


Ordo Salutis

Revised 1/12/2008

The Heart of Ordo Salutis

		1	2	3	4	Writer
	A	Faith	Justification	Regeneration	Eternal Life	Forlines, Harrison, Picirilli, Wuest
	B	Faith	Regeneration	Eternal Life	Justification	Chafer/DTS/Walvoord, Demarest, Erickson, Hodges
	C	Regeneration	Faith	Eternal Life	Justification	Berkhof, Calvin, Gilliard, Hendriksen, Hoeksema, Snoeberger
	D	Regeneration	Eternal Life	Faith	Justification	Boice
	E	Regeneration	Eternal Life	Justification	Faith	

Categories

Ordo Salutis (Order of Salvation) is understood differently by various groups and is more comprehensive than the three to four categories above: faith, justification, and regeneration (eternal life). Nevertheless, these categories are at the heart of the debate and will suffice for our discussion at present. According to the Calvinists pictured in Row C, regeneration and the impartation of eternal life occur in two phases. These two phases are supposedly distinguishable something along the following lines:

- ① **regeneration** (*gennao*: subconscious masculine insemination, e.g. Jn 1:13; 1Jn 3:9)
- ② **eternal life** (*anagennao*: conscious feminine germination of new birth; e.g. Jam 1:18; 1Pet 1:23).

Rows

The above chart is a modification of one which I originally posted in the GES *Eternal Security* forum on November 08, 2006. This modification now includes a corresponding Writer's column. A new Row A has been inserted at the top to represent a non-Calvinistic position which is completely opposed to the standard Calvinistic *Ordo Salutis*. The Calvinistic arrow in the left hand column does not span all of Row B because there are non-Calvinists as well as moderate Calvinists who may opt for Row-B. The non-Calvinists in Row B would be inclined to see a general prevenient grace which enables all (who hear the gospel) to believe, while a Calvinist would be more inclined to limit it to a irresistible particular grace made available only to the elect. Rows B-E become increasing Calvinistic as one proceeds down the chart. A rule-of-thumb summation of the rows is as follows:

- A. Arminianism (and Marrowism)
- B. Moderate Calvinism (and Dispensationalism along with some non-Calvinists)
- C. Scholastic Calvinism
- D. Popular Calvinism
- E. Hyper Calvinism

Heart of Question

“Can a lost person receive Christ?” is the question at the heart of this discussion. Of course, Jn 1:12 must be regarded as a key verse in dealing with the question since it seems to suggest an affirmative response with a complete and conclusive *ordo* in terms of the above chart. This verse is also contextually related to one of the four principle Calvinistic proof texts above (i.e., Jn 1:13). We will therefore begin our investigation with the context of this verse.

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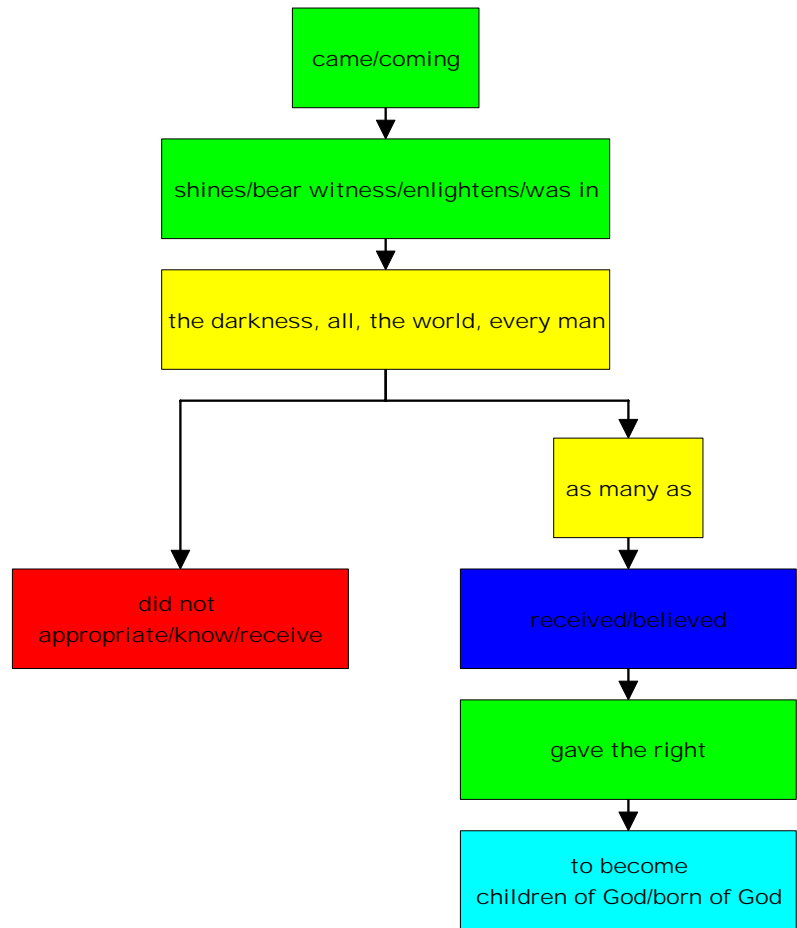
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Flow of Context

⁵ And the light **shines in the darkness**, and the darkness **did not appropriate** it. ⁶ There **came** a man, sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ He **came** for a witness, **in order that** he might **bear witness** of the light, **in order that** all might **believe through him**. ⁸ He was not the light, but **came in order that** he might **bear witness** of the light. ⁹ There was the true light which, **coming into the world, enlightens every man**. ¹⁰ He **was in the world**, and the world was made through Him, and the world **did not know** Him. ¹¹ He **came** to His own, and those who were His own **did not receive** Him. ¹² But **as many as received** Him, to them (to those who **believed** in His name) He **gave the right to become children of God**, ¹³ **who were born** not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but **of God**. (Jn 1:5-13; TM)

Color Scheme:

- **Green**—progression of light
- **Yellow**—scope of light
- **Red**—negative response to light
- **Dark Blue**—positive response to light
- **Cyan**—result of light



came/coming

The logical order indicated by *hina* (*in order*) in vv. 7-8 is that John the Baptist (1) came (2) in order to bear witness (3) in order that all might believe through his witness. This same order is demonstrated in our flowchart. A parallel sequence is perceivable concerning the light since its (1) coming (2) enlightens (3) every man so that he may believe. This order of events anticipates a non-Calvinistic conclusion: general prevenient grace makes it possible for anyone exposed to it to believe. This perception would be in harmony with either Row A or a non-Calvinistic approach to Row B.

The first box (*came/coming*) in our flow chart refers jointly to John the Baptist who *came* to bear witness of the light (v. 6-8) and to *coming of* the light itself (v. 9). The light (Jesus) and light bearer (John the Baptist) take the initiative in invading the realm of darkness. In the incarnation Christ *came* to this dark world and still *shines* forth as light as a result. The logical sequence then is *came* then *shines*. The flow chart represents this sequence of events by putting *came* and *shines* into two consecutive green boxes.

shines/bear witness/enlightens/was in

The second green box consequently denotes the immediate and joint purpose of Jesus and John the Baptist. They came to shine in the darkness and in doing so enlighten every man by bearing witness to the fact that the light was now in the world.

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the darkness, all, the world, every man

Contrary to Calvinistic expectations, this venture by the light is portrayed as universal (*all*) and particular (*every*). The light shines in the darkness, even in those parts of the darkness that reject it, and enlightens every man whom it encounters. Just as

light from a city on a hill does not transform the valley into light but pierces the darkness so that even those standing at a distance in the darkness may see the light, so the light invades the realm of darkness. The implication is that when the light of the world, as Jesus refers to Himself (Jn 8:12; 9:5), is shown throughout the world, even to those who reject Him, He enlightens every man in the world who is exposed to it.

They Really Might Believe

The parallelism leads us to conclude that everyone who is exposed to the message through the witness bearer is also enlightened by the light and has experienced the shining of the light. This enlightenment makes it possible, not inevitable, for those in the darkness to respond favorably to the light. We therefore find an implicit affirmation of universal enablement (of the type expected in Row A or a non-Calvinistic view of Row B) in this transition from the green to yellow boxes in our flow chart. John bore witness *in order that all might believe*. The most natural reading consequently is that *all* to whom John bore witness *might believe*. His witness made it possible for them to believe. In this manner, every person who encountered the message of the incarnate light was enlightened. Cloud is justified in summarizing: “The sinner, being given light from Christ (Jn. 1:9) and being drawn by Christ (Jn. 12:32) and being convicted and enlightened by the Holy Spirit (Jn. 16:8) can, because of this gracious divine enablement, either believe on Christ or not” (*Calvinism*, 41).

Relative All

The Calvinistic attempt to evade this conclusion by assuming that (since *every* does not mean every individual in the earth) *every* must simply refer to the ethnic inclusion of Gentiles with the Jews fails to do justice to the scope of the parallelism. The point of the context is not ethnic inclusion but combined universalism and individualism. Everyone exposed to the light was enlightened by the light and thereby enabled by the light to respond individually to the light. The light puts everyone who encounters it on the spot. They are put on the spotlight and must either turn away from the light or turn toward it. There are no exceptions. The impact of the light is not merely that all who are exposed by it are enlightened without distinction. More than that, all those exposed are enlightened without exception. That the *all* is relative rather than absolute does not mean that it is merely ethnic. On the contrary, this relative *all* means that although those in the world who never heard the message of the incarnation are not enlightened by it, each and every person in the world who does hear it is enlightened by it and enabled by it to respond to it.

No Mere Truism

Lenski (*John*, 52-53) appeals to Augustine and Luther in an attempt to reduce the impact of the text to simply signify that Jesus is the only light by which men are enlightened. Lenski denies that all who are exposed to the light are enlightened by it since some reject the light. However, this attempt virtually reduces the text to a truism, as if it merely said, “The light enlightens all who are enlightened.” Those trying to keep the will in bondage by such maneuvers are strong-arming the text and putting it in bondage to their theology. The flow of the context rises above merely affirming that the *logos* is the light which enlightens men. Just as “all things came into being by Him and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being” (1:3), so all men exposed to the light are enlightened by the light and apart from Him no one is enlightened since He is the true light. Verse 9 does not merely affirm that Jesus is the *true light*; it also affirms that He enlightens *every man*. To affirm the implications of the former while denying the ramifications of the latter is to do an injustice to the text. The light shines in the darkness and in doing so enlightens all those therein whom it encounters. Even Lenski admits this scope of the enlightenment when he reaches *as many as* in 1:12. John knows nothing of a person who encounters the light but who is not immediately put in the spotlight of personal crises as to whether or not he will reject or receive the light. As John demonstrates in the personage of Pilate, there is no neutrality in one’s response to the light. Granted, most of those who are enlightened by the light reject it and are hardened as a result of their rejection. Even Pilate eventually comes to the place where his rejection of the light causes him to consent to the demand to crucify the light.

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did not
appropriate/know/receive

Although the light enlightened all within the darkness whom it encountered, the overwhelming response to the light by those in the darkness was negative. *Nevertheless* (*hosos*) some believed. This is the word John used to describe the similar reaction in Jn 12:42. The *hosos* of the epilogue is parallel in that respect to the *hosos* of the prologue. God judicially blinded the hearts of those who rejected the light so that they *could not believe* (12:39). Naturally, if those in the darkness could not believe by simple virtue of the fact that they were in the darkness, God would not have had to judicially harden their hearts to prevent them from believing as He did in Jn 12:40. God counteracted the natural enablement imparted by the light so that those who rejected the light could not believe in it despite the illuminating power it continued to generate. This explains why they could not subsequently believe. *Nevertheless* some responded positively to luminary power the light But why did some respond positively while others did not? John provides the answer to that question in 1:12.

as many as

The transition to *as many as* (*hosos*) in the flowchart marks the transition to v. 12 where John moves from the overall negative response by those who in the darkness who rejected the light to the limited positive response by those who in the darkness who embraced the light. Even Hendriksen (a Row-C Calvinist) acknowledges, “The expression ‘as many as’ amounts to whosoever” (*John*, 80). Granted, he only mentions a ethnic implication when he adds, “whether Jew or Gentile.” But there is much more to this implicit *whosoever* than mere ethnic inclusiveness.

Whosoever > Ethnic Inclusiveness

As Lenski acknowledges, there is more to v. 12 than just a truism that all believers believed in Him. Lenski should have likewise perceived that v. 9 means more than all who are enlightened by Him are enlightened by Him. Lenski was on target with his initial assessment of v. 9 that there is more to it than such simplistic reductionism: “In reality this individual acceptance denotes universalism, that ‘whosoever believeth’” (cp. Jn 3:15-16). “Thus ‘as many as’ opens the door to all men in the world” (*John*, 59; emphasis his). The enlightenment and witness is sufficient for all to believe but is efficient only for the *hosos* (\approx *whosoever will*). Contrary to Augustine, the efficiency of the light is not determined by the light so that only the elect can be saved but by the response of the enlightened. So why it is that some believe while others do not? Because those enlightened by the light determine their own response to the light. *Hosos* is equivalent to the *whosoever-will-may-come* invitation in Rev 22:17. The problem is that most will not because they will not to do so. In this play on the word *will*, it may be said, “They *will* not because they *will* not.” They do not believe in the light because they choose not to do so.

Pronominal Determination

The *hosos* determines who will be given the right to become children of God. By their own will, they determine whether or not they will come to the light in order to become children of God. It is incumbent upon them to *receive* the light in order to be *given* the right. The logical order is: *receive* → *given*. Hendriksen rejects the attempts of his fellow Calvinists (such as Morris) to invert the order. At the same time, he attempts to avoid a non-Calvinistic conclusion by claiming that there is no order since both the giving and receiving happen at the same time. Nice try. But this approach fails on several accounts.

Hendriksen pointed out Aramaic nature of the idiom: *as many as...to them* (*hosos...autos*). Unfortunately, what he failed to mention is that the former (*hosos*) naturally determines the scope of the latter (*autos*) and normally determines the logical sequence as well. For example, “*As long as* [*hosos*] they have the bridegroom with *them* [*autos*], *they* cannot fast



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(Mk 2:19; NKJ). Their fasting does not determine how long the bridegroom will stay with them. Quite the contrary, their having the bridegroom with them (*hosos*) determines how long they cannot fast. So in Jn 1:12, *as many as* believed in Him became children of God. The order is not: “*As many as* became children of God believed in Him.” The scope of how many will become children of God is determined by the response of the *as many as*. Their reception of the light determines whether or not God will make them children of God.

We may consult Mk 6:56 for another syntactical parallel: “*As many as [hosos] touched Him [autos] were made well.*” Jesus was not seeking every opportunity to limit the numbers of those who touched Him in this context. To the contrary, they were seeking every available opportunity to touch him as He publicly walked and taught among them. The limitations were imposed by their own ability and desire to touch Him. But more to the point, even though they may have been healed the very moment they touched Jesus, their being made well did not determine that they would touch Him. Obviously, the opposite is true. They determined whether or not they would touch Him and in so doing determined whether or not they would be healed. Likewise, in relation to Jn 1:12, their receiving Him determined who would become a child of God. Who would become a child of God did not determine who would receive Him.

In Lk 4:40 we have a similar structure: “*As many as* were sick with various diseases were brought to Him” (TM). Their being brought to Him did not determine who was sick. Rather, they were brought to Him because they were already sick. The former preceded the latter both logically and temporally. Again in Luke, “*as many as* do not receive you...shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them” (Lk 9:5). You do not shake off the dust from your feet in order to make people reject you. On the contrary, the proper order is that you shake off the dust because you have already been rejected. Similarly, Paul writes, “*As many as* walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them” (Gal 6:16). They determine their walk, and their walk in turn determines whether or not the blessing applies to them.

Receive → Given

	<p>While it is true that the gift is received in the same moment it is given, it is misleading to pretend that this rules out logical sequence. Calvinists, of all people, should have no problem recognizing that just because a set of actions or decisions take place at the same time, this does not rule out logical sequence. Their whole theology is based upon the logical order of decrees given outside of time with only logical succession.</p> <p>In this context, the limiting factor as to the effectiveness of light in producing children of light is the receptivity of those in the darkness. All those enlightened by the light are thereby enabled to respond to the light either positively or negatively. The limiting factor in such an encounter is not the availability of light but the response to the light.</p> <p>In the illustration, the number of gifts received is governed by the receivers not by the giver because the giver has made the gift available to all so that <i>all might</i> receive it (cp. Jn 1:7). Availability (on the part of the giver) provides ability (on the part of the receiver). The person on the receiving end of the offer in this context is able to either accept or reject the offer. The intended recipient determines whether or not the offer will be effective. It is the offer of the gift (thus enlightenment), not the giving of the gift (regeneration), that makes it possible to receive the gift (of regeneration). The logical order therefore is: <i>offered → received → given</i>.</p>
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In the flow of the context, John has already presented the offer and demonstrated the logical order of the negative response: *offered → rejected*. Now, he addresses the logical order for those who embrace the light. The light was present in the word, shining and enlightening everyone it encountered so that all might believe. Verse 12 simply continues and completes the parallel logical order of the positive response from the context of *offered → received → given*. The light was already *offered* in the context. Therefore, the abbreviated order in v. 12 is: *receive → given*. The combined contextual order is: *offered → received → given*

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Not only does John's choice of syntax indicate that the former (*hosos*) logically precedes the former (*autos*) in determining who will experience the benefit, his verb choice does so as well. For example, Paul uses a similar construct: "For *as many as* [*hosos*] are led by the Spirit of God, these *are* [*eimi*] sons of God" (Rom 8:14; NKJ). Although the former (*hosos*) circumscribes the latter in determining who is a son of God, we may entertain the possibility that both truths are not sequentially true but simultaneously true since they *are* true both at the same time. In other words, Hendriksen's argument that the events in Jn 1:12 happen simultaneously rather than sequentially might potentially have a parallel in Rom 8:14 where we have *hosos...eimi*. But even if his argument against logical sequence were valid, our argument above would still hold true that the former (*hosos*) determines the scope of the latter (*autos*).

Verbal Sequence

But Hendriksen's argument falters all the more grievously because John uses a verbal contrast to specify: "*As many as* received Him, to them He gave the right to *become* [*ginomai*] children of God" (Jn 1:12). We do not have *hosos...eimi* but *hosos...ginomai*. The contrast in the Johannine prolog between *eimi* (*be*) and *ginomai* (*become*) is well known. We need only note the contrast between the parallel syntax and contrasting verbs in Jn 1:12 and Rom 8:14. Unlike Rom 8:14 (which syntactically allows the possibility of simultaneity), in Jn 1:12 we must affirm logical sequence because they *become* something they were not before. Logically, the reception of the light must take place before the recipient *becomes* a child of God. *Hosos* determines how many will become children of God, and *ginomai* confirms the logical sequence: *believe* → *become*. The text does not say, "As many as received Him *are* (*eimi*) children of God." No. They *become* children of God as a result of receiving Christ.

Verse 12 is John's summation of Jesus' invitation: "While you have the light, **believe** in the light, *in order that* [*hina*] you may *become* [*ginomai*] sons of light" (Jn 12:36). The order then is *believe* in order to *become* (*believe* → *become*). What you become as a result of believing is something you were not before you believed: son of the Light and a child of God. We therefore request that the Calvinist concede to the logical sequence of the text. Other texts, such as Jn 5:40 confirm the obvious order: "Come to Me in order that you may have life." The order is: *come* → *have*. Clearly this refers to the inception of eternal life. Coming to Jesus in faith precedes coming into (initial and eternal) possession of such life. Jesus is not telling believers in this verse how they can continue to experience the abundant life they already have. (Snoeberger's package argument complete fails.) The Lord is telling unbelievers how to come into possession of life they do not have. According to John, the light of life is in God's Son, and the only way you can have such life is to have the Son (cp. Jn 1:4; 1Jn 5:11-12). So how can you possibly have eternal life before you receive the Son? Obviously, you can't. Rows D & E on the chart are ruled out as impossibilities and Row C is put into serious jeopardy.

Parallel

When a non-Calvinist fails to note the logical sequence regarding *hosos* in Acts 13:48, Calvinists are quick to object. This is a favorite Calvinistic proof text. "*As many as* [*hosos*] had been appointed to eternal life *believed*" (Acts 13:48). The pronoun *hosos* determines how many believed. The believed because they were appointed to eternal life. Syntactical and verbal considerations compel us to acknowledge that they were *appointed* before they *believed*: *appointed* → *believed*. We have conceded this order to the Calvinists. But we have met the Calvinists on their own terms in evaluating Jn 1:12 under the same terms and concluded (due to similar syntactical and verbal considerations) that they *believed* before they *became*: *believed* → *became*. They became children of God because they received Christ. Calvinists should likewise be forthright in acknowledging that these believers were given the right to become children of God because they received Christ. The order is: *receive* → *became*.

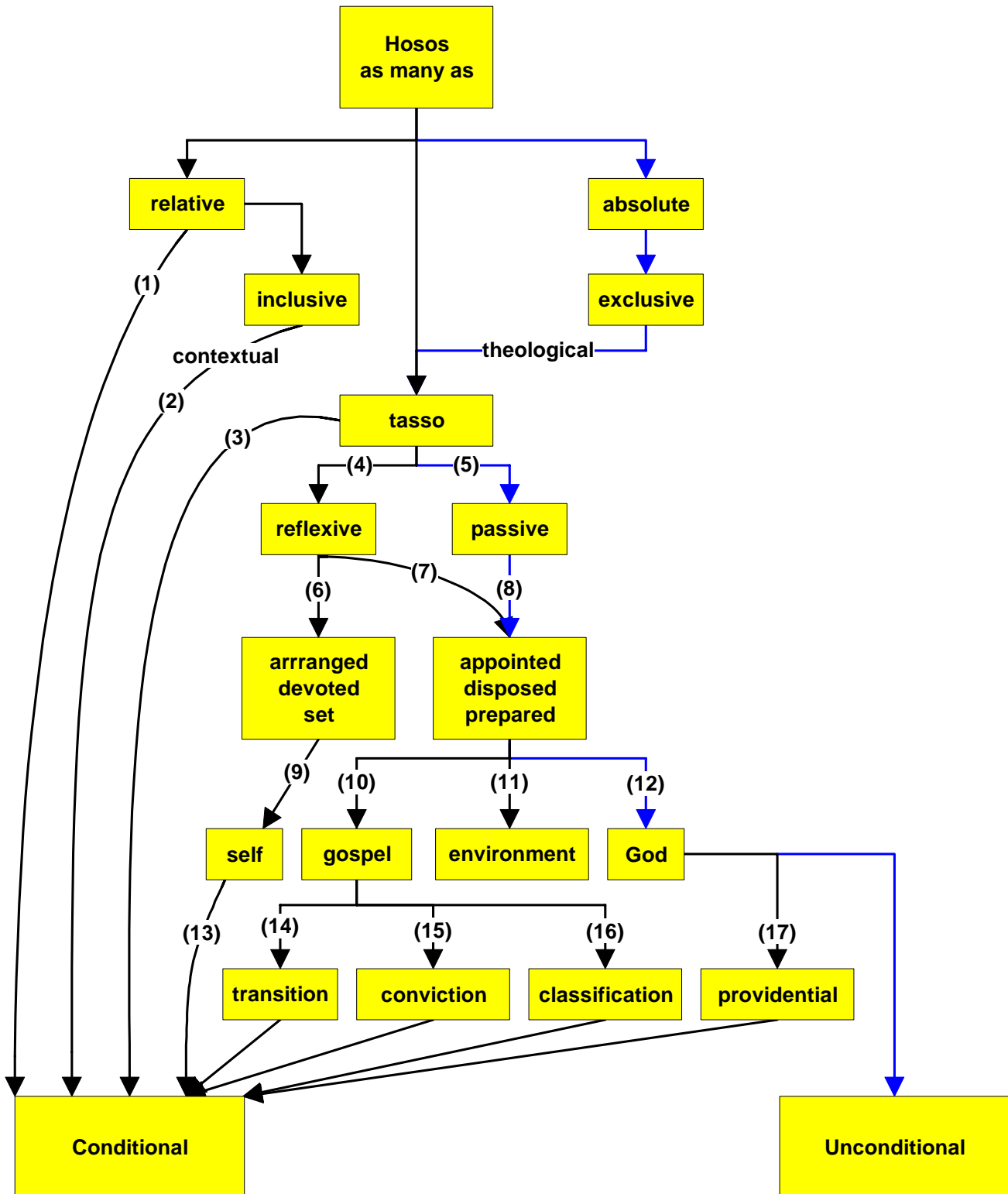
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Options for Acts 13:48



As to the Calvinistic interpretation of Acts 13:48, there is little need to deal with the interpretation of this text here. We have devoted an entire appendix to this verse in the *Outer Darkness* and will be content here to offer this chart as summation of the various hermeneutical options discussed therein. There are seventeen ways that one might interpret

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this verse and still come to a non-Calvinistic conclusion. In contrast, there is only one branch by which one might derive the Calvinistic conclusion of unconditional election. To be sure, hermeneutical options need to be weighed, not merely counted. But numerous of these alternatives were found to be very viable. We did point out the weaknesses in that discussion of a couple of the non-Calvinistic interpretations. But the problem with discounting even those non-Calvinistic arguments is that other considerations come into play from other strands of support that make even the weaker non-Calvinistic arguments plausible in a web of support. One would typically have to break more than a single strand in order to reject an single non-Calvinistic interpretation in the above chart. The opposite is true of the line of arguments leading to the Calvinistic position. It is held by a single blue strand which if broken anywhere along the way causes the Calvinistic interpretation to fall from consideration.

received/believed

We explain our particular translation of Jn 1:12 in the *Outer Darkness* and will not need to repeat that discussion here. However, the parallelism between *receive* and *believe* are fully self-evident within the verse so as to allow us to gloss over our translation for the present purpose. Faith is passive. Receiving a gift is also passive. However, you have a choice as to whether or not you receive a gift. The fact that John uses the verb *received* therefore not only signifies our passivity but our passive **receptivity**. Just as we chose to passively receive a gift, so we are generally expected to be the ones in control of what we believe. This verb *receive* matches well with the *whosoever will* implied by the pronoun *hosos*. We determine whether or not we will be given the right to become children of God by our response to the offer of God's gift. To illustrate, we note the following summation of the Johannine parallelism:

- As many as **received** (*lambano*) Him were given the right to become children of God (Jn 1:12).
- And whosoever will let him **take** (*lambano*) the water of life freely (Rev 22:17)

Whether it be the gift of light or of life, the invitation is to _____ (*lambano*) the gift. We may fill in this blank with either *receive* or *take*. It makes no difference. When one takes a gift which is being offered to him, it is obvious that he is passively receiving that gift. Likewise, when one receives a gift which is being offered to him, it is obvious that he is doing so of his own free will in choosing to take it. The *hosos* indicates self-determinism and *lambano* alludes to free will. In summary, whosoever will may come. The problem is that most choose not to of their own accord.

gave the right

In a drastic attempt to avoid the obvious indications of free will, Morris attempts to reverse the order of the verse. He claims *gave* means: "He *gave* the gift that they should receive the Word and become children of God" (*John*, 98). So much for fidelity to scripture. The biblical text says the reverse. Not only is Morris' perversion of the order nonbiblical, it is nonsensical. John is not saying that God subsequently gave the gift of faith those who had already believed. John is not saying that God does the giving before we do the receiving!

Inverted Order Within Jn 1:12



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But not all Calvinists are so perverse in their treatment of the verse. Hendriksen frankly admits: “We do not believe that the solution of this problem lines in interpreting the sentence as if it should read: ‘But as many as received him, to them he had previously given the right to become God’s children” (*John*, 81). To his credit, Hendriksen rejects the attempt of his fellow Calvinists to stand the verse on its head. And certainly, in the same moment in which a gift is received, it is given.

No Order Within Jn 1:12



But we have already demonstrated the weaknesses of Hendriksen’s attempt to lay the verse on its side and claim that there is no order. There is an clear order pictured in our flow chart from top to bottom. If the verse be allowed to stand on its feet, the clear order is that those who received/believed were given the *right (exousia)* to become children of God. Contextual, syntactical, and verbal considerations demand that we acknowledge the logical order.

Logical Order Within Jn 1:12



If we were to ask, “To whom is the right to become a child of God given?” the clear answer from the text would be, “To those who receive Him.” The natural order is: *receive* → *become*. One does not need a course in Greek syntax to see the natural order in what John is saying. If we were to say, “Those who bought the plane ticket were given the right to get on the plane,” it is obvious that buying the picket precedes the right to get on the plane. Buying the ticket is the condition for getting on the plane. In order to have the right to get on the plane, one must first purchase the ticket.

Right

But why did John interject the word *right (exousia)*? Why not simply say that those who received/believed became children of God? Because John wishes to interject another link in the chain of events. Godet’s (*John*, 265) argument is very insightful. John is using *exousia* to truths associated with our new position in Christ such as: reconciliation, justification, and adoption. He cites Gal 4:6 in support of placing adoption before regeneration: “Because you are *sons [huios]*, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’” In Godet’s opinion, God sending forth His Spirit into our heart is equivalent to John’s saying that we become *children (teknon)* of God by

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regeneration in which God imparts His life to us through the Spirit. The Johannine *ordo salutis* as Godet perceives it is: (1) you receive Christ by believing in Him; (2) you are given a new position consisting of justification and adoption; (3) you become a child of God by regeneration. In short, his *ordo salutis* is as pictured in Row A. Those who become children of God do so because they have been given the right to do so.

We would find this argument rather conclusive as it is if it were not for the fact that Paul also said in Romans: “You have received a spirit of adoption [*huiiothesia*] as sons by which we cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’” (Rom 8:15). To be sure, in the next sentence Paul adds, “The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are *children* [*teknon*] of God” (Rom 8:16). And his doing so may be taken as support our position that we become adopted sons before we become regenerate children. Nevertheless, it is not clear if Paul is simply enunciating the truth of Rom 8:15 in Gal 4:6 or if he is encapsulating the twin truths of both Rom 8:15 and 8:16 in Gal 4:6.

If the latter, then our point is proven and Godet is correct: justification precedes regeneration (Row A). If the former, then support for our putting justification before regeneration in Jn 1:12 to this point in our discussion is limited to the fact that John placed our *right* to become children before the fact of our becoming children.¹ Our estimation is that such *right* would be a positional/legal *change in status* since it precedes the ontological event of regeneration which is an impartation/*community of nature*. Even [Morris](#) perceived this facet correctly. In Pauline terms, we would be inclined to think that they have the right because they have the righteousness of Christ imputed to them. Consequently, they have the life of Christ imparted to them. Just as misthologically washed robes give us a right to the tree of life (Rev 22:12), so soteriological righteousness is necessary to have a right to become a child of God.

to become
children of God/born of God

We have already seen that what determines whether or not one will become a child of God is whether or not one receives Christ. Calvinistic attempts to invert the order by standing it on its head or to deny the order by laying it on its side have been found futile. Snoeberger tires a different approach. He tries

to give the verse a different conclusion, a different pair of shoes so to speak. He basically concedes the logical sequence **within** v. 12 and then tries to limit *teknon* to mean *adopted son*. Second, having staked his entire argument on this identification, he limits the logical sequence **between** vv.12 and 13 to one of three remaining options.

Three Adoption Options

The first option is that v. 13 refers back to the adopted children of v. 12. But (in his opinion) this would make adoption and regeneration synonymous and reject the logical priority of regeneration. We will not belabor this point since we disagree with his premise which takes *teknon* as referring to adoption in v. 12. However, we must point out that he admitted that his first option was grammatically possible and would result in faith preceding regeneration (and therefore a Row-A or Row-B understanding). This would be detrimental to the Row-C *ordo salutis* he is trying to prove. He therefore concedes that his rejection of option one is on a theological basis. The basis he provides is the bifurcation of adoption and redemption in the previous part of his discussion where he had acknowledged that everyone places adoption after faith. It was therefore incumbent upon him to make a division between regeneration and adoption and place faith between them. But if regeneration and adoption both come after faith (as Row-A and Row-B advocates believe and option one indicates), then Snoeberger is going to need something stronger than an appeal to bifurcation to show that regeneration precedes faith. In short, it appears that Snoeberger assumes the point to be proven in order to prove the point he is trying to make—circular reasoning in other words. In any event, as it currently stands, his first option discredits his own Row-C *ordo* and supports Row-A and Row-B instead.

The second option that Snoeberger provides is that v. 13 refers back to the adopted children of v. 12, but the verb tense puts their birth before their adoption. He acknowledges that this position is grammatically and theologically plausible. If so, the *ordo* it gives is: *faith* → *regeneration* → *adoption*. This is a Row-B understanding and refutes Snoeberger’s Row-C placement of regeneration before faith. So how does he dispense with this *ordo*? By merely remarking, “The purpose of the passage does not seem to be the construction of an *ordo*” (*Ordo*, 80). What kind of response is this! On the basis of the contextual flow of the passage, the syntactical implementation of *hosos*, and the verbal choice of *ginomai*, we find his remark ludicrous. Option two leads to (a non-Calvinistic version of) Row B.

The third and final option that Snoeberger provides is the one he prefers: (1) v. 13 refers back to v. 12 in its entirety—with no logical relationship between the verses as to priority. If so the transition from v. 12 to v. 13 does not support

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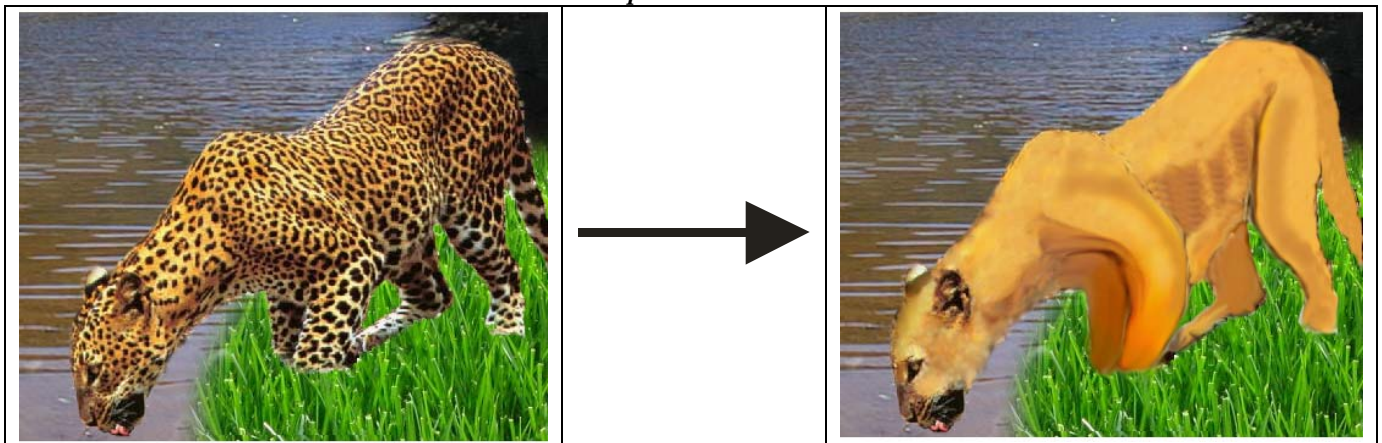
any of the Rows. That is one possibility. There are two others. (2) If v. 13 refers back to v. 12 in its entirety and continues the sequence, then it simply affirms that they experienced adoption in v. 12 and then regeneration in v. 13 (= Row A). Or (3) if v. 13 refers back to v. 12 and gives the antecedent (pluperfect) sequence, then it supports a Row-C understanding. But Snoeberger evidently felt that trying to derive his argument from this latter approach would have appeared to be grasping at straws since it would place v. 13 before v. 12 in logical sequence. Unfortunately for him, this is the only one of his three options that gives plausibility to Row C. But acknowledging a logical priority in option three would certainly put Row A, not Row C, in a favorable position. So once again, his own options lead him away from a Row-C conclusion.

Condition Versus Cause

So how does Snoeberger manage to pull off a Row-C sequence of regeneration before faith when his own options lead away from that conclusion and the best alternative he can put forth for his own position is that there is no logical sequence? He appeals to theology. Since his theology demands that regeneration precede faith, he concludes that it must precede faith. In doing so, he reads his theology into the text rather than from it. Secondly, he appeals to the nature of the verb *born* in v. 13. According to Calvinists, since we do not give physical birth to ourselves or have any choice in the matter in the natural arena, the same must be true in the spiritual realm as well. We reject their assessment on the basis of the *whosoever* implications of *hosos* and the nature of the verb *received* in v. 12. Of course, we do not give birth to ourselves. No one is saying otherwise. Verse 13 only says that our birth is not of ourselves; it does not say that our reception of Christ is not of ourselves. We do not spiritually inseminate ourselves. But we do provide the passive receptivity to that activity. This passage is not describing the divine rape of the unwilling or the divine necrophilia of the unresponsive.

In order to become airborne in a plane, a passenger must first get on the plane. His getting on the plane does not cause the plane to fly, but it is a condition for his being borne through the air by the plane. In the same manner, our receiving Christ is the condition for our being born of God, but it does not cause us to be born. Believing is the condition, not cause, of regeneration. John illustrates this nicely. It is not his fault that Calvinists cannot tell the difference between a condition and cause or try to place the cause before the condition. John has presented a very orderly account in which he placed the condition for the cause before the cause. Verse 13 is his way of reiterating that difference between condition and cause. God is the cause of our new birth. Our responsibility is to meet the condition for new birth, not to cause our new birth. Consequently, our response determines whether or not God will cause our rebirth.

The Leopard in Jer 13:23



Calvinists will insist that we can no more change our nature (i.e., regenerate ourselves) than a leopard change its spots. For an animation of the above illustration, see [leopard](#). As noted there, our question is not, “Can a leopard change its spots?” but “Can a leopard drink water?” A leopard cannot change its spots. But could a leopard drink water from a certain place that could? According to scripture, there was a leper who washed himself in the Jordan, and it changed his skin (2Kings 5:1). This leper did not have the ability to change his skin, but he did have the ability to wash himself in the Jordan. And doing so did so. It was his decision as to whether or not he would wash, but it had to

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be the Jordan, not some other river. We do not attribute the removal of the leprosy to the ability leper do we? Of course not. Likewise, if God gave a leopard the option of drinking from a certain location so that it could change its spots, we would not attribute the removal of its spots to the ability of the leopard. So why do Calvinists insist that we are attributing the change in a lost person's nature to the ability of the lost person? Such a notion is ludicrous as easy shown by such analogies. God has given the sinner the option of drinking living water so that his nature may be permanently changed from one of death to life. A sinner cannot change his nature, but he is able to drinking living water which can do so. Calvinists confuse opportunity with ability.

The Calvinist will retort that dead man cannot drink. We will respond in like manner that dead man do not thirst. Yet the Bible is clear that those in need of spiritual life can indeed thirst. They can come and drink living water in order to quench that thirst (Jn 4:10, 13-14; 7:37; Rev 21:6; 22:17).² The order is: thirst → drink → live. Likewise, the spiritually dead must believing hear the gospel in order to “come to life spiritually” (Jn 5:25; WNT). The order is: dead → hear → live. Dead men hear. The spiritually dead are the ones who need to hear in order to come into possession of spiritual life. Whereas Row C might imagine that spiritual thirst is an indication of spiritual life, so that those who thirst are already regenerate, we take the thirst described in these passages to be an indication of spiritual need. A dead man is someone in need of spiritual life. A thirsty man is someone who needs a drink. A spiritually thirsty man in someone in need of a drink of spiritual water. A spiritual dead man who thirsts for living water is a someone who needs to drink living water in order to have spiritual life. He needs a drink in order to have life, not because he already has it. Such thirst is an indication of prevenient grace.

Regeneration Options

Having examined the options presented by Snoeberger and found them leading away from the very conclusion to which he wishes to drive us, it is time to reexamine his premise—that *teknon* is referring to adoption. According to EBC, *tekna* (the plural form found in v. 12) is parallel to *born ones*. According to Constable, “The New Testament speaks of the believer as a child of God and as a son of God. Technically it describes us as children by birth, the new birth, and as sons by adoption. John consistently referred to believers only as children of God in his Gospel. He did not call us the sons of God” (*John*, 20). If it be asked, “What about Jn 12:36?” Constable’s response would be that it is using a Semitic idiom to describe ethical sonship in terms of behavior (p. 193) rather than Pauline adoption. Hendriksen would concur. A Matthean parallel from the lips of Jesus illustrates this perspective: You do good works in order to become *sons* (*huios*) of God in your conduct (Mt 5:45). You do not do good works in order to become born again as a child of God or soteriologically adopted as a son of God. According to such commentators, Snoeberger is in error treating *tekna* as *adopted ones*.

Morris (a Calvinist) explains at that the *change in status* (i.e., *right*) preceded the *community of nature* expressed by *tekna* (*children*) so that John is not referring to adoption which would have been the case for *huioi* (*sons*). Lenski agrees that John always uses *children of God* rather than *sons of God* for believers because “he always views it as the product of regeneration” (pp. 61-61). Snoeberger claims that John does not use *huios* of believers merely because John prefers to reserve the label *huios* to denote Jesus as the *Son* of God. Morris notes this preference but points out that John does use *huioi* (the pl.) of men in Jn 12:36. Accordingly, Snoeberger’s claim sounds rather hallow. If John had wished to describe us as *adopted ones* in 1:12, he could have easily have done so with *huioi*. Hendriksen concurs that while “Paul uses both terms in describing believers as children of God,” in the Johannine gospel and epistles “one becomes a υἱός [son] by adoption, but a τέκνον [child] by regeneration.” “The noun [*tekna*] which John uses for this purpose [in v. 12] comes from τίκτω, to beget. To him salvation is the impartation of life...being begotten of God” (p. 81).

In a nutshell, verses 12 and 13 affirm that those who believed in Christ were given the right to become *begotten ones* (*tekna*) of God because they were *begotten* (*gennao*) by the will of God. John uses *gennao* to refer to the role of the male parent in producing the begotten ones. This isn’t rocket science. It is more like *Sex Ed 101*. They were the *begotten ones* of God (in v. 12) because they were *begotten* by God (v. 13)—not by some other source including themselves. The sequential structure is simple:

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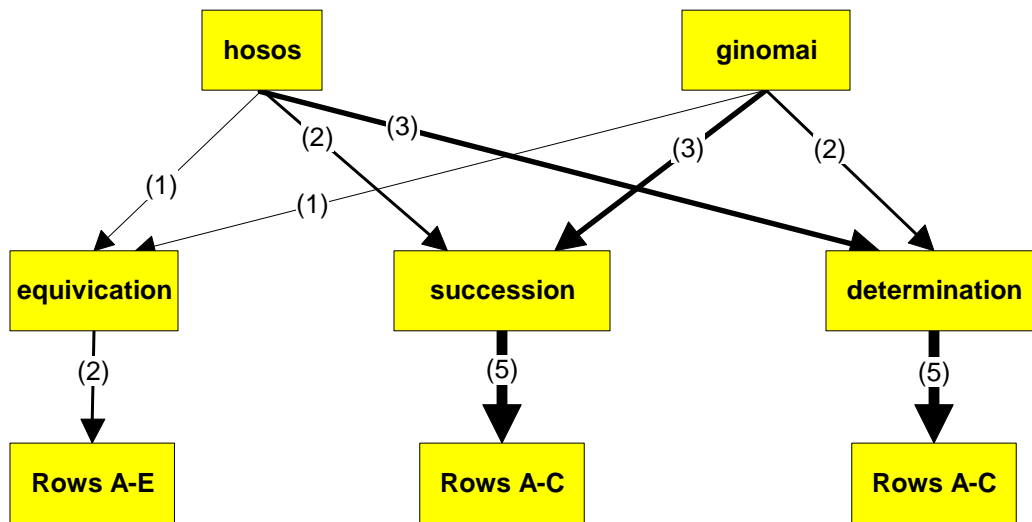
V. 12 Received/believed → given right → **begotten** of God
V. 13
∴ faith → justification → regeneration/eternal life

The connection is not complicated. They begotten of God because they were begotten by God. The sequence confirms Row A. An expanded rendition of our translation would be: “But as many as received Him, to them (to those who believed in His name) He gave the change in status necessary to become **begotten** of God, who were **begotten** not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (Jn 1:12-13; TM). Although John attributes their receptivity to themselves with *hosos*, he reiterates that their regeneration itself is attributable only to God. They are *begotten of God*, not of themselves. Verse 13 simply picks up on the conclusion of v. 12 and reiterates that they were begotten **of God**. But just because their birth is attributable to God does not give us just cause to concluded that the reception is sovereignly determined.

Hermeneutical Probability

As mentioned above, when interpreting a passage of scripture, it is necessary not only to count the various options but weigh them as well. In the charts which follow, although I might have assigned a greater weight to the interpretations which I deem merit it, I simply assigned sequential values instead.

Sequence Within Jn 1:12

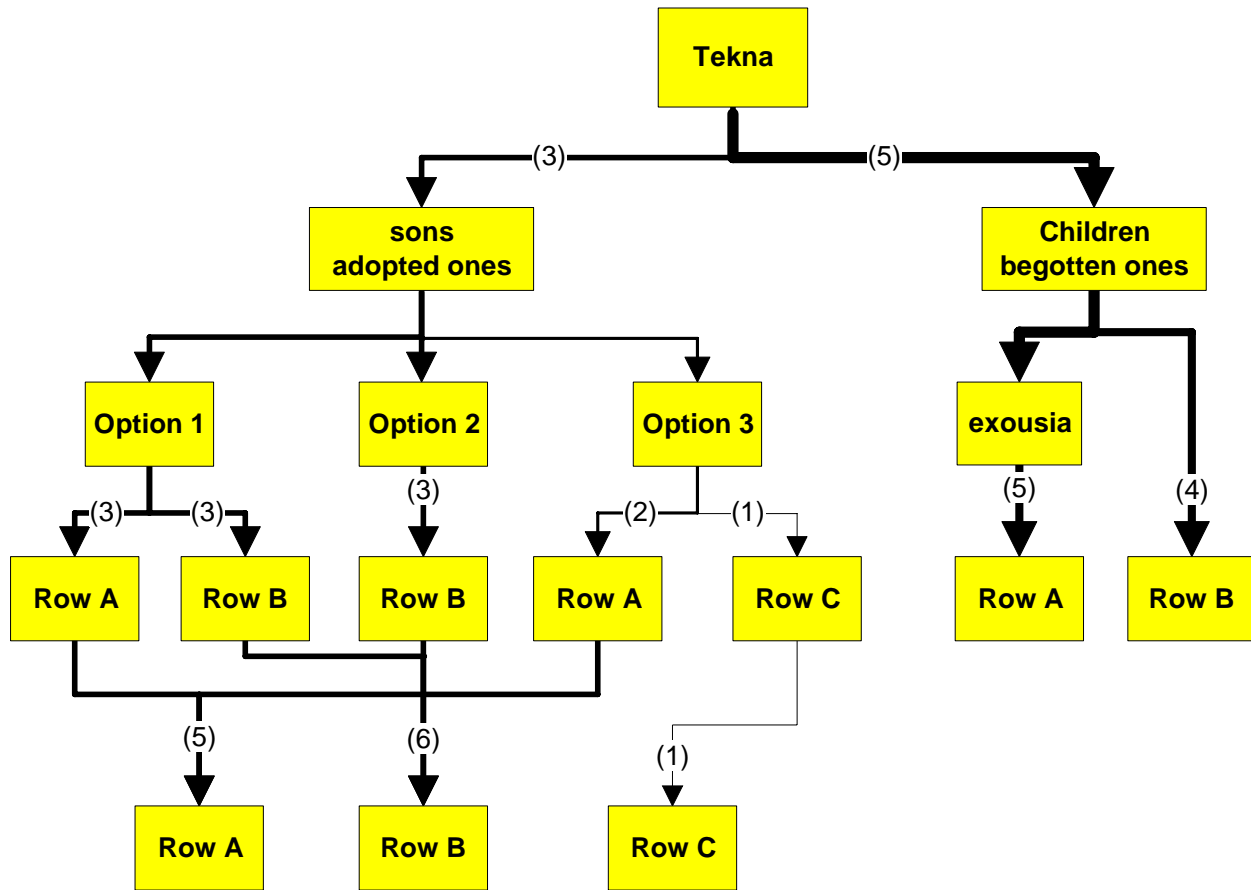


Row-C and Row-E advocates would need to deny the logical sequence within v. 12. Strangely perhaps, Hendriksen resorted to this maneuver as well. The reason is obvious however. Since he acknowledged that *tekna* refers to regeneration, he had to deny any order in the verse. Otherwise, he would have had to abandon Row C and adopted Row B. Those taking this approach will have to maintain that neither *hosos* nor *ginomai* provide determination (i.e., syntactical circumscription) or succession (i.e., logical sequence). As the least likely option, these branches are assigned the lowest hermeneutical probability (i.e., a value of only 1). It is much more reasonable to perceive a succession in *hosos* and certainly a syntactical determination. Consequently, the values of 2 and 3 respectively were assigned to these more promising candidates. *Ginomai*, on the other hand, is a stronger indicator of logical sequence than mere syntactical determination and was assigned the corresponding latter two values in inverse proportion to *hosos*. The combined values were then charted for each option under each main branch. As one may see, Rows A-C break even in terms of hermeneutical probability for the *ordo* within v. 12 for the factors charted above. If one were to combine the values of all branches, Rows A-C have a combined value of 12 (2 + 5 + 5), but Rows D-E only score 2.

This 12 to 2 hermeneutical preference of Rows A-C over Rows D-E gives us an objective basis for dispensing with this latter two options as we proceed to the next chart which will demonstrate the hermeneutical probability of each of

Rows A-C. In other words, our first chart helped limit our range. Our next chart will help specify our finds in favor of one particular row.

Sequence Between Jn 1:12 & 1:13



In the above flow chart, we have surmised the primary options for the sequence principally between v. 12 and v. 13. Although *exousia* actually deals with the sequence within v. 12 rather than between vv.12-13, it has been dealt with in this chart rather than the above chart for sake of simplicity and to follow the flow of our discussion. Rows D and E are not charted because they were ruled out as inconsequential by the sequential probability within v. 12. The inclusion of *exousia* in that chart would have only provided redundancy to what was already made abundantly clear by that chart—Rows D & E are not worthy of further consideration.

As before, the lowest value is 1. Despite appearances, the main branches from *tekna* do not actually skip from 3 to 5. Rather, the value 5 had to be assigned to the main trunk because a sub-branch had to be assigned a 4 (and a sub-branch cannot be given a value higher than its trunk). This sub-branch had to be given a 4 because it has a (much) stronger probability than the value 3 assigned to main opposing trunk (that of adoption). Yet its value is rendered less than that of its corresponding begotten counterpart by *exousia*. The terminus of each branch shows the computational totals for each main trunk. If we were to combine the totals, we would come to a tie with Row A and B both having a value of 10 (5 + 5 for A and 6 + 4 for B). Row C retains its lonely value of 1. As seen in the discussion, it is apparent that our discussion does not hold A and B to be equally probable. While the discrepancy might be explained by remembering that hermeneutics is as much an art as it is a science, there is another explanation readily available from the chart itself. The value 10 does have value in that it shows the overall probability. However, if one wants to see the particular value assigned by the present discussion, it would not be gleaned by simply adding all probabilities but by noting that we dispensed with the *adoption* trunk in favor of the *begotten* trunk. Therefore, the present study finds Row A (much) more persuasive than Row B, as attested by the 5 to 4 value reflected in the chart for that trunk.

Summary

Our analysis of Jn 1:12 has led us to the conclusion that the nominal term *begotten* in v. 12, which is nestled in a sequential array of events within that verse and context, is indeed referring to the same event being described in v. 13 with verbal form *begotten*. Since it is conceded by all that v. 13 refers to regeneration and since our study places this event after faith, regeneration has been found to follow faith, leaving us with only Rows A and B as true contenders to the hermeneutical throne. *Exousia* then crowned Row A with the right to the throne. The populace, led by *hosos* and *lambano*, applauded in improvement, shouting, “Whosoever will may come.”

¹ We believe Godet is correct in equating the *ordo* in Jn 1:12 with Gal 4:6 for several reasons. For one thing, we have derived our conclusion for Johannine *ordo* regarding Jn 1:12 without reliance upon the Pauline *ordo* in Gal 4:6. Nevertheless, having derived our conclusion for the Johannine *ordo* independently of the Pauline perspective, we are now in a position to compare this Johannine *ordo* with Godet’s perception regarding the Pauline *ordo* in Gal 4:6. Naturally, we expect John and Paul to be in agreement on the order. When this comparison is made, a perfect match is found in support of Row A.

Secondly, the allusion to Rom 8:15 may be an illusion. The spirit (small “s”) of adoption in Rom 8:15 need not be equated with the Spirit (capital “S”) found in Gal 4:6. Nor should this distinction be glossed over. In Rom 8:15 the antithetical parallelism is between the *spirit of slavery* and the *spirit of adoption/sonship*. It is not at all apparent that the allusion is to the Holy Spirit Himself in 8:15. The translations are divided on the issue. If the Holy Spirit is not the allusion, then the parallel to Gal 4:6 is only an illusion and does not detract from Godet’s Row-A conclusion. On the other hand, if the Holy Spirit is the allusion, then Paul could be understood as affirming that the Spirit who we received as a **result** of our adoption enables us to cry out to God as Father (adoption → Spirit), and Godet’s conclusion is affirmed. On the other hand, if Calvinists insist that *Spirit of adoption* must mean the *Spirit who produces adoption* (i.e., Spirit → adoption), then what will they do with *justification of life* in Rom 5:18. If *Spirit of adoption* means *Spirit → adoption*, then would we not be inclined to conclude that *justification of life* means *justification → life*? But that would concede the order in Row A and thus affirm Godet’s conclusion. Moreover, the context of Rom 5:18 strongly suggests that *justification of life* does in fact mean the justification that **results** in life (i.e., *justification → life*) since Paul has just mentioned that *many transgressions resulting (eis) in justification* (Rom 5:16) and the possibility of this gift of righteousness resulting in a future experience of life (Rom 5:17), specifically so that righteousness might **result (eis)** in eternal life (Rom 5:21). The context is saturated with references to life as the intended result of justification. Consequently, the genitive in *justification of life* (Rom 5:18) should be regarded as a genitive of purpose. For example, Wallace puts both *resurrection of life* and *resurrection of judgment* (Jn 5:29) into this category, noting that “the genitives seem to express both purpose and *result*” (GGBB, 101; emphasis his). Obviously, the logical order is *resurrection → judgment*, not *judgment → resurrection*. To read *justification of life* as *life → justification* would be to reverse the flow of the context and make life the source of justification. But Wallace comments make a genitive of source even more unlikely: “Since this usage is not common, it is not advisable to seek it as the most likely one for a particular genitive that may fit under another label” (GGBB, 109). A genitive of purpose would therefore be much more likely than a genitive of source. God gives us justification for the purpose of legally qualifying us for eternal life. Eternal life is the result of justification. Despite the havoc that putting justification before life would cause for the Calvinist, Hendriksen translates Rom 5:18 as *righteousness resulted for all men in justification issuing in life* and acknowledges that “justification...opens the gate to life” (Romans, 182-183).

Thirdly and most importantly, the context in Galatians leads to a Row-A understanding. Paul reminded the Galatians that they **received the Spirit by hearing with faith** (Gal 3:2-5, cp. 3:14,22; Eph 1:13). In fact, their reception of the Spirit by faith is identified as how they *began by the Spirit* (v. 3). Obviously, regeneration is in view. Consequently, the Pauline *ordo* is: hearing → faith → regeneration. This leaves us with either a Row-A or Row-B *ordo*. Paul proceeds to remind them that in addition to being *regenerate by faith*, they were also *justified by faith* (3:24) and became *sons through faith* (3:26). So from Paul’s affirmations we know that regeneration, justification, and sonship follow faith, but we do not know in what order these three benefits follow faith from what he has said thus far in this ch 3. As we concluded Gal 3, we are still left with either a Row-A or Row-B *ordo*. However, a few verses later Paul clarifies this latter part of his *ordo*: “Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts” (Gal 4:6). Here, Paul gives us a clear order of two of the benefits he had just described that come after faith. The *because* shows that the reason God sent forth His Spirit into their hearts in the act of regeneration was because they were sons. Sonship is the basis for God having sent forth His Spirits into their hearts in the act of regeneration described in ch. 3. Sonship/adoption is the grounds for regeneration: adoption → regeneration. Their

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legal change in status preceded the ontological change in their heart. Consequently, we may deduce that justification (adoption's legal twin) also occurred before regeneration. The Pauline *ordo* therefore, as derived from the context, is unmistakable: hearing → faith → adoption & justification → regeneration. The Pauline *ordo* is the same as the Johannine *ordo*, as shown by a simple contextual examination of their respective passages in Gal 4:6 and Jn 1:12. To restate, there are three affirmations of *ordo* in Gal 3:

- Faith → regeneration (i.e., received/begun by the Spirit by faith; Gal 3:2-5, cp. 3:14,22)
- Faith → justified (i.e., justification by faith; Gal 3:24).
- Faith → adoption (i.e., sons through faith; Gal 3:26).

So we know that regeneration, justification, and adoption follow faith, but we do not know in what order until Paul adds:

- Adoption → regeneration (Gal 4:6).

With this clarification, we now know that regeneration follows adoption. A simple syllogism allows us to conclude: (1) Since faith comes before adoption and regeneration and since (2) adoption comes before regeneration, (3) the order in which they occur is: faith → adoption → regeneration. We derive this conclusion by just taking Paul's statements at face value. Since justification and adoption are facets of the same legal transformation, we may infer that they happen at the same time. Therefore, the full order is faith → adoption/justification → regeneration.

² In Jn 4:10, we have a clear conditional sequence as denoted by Jesus' *if*: ask ⇒ given. The syntax leaves no doubt as to the conditional nature of this sentence. Those who know what the gift is are told what they must do in order to have the gift: Ask for living water in order to be given water. In other words, they must believe in Jesus for living water in order to be given living water by Jesus: faith ⇒ regeneration. Likewise, in 4:14 the order is: drink then have living water. We take this logical sequence of *drink* → *have* to denote a conditional sequence as well: *drink* ⇒ *have*. Obviously, we do not have this water before we drink it, and we must drink it in order to have it. We must drink it for it to become a well of water within us. The conditional nature of the promise is clear. If you drink it, then you will have it: *if* A *then* B (i.e., A ⇒ B). Jesus explicitly presents us with this same conditional sequence later: "If anyone eats of this bread, then he will live forever" (Jn 6:51; TM). Both Jn 4:10 and 6:51 use a syntactically conditional structure to make the conditional sequence inescapable. If we drink/eat (=believe), then we will have eternal life as a result. Faith is the condition for regeneration: *faith* ⇒ *regeneration*. As a result, faith must logically precede regeneration: *faith* → *regeneration*. This **conditional** sequence of *faith* ⇒ *regeneration* is the same **logical** sequence we encounter in Jn 1:12-13. If you receive/believe Christ, then you will become children/born of God: *faith* → *regeneration*. The conditional sequence of *faith* ⇒ *regeneration* demands the logical sequence of *faith* → *regeneration*. John's order in Jn 1:12 is in agreement with Jesus' condition in Jn 4:10 and 6:51. Faith is the condition for regeneration and consequently precedes regeneration both logically and conditionally. The conditional syntax confirms the logical sequence.