S. Steward (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1989), pp. 131-41. The outcome of this seems to be some kind of a theological subjectivism that falls into a subjective formalism. This is because his theology would not allow the objective reality of God’s revelation to determine the religious feeling of his subjectivity. Its dynamism genuinely comes, as it responses to the objective reality of God, which is beyond his subjectivity.


De Spiritu Sancto, §7.

De Spiritu Sancto, §37-8.

This is the comment of Blomfield Jackson, the translator of Basil’s De Spiritu Sancto, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. VIII, p. 5.


Lane says that Basil’s assertion of the three hypostases was accepted by the other two Cappadocian fathers who played a leading role in the Council of Constantinople. They persuaded its participants to accept the word “three hypostases” as its official notion for the Trinity. The Council apparently professed that the three hypostases are of one substance of the Trinity (Christian Thought, pp. 29-35). Adolph Harnack thus comments that Basil’s influence was great in resisting the complete victory of the doctrine of the homoousion at the Council of Constantinople (381). The doctrine of the homoousion that was upheld by Hosius, Athanasius, Eustathius, and Marcellus at the Council of Nicea in 325 was defeated. The real winners at the Council of Constantinople were the homoeousins (όμοιούσιον) who were sympathetic to the doctrine of the homooousion, History of Dogma, vol. IV, trans. E. B. Speirs and J. Millar (London: Williams & Norgate, 1898), p. 82.


De Spiritu Sancto, §37-8.


De Spiritu Sancto, §37-8.

De Spiritu Sancto, §27.

De Spiritu Sancto, §44.


De Spiritu Sancto, §37-8.

Basil explicitly states that the Holy Spirit has an intelligent substance and being, De Spiritu Sancto, §38.


One chapter (De Spiritu Sancto, chapter 9 §22-3) is allocated for this out of thirty chapters.

De Spiritu Sancto, §46.

De Spiritu Sancto, §38.

De Spiritu Sancto, §37, 39, 61.

One of the major reasons that the early fathers of the church (i.e., Apollinaris, the bishop of Hierapolis) strongly opposed the highly charismatic Montanists is not their spiritual gifts themselves, but the faulty of them (i.e., prophecy). For instance, Tertullian and Irenaeus admired their spiritual life and gifts. Montanus and his female followers (Maximilla and Prisca or Priscilla) prophesied the imminent end of the world by saying the imminent descent of the heavenly Jerusalem at the village of Pepuza. The catholic church condemned them as heretic by illustrating their false prophecy owing to its unfulfilment, Robert M. Grant, Greek Apologists of the Second Century (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1998), pp. 87-89. cf. Studer, Trinity and Incarnation, pp. 56, 67, 72.


[92] “Furthermore, from this too may be apprehended the difference between the grace that comes from the Spirit and the baptism by water: in that John indeed baptized with water, but our Lord Jesus Christ by the Holy Ghost,” De Spiritu Sancto, §36.

[93] De Spiritu Sancto, §35.
[94] De Spiritu Sancto, §22.
[95] De Spiritu Sancto, §35.

[96] See Menzies, “Non-Wesleyan Origins of Pentecostal Movement,” pp. 84-96. He speaks of the Keswick-type of holiness teaching as one of the major non-Wesleyan origins of Pentecostal movement, implying that the Keswick teaching of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is embodied in the belief of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, pp. 95-6.

[97] De Spiritu Sancto, §36.


[101] Hill indicates that Athanasius fails to explain his assertion of the distinction of the Trinity, for he does not distinguish ousia and hypostasis at the point where such a distinction might be most helpful, The Three-Personed God, p. 46.


[103] “It [the proposition with] does indeed, equally well with the preposition ‘and,’ confute the mischief of Sabellius; and it sets forth quite as well as ‘and’ the distinction of the hypostases, as in the words ‘I and my Father come,’ and ‘I and my father are one.’ In addition to this the proof it contains of the eternal fellowship and uninterrupted conjunction is excellent. For to say that the Son is with the Father is to exhibit at once the distinction of the hypostases, and the inseparability of the fellowship,” De Spiritu Sancto, §59. The bracket is mine.

[104] It is worthwhile to notice the central basis of Basil’s employment of the preposition ‘with’ for the trinitarian unity of the Holy Spirit. He gets it from his own interpretation of the baptismal formula of the Scripture (Matt 28:19, “baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”). He highlights that the word “and” here derived from the very words of our Lord Jesus Christ. Its equivalent meaning is the word “with.” The reason for his preference of the word “with” to “and” is that the former expresses the trinitarian union of the Holy Spirit that is strongly felt in faith more effectively than the latter does, De Spiritu Sancto, §65-8. The word “in” (έν) is used to illustrate the relation of the Holy Spirit to all creatures which He dwells in, De Spiritu Sancto, §65.

[105] De Spiritu Sancto, §38.

[106] See De Spiritu Sancto, §28, 35, 36. Basil interprets Jesus’ Great Commission in Matt 28:19 as the evidence of the togetherness of the Trinity, and strongly opposes the baptism for redemption only in any single name of the Trinity. If each member of the Trinity is separable from the other two, our Lord would not command us to baptize in the whole name of the Trinity.

[107] De Spiritu Sancto, §37, 39.
“Worshipping as we do God of God, we both confess the distinction of the Persons, and at the same time abide by the Monarchy. We do not fritter away the theology in a divided plurality, because one Form, so to say, united in the invariableness of the Godhead, is beheld in God the Father, and in God the Only begotten. For the Son is in the Father and the Father is in the Son. . . herein is the Unity. So that according to the distinction of Persons, both are one and one, and according to the community of Nature, one. How, then, if one and one, are there not two Gods? Because we speak of a king, and of the king’s image, and not of two kings.” De Spiritu Sancto, §45. Cf. §22, 38.

De Spiritu Sancto, §45.
De Spiritu Sancto, §39.
Pannenberg illustrates the evidence that Tertullian and Origen presuppose the doctrine of the μοναρχία of God the Father, Systematic Theology, vol. I, p. 279.
De Spiritu Sancto, §43. Hill says that Athanasius has influenced the Cappadocian fathers (including Basil) to preclude “once and for all any tendency to think in subordinationist terms,” The Three-Personed God, p. 47.
The doctrine of the μοναρχία “means a relapse into subordinationism, since the idea of the mutual defining of the distinctiveness of the persons does not lead to the thought of an equally mutual ontological constitution of their personhood but is interpreted in terms of relations of origin, of which it can be said that strictly they are constitutive only for the personhood of the Son and Spirit if the Father is the source and origin of deity,” Systematic Theology, vol. I, p. 280.
De Spiritu Sancto, §13, 41, 42, 45.
Studer, Trinity and Incarnation, p. 144.
De Spiritu Sancto, §37-8.
“One, moreover, is the Holy Spirit, and we speak of Him singly, conjoined as He is to the one Father through the one Son, and through Himself contemplating the adorable and blessed Trinity,” De Spiritu Sancto, §45. Basil believes the Spirit has an intelligent power and energy that inspires and illuminate us to search for the truth of God, De Spiritu Sancto, §22.