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**Approaching Participation in the Divine Gift:**

**Anselm of Canterbury’s Theology of the Holy Spirit.**

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Abstract

This article seeks to constructively retrieve Anselm’s theology of the Holy Spirit by responding to a recent criticism of his doctrine of atonement. This criticism is called the question of efficacy and focuses particularly on how Anselm holds humanity to participate in and receive the divine gift of atonement. In short, this paper argues that the Spirit’s prevenient and subsequent grace allow for an individual to respond freely and in faith to Christ’s work, resulting in three individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for union to be restored with God and human flourishing to obtain in Anselm’s thinking. In order to argue this, the paper proceeds in four sections. First, it discusses the question of efficacy. Second, it discusses the Spirit’s work in relation to an individual initially accepting Christ’s Gift. The paper then proceeds by discussing the subsequent work of the Spirit and redemptive role of faith that are inherently tied to the initial work. The paper then concludes by analyzing alternative approaches to this question of efficacy.

I. Introduction

Despite the perennially growing mountain of resources for Anselm of Canterbury’s thought, there is little scholarship covering his theology of the Holy Spirit in relation to humanity. One of the reasons for this lack of scholarship is that he is relatively silent on this topic in comparison to his other direct writings on, for instance, the Trinity and Atonement. Yet Anselm’s extensive writing on certain topics need not indicate a lack of interest in or even of a thought-out doctrine of the Holy Spirit. For Anselm was a reactive writer who responded to various requests, situations, and potential error.[[1]](#footnote-1) Thus, though his theology is not always systematically laid out for the reader, one can ascertain it through a survey of his works. Nonetheless, the fact that Anselm is not vocal about the Holy Spirit’s work *ad extra* at least accounts for the lack of scholarship.

The only article that directly addresses this aspect of Anselm’s theology is by Thomas Williams.[[2]](#footnote-2) Williams argues that Anselm consistently treats the Holy Spirit in teleological terms. In the Godhead, the Spirit is the mutual affection that engages the divine Memory and Understanding, giving them purpose. For ‘[m]ere knowledge… is not *for* anything.’[[3]](#footnote-3) Regarding humanity, the Spirit brings human nature to fruition by restoring the will to rectitude and allowing for right action.[[4]](#footnote-4) The Spirit thus restores and fulfills human nature. Williams’ use of both the *Monologion* and *De Concordia* demonstrates this is of interest to Anselm while laying the groundwork for how it is of interest.

Indeed, Anselm has obvious interests in the Holy Spirit. He most directly develops this theology in the *Monologion* due to the request for the *ratio fidei*,and in the *De Processione Spiritus Sancti* by polemically defending the *filioque.* Both of these works consider the Holy Spirit’s role within the Godhead, but they do not fully attend to the Spirit’s work in human beings. And since grace is traditionally ascribed to the Holy Spirit, Anselm’s discussion of the harmony of free-will and grace in *De Concordia* must shed some light on the Spirit’s work, but the treatment is at best peripheral.[[5]](#footnote-5)

Where, then, does one begin to retrieve his thinking about his theology of the Holy Spirit? Fortunately, a recent criticism focuses on Anselm and the satisfaction theory of atonement, arguing that an Anselmian Satisfaction Theory of Atonement does not sufficiently answer the question of efficacy. That is, it does not explain how Christ’s atoning work is efficacious for and appropriated by humanity, rather than simply being *sufficient* in some manner.[[6]](#footnote-6) The purpose of this paper is therefore to answer the following question: How does Anselm’s theology of the Holy Spirit account for Christ’s work being efficacious? In answering this question, I will utilize the basic tenets of Anselm’s philosophical anthropology and doctrine of atonement while developing his theology of the Holy Spirit as a grammar to understand the connection. In short, this paper argues that the Spirit’s prevenient and subsequent grace allows for an individual to respond freely and in faith to Christ’s work. This argument demonstrates that there are three individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions to restore both union with God and human flourishing: Christ’s work, the Spirit’s work, and the individual’s faith.

I will proceed by discussing the question of efficacy in general. I will then turn to offer a constructive response to the question of efficacy, a response that is compatible with Anselm’s doctrinal tenets and anthropology and also limits itself to faith and the Spirit’s work. I then consider alternative ways to respond to this question and then close by considering the limitations and further development for this paper.

II. Efficacy, Justification, and Redemption

It is odd that Anselm does not fully elaborate on how Christ’s atoning work is efficacious in *Cur Deus Homo* (CDH).[[7]](#footnote-7) Because his account is the first systematic doctrine of atonement,[[8]](#footnote-8) one wonders whether he considered efficacy to be a necessary element for a full account. The beginning of an answer is apparent at the end of CDH where Anselm briefly mentions that Christ’s atoning work becomes efficacious for believers through their faith. Anselm is explicit about the necessity of faith when considering the Virgin’s participation, though the term is left tacit in the final chapters.[[9]](#footnote-9) After this, he only states that Scripture explains how individuals should ‘approach participation in such great grace and how we ought to live under it.’[[10]](#footnote-10) While much of Scripture indicates it is by faith that humanity participates in Christ’s work (cf. Rom 3.24-6), this is a very brief explanation when compared to the remainder of Anselm’s work in CDH. It does not answer how Christ’s work is appropriated by individuals via faith, whether there are additional conditions in order for this to occur, and how the subjective stain[[11]](#footnote-11) is confronted in this process.

In order to understand the question of efficacy, it is best if we look first at the question of sufficiency. Christ’s death is *sufficient* insofar as it objectively provides the means by which humanity is reconciled to God. It is sufficient for anyone who participates in this work, and in this sense it directly addresses the afront to God’s honor that is the objective break in the divine-human relationship.[[12]](#footnote-12) Anselm is clear that Christ’s self-offering is the mechanism of atonement, sufficient to repair the objective break for anyone who participates in Christ’s work.[[13]](#footnote-13) The question of *efficacy* pertains to whether and how this work is subjectively actualized and redemptive for humanity; how Christ’s work is appropriated, and in what way the subjective stain is redeemed (i.e. how the atonement is effective for the individual). Showing that Christ’s work is sufficient does not automatically show that it is efficacious—let alone how it is efficacious.

In speaking about efficacy this way, I mean to include justification, redemption and salvation together in Anselm’s thought, which later Reformation thinkers keep separate. There are two sets of reasons for considering justification to include redemption: first, theological reasons; second, historical reasons. Regarding the theological reasons, it will be best to clarify these terms. By justification I mean the initial reconciliation with God, including a shift in the individual’s status as well as the necessary means of renewal to bring that individual into union with God. By redemption I mean the renewal and re-ordering of the human being. For instance, the will for the just overcomes and controls the will for the advantageous.[[14]](#footnote-14) Redemption refers to the ongoing process of bringing the individual into closer unity with God that inwardly transforms the individual; an *ontic* change occurs in redemption. Justification therefore includes an initial element of redemption in it, and is not limited to ‘forensic change’ of the person; otherwise, how would the atonement be efficacious? Lastly, I use salvation to mean the entire process of bringing an individual into communion with God, which encapsulates the initial and continued process of justification and redemption, though it most directly signifies the *union* between God and the human being.[[15]](#footnote-15)

The question of efficacy consequently encompasses justification and parts of redemption, and there are good theological reasons for thinking this. In terms of justification, a doctrine of atonement should include the redemption that occurs in justification, implying that justification can include but is certainly not limited to a forensic change. Should an initial redemption of the person not occur within justification, then only the individual’s status is changed in appropriating Christ’s work and gift. Yet Christ’s work inherently achieves more than just a relational change in status, but an intrinsic change within the person. On the assumption that atonement is for the sake of union, one must question what legitimate communion is attained if it is only forensic. Justification is meant for right relationship and being, not right status; it should therefore include an initial healing of the individual.[[16]](#footnote-16)

To argue that the atonement only achieves forensic change, or even that forensic change is the first distinct category of change in the chronology of appropriating Christ’s work, relies upon the superficial understanding of Christ’s self-offering being sufficient. To say this about forensic change is to assume that an individual could partake in the sufficiency without the atonement being efficacious; yet it is the moment that someone participates in Christ’s work that it is no longer sufficient, but also efficacious. This, then, seems to be a categorical error and a perilous assumption which trivializes Christ’s work to relational, not ontic, change. Instead, the actual individual is reconciled: this reconciliation thus includes, but is not exhausted by, a change in status before God. I do not argue that the individual is ontically changed *in toto* by the initial appropriation, but rather that there must be an essential change to the person, which for Anselm occurs in the will and mind.[[17]](#footnote-17)

Efficacy necessarily touches the question of redemption, then, for two reasons: first, the redemption occurs in justification itself, and second, the ongoing redemption that occurs in union with God necessarily builds on the redemption that occurs in the initial union with God. Although the atoning death of Christ is once for all, participation in its effects is not. We must consider both how an individual is initially cleansed and how the individual continues to be redeemed. This distinction of course changes the language from imputation to impartation of righteousness, which moves this conversation toward redemptive participation in Christ and with the Spirit.[[18]](#footnote-18)

Regardless of the theological impetus for thinking about efficacy this way, there are historical and textual reasons for taking up this distinction. Concerning the historical impetus, we only see an intentional separation of justification and redemption beginning in the Reformation, whereas medieval theology understood justification to include both initial and continued redemptive.[[19]](#footnote-19) This distinction simply post-dates Anselm. As for the textual reasons, we shall see that Anselm’s use of ‘faith’ does not allow there to be a legitimate distinction; the gift of faith includes both the individual’s initial and subsequent redemption.

With this discussion in mind, I will now turn to develop Anselm’s position on efficacy and the Holy Spirit. In this retrieval I will assume the narrative that God is Giver,[[20]](#footnote-20) by which I mean that God initially gives the gift of life and sustains creation. This narrative is developed in *De Casu Diaboli* 4, where Anselm demonstrates that humanity is necessarily and ontologically dependent on God for its existence, though is existentially capable of not recognizing this gift, something which would be inordinate. This narrative serves to illuminate certain points, though the coming argument is by no means dependent upon this backdrop. In the following, I argue that the Spirit initiates the process of salvation, reordering the individual’s mind and will to be able to freely accept the gift of salvation. The Spirit’s work and the individual’s responsive ‘yes’ birth the gift of faith, redeeming the individual in both his initial and continued participation. Faith is therefore given and sustained by the Spirit, which joins the individual to God in Christ. The individuals enact their faith through works of love, which concretizes the process of total restoration. The Spirit’s own work not only efficaciously administers Christ’s work but also efficaciously transforms the individual.[[21]](#footnote-21)

In seeking to retrieve Anselm’s position and examine his philosophical and theological resources for this endeavor, I will abide by the hard core of his account. First, I will (i) assume the mechanism of atonement, and (ii) assume the narrative that God is Giver. These first two tenets are important for my account to be true to Anselm’s thought. Of course, it is essential that my account is amenable to Anselm’s mechanism for it to be a true retrieval of his thinking, which it is. The narrative that God is Giver also serves as a helpful backdrop for some of the subsequent points; for instance, the point that the Spirit is the restorative Giver. Next, I will (iii) utilize Anselm’s specific construal of sin as disordering, which means both the will and intellect are not operating as they are intended to. For Anselm, the will is bound and the intellect clouded. This is necessary for my account to be true to Anselm’s thinking as well as sufficiently elaborate on the question of efficacy. I will also (iv) demonstrate how the redeemed individual honors God in faith and works of love, and (v) rely upon his account that it is by faith that the individual responsively participates in Christ’s work. These last tenets are very important for the argument’s coherence and scope as well as the argument’s accuracy to Anselm.

III. The Spirit, Justification, and Faith

Having laid this groundwork, I will now discuss how the Spirit works in the initial sense of justification and redemption. How do individuals participate in Christ’s work, and how is it effective for the subjective stain? I will argue that given Anselm’s notion of sin, the Spirit[[22]](#footnote-22) overcomes both the clouded intellect and bondage of the will in initiating and sustaining the process of salvation, contingent upon the responsive and continued ‘yes’ of the individual. This results in the gift of faith, bringing the individual into submission before God and overflowing in works of love, all of which continue to redeem the individual.

By participation I do not mean that the individuals initiate this process or restore themselves. This would immediately classify Anselm’s account as Pelagian or Semi-Pelagian. In guarding against Pelagianism, Anselm states, ‘it is *never* in [one’s] power to acquire rectitude when [human beings] don’t have it.’[[23]](#footnote-23) In regards to Semi-Pelagianism, he maintains that humanity is unable to initiate the process of salvation. The gift of salvation, just like the gift of existence, is given without prior act or merit. There are simply no merits by which either can be earned; indeed, the gifts of existence and salvation come through the overflowing and covenantal love of the Father who acts of his own accord. Moreover, because sin has bound the will and clouded the intellect, the only way we can participate is by responding to the divine initiative.

Let us first discuss the clouded intellect, and then turn to the will’s bondage. Regarding the clouded intellect, Anselm holds that humanity is made with the rational capacity in order to discern and choose the Good. The human is ‘rational in order that it might *distinguish* between the just and the unjust, between the good and the bad.’[[24]](#footnote-24) He then states, ‘rational nature was made for the purpose of loving and *choosing* the supreme Good above all other things.’[[25]](#footnote-25) Humans have a capacity to both *distinguish* and *choose* the Good for its own sake. This distinction of the intellect and will is later confirmed in *De Concordia* 3.11: ‘There is reason in the soul, which the soul employs as its instrument for reasoning, and the will, which it employs for willing.’[[26]](#footnote-26) Should the understanding not lead to action, then it is fruitless: ‘its rationality is pointless unless the rational creature acts in accordance with those judgments.’[[27]](#footnote-27)

While unfallen humanity was able to both discern and act upon the Good, fallen humanity is unable to do so because they experience a type of epistemic vitiation, this clouding of the intellect. *Inter alia*, the ‘inability to understand justice… derives from sin.’[[28]](#footnote-28) Sin produces a warping and confusion of the intellect. Given the interconnectedness of the intellect and will, humanity can never act justly. Humanity cannot even discern the Good in order to initiate the process of salvation, for their intellect must be healed and redeemed.[[29]](#footnote-29)

Even if agents could discern the Good in some manner, this would prove fruitless to them because the will is bound to sin. While Anselm understands the human to be at least comprised of the intellect and will, he further divides the will into two parts. For Anselm, to be created as a rational creature is to be created with a will for the just and a will for the advantageous.[[30]](#footnote-30) He holds that the ‘rational nature received, at one and the same time, the will for happiness itself [the advantageous], the will for justice (that is, rectitude, which is justice itself), and free choice, without which it could not preserve justice.’[[31]](#footnote-31) Before the fall, rational creatures knew God and were in happy communion with Him. Should Adam and Eve have continually willed what was just, that is, God for his own sake, then their will for the advantageous would have been fulfilled. This is true as well for willing all other things—they must be desired and willed for God’s sake alone. Of course, willing God himself does not exhaust willing what is just; instead, willing the just is a matter of willing what God wills us to, willing it for his sake. This reflects an intended internal ordering of the will: ‘Since the purpose of the rational nature is to love God above all else and for his own sake, and to love other things for God’s sake, a rational nature possesses rectitude when it does just that.’[[32]](#footnote-32)

Yet when a human does not will the just over the advantageous, his will is in a state of disorder, losing its rectitude before God. This internal disordering can be seen in a variety of things—lust, anger, envy, malice, deceit. For now, it is sufficient to say that Anselm holds human beings are born with their will in a state of bondage, meaning it is internally disordered, necessarily inclined to will the advantageous over the just. Because reconciliation would require desiring relationship with God for his own sake and discerning the Good, it is impossible for a human being to initiate reconciliation. Only if the will’s ‘rectitude is restored through grace’ can human beings be reconciled to God.[[33]](#footnote-33)

While the foregoing exposits how Anselm avoids Pelagianism, it more importantly provides the groundwork to demonstrate Anselm’s position of *responsive* participation in light of the dire human condition. Anselm uses an analogy to explain the gift of salvation and the cooperation of free will:

Suppose someone gives clothing to a person who is naked, to whom he does not owe

anything and who cannot provide himself with any garment. Even though the person who

was naked has the power to use or not use the clothing he has been given, still, if he does

use it, the fact that he is clothed should not be attributed to him but to the one who gave

him clothing.[[34]](#footnote-34)

Let us flesh this analogy out in terms of the clouded intellect, the bound will, and the Spirit’s work. I will first discuss the clouding of the intellect and then the bound will. According to this analogy, the ability to participate must be aided by prevenient and initial grace of the Spirit, which enables the individual to see and will God. The Spirit preveniently takes the clothes to the individual and initiates an opportunity. While Christ’s atoning work is the foundational means of this prevenient grace,[[35]](#footnote-35) the Spirit’s work also demonstrates prevenient grace through a variety of means, such as preaching, reading, conversation, art, the Body of Christ, and indeed any means or ‘whatever other way’ the Spirit deems fitting.[[36]](#footnote-36)

Anselm acknowledges a variety of means and situations for prevenient grace, though the Spirit’s work is concentrated in the Body of Christ.[[37]](#footnote-37) This makes the Body of Christ, i.e. the community of believers amalgamated by their union with Christ and the Spirit’s work, a localized place for the event of grace. This localization means that the event of grace is predominately dispensed and occurs through believers, though it implies neither that grace is contained geographically to where believers are collected nor that the Body of Christ is the only means of grace.

The Spirit utilizes these various means to reach individuals, planting within them the seed of understanding. In other words, the Spirit opens an individual’s mind to comprehend the meaning: not merely the words or sounds, but the true referent of the chosen means.[[38]](#footnote-38) Due to the variety of means Anselm allows, this most likely means that the individual’s eyes are opened to see how all creation already reflects God’s glory.[[39]](#footnote-39) This can also, of course, signify the explicit Gospel message of Jesus as Christ that these particular means point toward. Regarding the first option, these waters are muddied because Anselm concurrently holds creation to be in a state of disorder, particularly in regards to beauty.[[40]](#footnote-40) This simply raises the question of what extent fallen creation continues to reflect God’s glory. Regarding the second option, this would reiterate that the Spirit’s revelation must be one concerning the Gospel message of Christ’s atoning sacrifice rather than simply God’s glory in creation. Yet these options do not have to be mutually exclusive and can cooperate in some fashion.[[41]](#footnote-41)

One does not have to decide on the specific content in order to discern the primary point: the Spirit’s revelatory act is a necessary epistemological condition. The Spirit must plant the seed of understanding, referring the individual to God. This initial revelatory work is necessary given the clouded intellect.

While Anselm does not explicitly use the term ‘Spirit’ in the quoted passages above, his discussion of the Spirit’s work in immediately surrounding passages of *De Concordia* align with this view of the Spirit’s work. For instance, Anselm’s explicitly states that it is the Spirit who makes Scripture fruitful, just as other prevenient means must be made fruitful. He states, ‘Accordingly, we preach nothing effectively for spiritual salvation, which sacred Scripture, made fruitful by a miracle of the Holy Spirit, does not set forth or contain within itself.’[[42]](#footnote-42) It is emphatically the Spirit who operates in this prevenient manner in connection with Christ’s work, planting the seed of understanding through various means.

But even when clouding of the intellect has been overcome, the individual needs a remedy for the will’s enslavement. Thus, this initial act of the Spirit must furthermore enable the individual’s will to respond. In order for the person to will what his mind conceives, the Spirit must give a momentary ‘growth.’ The will simply cannot will what it conceives ‘unless it has received rectitude’ to do so.[[43]](#footnote-43) There is thus a necessary, momentary healing which rejuvenates and allows the individual to act upon the Good. Only by the Spirit’s prevenient and initiating grace can the individual for a moment will the just over his apparent advantage, willing to unite with God.

Upon the Spirit’s initiation, the individual cooperates with an initial ‘yes’ of submission, both of which obtain the gift of faith. I intentionally leave out the ways this initial yes of submission can occur. While individuals can say yes through a variety of means— such as baptism, Eucharist, confession, repentance and more— the most important factor is that the individuals submit themselves to God with the Spirit’s aid. Should they submit, the gift of faith is obtained: ‘Faith—one’s believing what one hears—comes about when, through grace, rectitude of will is added to the conception.’[[44]](#footnote-44) This is a cleansing of the will, reordering it to will the just over the advantageous in the initial sense to cooperate with the initial grace. In terms of my earlier distinction about the initial cleansing and the subsequent redemption, this is the redemption that occurs within justification. This account of the initial cleansing and redemption is Anselm's answer to the conundrum that a person needs to have rectitude of will in order to even will rectitude;[[45]](#footnote-45) it also allows him to maintain that grace is given generously and unmeritedly.[[46]](#footnote-46) Justification therefore occurs in status by the imputation of Christ’s righteousness, and in actuality for the individual by the transformation of his will and mind. This is paramount in that it paves the ground for subsequent redemption.

The Spirit’s work is logically and chronologically prior to the individual’s response and to faith. Chronologically, faith is a result of the Spirit and individual working contemporaneously. Logically, these two factors of the Spirit’s work and the individual’s response are necessary conditions without which faith does not occur. Though the chronology suggests that both are equally necessary conditions for faith, the logical ordering establishes that faith is possible primarily via the Spirit’s work.

To summarize this initial part, in administering the gift of union, the Spirit must confront both the will’s bondage and clouded intellect. The Spirit’s prevenient and initial grace enables the individual to respond to the offer for union, which is actualized when the individual responds positively. This is justification, wherein the individuals are redeemed in that they are turned toward God, enabled to will the just over the advantageous. It is in this cooperation and justification that faith is given. Crucially, the Spirit efficaciously administers Christ’s work, bringing humanity into union. Christ is the centerpiece, the touchstone of the divine-human relation in Anselm’s thought, and it is the Spirit who redeems and connects humanity to Christ.

IV. The Spirit, Faith, and Redemption

Having explored the Spirit's work in the initial phase of justification and redemption, I turn now to examining how the Spirit and faith work in subsequent redemption. This faith, the continued submission, comprises both knowing God with the intellect and willing in accord with God. Faith is not complete without actions, as Anselm holds in *Monologion* 78. He states, ‘faith will be useless and like something dead unless through love it is strong and alive. For a faith that is accompanied and attended by love will by no means be idle when it has the opportunity to act.’[[47]](#footnote-47) In virtue of being rooted in the supreme justice of God, faith cannot tolerate injustice.[[48]](#footnote-48) In general, this is the maxim that faith without works is dead, a thread from James (cf. 2.17-20). That faith overflows in works of love is the position of Augustine, who himself writes ‘it can be truthfully said that the commandments of God pertain only to faith, provided that the faith which is meant is not a dead faith but that living faith which works through love.’[[49]](#footnote-49)

Importantly, the individual’s continued submission to God in works of love completes faith. This combination acts as a restorative means for the individual. Yet it is important for Anselm that the individuals’ continued restoration is not accomplished solely by themselves. These works redeem only insofar as they are accompanied by the Spirit’s subsequent grace. As Anselm himself writes, ‘just as no one receives rectitude unless grace comes first, no one preserves rectitude unless that grace continues.’[[50]](#footnote-50) Illuminating this point, Thomas Williams holds that the Holy Spirit in Anselm’s thought energizes the teleology for both divine and human life. The otherwise ‘self-contained and static divine wisdom is made dynamic and purposive’ by the Spirit.[[51]](#footnote-51) So too in human life: ‘The teleological impetus that the Spirit gives within the Godhead carries over into the Spirit’s activity in redemption and sanctification,’ such that there is ‘no living faith apart from the Holy Spirit.’[[52]](#footnote-52) The Spirit is therefore the necessary giver[[53]](#footnote-53) without whom the initial and sustained redemption of humanity could never occur. It is the Spirit who cooperates with faith in such a way that human nature is restored and comes to its appointed end.

This account of continued redemption is key to addressing the question of efficacy. It is also key to understanding participation in Christ’s work and the additional work of the Spirit and faith. As I have construed it, the Spirit is efficacious in administering Christ’s work, as well as providing efficacious means of her own. At large, the entirety of this process is for union, the aim of salvation as previously defined. And so more than works, faith means humanity is re-established to communion with God. This is because faith is given upon the individual’s accepting the offer of union with God. As Williams notes in his translation[[54]](#footnote-54) and Andrés Hubert in his article,[[55]](#footnote-55) distinguishing between the Latin prepositions *ad* and *in* is crucial for understanding Anselm’s intentions concerning faith and union. To believe *ad Deum* means that an individual knows about God impersonally. This individual has what may be considered propositional knowledge; she comes *up to* God, gaining knowledge ‘that’ or ‘about’. Anselm uses *in Deum* to indicate what may be considered interpersonal knowledge, which includes but is not limited to propositional knowledge. This is a move *into* God, establishing right union in Christ through the Spirit’s work.[[56]](#footnote-56) Just as the initial gift of existence requires a proper recognition of one’s dependency upon God,[[57]](#footnote-57) so too does the gift of faith. As Hubert puts it, “The ‘work’ of God is therefore the beginning of a promise; it is an interchange of gifts wherein God gives himself and asks the creature for their total devotion. We are in Covenant. We are in relationship.”[[58]](#footnote-58)

These three components—Christ’s work, the Spirit’s work, and the individual’s faith—are the independently necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for salvation and answering the efficacy question. While Christ’s work provides the sufficient means of salvation, the Spirit efficaciously administers this to humanity upon their cooperation, redeeming and bringing them into communion with God. The initial work of the Spirit and individual’s submission bring about the justification of the individual in status and his redemption in a preliminary sense. This results in faith. When the individual submits to this work, the Spirit subsequently redeems the individual in grace and through faith. This faith is seen both in right communion with God and in the overflow of works, which is the continued submission of the individual. As such, the entire individual is brought into union with God in the process of salvation.

This constructive answer utilizes the hard core of Anselm’s position: it (i) assumes the mechanism of atonement, (ii) assumes the narrative that God is Giver, (iii) utilizes his specific construal of sin as disordering, (iv) demonstrates how the redeemed individual honors God in faith and works of love, and (v) relies upon his account that it is by faith that the individual responsively participates in Christ’s work.

V. Alternative Approaches

David Meconi argues that for Anselm, deification (and thus redemption) occur primarily in connection with the *imago Dei*. Rather than emphasizing the role of the Holy Spirit, Meconi discusses how the *imago Dei* means that (i) humanity is a ‘locus of divine interaction within the created order,’ and (ii) the closer human beings are to God, the more like God they will be.[[59]](#footnote-59) The first point is simply how Anselm differentiates humanity from the rest of creation in that they are made with a ‘primal thirst’ for God.[[60]](#footnote-60) The second point specifically picks up Anselm’s metaphysical discussion of archetypes and images in *Monologion* 66. Because of this emphasis of the *imago Dei* in Anslem’s thinking, Meconi argues that Anselm holds a distinctive theology of union with God: that instead of focusing on the Holy Spirit’s indwelling of Humanity, Anselm focuses on the ‘soul’s entering God.’[[61]](#footnote-61) Meconi goes on to argue that ‘Anselm instead stresses how the *imago Dei* is constituted so as to enter God and live a new life therein.’[[62]](#footnote-62) This means that humanity can enter into can simply because of the *imago Dei*. Finally, Meconi argues that Anselm emphasizes Christ’s full humanity as providing an example of life in union with God and showing what the effect of our own participation will be over time.[[63]](#footnote-63)

It is not apparent that my reading of Anselm is necessarily antithetical to Meconi’s. Meconi sees the *imago Dei* in Anselm’s thought as a type of capacity to interact and engage in a restorative relationship with God because of the incarnation and atonement. But it is consistent with this view that the Spirit’s work is necessary to bring this capacity to fulfillment. It could be that Anselm holds the Spirit to empower the individual, made in the *imago Dei*, to move closer to God in union and in light of Christ’s work.

Yet Anselm is very clear about the clouded intellect and the bondage of will. Thus, simply talking about how the *imago Dei* may move one closer to God is insufficient. There still must be an additional means. Again, Anselm explicitly holds that it ‘is *never* in [one’s] power to acquire rectitude when [human beings] don’t have it,’[[64]](#footnote-64) which drives home the question of how the incarnation and atonement can be efficacious for humanity without a change in our fallen condition. The will’s bondage and clouded intellect preclude a simple acceptance of Christ’s gift. Humanity requires addition help, and this is precisely why the Holy Spirit is of paramount importance in Anselm’s thinking. While Meconi is right to analyze Christ as *the* example for humanity to emulate,[[65]](#footnote-65) his elevation of fallen human anthropology occurs one step too soon; this runs contrary to Anslem’s texts and poses a theological problem.

Another author, Nathan R Kerr, discusses the sanctifying role of reason, or *theoria*, in bringing the individual into communion with God.[[66]](#footnote-66) Kerr argues that *theoria* brings a person ‘redemptive insight into the perfection of the divine *esse*.’[[67]](#footnote-67) Kerr’s approach focuses on God’s being, reason, and grace. First is God’s being: ‘the very essence of God is to exist as one who makes and re-makes us as creatures in God’s own image.’[[68]](#footnote-68) Anything that exists apart from him experiences a quality of *nihil*; it participates in nothingness. As Augustine held, to lack participation in God’s being is to experience a lack in one’s own being, this quality of *nihil*. Second, and of equal importance for Kerr, is that reason does not simply mean a cognitive comprehension, but an entry and participation of one’s being into the divine life.[[69]](#footnote-69) Reasoning about and comprehending who God is accomplishes this participation, which is consequently a redemptive participation. Thirdly, Kerr holds that God’s grace is a redemptive ‘grace that perfects our very being, such that an account of the arrival of grace must mean also an account of our own created nature’s ability to enact its own perfection, by overcoming sin through the performance of its own creatureliness.’[[70]](#footnote-70) Kerr argues that because reason must be seen as *theoria* for Anselm, this does not subordinate or trivialize the work of grace. Instead, *theoria* utterly ‘radicalizes’ the work of grace in that reason heavily relies upon prevenient and subsequent grace.[[71]](#footnote-71)

Kerr is correct that Anselm holds an Augustinian position on God’s being and human existence, and that Anselm sees a move into God as redemptive. Yet there are several problems with Kerr’s account, both theological and textual. Theologically, it is far-fetched and skirts heresy to claim that ‘the very essence of God is to exist as someone who makes and remakes as creatures in God’s own image.’[[72]](#footnote-72) This represents confusion of metaphysical language on Kerr’s part, for God’s being creator is generally held to be a relational property as opposed to an essential property. In other words, God is not essentially a creator; God need not have created at all. Yet Kerr’s language goes further in implying that creation is God’s primary teleological purpose, something theologically erroneous and certainly not Anselmian.[[73]](#footnote-73)

Regarding Kerr’s second and third points, he leaves the means of this redemptive grace ambiguous, though he obviously makes reason the vehicle through which grace eventually operates. Should the redemptive grace not necessarily be in Christ, then Kerr faces the charge that his account is not true to Anselm. For Christ’s atonement, and thus the primary means of redemptive grace, are in fact fitting and necessary for Anselm.[[74]](#footnote-74) Alternatively, should Kerr concede that the necessary redemptive grace begins in Christ, he encounters two more problems. The first problem is that this approach does explain how the redemptive grace is administered, or whether humanity can simply move themselves to Christ’s work by *theoria*; this leaves Kerr’s account ambiguous, placing a high priority on the human capacity to respond. Regarding the second problem, positing *theoria* as the primary means of participation and subsequent redemption elevates the human condition. Yet as we saw, humanity is bound in will and clouded in intellect; if anything, reason is the handmaiden of faith, given Anselm’s prioritization of faith. Thus, should *theoria* maintain a place in Anselm’s thought, it would be in the subsequent transformation of the believer, conjoint with the Spirit’s work, not something that itself can ‘radicalize’ the imbued grace within nature and cast Anselm as Semi-Pelagian.

VI. Conclusion

The consequences of my thesis are as follows. Anselm clearly has a view concerning the work of the Holy Spirit, and it is evident that retrieving his theology and philosophy throughout his corpus confirms Anselm as a pneumatologist. The gift of life bookends and permeates Anselm’s thought,[[75]](#footnote-75) and it is only fitting that it is the Spirit who gives new birth to the person responding to Christ’s atonement. While human beings are ontologically dependent on God for the gift of existence, they are also dependent on God for the subsequent redemption that enables them to fulfill their nature by willingly submitting to God as their sustainer and creator. There is thus double gratuity. First, God sustains creation in covenant, not willing to abandon it, as this would further affront his purposes and display disregard for humanity. This is the creation covenant. Second, God offers the redemptive restoration of humanity and creation in the person and work of Christ. The gift of Christ is a further gift to allow creation to fulfill its purpose; this is the covenant in Christ. And as I argued, the Spirit efficaciously administers Christ’s work, bringing the individual into union which results in faith; the Spirit’s very initiation and subsequent grace signify that the Spirit is efficacious in her own right, drawing the believer into life with God. Atonement is therefore accomplished in a triune manner: God the Father’s covenant in creation, Christ’s work, and the Spirit’s work. While this paper concerned the question of efficacy, it more importantly focused on retrieving Anselm’s theology of the Holy Spirit *ad extra*.

A further development for this paper would consist of exploring the redemption of creation. Because Anselm holds that creation’s disorder causally enters through humanity,[[76]](#footnote-76) one could hypothesize that the restoration of order would enter through humanity as well, broadening the scope of Anselm’s doctrine of atonement from humanity to creation *in toto*. Another further development would be the question of perseverance, requiring discussion over whether the initiating and subsequent grace acts as a ‘seal’ for the individual. In either case, these developments would not call the current argument into question. As discussed, the legitimate limitation to this argument is that Anselm’s pneumatology is tacit, never systematically worked out in relation to redemption. His pneumatology is most explicitly related in the *Monologion* and *De Processione Spiritus Sancti*, though these treatises concern the inward life of God, so to speak.[[77]](#footnote-77) While Anselm held these interests and views, his lack of explicit writing simply means that one must retrieve his thinking in this regard.

I consider my approach a good starting point because Anselm directly confronts the cooperation of grace and free will in his work *De Concordia*, already illustrating how this cooperative grace is effective for appropriating Christ’s work and redemptive for the subjective disorder. Moreover, the scope of my explanation includes the work of the Spirit, making Anselm’s doctrine of atonement Trinitarian in nature, a strength that should not be easily dismissed.[[78]](#footnote-78)

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1. Thomas Williams, “God Who Sows the Seed and Gives the Growth: Anselm’s Theology of the Holy Spirit,” *Anglican Theological Review*, Vol. 89, No. 4, p 611-627 (Fall 2007), 612-13. A brief reading of the introductions to the *Monologian* and *Cur Deus Homo* are also sufficient to see this. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Williams, “God Who Sows the Seed.” A few other articles peripherally include or retrieve his theology of the Holy Spirit, such as the recent article on Anslem’s Doctrine of Sanctification in conjunction with his Doctrine of Atonement: Ruben Angelici, “‘The love that pierces the heart’: a critical analysis of the concept of sanctification in the writings of St Anselm of Canterbury,” *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol. 72, No. 1, p 64–81 (2019). While a good beginning resource, this article is peripheral because it mainly argues about the role of sanctification as opposed to developing a robust theology of the Holy Spirit like Williams’ article. Only a component of Angelici’s article argues that the Holy Spirit must be assumed in this process, a thorough conclusion reached primarily due to Anselm’s pastoral and spiritual letters. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Williams, “God Who Sows the Seed,” 613-14. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Williams, “God Who Sows the Seed,” 618. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. This work also analyzes the cooperation of the will with foreknowledge and predestination. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. This is documented and responded to in Joshua Farris and Mark Hamilton, “Reparative Substitution and the ‘Efficacy Objection:’ Toward a Modified Satisfaction Theory of Atonement,” *Perichoresis*, Vol. 15, Issue 3, pp. 97-110 (2017), 104. The literature is never lacking in various criticisms. For a catalogue, one should confer John McIntyre, *St. Anselm and His Critics*, (Edinburgh: T. and A. Constable LTD., 1954). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Unless otherwise noted, I will be using Thomas Williams, Ed. and Trans., *Anselm: Basic Writings*, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2007). In order, I will cite the work, book, chapter, and page number when relevant. For instance, *Cur Deus Homo*, Book I, Ch. 20, page 279 will be, CDH I.20; 279. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. John McIntyre, *The Shape of Soteriology: Studies in the Doctrine of the Death of Christ*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992), 16-17. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. *CDH* II.17; 317. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. *CDH* II.19; 324. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. I use ‘subjective stain’ to indicate the internal disordering of the will: in part to mean the desire for the advantageous over the just, and more generally to indicate the stain that sin leaves on humanity. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. *CDH*, I.14-15; 265-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. *CDH* II.11, 14-15; 261-2, 265-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Will here is used as ‘disposition’ or ‘affection’, not as a tool. This is discussed further along, though cf. *DC* 3.11,12; 388-91. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Others define redemption as focusing on both the release from bondage and the ongoing sanctification of human life. I am avoiding the term sanctification because of the etymological issues in deriving its meaning, similar to that of justification that I am discussing. For instance, sanctification can mean a setting apart, or a cleansing, both of which can run into the issue of mere ‘status’ that I argue against. On the other hand, I am avoiding this range because of the desire to focus on the redemptive aspect of justification. Last, I seek to avoid the conceptual baggage (which is certainly and justifiably welcome in some contexts) that comes with this term from reformation thinking. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Frank D. Macchia, *Justified in the Spirit: Creation, Redemption, and the Triune God*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. This will be elaborated on below. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Macchia, *Justified in the Spirit*, 28-30. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. As noted in Paul Rhodes Eddy, James K. Beilby and Steven E. Enderlein, “Justification in Historical Perspective,” *Justification: Five Views*, Edited by James K. Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 19-23. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. As discussed in *De Casu Diaboli,* 4. Eileen Sweeney’s article is an excellent resource on Anselm’s depiction of God as Giver: “Anselm on Human Finitude: A Dialogue with Existentialism,” *The Saint Anselm* *Journal*, Vol. 10, No. 1, pp. 1-10 (2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. It is simply in virtue of how justification and redemption overlap that my analysis extends this far. I will not, however, comment on the question of perseverance, meaning, whether someone may lose communion with God having once obtained it. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. While Anselm does not explicitly attribute these following works of grace to the Spirit in the passages I use, I consider them as such. On the one hand, it would not make sense to attribute them to the Father or the Son. On the other hand, the surrounding passages in *De Concordia* attribute analogous works to the Holy Spirit, e.g. inspiring Scripture. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Anselm, *De Libertate Arbitrii*, 11; 162. Original emphasis. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. *CDH*, II.1; 290, my emphasis. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. *CDH*, II.1; 290, my emphasis. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. *De Concordia,* 3.11; 388. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Sandra Visser & Thomas Williams, *Anselm*, Great Medieval Thinkers, Ed. by Brian Davies, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 195. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. *De Concordia*, 3.7; 383. And again in *De Libertate Arbitrii*, 4; 153. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. These statements must be considered in context of Anselm’s theory of language and epistemology, which is at least mentioned in *Proslogion* 4 and intimated in *De Concordia* 3.6 (aside from *De Veritate*). My statements here would not change, though more nuance would be added in terms of choosing particular diction to convey particular philosophic meaning. The terms ‘act’, ‘desire’, ‘discern’, ‘understand’, ‘believe’, ‘sound’, ‘meaning’, would be scrutinized. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. This use of will means ‘affection’, as opposed to ‘tool’, a distinction Anselm describes in *De Concordia* 3.11; 388-89. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. *De Concordia*, 3.13; 392. This interpretation is affirmed in Visser and Williams, *Anselm*, 179, 183. It is also reaffirmed in some form by Katherin Rogers, *Anselm on Freedom*, (Oxford Scholarship Online, September 2008), 77-78. E-book. DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/97801 99231676.001.0001. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Visser and Williams, *Anselm*, 196. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. *De Concordia*, 3.13; 393. These remarks are categorically concerned with choosing the Good itself and salvation as opposed to other trivial matters, such as what type of breakfast one will have. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. *De Concordia*, 3.5; 379-80. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. I say ‘foundational’ because our conversation pertains to the subsequent efficacy of Christ’s work, not retroactive. It is, of course, suggestible that the Spirit’s work efficaciously precedes Christ, though it is questionable whether her work would ever be efficacious in some sense without Christ. Cf. Macchia, *Justified* *in* *the* *Spirit*, 229. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. *De* *Concordia*, 3.6; 381. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Fr. David V. Meconi, S.J., “Anselm and Appropriating the Divine Life,” *Saint* *Anselm* *Journal,* Vol. 8, No. 2. (Spring 2013), 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. *De Concordia* 3.6; 381. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. This is because Anselm maintains a type of natural law and order that presupposes knowledge, according to Adonis Vidu, *Atonement, Law, and Justice: The Cross in Historical and Cultural Contexts*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 53. Visser and Williams, *Anselm*, 202-7, argue that for Anselm, people simply know right from wrong. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. *CDH* I.14 and 15. For an interesting discussion regarding the symmetry, rationality, and aesthetics of creation, cf. Frank B. Brown, “The Beauty of Hell: Anselm on God’s EternalDesign,” *Journal of Religion* Vol 73, No. 3, pp 329-56 (July 1993). [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Another peripheral question is whether the meaning originates within the individual or externally in creation. This is only peripheral insofar as this paper’s driving point is to discuss Anselm’s pneumatology in terms of the question of efficacy. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Schmitt, *Opera Omnia,* Vol. II, *De Concordia* 3.6, p. 271. My translation. Compare: *Siquidem nihil utiliter ad salutem spiritualem praedicamus, quod sacra scriptura spiritus sancti miraculo foecundata non protulerit, aut intra se non contineat.* [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. *De Concordia*, 3.6; 381. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. *De Concordia*, 3.6; 381. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. *DC* 3.3; 377: The will ‘cannot will any rectitude at all if it does not have rectitude in virtue of which it wills rectitude.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. This is explicitly stated in *DC* 3.3; 377: ‘no creature has this rectitude of will… except through God’s grace.’ Aside from *De Concordia*, it is the old anvil that Anselm hammered upon in CDH, where he vehemently holds together necessity and God’s freedom in the Incarnation and chosen manner of salvation, pounding out the various questions on the assumed anvil that it is precisely God who saves and initiates salvation. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Anselm, *Monologion,* 78; 71. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Anselm, *Monologion,* 78; 71. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. St. Augustine, *On Faith and Works*, trans. and ann. Gregory J. Lombardo, C.S.C., in *Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation*, No. 48, Ed. Walter Burghardt and Thomas Lawler, (New York, NY: The Newman Press, 1988), 46. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Anselm, *De Concordia*, 3.4; 378. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Williams, “God Who Sows the Seed,” 615. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Williams, “God Who Sows the Seed,” 615. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. While this is apparent from the current argument, consider the parallel of Anselm’s depiction of God as Giver of life in *De Casu Diaboli,* 4. Here the narrative that God is the initial and sustaining Giver helpfully illuminates Anselm’s thinking. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Anselm, *Monologion*, 76; 70, footnote 71. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Andrés Hubert, “El Espíritu Humano y la Dramaticidad de su Transcendencia Según el *Monologion* de San Anselmo,” *Teología y Vida*, Vol. 56, No. 4, pp. 379-405 (Dec. 2015), 403. My translation. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Compare with Schmitt: *quod expressius et familiarius significatur, si dicitur tendendum esse in illam [sc. summam essentiam], quam si dicitur ad illam. Hac itaque ratione puto congruentius posse dici credendum esse in illam quam ad illam.* Schmitt, *Opera Omnia,* Vol. I, *Monologion* 76, pp. 83-84. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Sweeney, “Anselm on Human Finitude,” 6. Cf. *De Casu Diaboli,* 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Hubert, “El Espíritu Humano,” 391. My translation. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Meconi, “Appropriating,” 5-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Meconi, “Appropriating,” 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Meconi, “Appropriating,” 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Meconi, “Appropriating,” 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Meconi, “Appropriating,” 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Anselm, *De Libertate Arbitrii*, 11; 162. Original emphasis. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. *CDH*, II.11 and II.19 [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Nathan R. Kerr, “St. Anselm: *Theoria* and the Doctrinal Logic of Perfection,” In *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Tradition*, Ed. by Michael Christensen and Jeffry Wittung, pp. 175-188, (Madison: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Kerr, “*Theoria,*” 176. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Kerr, “*Theoria,*” 182. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Kerr, “*Theoria,*” 180. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Kerr, “*Theoria,*” 182. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Kerr, “*Theoria*,” 182-3. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Kerr, “*Theoria,*” 182. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. On the contrary, Anselm maintains that everything exists for God and his Glory. Cf. *Monologian*, 49; 53-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. This is indeed the prompt of *CDH,* to answer why atonement and thus redemptive grace occur in Christ. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Notice in the preface to *CDH* that a major concern of Anselm’s is discussing how the atonement restores human nature to its intended purposes. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. *CDH*, 15; 266. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. As noted by Williams, “God Who Sows the Seed,” 612-13. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. A special thanks to Thomas Williams for many engaging conversations and substantial feedback on previous versions of this paper. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)