

[http://www.jimmyakin.org/2006/01/the\\_ordo\\_saluti.html](http://www.jimmyakin.org/2006/01/the_ordo_saluti.html)

By Jimmy Akin

There are several difficulties with the typical Calvinist articulation of the Ordo Salutis.

One that I would point out is that Calvinists frequently press biblical language beyond its limits in trying to come up with a precise Ordo Salutis. Specifically: They assume that the biblical authors are using the relevant terms in univocal senses. That means: They assume that the biblical authors use the same words in the same way all the time, so whenever Paul talks about "justification" in a discussion of salvation he always has to mean the same thing by it, and it is necessarily distinct from--for example--sanctification.

This is a problem because Paul's language is a lot more complex than that. In Romans 6:7 Paul clearly uses the word "justify" in a way that overlaps with "sanctify." What he literally says in Greek in this passage is "He who has died has been justified from sin" but the context is so obviously sanctificational that most translations--even Protestant ones--will render this something like "He who has died has been freed from sin."

This problem goes to the theological-exegetical method of Calvinists.

**The next problem goes to a particular feature of Calvinist theology: Their understanding of regeneration. Calvinists conceive of regeneration as a work of God whereby God makes the person capable of responding to him in faith. Regeneration thus precedes faith, which precedes justification.**

**Unfortunately, they are just wrong on this one. Regeneration is an impartation of divine life that normatively happens in baptism and baptism (in the case of adults) follows faith. The paradigm for adult believers would thus be: God's initiative of grace enabling one to respond in faith > faith > baptism > regeneration.**

Expect John 3:3-5 to be a central text in debates with Calvinists concerning regeneration. See the stuff from the Fathers Know Best section of the library at Catholic.com to show patristic disagreement (which is unanimous) with the Calvinist understanding of regeneration.

It would be possible to construct a Catholic understanding of the Ordo Salutis. Unfortunately, I don't have the leisure at the moment to do the heavy lifting needed to do a detailed Catholic articulation, but the core elements of one (for adults) might look like this:

1. God's initiative of grace enabling an individual to respond to his call.
2. Conversion (faith and repentance)
3. Baptism

4. Regeneration/Justification/Sanctification
5. Glorification in heaven.

When you start wanting to get into more detail than that, though, problems arise.

**First, you'll notice that I have listed regeneration, justification, and sanctification on the same line. That is because God normally does all of these at once in time (which Calvinists will admit in the case of justification and sanctification). I don't know that one can establish any of them as being logically prior to the others.**

Second, between steps four and five there are things that happen, and they do not all happen in the same order. These include things like falling from grace and being restored to it. **They also include growth in justification (a concept wholly absent from Calvinist thought), and purification in purgatory for some but not necessarily all people.**

**Third, you'll note that I don't have anything prior to step one like election or predestination. This is because the Catholic Church has not mandated a single view of these matters and permits considerably more flexibility than Calvinism does. [Thomas Aquinas put election prior to predestination \(and love prior to election\)](#), but that's a matter of theological opinion, not something that the Magisterium mandates.**

**Then you'd have to build in ways of handling the situation of infants who are baptized and baptism of desire situations and baptism of implicit desire, and you see how complex this is all getting.**

We're now hitting the reason why Catholics (and other non-Calvinist Christians) don't generally go in for detailed articulations of the Ordo Salutis.

**God just doesn't have a fixed order of how he applies salvation to people. Even if you assign fixed meanings to terms like "election" (and it's not AT ALL clear that Scripture uses this term the same way in every case), God just gives some people graces at different stages than he gives others.**

**What you can do is describe, within limits, how God *normally* does it in the archtypal case, but there just isn't a "one size fits all" paradigm for this in Scripture. Calvinists are wrong to think that there is and they fail to do justice to the complexity of biblical language and the biblical text when they assume there is.**

**This is why many non-Calvinist Protestants accuse Calvinists of logic chopping the biblical text on these points.**

Now: If you try to explain all this, you're likely to meet with some stock responses, such as how complex the Catholic Church makes things. There are a number of responses to this, including:

1. Excuse me, but your proposed Ordo Salutis is looking rather complex to me already.
2. Indeed, it's more complex than it appears, since you have to have an alternate Ordo Salutis to cover the case of elect infants who die before reaching the age of reason.
3. And the existence of debate even in Calvinist circles about the precise sequencing of some steps shows that not every question is settled in your own movement and that different Scriptures can be brought forward to argue different positions.
4. Trying to work out a detailed schema of salvation inevitably is going to result in complexity because of the mysteriousness of searching out God's ways, which is another way of saying
5. I didn't make it complex. God did. You're just not wanting to recognize the true scope of the mystery of God's action as Scripture presents it to us, and
6. Despite the complexity of a detailed account, the core message of salvation can be boiled down into a very simple form: "Repent, believe, and be baptized." (And, if you need to add: "If you fall into mortal sin then repent, believe, and go to confession.")
7. The Catholic articulation of these matters can thus be presented in very simple, practical form that even a child can understand or it can be presented in all the enormous theological depth needed to satisfy a theologian.
8. If you're having trouble keeping up with the latter, Friend Calvinist, I'll talk slower to make it easier for you.

**My thoughts:**

**If man does not have free will and God elects and predestines man before he is created, why doesn't God simply create man in heaven? Why does God create man on earth; especially men and women that God has already rejected and predestined for hell? What is the entire point of a life on earth for men that God has already chosen and predestined for hell?**

Romans 11:33-34, "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?"

Calvinism is an unorthodox and incorrect interpretation of Scripture and a false belief heresy!

Calvinism in essence is constructed by ignorant people to try to explain a very complex and individualistic approach by God that is different for every individual that God chooses and saves. God doesn't use the exact same process on everybody in the exact same way. When Calvinists try to say that God does they are simply dead wrong and simply trying to pretend that they know the mind of God and know God's thoughts and ways and that is certainly against scripture. Scripture says in Romans 11:33-34 "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?"

When Calvinists try to do this, they are being extremely arrogant and are committing the greatest sin of pride, which is also the sin of Lucifer.

The main point is this: Man has free will. This is an absolute truth and to say otherwise is blasphemy and heresy! To believe that man does not have free will, **removes God's justice and righteousness and makes God an evil entity.** Once again this is blasphemy and Heresy!

Also, what happens to people who are not literally baptized by water, but are baptized by desire and baptized by implicit desire? In other words, what happens to people that were never baptized, but deeply want and desire to be baptized, but die before being baptized through no fault "of their own"?