

Is there Scriptural Legitimacy for Jehovah's Witnesses' Christology  
of the 'Firstborn' as the First of God's Created Beings?

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## ABSTRACT

### Is there Scriptural Legitimacy for Jehovah's Witnesses' Christology of the 'Firstborn' as the First of God's Created Beings?

Lucy Trahan

The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, publishers and distributors of all documents used and disseminated by Jehovah's Witnesses, claim that Jesus is subordinate to God the Father and that he is the first of his creation, and therefore not co-eternal or co-equal with him. The focus of this thesis is to investigate early Christian primary and secondary sources as well as contemporary scholarly opinions and compare them to Watchtower teachings to determine whether Jehovah's Witnesses' understanding of the 'firstborn of creation' of Colossians 1:15 can be said to be a legitimate interpretation of this expression and whether their Christology can be reconciled with New Testament writings. Based on the traditional Christian hermeneutical reappropriation of Hebrew texts and the traditional understanding of the entire Christian canon of Scripture, the claim that the Son must be a created being does not truly find irrefutable substantiation.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

### *Textual Criticism*

	Different readings in a single instance of variation
Ⲙ	Codex Sinaiticus, c. Fourth Century
Ⲙ <sup>2</sup>	Codex Sinaiticus, c. Seventh Century
Ⲙ*	Codex Sinaiticus
Ψ	Lavrensis, Ninth – Tenth Century
A	Codex Alexandrinus - 5 <sup>th</sup> century
al	alii: some manuscripts which differ from the Majority Text
B	Codex Vaticanus, Fourth Century
BCE	Before the Common Era
bo	The Bohairic is a Coptic version of the New Testament
c.	circa
cf.	compare
CE	Common Era
D	Bezae Codices
D <sup>1</sup>	Bezae Codices, c. Sixth – Seventh Century
D <sup>2</sup>	Bezae Codices, c. Ninth Century
D*	Bezae Codices
Eus	Eusebius of Caesarea
G	Galatians
I	Freerianus, Fifth Century
Ir <sup>lat pt</sup>	Irenaeus, Latin translation
L	Luke
lat	Vulgate and part of the Old Latin tradition - 2 <sup>nd</sup> to 3 <sup>rd</sup> century
latt	the entire Latin tradition in support of the same Greek reading
Lcf	Lucifer
LXX	Septuagint - The Greek Old Testament

Ⲙ / MT	Majority Text / Masoretic (Hebrew) text
ms/mss	manuscript/manuscripts
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
Or	Origen
<i>pc</i>	<i>pauci</i> (a few): A few other witnesses
P <sup>46</sup>	Papyrus # 46
sa	Sahidic
sy	all the Syriac versions extant for the related passage
vg	Vulgate – 4 <sup>th</sup> century and later
vg <sup>ms/mss</sup>	individual Vulgate manuscripts with independent readings
vs/vss	verse/verses
6	Thirteenth Century minuscule
33	minuscule
048 <sup>vid</sup>	uncial (+ videtur = probable but uncertain)
075	uncial
0278	uncial
0287	uncial
81	minuscule
104	minuscule
1175	minuscule
1241 <sup>s</sup>	minuscule (+derived from a later addition)
1739	minuscule
1881	minuscule
2464	minuscule

*Bibles / Books / Commentaries / Dictionaries*

AB	The Anchor Bible.
ABD	Anchor Bible Dictionary
BEC	Bible Exposition Commentary
CCL	Classic Commentary Library Series
ExpBC	Expositor's Bible Commentary
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary Series
NOAB	New Oxford Annotated Bible
NPNF	Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers (Eerdmans' reprint series)
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version (National Council of the Churches of Christ, 1989)
NA27	Novum Testamentum Graece, 27 <sup>th</sup> Ed. (2001)
NWT	New World Translation (Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1984)
RSV	Revised Standard Version (Oxford University Press, 2002)
TEV	Today's English Version (American Bible Society, 1992)
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary (Thomas Nelson, 2000)
YLT	Young's Literal Translation (Baker Book House, 1989)

*Journals / Publications*

BSac	Bibliotheca Sacra
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
EQ /EvQ	Evangelical Quarterly
ExpTim	Expository Times
IB	Interpreters Bible Series
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JETS	Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society
JSNTS	Journal for the Study of the New Testament

JTS	Journal of Theological Studies
NTS	New Testament Studies
RE/RevExp	Review and Expositor
RHPR	Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLDS	SBL Dissertation Series
TB	Tyndale Bulletin
WTJ	Westminster Theological Journal

*Miscellaneous*

NRM	New Religious Movements
WBTS	Watchtower Bible and Tract Society

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INTRODUCTION:  
FIRSTBORN OF CREATION - CREATOR OR CREATURE?

*Statement of the Question*

Several New Religious Movements<sup>1</sup> (NRMs) claim to be Christian<sup>2</sup> and to rely on the biblical canon of Scriptures<sup>3</sup> as their source of doctrine. Their interpretation of Scripture, however, demonstrates that although they appear to use the same texts and speak the same language,<sup>4</sup> they teach a different Christology than what most consider being mainstream orthodox<sup>5</sup> Christianity. Jehovah's Witnesses among others, claim that Jesus is subordinate to God the Father and that he is the first of his creation, and therefore not co-eternal or co-equal with him.

Considering that some view orthodoxy as being defined by those whose voice or influence have proven strongest<sup>6</sup> and that Christology has been a source of controversy since the first century, I intend to investigate whether the Christology of Jehovah's Witnesses can

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<sup>1</sup> Massimo Introvigne, "The Future of Religion and the Future of New Religions" (paper presented at the annual Engelberg Seminar on "the Future of Religion", Avesta/Engelsberg, Sweden, June 15-17, 2001), Center for Studies on New Religions, n.p. [cited 12 July 2011]. Online: [http://www.cesnur.org/2001/mi\\_june03.htm](http://www.cesnur.org/2001/mi_june03.htm). British sociologist Eileen Barker, a British sociologist, is said to have promoted the expression of 'new religious movements' to replace 'cults' or 'sects,' which carried derogatory connotations. 'NRM' was meant to refer especially to the larger 19<sup>th</sup> century Judeo-Christian movements such as Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons, but could also be applied to splinter groups of other religions. However, definitions and their limits of application vary. See also James R. Lewis, *The Oxford Handbook of New Religious Movements* (Oxford University Press, 2008), 17. NRMs are said to exist at "the fringe of the dominant religious culture."

<sup>2</sup> The term 'Christian', derived from the Greek word Χριστός (*Christós*) meaning 'the anointed one', refers to the followers of Jesus of Nazareth as attested to in the Gospels.

<sup>3</sup> The canon mentioned in this thesis refers to the list of books considered as authoritative for Christianity, although the books included in this canon might vary from one denomination to the next.

<sup>4</sup> Irenaeus of Lyons wrote that nearly all heretical sects spoke of God but because they were evil, they altered Him (*Against Heresies* 1.22). John H. Hayes and Carl R. Halladay show that various Christians or Jewish communities read Scriptures from various faith perspectives and based on varying theological presuppositions: see *Bible Exegesis* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 157.

<sup>5</sup> There are various definitions of 'orthodoxy'. The word is taken from the Greek word ὀρθός, meaning 'right' or 'straight' and δόξα, meaning 'opinion' or 'praise' and which is related to δοκεῖν, meaning 'to think'. See: *The New Oxford American Dictionary* (Oxford University Press, 2001), 1209; *Random House Unabridged Dictionary* (Random House, 1999), 1368.

<sup>6</sup> Bart D. Ehrman, *Lost Christianities: The Battles for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2003), 161.

be found to coincide with the general Christian understanding of New Testament writings. My aim is not to determine whether the Jehovah's Witnesses' doctrines are deemed orthodox or not since these categories are constructions which serve to polarize communities and are highly questioned by contemporary scholars. Instead, my intent is to investigate early Christian primary and secondary sources as well as contemporary scholarly opinions and compare them to Watchtower<sup>7</sup> teachings to determine whether Jehovah's Witnesses' understanding of the 'firstborn of creation' as 'the first of God's created beings' can be said to coincide with the Christology of Early Christians and of contemporary Christianity.

This thesis will focus more specifically on Colossians 1:15 because this verse is a pivotal Christological passage used by the Watchtower to support the doctrine that the pre-incarnate Word was a creation of God, and therefore not co-equal and co-eternal with God. Although it appears that there is ample scholarly support in interpreting 'firstborn' in Colossians 1:15 as 'pre-eminent,' support can also be found in the Watchtower publications and from the studies of Greg Stafford<sup>8</sup> which point to Jesus as the 'first to be born' among others. We also find allusions to the 'Son of God' in a subordinate position in the writings of early Christians, such as Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and more specifically Arius.

Seeing as this controversy has existed since the second century CE, one is led to wonder if there was truly some foundation for the interpretation of firstborn as part of creation, and whether it deserved to be considered 'heretical'<sup>9</sup> in the early Church, and

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<sup>7</sup> Watchtower Bible and Tract Society is the corporation responsible for printing and disseminating all publications for Jehovah's Witnesses, and is commonly referred to as the Watchtower.

<sup>8</sup> G. Stafford, *Jehovah's Witnesses Defended* (Murrieta, CA: Elihu Books, 2009) and *Three Dissertations on the Teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses* (Murrieta, CA: Elihu Books, 2002).

<sup>9</sup> Heresy, from the Latin *haeresis*, and the Greek, αἵρεσις, (meaning *a choosing and faction*), is commonly understood as a system of beliefs which conflict with established dogma, or opposed to the 'orthodox' accepted tradition. Heresy is also defined as teaching that deviated from the orthodox standard or norm by Andreas J. Köstenberger and Michael J. Kruger. *The Heresy of Orthodoxy* (Illinois: Crossway, 2010), 24. See also Harold

consequently, why it is still questioned today. Although Origen accused all heretics of being believers at first who later deviated from their faith,<sup>10</sup> Walter Bauer reversed the long held position that orthodoxy preceded heresy. Instead Bauer posits that there first existed a variety of legitimate Christian beliefs prior to the need to develop and crystallize a standard Christian doctrine.<sup>11</sup> Ehrman claimed that the beliefs and traditions now observed in Christianity are a result of various groups and factions competing among each other in the first and second centuries; where the victors claimed the right to determine what is considered 'orthodox' while others, whose voices were silenced, were tarred as 'heretical.'<sup>12</sup> Christian orthodoxy, viewed in this light, deserves to be challenged if necessary, or upheld if legitimate. Similarly, it is our duty, as honest biblical scholars, to also examine the evidence of the Watchtower Christology to determine whether Jehovah's Witnesses are perpetuating an unfounded interpretation of Scriptures or a *bona fide* interpretation which is simply not according to the mainstream understanding. The implications are that either Jehovah's Witnesses are exonerated and respected as a legitimate Christian denomination or they continue to be marginalized for misinterpreting Scripture to suit a particular agenda. If they are found to be legitimate, there may be a need to open the parameters used to define 'Christianity' to allow for a more pluralistic understanding rather than to restrict it to the 4<sup>th</sup> century definition prescribed by the Nicene Creed.

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O. J. Brown, *Heresies: Heresy and Orthodoxy in the History of the Church* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994), 1-3.

<sup>10</sup> Walter Bauer wrote on the theological conflicts in the early church in *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (trans. R. A. Kraft and G. Kroedel; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971) [cited 18 February 2011]. Online: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/22171234/Bauer-Orthodoxy-and-Heresy>.

<sup>11</sup> See also Köstenberger and Kruger, *Heresy of Orthodoxy*, 24.

<sup>12</sup> Ehrman, *Lost Christianities*, 253-7.



*The American Heritage New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy* defines Christianity as “the religion based on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.”<sup>13</sup> The term Χριστιανός (Christian) was originally recorded in the Scriptures in Acts 11:26, Acts 26:28 and 1Peter 4:16 and was used to refer to the followers of Jesus, the Christ. Since these first century writings, much has been written about Jesus. His person, nature, and position, within the context of a monotheistic system of belief, have not been without debate. More recently, since the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, some NRMs have challenged many aspects of the mainstream Christian faith. I will consider one of these challenges, the Watchtower’s position that Jesus is not part of a Triune God and that he is actually the first of God’s creatures, albeit the most important one. Since most of this thesis will focus on comparing the Bible with the writings of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, the review of relevant literature will be done in the subsequent chapters within the appropriate topical context.

Most mainstream Christians have a negative view of Jehovah’s Witnesses because of their refusal to accept blood transfusions but also because of their denial of various widely accepted doctrines, such as the Trinity, the immortality of the soul, hell as a literal place of punishment, the bodily resurrection and visible return of Jesus, and that Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh.<sup>14</sup> In spite of this reputation, in 2011, there was an average of nearly 7.4 million active Jehovah’s Witnesses in 109,403 congregations worldwide.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *The American Heritage New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy*, Third Edition. (Houghton Mifflin Company, 2005) [cited 17 August 2012]. Online: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/christianity> To this definition, they add that “Christians believe that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, sent by God. They believe that Jesus, by dying and rising from the dead, made up for the sin of Adam and thus redeemed the world, allowing all who believe in him to enter heaven. Christians rely on the Bible as the inspired word of God.”

<sup>14</sup> R. Carlson and E. Decker, *Fast Facts on False Teachings* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1994), 12-123.

<sup>15</sup> *2012 Yearbook of Jehovah’s Witnesses* (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., 2012), 55.

They claim to be the only true Christians<sup>16</sup> and the only ones who truly adhere to the biblical text. They also claim that Christendom<sup>17</sup> is Babylon the Great<sup>18</sup> because they have perverted the Word and fornicated with the world empire of false religion, business and politics. Considering that true Christians must, by definition, be followers of Christ, what are the Watchtower's Christological claims? Is Jesus divine, equal with God and co-eternal? Is he the Creator or a creation? What is the source of the doctrine of the Jehovah's Witnesses? If their Christology is based solely on the Scriptures, as they claim, is it truly in line with Scripture as a whole and what can be gleaned as the general understanding of the first generations of Christian theologians?

Since the second century of our common era, scholars have discussed many of these issues, especially the 'firstborn' position of Jesus Christ, in order to crystalize fundamental Christian doctrines and defend against erroneous teachings. In the nineteenth century specifically, New Religious Movements such as the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses, arose and denied some of the basic tenets of traditional Christianity, most specifically the divinity of the Christ and his part in the Trinity. Jehovah's Witnesses claimed that their original intent was to return to the source and restore true faith since traditional Christianity had corrupted the Word. They also began claiming new divine revelations. As it is difficult for any non-Christian to distinguish between one Christian denomination and another, how is

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<sup>16</sup> *Reasoning from the Scriptures* (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1989), 328-30.

<sup>17</sup> The following quotes from the Watchtower publications illustrate the distinction between 'Christendom' and 'true Christianity' from the WBTS' perspective: "While Christendom's theologians, missionaries, and churchgoers continue to grapple with the gathering storm of controversy in their churches, true Christianity is flourishing worldwide. Indeed, true Christians [...] invite you to join Jehovah's Witnesses in united Christian worship of the only true God, Jehovah." (March 1, 2004, 7); "Equally striking is the contrast between Jehovah's Witnesses and Christendom today. [...] The very features that Christendom lacks abound among Jehovah's Witnesses!" (April 1, 2001, p. 18); "It is out of date to define Christendom as meaning Christianity. True Christians today do not confuse Christendom with Christianity or make them identical." (April 15, 1962, 229).

<sup>18</sup> *Reasoning from the Scriptures*, 49-53.

anyone to distinguish between the Watchtower's doctrinal claims and those of traditional mainstream Christianity they are challenging?

In order to arrive at an educated conclusion as to the validity of their claims, one must then begin by analyzing the source documents, namely the Scriptures themselves. Considering that we no longer have the original texts, we must turn to the most authoritative witnesses in existence. Since not every scholar can claim expertise in this domain, most must opt to rely on experts who have made it their life's work to study and analyze these texts and extract the known variants. It would also be relevant to read the early church fathers to get a grasp of what was understood at that time, as well as what scholars have written on the subject in recent years. Finally, to justly analyze the validity of Jehovah's Witnesses claims, it is necessary to investigate their assertions from their own publications and compare them to what is gleaned from the Scriptures themselves, and from relevant exegetical studies by reputed scholars.

### *Methodology*

Much has been written on the Colossians 1:15-20 pericope and most Christian scholars appear to agree with the traditional understandings set forth by the Church Fathers. However, some contemporary scholars, such as Greg Stafford and Rolf Furuli, claim that it is grammatically possible to include the firstborn as part of creation.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, since this debate has been ongoing for centuries, some of the early church also considered that this interpretation had merit then also. Considering as well the fluctuation in interpretation of the nature of Jesus in the years leading up to the Council of Nicaea, one is led to wonder if in

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<sup>19</sup> Stafford, *Jehovah's Witnesses Defended*, 361-425 and R. Furuli, *The Role of Theology and Bias in Bible Translation – With a Special Look at the New World Translation of Jehovah's Witnesses* (Huntington Beach, CA: Elihu Books, 1999), 249.

fact, there is a possibility that what was, and still is, considered ‘heresy,’ might be simply another interpretation and equally as valid as the traditional orthodoxy supported by most of mainstream Christianity. From a survey of the various verses which refer to Jesus as πρωτότοκος, μονογενής or ἀρχή, it is evident that translators have made choices in their interpretation of these terms according to their perception of the context. It is also common knowledge that scholars all have pre-suppositions and base their interpretations on their experience and knowledge. Considering the evidence of a gradual evolution of rituals and practice over time,<sup>20</sup> it is possible that some extrapolation of Scripture has occurred from the mainstream camp, and that creeds have been formed based on these extrapolations.

Therefore, I intend to first consider the pre-Christian, early Christian and non-Christian understanding of firstborn, both from biblical and non-biblical sources. Then after translating and critically analyzing the text itself, considering all the known variants from scholarly research to date, I will elaborate a *philological analysis* to see the extent of the possible meanings of the words used to describe Jesus as ‘first’. Thereafter, I will proceed with a *comparative analysis* of other passages which speak of ‘firstborn’ in both the Old and the New Testament in the hope of extricating all the possible meanings of the term. In addition, I will consider other passages which, while using other similar terms such as ‘beginning’ or ‘first’, nevertheless describe the position of Jesus in relation to his Father and to creation.

The writings of the Early Church Fathers will be considered since they have served to set the traditional understanding of much of the Scriptures for the centuries to come and laid the foundations for the current mainstream Christian denominations. I will thereafter consider contemporary scholarly interpretations of those who defend both positions, namely that the

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<sup>20</sup> For example, the practice of infant baptism, priests’ need for celibacy, or canonization, etc.

‘firstborn’ of Colossians refers to Jesus as eternally pre-eminent in creation or that this term refers to Jesus as the first of all created beings.

Then I will make a compilation of the evidence from the WTBS documents to arrive at a fair assessment of what their doctrine truly states regarding Jesus’s relationship to the created order. Lastly, I will attempt to conclude with a position as to the legitimacy of the current WBTS’ Christological position regarding the status of Jesus as first in the creative process of God.

CHAPTER 1:  
FIRSTBORN OF COLOSSIANS 1—EARLY CHRISTIAN AND NON-CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING

*1.1 Jewish understanding of 'firstborn'*

The *Encyclopaedia Judaica* emphasizes the importance of primogeniture by stating that it was “a persistent and widespread institution whose legal, social, and religious features were reflected in the norms of ancient Israelite society.”<sup>21</sup> Firstborns, therefore, had a special status not only in respect to inheritance but also to cultic rules.

In Classical Hebrew, a variety of words were formed from the b-k-r stem, which stands for ‘first.’ For instance, the masculine noun *bekhor* (בְּכוֹר) is usually translated as ‘firstborn son,’ the feminine word *bekirah* (בְּכִירָה) means ‘firstborn or older daughter,’ the word *bekhorah* (בְּכוֹרָה) can refer to ‘birthright,’ *bekhorot* (בְּכוֹרוֹת) as a feminine plural form can be translated as ‘firstlings,’ whereas the word *bikkurim* (בִּכּוּרִים) refers to ‘first-fruits’ as sacrificial gifts of harvest which were brought to the altar.<sup>22</sup>

Additionally, there are ample passages attesting to the concept of ‘firstborn’ without using the same word (or b-k-r stem). In the Jewish tradition, specific terms were used to describe one which opens the womb. The word *peter* (פֶּטֶר) is commonly translated as ‘that which first opens’ and is sometimes seen with the additional word *rechem* (רֶחֶם) which means ‘womb’ as in *peter-rechem* (פֶּטֶר-רֶחֶם)<sup>23</sup> but most often is seen without it and is translated as ‘that which first opens the womb.’<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. vol. 6. (New York: Macmillan Company, 1971), 1306.

<sup>22</sup> Adele Berlin, editor in chief. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion*. 2nd edition. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 116.

<sup>23</sup> Exodus 13:12.

<sup>24</sup> As seen in Exodus 13:12b, 13 and 15, as well as in Numbers 3:12 and 18:15.

The word *bekhor* (בְּכוֹר) implied more than simply an opening of the womb or an order of birth.<sup>25</sup> One can glean much evidence of the Jewish customs from the Torah<sup>26</sup> and the Jewish oral and written laws. In the book of Exodus, we read that God had commanded the Israelites to “Consecrate to me all the firstborn; whatever is the first to open the womb among the Israelites, of human beings and animals, is mine.”<sup>27</sup> It was believed that the first offspring to open the womb of man or animal, or the firstborn, was to be dedicated to God. From the book of Deuteronomy, we see that a socio-legal right was assigned to the firstborn son in relation to the paternal inheritance since the father’s firstborn son would be destined to receive a double portion of the family inheritance (Deut. 21:17).<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, because the firstborn unblemished lamb, calf or kid was reserved for a sacrifice or for gifts to the priests and therefore paternal lineage could not always be ascertained, a cultic assignment was given to the firstborn of the maternal lineage when it pertained to animal offerings.<sup>29</sup>

Exodus 23:19 adds that “The choicest of the first fruits of your ground you shall bring into the house of the Lord your God.” In the same fashion that the firstborn (*bekhor*) of man and animal belonged to God, so did the first fruits (*bikkurim*) of grains<sup>30</sup> and agricultural harvests, even to their bread dough.<sup>31</sup> Philo, one of the most important Jewish authors who lived in Alexandria, Egypt, from c. 20 BCE to c. 50 CE, also attests to this practice of first

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<sup>25</sup> Refer to Appendix 4 for occurrences of the word ‘firstborn’ in the Hebrew Bible.

<sup>26</sup> The Torah is commonly understood to consist of the five books of the Hebrew Bible attributed to Moses, namely Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. In rabbinic literature, the Torah also includes the oral traditions and interpretations.

<sup>27</sup> Exodus 13:2. Except where specified, quoted verses are from *The New Revised Standard Version*. (Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, 1995) [cited 7 February, 2011]. Online: <http://bible.oremus.org/>.

<sup>28</sup> Berlin, *Dictionary of Jewish Religion*, 116.

<sup>29</sup> *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 1306.

<sup>30</sup> Exodus 34:26 and Leviticus 2:14.

<sup>31</sup> Numbers 15:21.

fruit offerings and adds that “all the first things, whether in point of time or of power, are the property of God, and most especially all the first-born.”<sup>32</sup>

Since the firstborn male was believed to inherit the father’s might to a greater extent than offspring<sup>33</sup> which followed, he was in a better position to also inherit the responsibilities when the time came to take over the household affairs. If, however, this son proved incompetent, underserving<sup>34</sup> or unable, then the birth right was transferred to another.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, primogeniture carried not only privileges but responsibilities as well. They were to care for their elders and take over the leadership the family or clan upon the death of the patriarch.<sup>36</sup> In the case of firstborn daughters, they were granted the privilege or right to be married off before their younger sisters.<sup>37</sup>

Since in the course of time, many Israelites men became polygamous, the Mosaic Law added the following stipulations to clarify the order of inheritance among children from different wives:

If a man has two wives, one of them loved and the other disliked, and if both the loved and the disliked have borne him sons, the firstborn being the son of the one who is disliked, then on the day when he wills his possessions to his sons, he is not permitted to treat the son of the loved as the firstborn in preference to the son of the disliked, who is the firstborn. He must acknowledge as firstborn the son of the one who is disliked, giving him a double portion of all that he has; since he is the first issue of his virility, the right of the firstborn is his.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> *The Works of Philo, Complete and Unabridged*. 9<sup>th</sup> Edition, Translated by C.D. Yonge, (Hendrickson Publishers, 2008), ix, 285-6, 649.

<sup>33</sup> Genesis 49:3; Deuteronomy 21:17.

<sup>34</sup> Genesis 49:4; 1 Chronicles 5:1.

<sup>35</sup> 1 Chronicles 26:10.

<sup>36</sup> See for example, Genesis 27 (Elderly Isaac asked his son Esau to go hunt and prepare a meal for him before he died), 48:13 (elderly Israel blessed Manasseh and Ephraim, the sons of Joseph), Judges 8:20 (Jether asked his son to hunt), 1 Chronicles 26:10 (where Hosah made his son Shimri the chief).

<sup>37</sup> Genesis 29:26.

<sup>38</sup> Deuteronomy 21:15-17.



In several instances we find that some nevertheless opted to select another more favoured son as heir rather than the firstborn. Consequently Abraham's son, Isaac, although born after Ishmael, was chosen over the firstborn Ishmael.<sup>39</sup> In Genesis 25:29-34, we read that Esau, the firstborn son of Isaac, sold his birthright to his younger brother, Jacob for a bowl of warm stew. Although with the help of a measure of subterfuge, Jacob nevertheless received the double portion of inheritance rather than Esau, the firstborn.<sup>40</sup> In the book of 1 Chronicles, we read that "The sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel. (He was the firstborn, but because he defiled his father's bed his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph son of Israel, so that he is not enrolled in the genealogy according to the birthright; though Judah became prominent among his brothers and a ruler came from him, yet the birthright belonged to Joseph.)"<sup>41</sup> Although at first, every firstborn of every family was dedicated to serve as priest in the temple,<sup>42</sup> in time, the Levites, or priestly tribe, were dedicated as God's in exchange for all Israelite firstborns.<sup>43</sup>

In the case of Israel as a nation, their designation as 'firstborn' had no biological connotation. In Exodus 4:22, God had commanded Moses to say to Pharaoh, "Thus says the Lord, Israel is my son, even my firstborn." God's calling of Israel as his firstborn indicates that He had selected Israel as heir by election or adoption. In the subsequent narrative of Exodus, the value of a firstborn was highlighted by the final plague striking all Egyptian

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<sup>39</sup> Genesis 21.

<sup>40</sup> Genesis 27.

<sup>41</sup> 1 Chronicles 5:1-2.

<sup>42</sup> Number 3:12.

<sup>43</sup> Deuteronomy 10:8 and Exodus 32:29. According to George W. Harrison, the Levites were set apart for God because of their zeal in coming forth to execute judgment on the corrupted Israelites who had worshipped the golden calf at Mount Sinai. He also suggests that another reason might be that when Moses was ordered to take a census, the number of firstborn males among the Levites was almost the same as that of the firstborn males among the rest of the tribes – making it simpler to use the Levite firstborns as proxy in priestly service rather than disrupt the entire Israelite society. For more detail, see G. W. Harrison, "Covenant Unfaithfulness in Malachi 2:1-16," *Criswell Theological Review* 2.1 (1987), 63-64. See also the laws on redemption of firstborns in Exodus 13:15; 34:19 and Deuteronomy 15:19. Cf. Leviticus 27.

firstborns as punishment for resisting God's command to allow the Israelites to leave.<sup>44</sup> However, since God spared all of Israel's firstborns in this case, he acquired the right to claim them for himself.<sup>45</sup> God's election or adoption of Israel, and of Ephraim, is reiterated in the book of Jeremiah where God states "for I have become a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn."<sup>46</sup> James Kugel mentions that in agreement with the book of Exodus, the *Prayer of Enosh* (Qumran text 4Q369) makes mention of Israel as God's firstborn and asks how such a small group of people late in the history of mankind could be designated as God's firstborn.<sup>47</sup> To answer this, he then quotes the book of Jubilees where God is claimed to state:

"Behold, I shall separate off for myself a people from among all the nations, and they also will keep the Sabbath... They will become my people and I will be their God. I have chosen the descendants of Jacob among all of those whom I have seen [will be created]. And I have written them down as my firstborn son and have sanctified them for myself."<sup>48</sup>

Consequently, Kugel claims that Israel was elected as God's firstborn "during the first week of creation."<sup>49</sup> He also adds that Israel's special relationship is also alluded to in the *Words of the Luminaries*, another Qumran text, which reads that God has "called [I]srael 'my firstborn.'"<sup>50</sup> Israel was selected as God's firstborn, he concludes, because they were singled out to be disciplined by God as one father does a son, so that all other nations would witness his interventions.<sup>51</sup> Other second temple period texts also mention similar themes of

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<sup>44</sup> See Exodus 11:5 and 12:12.

<sup>45</sup> See Numbers 3:13.

<sup>46</sup> Jeremiah 31:7-9.

<sup>47</sup> James Kugel, "4Q369 'Prayer of Enosh' and Ancient Biblical Interpretation." *Dead Sea Discoveries*. 5/2 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), p. 119-148

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, "Jubilees" 2:17-20, 124.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 126.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, in 4Q504 in "Words of the Luminaries," iii 2-7, 128.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 129.

disciplinary purpose, such as in Sirach 17:17-18 and in Psalms of Solomon 18:3-4.<sup>52</sup> Interestingly, Kugel takes it a step further and claims that the 'firstborn' assignation of Israel referred also its status as ruler over subsequent generations but also over the entire world.<sup>53</sup> Similarly, Robert Keay stated that Israel as the firstborn not only represented the redemption of the nation, but also that it would fulfill that role for mankind through the Messiah. He added that "since God is ultimately the savior of the world, God is the firstborn of the world."<sup>54</sup>

In pre-Christian times, the firstborn was considered the most precious sacrifice to give to a deity.<sup>55</sup> In 2 Kings 3:27, Mesha the king of Moab, realizing that he was being defeated and feared losing his capital city, offered his own eldest son to his god Chemosh. He knew the value of a firstborn, the heir to his own throne, and was willing to sacrifice him for favour from his god. Similarly in Genesis 22:3, Abraham was told to offer his firstborn son, Isaac as a burnt offering to the Lord. Not only was Isaac his favoured and chosen firstborn but he was the promise of the source of a great nation to come from his loins. In the book of Micah, one also finds mention of the sacrifice of a firstborn as atonement for one's sins:

"With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? <sup>7</sup>Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Quoted in Kugel, *Dead Sea Discoveries*, p. 130.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 137-8.

<sup>54</sup> Robert Keay, "The Old Testament Background of the Firstborn: A Preliminary Study For Understanding 'The Firstborn Of All Creation' (Colossians 1:15)", *Christian Apologetics Journal*, Vol. 1, No.1, 1998. , p.4. Keay is quoting Rabbi Bechai from Pent. Fol. 124:4.

<sup>55</sup> *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, p. 1309.

<sup>56</sup> Micah 6:6-7.

## 1.2 Christian Understanding of 'Firstborn' From Scriptures

As mentioned above, the word בְּכוֹר (firstborn) in the Hebrew Bible usually referred to a birth order or birth right. The term 'firstborn' appears in the Septuagint (LXX) 130 times,<sup>57</sup> most often in the context of genealogies, indicating 'the son who was born first' and implying a temporal priority and a sovereignty or rank or position. However, as we have seen with the cases of Jacob and Esau, and with Joseph and Reuben, it is clear that this designation did not always apply to the child who opens the womb. Furthermore, since God speaks of Israel as His firstborn, inferring a term of endearment or election,<sup>58</sup> it is also evident that the term also applies to a legatee without the need for biological affiliations.

In several passages of the New Testament, Jesus is referred to as the firstborn (πρωτότοκος)<sup>59</sup> of creation, as the only begotten (μονογενής), and as the beginning (ἀρχή) or the first of creation. In Romans 8:29, the Son is described as the firstborn (πρωτότοκον) among many brothers. Hebrews 1:6 speaks of God bringing His firstborn (πρωτότοκον) into the world.

A pivotal scriptural passage, Colossians 1:15-20, believed to be a hymn of the early church,<sup>60</sup> speaks of the 'of all creation' in reference to Jesus. Some claim that 'firstborn' in this passage refers to Jesus as the first creature created by God, the exalted Son who is created but also the head of all creation, whereas others believe that it points to Jesus as supreme over creation and as pre-eminent because all things were created by Him and for Him as the eternal Son of God.

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<sup>57</sup> Peter T. O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*. (vol. 44 of *Word Biblical Commentary*; ed. Bruce M. Metzger; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 44; Furuli in *Theology and Bias*, 249, claims it appears 128 times in the LXX and 8 times in the NT.

<sup>58</sup> O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 44.

<sup>59</sup> See Appendix 6 for occurrences of πρωτότοκος, Appendix 7 for μονογενής, and Appendix 5 for ἀρχή.

<sup>60</sup> O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 32.

In John 1:14.18; 3:16.18 and in 1 John 4:9, Jesus is referred to as the only-begotten (μονογενής) of the Father. In Hebrews 11:17, μονογενής is also translated as only-begotten but is applied to Abraham's son, Isaac. This is differentiated from Luke 7:12; 8:42, and 9:38 where we find μονογενής translated as 'only' child.<sup>61</sup> We find similar references to Jesus but using the word ἀρχή, which is often translated as 'beginning'. Matthew 19:4; 24:8; Mark 1:1; 13:8; Luke 1:2; John 1:1; 15:27 and Acts 11:15 all render ἀρχή as 'beginning' in a temporal sense. In Hebrews 2:3; 3:14; John 2:11; 8:25; and Colossians 1:18, ἀρχή is translated as 'first' in order or ranking. Many translations portray the ἀρχῆς of Hebrews 5:12 and 6:1 as 'basic or elementary principles' but here too, ἀρχῆς should have been translated as 'beginning.'<sup>62</sup> In Revelation 3:14, Jesus is described as the ἀρχή or beginning of the creation of God. However, several passages show translations which attribute different meanings to ἀρχή, such as 'corners' in Acts 10:11, or as 'rule or ruler' in Luke 12:11; 20:20; Romans 8:38; 1 Corinthians 15:24; Colossians 2:10 and Titus 3:1.

In the New Testament, 'firstborn' is seen in the plural but always in the singular when applied to Jesus.<sup>63</sup> Most Christian scholars agree that, although it is true that the term can refer to a temporal order of events, Jesus as firstborn means that he is supreme and sovereign over all creation. The idea of sovereign election is reinforced in Colossians 1:18 which reads, "he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything." This verse finds resonance in Psalms 89:27, where God, speaking of David, states "I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth." Here, God adopts and appoints David as his firstborn, assigning him a place of honor and sovereignty. Since

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<sup>61</sup> See Appendix 7 for a list of all occurrences of 'only-begotten.'

<sup>62</sup> Michael Goulder, 'Hebrews and the Ebionites.' *NTS* 49.3 (July 2003), 400.

<sup>63</sup> O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 44

this verse has been traditionally seen as pointing to the Messiah,<sup>64</sup> many have proposed that ‘firstborn’ in Colossians 1 refers to Jesus as the pre-eminent ruler of the creation of God.<sup>65</sup> However, the disagreement is not about Jesus as sovereign over the created universe but rather whether he himself is a created being (as part of creation) or the uncreated Creator (and excluded from creation).

### 1.3 Extra-Canonical Understanding of ‘Firstborn’

References to the Logos, or the Word, as firstborn are also found in extra-biblical writings. Philo of Alexandria, a Jewish Philosopher (20 BCE-50 CE), often used the term πρωτότοκος when discussing firstborns in the Hebrew Bible, as when discussing Cain, but interestingly, he never uses this term for the Logos, whom he describes instead as πρωτόλογος.<sup>66</sup> Philo taught that man had been created by the First Cause, in the image of the Eternal Word.<sup>67</sup>

In the *Prayer of Joseph*, a 1<sup>st</sup> century CE pseudepigraphic writing, we read: “I, Jacob, who speak to you, and Israel, I am an angel of God, a ruling spirit,... called Jacob by men, but my name is Israel, called Israel by God, a man seeing God, because I am the first-born of every creature which God caused to live... I am Israel and archangel of the power of the Lord and a chief captain among the sons of God.”<sup>68</sup> Interesting parallels are seen in this passage. This speaker claims to be the firstborn and describes himself as Jacob or Israel, as a

<sup>64</sup> O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 44; N. T. Wright, *Colossians and Philemon* (Leicester, England: Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, 1989), 75.

<sup>65</sup> Arthur Patzia, *Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon*. New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1990), 29; Vernon, J. McGee, *Philippians and Colossians*. Thru the Bible Commentary Series. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991), 129; Wright, *Colossians and Philemon*, 75.

<sup>66</sup> See *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Edited by Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey William Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich (Stuttgart, Germany: Eerdmans Publishing, 1995), 875.

<sup>67</sup> Philo, *On the Creation*, XLVIII (Loeb Edition), 110-111.

<sup>68</sup> Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel of John* - Book II.

ruling spirit, an archangel and one of the sons of God, but one who, as a chief captain, has a position of authority over the other sons of God.

#### 1.4 The 'Firstborn' in the Early Church

The early Church Fathers wrote extensively about their understanding of the Son of God as the Word and his role in creation. At the end of the third century, much had been discussed about the person of Jesus and many theories had already been formulated about the relationship between the Father and the Son. One such writer, Justin Martyr (103-165 CE) understood the Logos as being separate from and subordinate to God, and wrote that "He existed formerly as Son of the Maker of all things."<sup>69</sup> In Chapter LXI entitled *Wisdom is Begotten of the Father, as Fire from Fire* in *Dialogue with Trypho*, he adds: "God begat before all creatures a Beginning, [who was] a certain rational power [proceeding] from Himself, who is called by the Holy Spirit, now the Glory of the Lord, now the Son, again Wisdom, again an Angel, then God, and then Lord and Logos." He equates the Word or the Logos to Wisdom as spoken by Solomon: "But this Offspring, which was truly brought forth from the Father, was with the Father before all the creatures, and the Father communed with Him; even as the Scripture by Solomon has made clear, that He whom Solomon calls Wisdom, was begotten as a Beginning before all His creatures."

Later, Clement of Alexandria (182-202 CE), explained that "the unoriginated Being is one, the Omnipotent God; one, too, is the First-begotten, by whom all things were made, and without whom not one thing ever was made. [...] For one, in truth, is God, who formed the

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<sup>69</sup> Justin Martyr. *Dialogue with Trypho* (Roberts-Donaldson Translation) Chapter XVIII – "Before The Divinity Of Christ Is Proved, He [Trypho] Demands That It Be Settled That He Is Christ."

beginning of all things.”<sup>70</sup> Clement added: “He was the Wisdom ‘in which’ the Sovereign God ‘delighted.’ For the Son is the power of God, as being the Father’s most ancient Word before the production of all things, and His Wisdom. He is then properly called the Teacher of the beings formed by Him.” In *Stromata*, Book VII – Chapter II on *The Son, The Ruler And Saviour Of All*, he adds that “He, the Son, is, by the will of the Almighty Father, the cause of all good things, being the first efficient cause of motion.”<sup>71</sup>

Tertullian (c. 160-220 CE) in *Against Hermogenes*, explained: “because God is in like manner a Father, and He is also a Judge; but He has not always been Father and Judge, merely on the ground of His having always been God. For He could not have been the Father previous to the Son, nor a Judge previous to sin. There was, however, a time when neither sin existed with Him, nor the Son.”<sup>72</sup>

In his *Commentary on John*, Origen (c. 185-c.253 CE) explained:

“The meaning of the term ‘beginning,’ as of origin, will serve us also in the passage in which Wisdom speaks in the Proverbs. ‘God,’ we read, ‘created me the beginning of His ways, for His works.’ Here the term could be interpreted as in the first application we spoke of, that of a way: ‘The Lord,’ it says, ‘created me the beginning of His ways.’ One might assert, and with reason, that God Himself is the beginning of all things, and might go on to say, as is plain, that the Father is the beginning of the Son; and the demiurge the beginning of the works of the demiurge, and that God in a word is the beginning of all that exists.”<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, Book VI - Chapter VII – “What True Philosophy Is, And Whence So Called.” Peter Kirby, *Early Christian Writings*, 2011. [cited February 22, 2011]. Online: <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/>.

<sup>71</sup> Clement, *Stromata*, Book VII – Chapter II on “The Son, The Ruler And Saviour Of All.”

<sup>72</sup> Tertullian, *Against Hermogenes*, Chapter III. “An Argument Of Hermogenes. The Answer: While God Is A Title Eternally Applicable To The Divine Being, Lord And Father Are Only Relative Appellations, Not Eternally Applicable. An Inconsistency In The Argument Of Hermogenes Pointed Out.” (Translated by Dr. Holmes). Kirby, *Early Christian Writings*.

<sup>73</sup> Origen. *Commentary on John*. Book 1. Chapter 17. “In Time, In The Beginning of Creation.” Roberts-Donaldson English Translation. Kirby, *Early Christian Writings*.



Origen seems to imply that God is the beginning, or author, of all things just as the demiurge is the author of all his own works. In Book II of the same commentary, he commented on the Epistle to the Hebrews:

“God made the ages through His Son, the ‘through whom’ belonging, when the ages were being made, to the Only-begotten. Thus, if all things were made, as in this passage also, through the Logos, then they were not made by the Logos, but by a stronger and greater than He. And who else could this be but the Father?”<sup>74</sup>

Origen here specifies that since all things were made through the Logos, the ultimate author of all things is not the Son, or Logos, but the Father himself. However, Origen believed that the Son was nevertheless divine on account of his eternal generation.<sup>75</sup> By this, he meant that the Father always continually begets the Son.<sup>76</sup> Some claim that the Ebionites and Lucian of Antioch<sup>77</sup> held similar beliefs.

Paul of Samosata (200 to 275 CE), a Patriarch of Antioch, undertook to explain the nature of Christ and concluded that the latter was a created being, implying that Jesus was therefore less than fully divine.<sup>78</sup> At that time, this was understood as an attack against the foundation of the faith and therefore created quite a controversy, which would last vigorously until the end of the 4th century.

Alexander, an early 4th century bishop of Alexandria, professed that the Word was not a creation but could be described as a ὑπόστασις (person)<sup>79</sup> or οὐσία (nature), distinguishable from that of the Father, and who served as mediator between God and His

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<sup>74</sup> Origen, *Commentary on John*, Book 2, Chapter 6.

<sup>75</sup> S. G. Hall, *Doctrine and Practice in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 105.

<sup>76</sup> B. M. Litfin, *Getting to Know the Church Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2008), 176.

<sup>77</sup> J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (Peabody, Mass.: Prince Press, 2007), 230; M. Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy: Arianism Through the Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 7-8.

<sup>78</sup> Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 118.

<sup>79</sup> For an in-depth discussion on the concept of divine persons, defined as ‘an indivisible, unique and therefore non-replicable unity in human existence,’ refer to L. Turcescu, *Gregory of Nyssa and the Concept of Divine Persons*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 7.

creation.<sup>80</sup> Although he affirmed that the Father alone was unoriginate, the Son was co-eternal with the Father as the latter could never exist “without His Word, His Wisdom, His Power, His image.”<sup>81</sup>

In opposition to Alexander, Arius (ca.250-336), a Christian priest from Alexandria, Egypt, and a Samosatene, taught that the unbegotten Father had always existed, but that the only-begotten Son, born before the beginning of time,<sup>82</sup> was the instrument of creation. Therefore, the Father was the one and only true God. However, he also added that although the Son is not unbegotten, he existed before the ages as a divine being and that before he was begotten, he did not exist.<sup>83</sup> The distinction between the Father and the Son was partly founded on 1 Corinthians 8:5-6 which reads that “Indeed, even though there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as in fact there are many gods and many lords—yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.”<sup>84</sup> The Son’s subordination<sup>85</sup> to the Father found support in John 14:28: “If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I,” whereas the unity of the Father and the Son was explained by means of John 17:22, which reads, “The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one.” Other passages which were used to support the Son as a creature were: Proverbs 8:22 (the Lord created me), Acts 2:36 (God has made Him Lord and Christ), Romans 8:29 (first-born among

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<sup>43</sup> Wiles, *Arianism*, 100,105; Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 224.

<sup>81</sup> Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 224.

<sup>82</sup> Wiles, *Arianism*, 7.

<sup>83</sup> E. Peters, *Heresy and Authority in Medieval Europe: Documents in Translation* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1980), 41.

<sup>84</sup> H. G. May and B. Metzger, eds. *New Oxford Annotated Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). R. Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 98-116; *Fourth Century Christianity*, Wisconsin Lutheran College. [cited 19 November 2009]. Online: <http://www.fourthcentury.com/index.php/arius-thalia-intro>; Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 230; Hall, *Practice in the Early*, 105.

<sup>85</sup> Litfin, *Church Fathers*, 175.

many), Colossians 1:15 (first-born of all creation), and Hebrew 3:2 (was faithful to Him who made him).

In Arius' letter to Thalia, which contains an important source of information about his teachings,<sup>86</sup> we read that God has no equal and is unbegotten, but that the Son in contrast is by nature begotten, has a beginning, and who in time has come to exist. He taught that "He who is without beginning made the Son a beginning of created things." He added that the Son is not equal to the Father and that, although the Son did not exist, the Father was still God."<sup>87</sup>

In 321, Arius' views were denounced, and in spite of his exile, the controversy did not end. In 325, Emperor Constantine, in an attempt to unify the Christian community, convened the First Council of Nicaea where Athanasius of Alexandria argued against the Arian doctrines and explained that belief in Christ would be meaningless if he was not God. Arian teachings were again condemned<sup>88</sup> and what is commonly known as the Nicene Creed thus expressed the Son's relationship to the Father as "begotten from the Father, only-begotten, that is, from the substance of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, through Whom all things came into being ..."<sup>89</sup>

However, the Arian controversy on the nature of Christ did not end since even after the Council of Nicaea, at the First Synod of Tyre in 335, Athanasius had been relegated to the position of heretic and banished.<sup>90</sup> At the Synod of Jerusalem of 336, Arius was reinstated to the Christian community. Even after the death of Constantine in 337, his own son,

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<sup>86</sup> Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 227.

<sup>87</sup> Williams, *Arius*, 98-116.

<sup>88</sup> Litfin, *Church Fathers*, 177.

<sup>89</sup> Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 215.

<sup>90</sup> Litfin, *Church Fathers*, 179.

Constantius II, with the support of Eusebius of Nicomedia, actually strived to reverse the Nicene Creed in favor of the Arian position.<sup>91</sup> Three different positions eventually surfaced.<sup>92</sup> One group rejected Arius' teachings and accepted that the Son was equal and co-eternal with the Father, but claimed that he was ὁμοιούσιος (alike in substance) rather than ὁμοούσιος (of the same nature). Another group compromised by describing the Son as being ὅμοιος (like) the Father, whereas a third group followed Arius' footsteps and claimed that the Son was ἀνόμοιος (unlike) the Father. Several synods continued to argue these distinctions in terminology, such as the Council of Sardica (343), the Council of Sirmium (357-8),<sup>93</sup> and the double Council of Rimini and Seleucia (359). Following Constantius' death (361), his successor, Julian, decided not to take sides and further contributed to the debate and dissention. Emperor Valens then made an about-turn and reinstated Constantius' policy, resulting in more exiles and persecutions.

Only at the Council of Chalcedon, in 451, was the 'Chalcedonian Definition'<sup>94</sup> enunciated in which the nature of Jesus Christ was finally defined in the manner in which most orthodox communities now profess it. Hardy and Richardson express it as the Lord Jesus Christ who is "begotten before ages of the Father in Godhead, [...] the same Son and only-begotten God, Word, Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Litfin, *Church Fathers*, 179.

<sup>92</sup> Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 249-51.

<sup>93</sup> Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 238.

<sup>94</sup> The Chalcedonian Definition, also referred to as the 'Doctrine of the Hypostatic Union' or the 'Two-Nature Doctrine,' defined that the Son has two natures in one person and hypostasis, while he is fully man and fully divine.

<sup>95</sup> Hardy, *Christology*, 373.

### 1.5 The 'Firstborn' as the Wisdom of God

The Logos as the wisdom of God was also the subject of much attention in the early church. Among all the previously quoted verses, Proverbs 8:22 and 25 stand out as the most often debated in the context of Jesus' position as firstborn because it closely links the personification of wisdom of the Hebrew Bible to the incarnate Son of God of the New Testament. Evidence of this can be found in Qumran<sup>96</sup> texts, in the Church Fathers,<sup>97</sup> and in Tatian's Diatesseron. Scriptural support can also be found in 1 Corinthians 1:24 and 30, where Paul equates Jesus with the wisdom of God, and more importantly, in Matthew 11:19; 12:42; and 23:34 (cf. Luke 11:49) where Jesus makes the same allusion to himself. Because Proverbs 8:22 has commonly been translated as "The Lord created me at the beginning of his work," many have been led to interpret that Jesus is the first created being and that all creation, except for him, has been created through him.

As seen in the previous section, this controversy, which started soon after the death of the apostles, eventually culminated in the formulation of the creeds at the Councils of Nicaea and Chalcedon where Jesus was declared as part of the Holy Trinity, co-equal with God the Father and co-eternal, and as such, begotten of the Father but un-created.

Since much of the controversy hinges on the term 'firstborn' as applied to the Son, and because context must be considered when interpreting any biblical passage, the next chapter will focus on the context of the term 'firstborn' as found in the letter to the Colossians. Considering the known variants, I will first translate the Greek into English. I will then synthesize the exegetical findings and opinions of reputable scholars to later compare these to the doctrinal positions of Stafford, Furuli and the Watchtower.

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<sup>96</sup> See Sirach 24:3, 9.

<sup>97</sup> As in Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho*, Clement's *Stromata* and Tertullian's *Against Hermogenes*.

CHAPTER 2:  
COLOSSIANS 1:15-20 – TEXTUAL CRITICAL ANALYSIS

2.1 *Greek text and known variants*

ΠΡΟΣ ΚΟΛΟΣΣΑΕΙΣ 1:1-20

<sup>1</sup>Παῦλος ἀπόστολος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ διὰ θελήματος θεοῦ καὶ Τιμόθεος ὁ ἀδελφὸς <sup>2</sup>τοῖς ἐν Κολοσσαῖς ἀγίοις καὶ πιστοῖς ἀδελφοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ, χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν.

<sup>3</sup>Εὐχαριστοῦμεν τῷ θεῷ πατρὶ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ πάντοτε περὶ ὑμῶν προσευχόμενοι, <sup>4</sup>ἀκούσαντες τὴν πίστιν ὑμῶν ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ καὶ τὴν ἀγάπην ἣν ἔχετε εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἀγίους <sup>5</sup>διὰ τὴν ἐλπίδα τὴν ἀποκειμένην ὑμῖν ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς, ἣν προηκούσατε ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τῆς ἀληθείας τοῦ εὐαγγελίου <sup>6</sup>τοῦ παρόντος εἰς ὑμᾶς, καθὼς καὶ ἐν παντὶ τῷ κόσμῳ ἐστὶν καρποφορούμενον καὶ αὐξανόμενον καθὼς καὶ ἐν ὑμῖν, ἀφ' ἧς ἡμέρας ἠκούσατε καὶ ἐπέγνωτε τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ· <sup>7</sup>καθὼς ἐμάθετε ἀπὸ Ἐπαφρᾶ τοῦ ἀγαπητοῦ συνδούλου ἡμῶν, ὅς ἐστιν πιστὸς ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν διάκονος τοῦ Χριστοῦ, <sup>8</sup>ὁ καὶ δηλώσας ἡμῖν τὴν ὑμῶν ἀγάπην ἐν πνεύματι.

<sup>9</sup>Διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἡμεῖς, ἀφ' ἧς ἡμέρας ἠκούσαμεν, οὐ παυόμεθα ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν προσευχόμενοι καὶ αἰτούμενοι, ἵνα πληρωθῇτε τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ καὶ συνέσει πνευματικῇ, <sup>10</sup>περιπατῆσαι ἀξίως τοῦ κυρίου εἰς πᾶσαν ἀρεσκείαν, ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ ἀγαθῷ καρποφοροῦντες καὶ αὐξανόμενοι τῇ ἐπιγνώσει τοῦ θεοῦ, <sup>11</sup>ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει δυναμούμενοι κατὰ τὸ κράτος τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ εἰς πᾶσαν ὑπομονὴν καὶ μακροθυμίαν.

Μετὰ χαρᾶς <sup>12</sup>εὐχαριστοῦντες τῷ πατρὶ τῷ ἱκανώσαντι ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν μερίδα τοῦ κλήρου τῶν ἀγίων ἐν τῷ φωτί· <sup>13</sup>ὃς ἐρρύσατο ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ σκοτοῦ καὶ μετέστησεν εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ, <sup>14</sup>ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν, τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν·

<sup>15</sup>ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου,

πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως,

<sup>16</sup>ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα<sup>98</sup>

ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ<sup>99</sup> ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς,

<sup>98</sup> According to NA27, τὰ has been inserted to read as τὰ πάντα, τὰ in the following manuscripts: 8<sup>2</sup>A (C) D<sup>2</sup> 075. 1881 38 vg<sup>mss</sup>; Eus Lcf *et*.

τὰ ὁρατὰ καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα,  
εἴτε θρόνοι εἴτε κυριότητες  
εἴτε ἀρχαὶ εἴτε ἐξουσίαι·  
τὰ<sup>100</sup> πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἔκτισται·  
<sup>17</sup>καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν πρὸ πάντων  
καὶ τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν,  
<sup>18</sup>καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ σώματος, τῆς ἐκκλησίας·  
ὃς ἐστιν<sup>101</sup> ἀρχή,  
πρωτότοκος ἐκ<sup>102</sup> τῶν νεκρῶν,  
ἵνα γένηται ἐν παῶν αὐτὸς πρωτεύων,  
<sup>19</sup>ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ εὐδόκησεν πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα κατοικῆσαι<sup>103</sup>  
<sup>20</sup>καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ ἀποκαταλλάξαι τὰ πάντα εἰς αὐτόν<sup>104</sup>,  
εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ,  
[δι' αὐτοῦ]<sup>105</sup> εἴτε τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς  
εἴτε τὰ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.

## 2.2 English translation

### COLOSSIANS 1:1-20

<sup>1</sup>Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ through God's will, and the brother Timothy, <sup>2</sup>to the saints in Colossae, and to [the] faithful brothers in Christ:<sup>106</sup> Grace [be] to you, and peace from God our Father.

<sup>3</sup>We give thanks to God, [the] Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, always praying about you, <sup>4</sup>having heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have toward all the holy ones, <sup>5</sup>because of the hope reserved for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth of the gospel <sup>6</sup>which is present among you, just as it is also in all the world, bearing fruit and increasing, just as [it has been] in you also since the day you heard [of it] and understood the grace of God in truth; <sup>7</sup>just as you learned from Epaphras, our beloved fellow

<sup>99</sup> The above reading is attested to in P<sup>46</sup> ⲛ\* B Ψ 6. 33. 1739. 1881 *pc* lat, whereas τα has been inserted in ⲛ<sup>2</sup> A C D F G 075 M vg<sup>ms</sup>, Eus Lcf.

<sup>100</sup> The τα has been replaced by ὅτι in P<sup>46</sup>.

<sup>101</sup> The article η has been inserted in P<sup>46</sup> B 075. 0278. 6. 104. 1175. 1739. 1881 *pc*.

<sup>102</sup> ἐκ has been omitted in P<sup>46</sup> ⲛ\*; I<sup>lat pt</sup>.

<sup>103</sup> Venema suggested a conjectural emendation, replacing -κησαι by -κισαί.

<sup>104</sup> Metzger's *Textual Commentary on the NT* states that J. J. Griesbach, J. M. A. Scholz and C. F. D. Moule prefer the reading of αὐτόν.

<sup>105</sup> [δὲ αὐτοῦ] is present in P<sup>46</sup> ⲛ A C D<sup>1</sup> Ψ 048<sup>vid</sup>. 33 M sy bo; Hil but is omitted in B D\* F G I L 075. 0278. 81. 104. 1175. 1241<sup>s</sup>. 1739. 1881. 2464 *al* latt sa; Or.

<sup>106</sup> Or 'to the holy and faithful brothers in Christ in Colossae:'.

slave, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your<sup>107</sup> behalf, <sup>8</sup>[who] also informed us of your love in [the] Spirit.

<sup>9</sup>On account of this also, since the day we heard [of it], we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled [with] the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,<sup>108</sup> <sup>10</sup>[so that you may] walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, desiring to please [Him] in every good deed, bearing fruit and increasing in the knowledge of God, <sup>11</sup>in all power, being strengthened for all steadfastness and patience, according to the power of His glory.

With joy <sup>12</sup>giving thanks<sup>109</sup> to the Father, who has qualified<sup>110</sup> you<sup>111</sup> to share in the inheritance of the saints in [the] light, <sup>13</sup>[and] who rescued us from the power of the darkness and brought [us] into the kingdom of the Son of his love,<sup>112</sup> <sup>14</sup>in whom we have the redemption, the remission of sins;<sup>113</sup>

<sup>15</sup>[He]<sup>114</sup> is a likeness of the invisible God,  
firstborn of all creation,  
<sup>16</sup>so that by<sup>115</sup> Him all things were created,  
in the heavens and on earth,  
visible and invisible,  
whether thrones or lordships,  
or rulers or authorities;  
all things were created through Him and in Him;  
<sup>17</sup>he<sup>116</sup> is before all [things]  
and in<sup>117</sup> him all [things] hold together.  
<sup>18</sup>He<sup>118</sup> is the head of the body, the church;  
[He]<sup>119</sup> is the beginning,  
the first-born from the dead,  
so that He Himself might come to have first place in all things.  
<sup>19</sup>For He is well pleased [for] all the fullness to dwell in him  
<sup>20</sup>and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself,  
having made peace through the blood of His cross,  
through Him, whether [things] on earth  
or [things] in heaven.

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<sup>107</sup> NOAB states that "other ancient authorities read *our*", NT-335.

<sup>108</sup> Or 'in all wisdom and spiritual discernment'.

<sup>109</sup> Or 'We joyfully give thanks'.

<sup>110</sup> NOAB translates *ικανώσαντι* as 'enabled' but states that "other ancient authorities read *called*", NT-335.

<sup>111</sup> NOAB states that "other ancient authorities read *us*", NT-335.

<sup>112</sup> Or 'his beloved Son'.

<sup>113</sup> NOAB states that "other ancient authorities add *through his blood*", NT-335.

<sup>114</sup> Although 'who' represents the literal translation of the Greek, it has been replaced by 'he' to allow for a more polished English translation.

<sup>115</sup> NOAB translates *ἐν* as 'in' but offers that this can read as 'by', NT-335.

<sup>116</sup> The word 'and' is present in the Greek but has been omitted for a more polished English translation.

<sup>117</sup> Or 'by'.

<sup>118</sup> The word 'and' is present in the Greek but has been omitted for a more polished English translation.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.



### 2.3 Exegesis of Colossians 1:15-20

#### AUTHORSHIP AND ORIGIN

The authorship of Colossians has also been a subject of debate since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>120</sup> because its style, theology and vocabulary, seems inconsistent with the rest of the Pauline corpus.<sup>121</sup> Some believe that it was written by one of Paul's disciples, one who was well familiar with Paul's teachings.<sup>122</sup> However, the letter itself attests to the author as Paul (1:1 and 4:18) and since Marcion (c. 150 CE) and Irenaeus (c. 190 CE), among others,<sup>123</sup> spoke of it as being of Paul, there seems to be no real evidence that it ever circulated under anyone else's name. Furthermore, this letter was also included in the Chester Beatty codex<sup>46</sup> (or commonly referred to as P<sup>46</sup>), a codex which consisted of Pauline Epistles dating from c. 200 CE.<sup>124</sup> Some propose that the ideas of Christ as Creator and as the fullness of God are too advanced theologically compared to the rest of the Pauline corpus. However, similarity can be found in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians (one of the undisputed letters of Paul) where he writes that "and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him."<sup>125</sup> Therefore, in spite of the lack of unanimity, some scholars continue to advocate in support of the support the authenticity of the authorship of Paul.<sup>126</sup> Nevertheless, this conclusion does

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<sup>120</sup> E. T. Mayerhoff rejected Paul is the author of this letter due to what he called 'non-Pauline' ideas. Others, such as Baur followed suit ascribing the 'heresy' mentioned in the letter to a later date (New Jerome Biblical Commentary).

<sup>121</sup> See O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 40-42, and Patzia, *Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon*, 8-10 for a list of arguments.

<sup>122</sup> Murray J. Harris, *Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament, Colossians & Philemon* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2010), 3.

<sup>123</sup> O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, xli, lists Irenaeus, *Adv Her* 3.14.1; Tertullian, *De Praescr Haer* 7; Clement of Alexandria, *Stom* 1.1; Justin, *Dialogue* 85.2; 138.2, as well as Marcion and the Muratorian canon.

<sup>124</sup> For more information on P<sup>46</sup> see: <http://www.cbl.ie/getdoc/c6212daf-30bd-4c1a-9e85-2b09839d39d0/1.aspx>.

<sup>125</sup> 1 Corinthians 8:6.

<sup>126</sup> O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, xlix, xli-xlii, 42 and Patzia, *Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon*, 7. See also F. L. Cross, ed., "Epistle to the Colossians" *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); as well as L. Helyer, "Col. 1:15-20: Pre-Pauline or Pauline?" *JETS* 26 (1983), 167-180 and "Cosmic Christology and Col. 1:15-20," *JETS* 37 (1994), 235.

not find unanimity and is generally referred to as a 'deutero-Pauline Epistle.' Because of this lack of academic consensus, I will refer to this letter as 'Pauline' hereafter.

Although some scholars claimed that this letter was likely written in Ephesus because of its proximity to Colossae, or in Caesarea because of various people mentioned had affiliations or had been present in Caesarea, most scholars believe that if Paul is the author, then this letter would belong in the category of his 'captivity epistles' and would have been written in Rome around 60-61 CE.<sup>127</sup>

Over time, various scholars have suggested that the hymn originated from various pre-Pauline sources. The following are some theories<sup>128</sup> which have been proposed:

- 1) From a pre-Christian Gnostic text as proposed, first by Bultmann, then by Käsemann, but O'Brien does not agree with this hypothesis because the notion that a redeemer being incarnated as a man coming to earth in order to reconcile God and mankind is distinctively Christian.
- 2) From Rabbinic Judaism as proposed by Burney and Davies because of the similarities to the Hebrew Bible Genesis creation account and Proverbs 8:22. Although these are legitimate observations, the church at Colossae was likely mostly Gentile, and therefore, the rabbinic influences would have not been prominent.
- 3) From Hellenistic Judaism, as suggested by Schweizer, who claimed that the Gentile Christians in Colossae were influenced by the Jewish Dispersion who attributed to the Wisdom of God a central place, but here it was attributed to the incarnate Son, whom Paul had met personally. Furthermore, contrary to this hymn, there is no evidence of Christ being the goal of creation in any Jewish material.

Therefore, not only O'Brien, but also Balchin and Helyer<sup>129</sup> conclude that the hymn is Paul's on the basis that the theology found in this hymn agrees with that of uncontested Pauline writings.

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<sup>127</sup> See Patzia's arguments in *Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon*, 10-12 and O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, xlix-liv.

<sup>128</sup> O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 38-40. He refers to E. Käsemann, *Essays on New Testament Themes* (London: SCM, 1964), 155-159.; Burney, *JTS* 27 (1926), 160-77; W.D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism. Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (London: SPCK, 1955), 150-52; and E. Schweizer, "Die Kirche als Lieb Christi in den paulinischen Antilegomena," *Neotestamentica* (ed. Schweizer; Zürich: Zwingli, 1963) 293-316; "Lord of the Nations," *Southeast Asia Journal of Theology* 13 (1972), 13-21; "Christ in the Letter to the Colossians," *RevExp* 70 (1973), 451-467; "Col. 1:15-20," *RevExp* 87 (1990), 98-99. Refer also to R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (New York: Scribner's, 1951), 176.

## PURPOSE OF THE LETTER

In his prelude to the hymn of verses 15-20, the author mentions “Epaphras, our fellow bond-servant” who likely had visited Paul out of concern for the false teachings that were threatening the church at Colossae.<sup>130</sup> Later in this letter we can see that the author was aware that this was the case since in verse 2:4 we read, “I say this in order that no one may delude you with persuasive argument.”

Although the author of Colossians never clearly states explicitly what was threatening the recipients of his letter, many scholars claim that the church in Colossae<sup>131</sup> was struggling with false teachings<sup>132</sup> which were undermining the faith of its members. According to Patzia, there were influences from astrology, from Hellenistic Judaism, and from a variety of ‘mystery religions’ which promoted secret teachings and activities.<sup>133</sup> In studying the text itself and from historical information, scholars have proposed that the Colossian heresy<sup>134</sup> detracted from the finished work of Christ by requiring asceticism (2:20-23) or religious works, promoted a Greek form of dualism where matter was evil and spirit alone was good, promoted a syncretic Judaism (2:8-16 and 3:11) mingled with mysticism, along with a worship of angels (2:18), as well as claiming that a few elect had superior and special knowledge (2:4-8). Patzia suggests that “one of the dangers of false teaching in any congregation is that it thwarts God’s plan of inclusivism” because some make themselves to

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<sup>129</sup> Helyer, *Colossians 1:15-20*, 179; J. F. Balchin, “Colossians 1:15-20: An Early Christian Hymn? The Arguments from Style,” *Vox Evangelica* 15 (1985): 65-94.

<sup>130</sup> O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, xxx.

<sup>131</sup> An ancient city in Phrygia, in Asia Minor, about 20km South East of Laodicea and near the road leading from Ephesus to Euphrates, and now near Honaz in Turkey. Patzia explains that although this had once been a large and wealthy city, by the time Paul wrote this letter, it was no longer due to an earthquake in 61 CE which decimated it, and it had not been rebuilt. Patzia, *Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon*, 3.

<sup>132</sup> O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, xxx-xxxviii; Patzia, *Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon*, 4-7.

<sup>133</sup> Patzia, *Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon*, 4-7.

<sup>134</sup> For an in-depth discussion of the Colossian heresy, see O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, xxx-xxxviii.

be a spiritually elect class of believers due to their special revelations, wisdom or legalism.<sup>135</sup> However, the author of Colossians stresses that there are no class distinctions among believers, regardless of whether they are Jewish or Gentile or whether they are slaves or free.<sup>136</sup>

Therefore, the author wrote to the Colossian believers in response to Epaphras' concerns, to warn them of this theological distortion and to prevent them from returning to old superstitions and beliefs (2:16-17), and therefore encourage them with a sound Christology.<sup>137</sup>

#### BOUNDARIES OF THE CHOSEN TEXT

Although the text quoted above, both in the original Greek and in the English translation, covers the first 20 verses of Colossians, the pericope I have chosen to serve as the focus for this analysis was limited to verses 15 to 20 due to the historical scholarly opinion that this consists of a pre-Pauline hymn, a Greek poetic form of writing, inserted by the author.<sup>138</sup> The author used this hymn to answer the Colossian heresy and to emphasize the cosmic and ecclesiastic pre-eminence of Christ.<sup>139</sup>

#### LITERARY CONTEXT

As mentioned above, verses 15-20 are consistently considered a hymn inserted to emphasise the Son's pre-eminence, scholars do not agree on their organization of the content

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<sup>135</sup> Patzia, *Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon*, 8.

<sup>136</sup> Colossians 3:11.

<sup>137</sup> Patzia, *Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon*, 10; O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, xxx.

<sup>138</sup> O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 32; Patzia, *Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon*, 28.

<sup>139</sup> Patzia, *Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon*, 7.

of the Colossian letter as a whole. In his introduction to the letter of Colossians, O'Brien<sup>140</sup> structured the content as follows:

VERSES	SUMMARY OF CONTENT
1:1-2	Introductory greeting
1:3-8	Thanksgiving: faith-love-hope and the Gospel
1:9-14	An intercession for knowledge and godly conduct
1:15-20	Christ the Lord in creation and redemption
1:21-23	Reconciliation accomplished and applied
1:24-2:5	Paul's mission and pastoral concern
2:6-15	The antidote to error: Christ in all his fullness
2:16-23	Freedom from legalism
3:1-4	See the things above
3:5-11	Put away the sins of the past
3:12-17	Put on the graces of Christ
3:18-4:1	Behaviour in the Christian household
4:2-6	Final admonitions; persistence in prayer and right behaviour toward outsiders
4:7-18	Personal Greetings and instructions

**Figure 1 – O'Brien's divisions of Colossians**

On the other hand, Harris<sup>141</sup> distributes the content into 5 parts, which mirror O'Brien's for the first chapter, but differs thereafter:

<sup>140</sup> O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, liv.

<sup>141</sup> Harris, *Guide to NT*, 5.

DIVISIONS		SUBJECT	VERSES
I		Introduction	1:1-14
	A	Introductory greeting	1:1-2
	B	Paul's Thanksgiving for the Colossians	1:3-8
	C	Paul's Intercession for the Colossians	1:9-14
II		Christ's Work and Paul's Mission	1:15-2:3
	A	The Supremacy of Christ in Creation and Redemption	1:15-20
	B	Reconciliation and the Colossians	1:21-23
	C	Paul's Stewardship of God's Mystery	1:24-29
	D	Paul's Spiritual Struggle	2:1-3
III		Error and Its Remedy	2:4-3:4
	A	Warning against Specious Philosophy	2:4-8
	B	Christ, the Remedy against Error	2:9-15
	C	Warning against Mystical Legalism	2:16-19
	D	Consequences of Death with Christ	2:20-23
	E	Consequences of Resurrection with Christ	3:1-4
IV		Exhortation to Holiness	3:5-4:6
	A	"Putting Off" Vices	3:5-11
	B	"Putting On" Virtues	3:12-17
	C	Household Relationships	3:18-4:1
	D	Prayer and Witness	4:2-6
V		Personal Notes	4:7-18
	A	Paul's Two Representatives	4:7-9
	B	Greetings and Final Instructions	4:10-18

**Figure2 – Harris' divisions of Colossians**

The Pauline writer starts his letter in his customary manner, namely by stating the author and the recipients within his greeting. After opening with thanksgiving for their readers' faith

and love, he follows with between an intercessory prayer in which he pleads that his readers may discern God's will and that they may be obedient to it.<sup>142</sup> This can only be achieved by correct understanding, which serves to introduce his main concerns to be discerning of the true Gospel rather than the errors being disseminated among them.

The hymn pericope, the focus of this thesis, begins by using descriptions of Jesus reminiscent of the personification of Wisdom in the Hebrew Bible and Judaism.<sup>143</sup> He speaks of the Son, being the image of the invisible God (verse 15a), who has visibly revealed him in his incarnation, and who is supreme and Lord over all creation. However, Colossian's Christ is different from the Wisdom of the Hebrew Bible because he is not only the originator ('in him' - verse 16a) of creation, the agent ('through him' - verse 16b) of creation, but he is also the ultimate goal ('for him' - verse 16b) of creation. The Son is the antecedent of creation ('before all things' - verse 17a), and the sustainer of creation ('hold together' - verse 17b). The hymn adds that not only is he supreme<sup>144</sup> over creation but he also has primacy in resurrection, and hence has preeminence ('in all things' - verse 18b) in the original creation, the new creation, the church, and hence in all things.

The text following the hymn reiterates what the hymn brought forth but then focusses on the practical application for its readers. The author thereafter alludes to the theological and pastoral issues that had surfaced in their community, exposing false teachings and

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<sup>142</sup> See also F.W. Beare, *The Epistle to the Colossians*. IB (New York: Abingdon, 1955) 158; J. D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans and Carlisle, England: Paternoster Press, 1996), 69; S. L. Johnson, "Studies in the Epistle to the Colossians" *BSac* 472 (October-December 1961), 344 and 474 (April-June 1962), 136-8; C. Vaughan, "Colossians." In *Ephesians-Philemon*. Vol. 11, *ExpBC*, Edited by Frank E. Gaebelin and J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 177; W. W. Wiersbe, *BEC* vol. 2 (Wheaton: Scripture Press, 1989), 110.

<sup>143</sup> O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 61.

<sup>144</sup> F.F Bruce, "Colossian Problems." *BSac* 562 (April-June 1984), 101-4 and 564 (October-December 1984), 299; Dunn, *Colossians and Philemon-Commentary*, 92; J. Eadie, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Colossians*. CCL, (reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1957), 56; Johnson, *Studies in Colossians*, 473 (January-March 1962), 15; C. F. D. Moule, *An Idiom-Book of New Testament Greek*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: University Press, 1963), 74. Vaughan, *Ephesians-Philemon*, 182; Wiersbe, *BEC*, 2:116.

reminding them of who they were as chosen people set apart for Christ. He ends in practical admonitions, closing with final greetings and instructions.

#### STRUCTURE

As mentioned above, this pericope is believed to be a hymn due to its rhythmic style,<sup>145</sup> extensive parallelism,<sup>146</sup> chiasmus, and its linguistic aspects which vary from the surrounding context. While the preceding verses 12 to 14 display a confessional style as evidenced by the use of 'we' and 'us,' the verses following the hymn, verses 21 - 23, uses direct speech to the Colossians. The hymn itself, however, is focused on exalting the supremacy of the Son.

As can be seen from the content summaries of O'Brien and Harris in the previous section, the structure of the hymn has been debated and many have posited various literary arrangements. According to O'Brien,<sup>147</sup> Norden originally described it as two strophes, or stanzas, of different lengths (15-18a, and 18b- 20) because the first part speaks of Christ over creation, while the second part speaks of Christ and the church, and both parts start with an introductory 'who.' Lohmeyer,<sup>148</sup> on the other hand, saw it as two strophes but of equal lengths, both having seven lines (15-16a, and 18-20), connected by three lines (16f-17). Kasemann also saw it as having two strophes but of six lines (15-16 and 18b-20), and connected with verses 16-17f.

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<sup>145</sup> For a summary of the long lasting debate on the structure of the hymn, see O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 31-37.

<sup>146</sup> Harris, *Colossians & Philemon*, 37.

<sup>147</sup> O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 33. See also W. McCown, "The Hymnic Structure of Colossians 1: 15-20," *EQ* 51.3 (Jul.-Sept. 1979): 156-162.

<sup>148</sup> E. Lohmeyer, *Die Briefe an die Kolosser und an Philemon* (Meyer Comm., 8th ed., 1931). Only slightly revised in the 9th ed. of 1954.



The following chart demonstrates a sampling of various other scholars and the structural configurations they proposed:

Patzia <sup>149</sup>	Masson <sup>150</sup>	Robinson <sup>151</sup>	Ellingworth <sup>152</sup>	Martin, Alletti <sup>153</sup>	Schweizer, et.al. <sup>154</sup>	Baugh, Wright <sup>155</sup>
Strophe I (vv. 15–16) Strophe II (vv. 17–18a) Strophe III (vv. 18b–20)	Semitic parallelism, 5 strophes of 4 lines each (v. 18a interpolated into the primitive hymn)	2 units, edited with allusions to the Church and the cross	2 strophes (vv. 15–17) and (vv. 18–20) v. 18a inserted by the author of Ephesians	2 strophes (vv. 15–18a) and (vv. 18b–20)	2 strophes of 3 lines each with an added strophe (vv. 17–18a) and commentary inserted by the author	simple chiasmus rather than strophic delineation

**Figure 3 - Structure of Colossians**

On the other hand, Lamp mentions alternative opinions such as C. F. Burney's claiming that Paul was giving a "midrashic exposition" connecting the first word of Genesis

<sup>149</sup> Patzia, *Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon*, 27-8.

<sup>150</sup> C. Masson, *L'épître de Saint Paul aux Colossiens* (Paris: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1950) 105, in J.S. Lamp, *Wisdom in Col. 1:15-20: Contribution and Significance*. JETS 41/1 (March 1998), 45-53.

<sup>151</sup> J. M. Robinson, "A Formal Analysis of Col. 1:15–20," *JBL* 76 (1957) 284–286, in Lamp, *Wisdom in Col. 1:15*, 46.

<sup>152</sup> P. Ellingworth, "Col. 1:15–20 and Its Context," *ExpTim* 73 (May 1962) 252–253. , in Lamp, *Wisdom in Col. 1:15*, 46.

<sup>153</sup> R. P. Martin, "An Early Christian Hymn," *EvQ* 36 (October-December 1964) 196–197; J.-N. Aletti, *Colossiens 1,15–20: Genre et exégèse du Texte Function de la Thématique Sapientielle* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1981). in Lamp, *Wisdom in Col. 1:15*, 46.

<sup>154</sup> D. von Allmen, "Reconciliation du Monde et Christologie Cosmique de II Cor. 5:14–21 à Col.1:15–23," *RHPR* 48 (1968) 39; R. G. Hamerton-Kelly, *Pre-existence, Wisdom, and the Son of Man* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1973) 168–178; E. Schweizer, "Die Kirche als Lieb Christi in den paulinischen Antilegomena," *Neotestamentica* (ed. Schweizer; Zürich: Zwingli, 1963) 293–316; "Lord of the Nations," *Southeast Asia Journal of Theology* 13 (1972) 13–21; "Christ in the Letter to the Colossians," *RevExp* 70 (1973) 451–467; "Col. 1:15–20," *RevExp* 87 (1990) 98–99; W. Mc-Cown, "The Hymnic Structure of Col. 1:15–20," *EvQ* 51 (July-September 1979) 158–161, in Lamp, *Wisdom in Col. 1:15*, 46.

<sup>155</sup> S. M. Baugh, "The Poetic Form of Col. 1:15–20," *WTJ* 47 (1985) 235–242; N. T. Wright, "Poetry and Theology in Col. 1:15–20," *NTS* 36 (1990) 449; *Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988) 64–66. in Lamp, *Wisdom in Col. 1:15*, 46.

(בְּרֵאשִׁית) and applying it to the personification of wisdom in Prov. 8:22.<sup>156</sup> Others have categorized the passage as simple rhythmic prose.<sup>157</sup>

The Pauline author employs various stylistic methods to praise the Lord of creation:<sup>158</sup>

- Repetition

The use of εἴτε (whether) in verse 16:

εἴτε θρόνοι, εἴτε κυριότητες, εἴτε ἀρχαί, εἴτε ἐξουσίαι.  
Whether thrones, or dominions or rulers or authorities

- Parallelism<sup>159</sup>

Verse 15 and 18:

ὃς ἐστὶν εἰκὼν	He is the image
ὃς ἐστὶν ἀρχή	He is the beginning

Verse 15 and 18:

ρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως	firstborn of all creation
πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν	firstborn from the dead

Verse 16 and 19:

τὰ πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ	All things through him
τὰ πάντα εἰς αὐτόν	All things into him

Verse 17 and 18:

καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν πρὸ πάντων	And He is before all things
καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ	And he is the head of the body

<sup>156</sup> Lamp, *Wisdom in Col. 1:15*, 46.

<sup>157</sup> F. F. Bruce, "Colossian Problem Pt. 2: The Christ Hymn of Col. 1:15–20," *BSac* 41 (April-June 1984) 99–111; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984) 55–56; M. J. Harris, *Colossians and Philemon*, 41–42; O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 32–37.

<sup>158</sup> See O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 32–37; Balchin, *Colossians 1:15–20*, 65–94.

<sup>159</sup> Balchin, *Colossians 1:15–20*; O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 36; see also L.R. Helyer, *Colossians 1:15–20*, 169.

Relative clauses are followed by subordinate clauses introduced with the word ὅτι (for or because) in verse 16 and 19:

ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη  
ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ εὐδόκησεν

For by Him were created (all things)  
For in Him he was well pleased

- Chiasmus

Two examples are seen in verse 16. The first shows two lines chiastically laid out synonymously, whereas the second is an explanation of τὰ πάντα (all things):<sup>160</sup>

ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα  
τὰ πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἔκτισται·

For by Him all things were created  
All things were created by him, and for him

ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς  
τὰ ὁρατὰ καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα

In the heavens and on earth  
Visible and invisible

- Inclusio

O'Brien suggests that the repetition of the word τὰ πάντα (all things) and the verb ἔκτισται (created) in the last line is an example of *inclusio*, or encircling, because it ties the second chiasmus above to the first.<sup>161</sup> Since 'all things were created' occurs at the beginning and end of the verse, everything in between draws attention to the completeness of the things created by him.

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<sup>160</sup> O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 37. For a more in-depth discussion on the chiastic structure, see J. P. Heil, *Colossians: Encouragement to Walk in All Wisdom As Holy Ones in Christ* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Bible Literature, 2010), 13-32.

<sup>161</sup> O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 37.

## VOCABULARY

One of the reasons that scholars claim that Paul inserted this hymn within his letter is the presence of *hapax legomena*, or words and series of words that are not found elsewhere in the NT.<sup>162</sup> Balchin and O'Brien lists the following examples: ὁρατά<sup>163</sup> (visible, in v.16), θρόνοι<sup>164</sup> (thrones, v.16), κυριότητες<sup>165</sup> (dominions, v.16), πρωτεύων (having first place, v.18), κατοικῆσαι<sup>166</sup> (to dwell, v.19), ἀποκαταλλάξαι<sup>167</sup> (to reconcile, v.20) and εἰρηνοποιήσας (making peace, v.20). Of these, only ὁρατά, πρωτεύων and εἰρηνοποιήσας are not seen elsewhere, although they were available in the LXX in the time of Paul's writings. Balchin also maintains that συνέστηκεν (v.17) is not used in the sense of 'cohere' elsewhere in Paul, and that he does not use the term ἀρχή (v.18) elsewhere of Christ.<sup>168</sup> However, as Balchin points out, Paul was quite familiar with the LXX since he regularly quoted it, and there are therefore no reasons why Paul would not feel free to use any words that more aptly expressed his intent.

In addition, there are a number of other words that Paul normally uses but are absent from this letter, such as νόμος (law), ἀποκάλυψις (revelation), or καυχάομαι (to boast), but considering the reason for Paul's letter, it seems plausible that various subjects or themes

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<sup>162</sup> Balchin, *Colossians 1:15-20*, 65-94.

<sup>163</sup> ὁρατά is not found anywhere else in the NT but is in the LXX and therefore would have been available to Paul. On the other hand, Paul uses its antonym, ἄορατα in Romans 1:20, ἄοράτου in Colossians 1:15, and ἄορατον in Hebrews 11:27.

<sup>164</sup> The word for throne is also found in Matthew 5:34; 19:28; 25:31; Luke 1:32, 52; Hebrews 4:16; Revelation 2:13; 4:4; and 12:5 but not in other Pauline writings. However it was also widely used in the LXX and available to Paul.

<sup>165</sup> The word is also found in 2Peter 2:10 and Jude 8 and in Ephesians 1:21 in reference in reference to authority.

<sup>166</sup> There are many instances of the word found in the NT such as Mt 2:23; 12:45; 23:21; Lk 13:4; Ac 1:19; 20:2; 5; 2:14; 7:2, 4a, 48; 17:24, 26; 22:12; Eph 3:17; Col 2:9; Heb 11:9; 2 Pt 3:13; Rev 3:10; 17:2; 8.

<sup>167</sup> This verb ἀποκαταλλάξαι found here in the infinitive aorist active is also found in Colossians 1:22 (ἀποκατήλλαξεν) in indicative aorist active, and in Ephesians 2:16 (ἀποκαταλλάξῃ) in the subjunctive aorist active. Balchin notes that Paul also used the uncompounded word (καταλλάσσω) elsewhere in 1Cor. 7:11, 2Cor. 5:18, 19, 20 and Rom. 5:10.

<sup>168</sup> Balchin, "Colossians," 71-2.

used by him elsewhere in his writings did not get included here if it was not relevant to his topic.

## IMAGES AND METAPHORS

Paul regularly used metaphors to ensure that his theology was understood. For example, he used athletic metaphors<sup>169</sup> to explain the struggles of living a Christian life. The following expressions are the metaphors or images used by the Pauline author in this pericope:

The image (of the invisible God)	In the incarnate Son, God gave mankind a physical representation of His very being in whom they could relate. Hebrews 1:3 explains that “He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature.”
The firstborn of all creation:	Reminds readers that in the Hebrew Bible, God had chosen the nation of Israel as his firstborn, a designation which implied that their redemption and their inheritance.
The head of the body:	Our physical heads are the motor that runs the body; without our head, our bodies would be lifeless matter. Similarly, the church or community of believers needs Christ as head to direct its every move, and without him it cannot survive or exist. He is also the source of wisdom and guidance.
The beginning:	Because this word is paired with ‘firstborn from the dead,’ the author was contrasting the original creation, of which the Son was Creator, with the new creation, born of Spirit, now provided by means of his sacrifice on the cross.
The firstborn from the dead:	He is the first to resurrect to a glorified body and offered this privilege to all those who would accept his gift of redemption.

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<sup>169</sup> Heb. 12:1, Phil. 2:16, Gal. 2:2 and 5:7 as well as 2Tim. 4:7 speak of a running a race.

Fullness:	As a full-fledged but sinless man, Christ died and resurrected to redeem mankind and reconcile us to God and open the way to restore creation to its original condition of unity between the spiritual and physical realms. The creator came to redeem his creation.
Peace through the blood:	Although it is clear that blood in itself cannot give peace, the blood of the Son's sacrifice permitted mankind to be reconciled to God and thus make peace between mankind and a just God. It also gave the believer the assurance of his redemption, of the forgiveness of sins, and therefore real peace of the knowledge of his eternal destiny.
His cross:	The author used Jesus' method of execution, namely his crucifixion, as a symbol of his sacrifice for the redemption of mankind. It also represents the responsibility that his followers are also expected to carry.

As can be seen in this chapter, it was important to execute an exegetical analysis of this pericope in order to examine whether the Watchtower's claim that the 'firstborn of creation' must unequivocally imply that the Son of God was the first of God's created order, through whom all other things were created thereafter. However, as can be seen above, the inclusion of the hymn of verses 15-20 within the context of this Colossian letter was intended to dispel misunderstandings as to the position of the Son and to exalt his supremacy. In the next section, I will consider the supremacy of the Son in light of the term 'firstborn' and how various scholars define the Son's position, in the context of the body of Scriptures.

CHAPTER 3:  
FIRSTBORN – A CONTEMPORARY ASSESSMENT

Since the early nineteenth century, the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (WBTS), the organization which disseminates the doctrines, teachings and publications for all Jehovah's Witnesses, have always claimed that they have, more than anyone else, tried to adhere to the Word of God most faithfully. They present Jesus as firstborn but as first of all creation, through whom all other things were created. They insist that the Scriptures do not state that Jesus is part of a trinity and nor that he is eternal, as mainstream Christianity professes. As mentioned above, they offer a variety of scriptures to support that Jesus is the first created being, and that he is the only begotten Son of God, but not God Himself. They agree that once the Son was created, all other things, whether visible or invisible, were created through him and for him.<sup>170</sup> (Refer to Appendix 9 for WBTS's doctrinal claims regarding the Son.)

### *3.1 Firstborn as Pre-Eminent*

A plethora of scholars since the Church Fathers, and more specifically since the birth of various New Religious Movements in the late nineteenth century, have debated whether or not the Son of God is the eternal Son of God, who always existed with the Father. They claim that Colossians 1:15 clearly establishes him as having supremacy over all things, including the physical universe but also the invisible spiritual realm. In 1984, Arthur Patzia clearly summarized his position by stating that the purpose of this passage was "to establish the supremacy or the preeminence of Christ in all things."<sup>171</sup> In 1986, N. T. Wright explained that the author of Colossians had purposely applied the 'Wisdom of God' to Jesus. When

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<sup>170</sup> For an in-depth expose of the WBTS's teachings, refer to *Reasoning from the Scriptures*, 1989.

<sup>171</sup> Patzia, *Colossians*, 29.

speaking specifically of the term ‘firstborn’, Wright understands it as conveying a temporal sense but also implying rank. He adds that “temporal priority does not imply that the pre-existent Son of God is *merely* (emphasis mine) the first created being. It is *in virtue of* (Wright’s emphasis) this eternal pre-existence that the Son of God holds supreme rank.” Although describing the Son as eternally pre-existent, one gets the sense that Wright is being careful about his position, since he adds that “He is not simply part of the created world itself. All that God made, he made by means of him.”<sup>172</sup> From these statements, it is not clear whether Wright sees the Son as the first created being or as excluded from creation and co-existent and co-eternal with the Father. In 1997, Ironside<sup>173</sup> pointed out that if Jesus was not the eternal Son, there could not be an Eternal Father. He proposed that ‘firstborn’ is not only a divine title, but that it is due to the incarnation that the Father now acknowledges him as such, because he is the heir. In his *Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament: Colossians and Philemon*, Murray J. Harris suggested that “if Paul had believed that Jesus was the first of God’s creatures to be formed, the adjective *protoktistos* or *protogonos* (‘created first’) or *protoplastos* (‘formed first’) might have been expected instead of *prototokos*.”<sup>174</sup>

Various passages have been used to support that Jesus is the pre-eminent ruler over all creation and as such is uncreated and eternal. Those ascribing to this opinion quote Psalms 89:27 to show that David also was not the firstborn of his family but was made such by God’s election. The following are additional verses which have been used to justify this position:

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<sup>172</sup> Wright, *Colossians*, 71-75.

<sup>173</sup> H.A. Ironside, *Colossians*. Ironside Commentaries (Baltimore: Loiseaux, 1997), 34-37.

<sup>174</sup> Harris, *Exegetical Guide to NT*, 40.



- Numbers 3:12 – “I hereby accept the Levites from among the Israelites as substitutes for all the firstborn (הַבְּכֹרִים) that open the womb among the Israelites. The Levites shall be mine.”
- Hebrews 1:6 – “And again, when he brings the firstborn (πρωτότοκον) into the world, he says, ‘Let all God’s angels worship him.’”
- Revelation 1:5 “Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn (πρωτότοκος) of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.”
- Colossians 1:18 “He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn (πρωτότοκος) from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything.”

In the verses quoted above, Numbers 3:12 points to the Levites as being elected as firstborn instead of those who would be rightfully such by birth. Hebrews 1:6 demonstrates that since Jesus as firstborn is granted the worship of angels then he must be divine and superior to them, recognizing also that none other than God is deserving of worship. As for Revelation 1:5, the author suggests that Jesus is the ruler and hence superior to all the kings of the earth. Lastly, Colossians 1:18 explains that since Jesus is to have ‘first place in everything,’ he is the firstborn in the sense that he has supremacy over all.

### 3.2 Firstborn as First Created Being

Not all modern and contemporary scholars agree with the above interpretation. Several scholars such as Walter Bauer, Bart Ehrman and Elaine Pagels, have proposed that the mainstream church tradition which was upheld since the Nicene Creed was not necessarily because it was the undisputed truth, but rather because in the end it was the position of the strongest or the most vocal, the victors, who won over and dictated the tradition which survived to this day within the mainstream Christian communities.<sup>175</sup>

Since the mid-1980s, Greg Stafford<sup>176</sup> and Rolf Furuli<sup>177</sup> have sided with the WBTS on several issues of interpretation. Stafford specifically published a book entitled *Jehovah's Witnesses Defended* in which he argued in great detail, in defense of the WBTS's doctrines, and against the theological writings of a variety of scholars, especially those of Robert Bowman and Ed Komoszewski.<sup>178</sup>

When specifically discussing the Son as firstborn, Stafford countered Harris' suggestion that Paul could have used 'πρωτόκτιστος' if he wanted the reader to understand that the Son was the first created being by stating that 'πρωτόκτιστος' could not have been used by Paul, since this term only started being used popularly in the second and third centuries.<sup>179</sup> Stafford, in agreement with the Watchtower, claims that Jesus is God's Son among other sons, and that although he is divine, he is not the Almighty God himself, but rather the first created being, through whom all the rest of creation has come into being.

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<sup>175</sup> Ehrman, *Lost Christianities*, 161; Köstenberger, *Heresy of Orthodoxy*, 24; Alister McGrath, *Heresy: A History of Defending the Truth*. (New York: Harper One, 2010), 73-75.

<sup>176</sup> Stafford, *Jehovah's Witnesses Defended*; Furuli, *Theology and Bias*.

<sup>177</sup> Furuli, *Theology and Bias*.

<sup>178</sup> Stafford is specifically arguing against the claims made in R. M. Bowman and J. E. Komoszewski, *Putting Jesus in His Place: The Case for the Deity of Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2007).

<sup>179</sup> Stafford, *Jehovah's Witnesses Defended*, 388.

Nine scriptural passages (Proverbs 8:22-25, John 1:3, John 14:28, John 17:22, Acts 2:36, Romans 8:29, 1 Cor. 8:5-6, Heb. 1:2 and Revelation 3:14) have been used to support the theory that Jesus is subordinate to the Father, and that although he is the Son of God, and mediator of creation, he is nevertheless the first created of all other created beings. Let us consider these to see if they unequivocally claim that the Son must be a created being:

# 1) Proverbs 8:22-25

- 22: יְהוָה קָנָנִי רִאשִׁית דְּרָכָו קָדַם מַפְעָלָיו מֵאִז׃  
κύριος ἔκτισέν με ἀρχὴν ὁδῶν αὐτοῦ εἰς ἔργα αὐτοῦ
- 23: מֵעוֹלָם נִסְכָּתִי מִרֹאשׁ מִקְדְּמִי-אֶרֶץ׃  
πρὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος ἐθεμελίωσέν με ἐν ἀρχῇ
- 24: בְּאֵין-תְּהִמּוֹת חוֹלְלָתִי בְּאֵין מַעֲיָנוֹת נִכְבְּדִי-מִיָּם׃  
πρὸ τοῦ τὴν γῆν ποιῆσαι καὶ πρὸ τοῦ τὰς ἀβύσσους ποιῆσαι πρὸ τοῦ  
προελθεῖν τὰς πηγὰς τῶν ὑδάτων
- 25: בְּטָרֶם הָרִים הִטְבְּעוּ לִפְנֵי גִבְעוֹת חוֹלְלָתִי׃  
πρὸ τοῦ ὄρη ἐδρασθῆναι πρὸ δὲ πάντων βουνῶν γεννᾷ με

This passage discusses the benefits of wisdom. Verse 12 specifies the speaker as the personification of wisdom.<sup>180</sup> The controversial words in these verses are קָנָנִי in the Hebrew, which has been translated as ἔκτισέν in the Greek LXX in verse 22, נִסְכָּתִי (Heb.) or ἐθεμελίωσέν (Gr.) in verse 23, and חוֹלְלָתִי (Heb.) or γεννᾷ (Gr.) in verse 25. Considering that translation is always a process of interpretation, the choice of words can have a profound difference in the meaning to the reader.

<sup>180</sup> Proverbs 8:12 reads “I, wisdom, live with prudence, and I attain knowledge and discretion.”

The NRSV translation reads:

<sup>22</sup>The Lord *created me* at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of long ago. <sup>23</sup>Ages ago I was *set up*, at the first, before the beginning of the earth. <sup>24</sup>When there were no depths I was *brought forth*, when there were no springs abounding with water. <sup>25</sup>Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, I was *brought forth*—(italics mine).

In verse 22, the difficulty arises from the LXX which translated the Hebrew word קָנִי, as ἐκτίσέν in the Greek, and the latter is generally translated as ‘created.’ Athanasius, to prevent his readers from misunderstanding this passage, explained that this referred to the Son in his incarnation.

However, looking at the pre-LXX Hebrew text, verse 22 uses the word קָנִי, which can be translated as ‘created,’ or ‘acquired.’ In most Hebrew Bible verses,<sup>181</sup> the word for ‘created’ is בָּרָא. On the other hand, the word קָנָה is only used on one other occasion,<sup>182</sup> and refers to acquiring or redeeming as with slaves or property. Bruce Vawter<sup>183</sup> concluded that he saw “no compelling evidence from the OT texts to indicate” that the Hebrew word קָנָה should be translated as ‘created.’ Therefore, it seems more plausible that the rendering in this verse should read as ‘The Lord possessed me’ rather than ‘The Lord created me.’

The Hebrew word נִסְכָּחַי in verse 23 is said to mean ‘to weave,’ ‘to be poured out,’ but also ‘installed’ or ‘anointed’ as applying to a king or prince. The Greek πρὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος ἐθεμελίωσέν με ἐν ἀρχῇ can be translated as ‘I was established from everlasting,

<sup>181</sup> Gen.1:1, 1:21, 1:27, 2:4, 5:1, 5:2, 6:7, Deut. 4:32, Ps. 89:12, 89:47, 104:30, 148:5, Isa. 40:26, 41:20, 42:5, 43:1, 43:7, 45:8, 45:12, 45:18, 48:7, 54:16, Jer. 31 :22, Eze. 21 :30, 28 :13, 28 :15 and Mal. 2 :10.

<sup>182</sup> Deut. 32:6.

<sup>183</sup> Bruce Vawter, “Prov. 8:28: Wisdom and Creation,” *JBL* 99 (1980), 213. He later reiterated the same conclusion in “Yahweh: Lord of the Heavens and Earth,” *CBQ* 48.3 (1986), 463.

in the beginning,’ and resonates of John 1:1 which states that ‘the Word was in the beginning.’<sup>184</sup>

And lastly, in verse 25, the verb **יָלַדְתִּי**, a polal perfect verb in the 1st person common singular, is said to mean ‘I was brought to birth’ or ‘I was brought to trembling.’ Besides Proverbs 8, where it is generally translated as ‘brought forth’, only one other instance of this usage is found in Psalm 51:7, where it is similarly rendered. The Greek text reads as ‘πρὸ τοῦ ὅρη ἐδρασθῆναι πρὸ δὲ πάντων βουνῶν γεννᾶ με’ where ἐδράζω can be translated as ‘to make to sit or place.’

Interestingly, Stafford proposed that although Proverbs 8:12 reads: “I, wisdom, dwell with prudence,” the ‘wisdom’ spoken of here is not used in the same manner as ‘prudence’ of that verse, because the first is a personal being whereas the latter is a impersonal attribute. He adds that “there is only one other being who in the Bible shares the same descriptions given to Wisdom in Proverbs 8, and that is the Word, who became Jesus of Nazareth.”<sup>185</sup> As supporting evidence, he shows the following verses which are said of Wisdom in Proverbs 8 and which are applied to Jesus in the NT: (This chart is adapted from Saffords on page 410, where the verses shown are his chosen parallels and where my bolding represent the descriptions which are applied to Jesus in the NT.)

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<sup>184</sup> However, on page 371, Stafford argues that ‘in the beginning’ as seen in Genesis 1:1 and in John 1:1 does not mean that the Son existed ‘before’ the beginning.

<sup>185</sup> Stafford, *Jehovah's Witnesses Defended*, 409.

WISDOM OF PROVERBS	JESUS OF NT
Proverbs 8:22 – “The Lord possessed me at the beginning of His way, <b>Before His works of old.</b> ”	Colossians 1:15 - And He is the image of the invisible God, <b>the first-born of all creation.</b>
	Revelation 3:14 -The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, <b>the Beginning of the creation of God,</b>
Proverbs 8:23-26 – “From everlasting I was established, <b>from the beginning</b> , from the earliest times of the earth ... <b>while He had not yet made the earth.</b> ”	John 1:1 - <b>In the beginning</b> was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
	John 17: - “And now, glorify Thou Me together with Thyself, Father, with the glory which I had with Thee <b>before the world was.</b> ”
Proverbs 8:30 – “Then I <b>was beside Him, as a master workman</b> ; And I was daily His delight, Rejoicing always before Him,”	John 1:3 - <b>All things came into being by Him</b> , and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.
	Hebrews 1:2 - In these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, <b>through whom also He made the world.</b>
	1Corinthians 8:6 - Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, <b>by whom are all things</b> , and we exist through Him.
Proverbs 8:30 – “Then I was beside Him, as a master workman; And I <b>was daily His delight</b> , Rejoicing always before Him,”	Luke 3:22 - and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, “Thou art <b>My beloved Son, in Thee I am well-pleased.</b> ”
	John 3:35 – “ <b>The Father loves the Son</b> , and has given all things into His hand.”
	John 5:20 – “ <b>For the Father loves the Son</b> , and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing;”
	John 17:24 – “Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because <b>you loved me</b> before the foundation of the world.”
Proverbs 8:31 – “Rejoicing in the world, His earth, And having <b>my delight in the sons of men.</b> ”	John 3:16 - For God so loved the world, that <b>He gave His only begotten Son</b> , that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.
	John 10:17 – “For this reason the Father loves Me, because I <b>lay down My</b> life that I may take it again.”
	1 Timothy 2:5-6 - For there is one God, <i>and</i> one mediator also between God and men, <i>the man</i> <b>Christ Jesus,</b> <sup>6</sup> <b>who gave Himself as a ransom for all</b> , the testimony <i>borne</i> at the proper time.
Proverbs 8:35 – “For he who finds me finds <b>life</b> , And obtains favor from the Lord.”	John 14:6 - said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the <b>life</b> ; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.”
	John 17:3 – “And this is eternal <b>life</b> , that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.”

Figure 4 - Stafford's Prov. 8 and Jesus

However, if Stafford can use this evidence to prove that Wisdom is in fact the Word, then we must apply the same reasoning to demonstrate that the Son is God because of the multitude of biblical passages in the NT applied to Jesus which were direct parallels to those of the Hebrew Bible which described the Almighty God. For a list of examples, see Appendix 9 - *Titles and Attributes of God (יְהוָה) Applied to Jesus*.

The NWT's translation is noteworthy:

<sup>22</sup>“Jehovah himself produced me as the beginning of his way, the earliest of his achievements of long ago. <sup>23</sup>From time indefinite I was installed, from the start, from times earlier than the earth. <sup>24</sup>When there were no watery deeps I was brought forth as with labor pains, when there were no springs heavily charged with water. <sup>25</sup>Before the mountains themselves had been settled down, ahead of the hills, I was brought forth as with labor pains.”

It is interesting that although the WBTS seem to have translated this passage using the words ‘produced,’ ‘installed’ and ‘brought forth’ rather than ‘created’ as many others have done, they have chosen to insert ‘as with labor pains’ without the use of brackets.

Considering all the alternatives, a plausible translation could read as:

<sup>22</sup>“The Lord possessed me, the beginning of His way, before His works of old. <sup>23</sup>From everlasting I was established, from the beginning, from the earliest times of the earth. <sup>24</sup>When there were no depths I was brought forth; when there were no springs abounding with water. <sup>25</sup>Before the mountains were settled, before the hills I was brought forth;”

Regardless of the translation used, Bock & Fanning<sup>186</sup> sum it up quite articulately:

“The hymn in Col. 1:15-20 is utilized by Paul to present Christ as the hypostasis of the divine wisdom in whom, through whom, and for whom the whole universe was brought into being. It does this, as do other New Testament writings, by interpreting the Old Testament Creation and Fall passages Christologically. In this case it does so by interpreting the creation accounts of Genesis by the eulogy to a personified divine wisdom in Prov 8:22-31.”

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<sup>186</sup> D. L. Bock and B. M. Fanning, Eds., *Interpreting the New Testament Text: Introduction to the Art And Science of Exegesis* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2006), 427.

## 2) John 1:3

πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν ὃ γέγονεν

All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.

If not even one thing ever came into being without him, it seems logical that there is no exception, or else the verse would state it as 'except for him, not one thing came into being.' Stafford claims that wherever we find the mention of 'all things' being subject to the Son, or coming into being through / for / by the Son, it must refer only to the physical and material universe. However, this would be inconsistent with Colossians 1:16 which expands on this to include 'all' that exists, whether visible or invisible, even spiritual powers.

## 3) John 14:28

ἠκούσατε ὅτι ἐγὼ εἶπον ὑμῖν· ὑπάγω καὶ ἔρχομαι πρὸς ὑμᾶς. εἰ ἠγαπᾷτέ με ἐχάρητε ἂν ὅτι πορεύομαι πρὸς τὸν πατέρα, ὅτι ὁ πατὴρ μείζων μου ἐστίν.

If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I.

The WBTS<sup>187</sup> use this verse as supporting evidence that the Son cannot be considered on equal footing as the Father as part of a Triune God since he himself states that the Father is greater (μείζων) than he is. Although most translations, if not all, are consistent in rendering μείζων as 'greater,' most theologians also are in agreement that

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<sup>187</sup> WBTS, "Jesus Christ." *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. 1 (NY: WBTS, 1988), 54; *Jehovah's Witnesses: Proclaimers of God's Kingdom*, 1993, 144; *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*, 1982, 57-68.



this is making reference to Jesus' temporary limitations while he humbled himself and took on the form of a man.<sup>188</sup>

Stafford, however, tries to prove this by claiming the Son must be a lesser being because the Father “never speaks like this”<sup>189</sup> anywhere in the Hebrew Bible and adds that “the notion of ‘servitude’ surely conveys the idea that the one who is the ‘servant’ is lesser than the one whom he serves.”<sup>190</sup> However, Jesus served his disciples, and he impressed this on them when he washed their feet. He also said at various times that the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve.<sup>191</sup> Does that imply that Jesus was inferior to his disciples? Certainly not. Rather, it means that when the Son had emptied himself to be incarnated as a man, he made himself subject to the Father.

#### 4) John 17:22

καὶ γὰρ τὴν δόξαν ἣν δέδωκάς μοι δέδωκα αὐτοῖς, ἵνα ὡσιν ἓν καθὼς ἡμεῖς ἓν·

The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one.

The WBTS argue that if the Son is God, he cannot receive glory from Himself. However, in John 17:1, the incarnate Son, soon to be crucified, was praying to the Father, asking to be glorified so that he in turn might glorify the Father. In verse 5, he asks that he may regain the glory that he once had prior to his incarnation and even “before the world began.” He is therefore referring to the glory that the incarnate Son would receive as a result of his faithfulness unto death and his resurrection.

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<sup>188</sup> Philippians 2:6-8.

<sup>189</sup> Stafford, *Jehovah's Witnesses Defended*, 252.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid, 333.

<sup>191</sup> Matthew 20:28, Luke 22:27.

Some might also argue that this verse shows that the relationship between Jesus and God is the same as other believers so that both are ‘one’ with the Father. But verse 11 explains that it is through the power of God’s name that they are one or in unity. This is made even clearer in verses 20-21 since it is through the message or the Gospel that they are unified.

#### 5) Acts 2:36

ἀσφαλῶς οὖν γινωσκέτω πᾶς οἶκος Ἰσραὴλ ὅτι καὶ κύριον αὐτὸν καὶ χριστὸν ἐποίησεν ὁ θεός, τοῦτον τὸν Ἰησοῦν ὃν ὑμεῖς ἐσταυρώσατε.

Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ -- this Jesus whom you crucified.

The contentious word is the verb ἐποίησεν which is understood as ‘produced’ or ‘made.’ But this verse does not state that ‘God made Jesus,’ but rather that ‘God appointed him Lord and Christ.’ Stafford uses this verse to prove that the Son is not God because it cannot be said of the Father that anyone appointed Him. Although this is true, this appointment came as a result of the Son’s incarnation and faithfulness to fulfill his redemption plan. Stafford<sup>192</sup> also cautions his readers to not confuse the word ‘Lord’ when used for the Father and when used for the Son because although the word appears to be the same, it is not implying the same level of exaltation. Furuli proposes the same argument adding that although the word κύριος is used for both, and therefore indistinguishable, the Hebrew words quoted from the Hebrew Bible were not the same.

In Acts 2:21, Peter was clearly quoting Joel 2:32 which says “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord (κύριος in the Greek but יהוה in the Hebrew) shall be saved.” Peter

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<sup>192</sup> Stafford, *Jehovah’s Witnesses Defended*, 128, 396-7.

continued by saying (verse 34) that David spoke of this Lord when he said “The Lord Lord (κύριος) said to my Lord Lord (κύριος), “Sit at my right hand” and (verse 36 quoted above) “God has made Him both Lord and Christ,” making sure that his audience was clear that whoever Joel spoke of in the Hebrew Bible was clearly applied to the Lord Jesus who had been crucified. Romans 10:9-10 also makes the same point that it is necessary to believe that “Jesus is Lord” (κύριος) to be saved.

2Corinthians 6:16 reads that God (ὁ θεός) dwells in men, whereas Romans 8:10 states that the Christ (Χριστός) dwells in men. There is no confusion here since the word Lord (κύριος) is not even used. (See Appendix 10 for Hebrew Bible texts applied to Jesus in the NT.) Furthermore, Jude 1:4 clearly reads that Jesus is “our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ,” (κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν) demonstrating that there is no other.

#### 6) Romans 8:29

ὅτι οὗς προέγνω, καὶ προώρισεν συμμόρφους τῆς εἰκόνης τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ, εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτὸν πρωτότοκον ἐν πολλοῖς ἀδελφοῖς·

For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

The WBTS claim that since the Son was one among many brothers, he cannot be the creator but part of creation as the rest of his brothers are. Stafford states that “Jesus is “the firstborn of many brothers” apparently because he is the first “image” after whom God patterned those who will similarly be “glorified.”<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> Ibid, 395.

In *Your Will be Done on Earth*,<sup>194</sup> the WBTS claim that only the 144,000 ‘spirit-anointed class’ are brothers with Christ, have the hope of being conformed to the image of the Son, and will rule with Christ as kings and priests for a thousand years.<sup>195</sup> Hence, there are two classes of believers, and those not part of the 144,000 anointed believers, although believers also, have no hope of becoming brothers of Christ. So, although there is no partiality with God,<sup>196</sup> even if Jesus is one among many brothers, it is clear that the ‘brothers’ are not all equal in the sight of the WBTS.

To refute the claim that Jesus is simply one ‘among many brothers,’ Bowman makes an interesting point in emphasizing that in his incarnation, Jesus referred to his Father as ‘my Father’ and taught his disciples to pray to ‘our Father,’ but specifies that Jesus “never speaks of God as “our Father” where “our” refers to Jesus and his disciples.”<sup>197</sup> He adds that this is made even clearer in John 20:17 because Jesus there enunciates the distinction:

Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”

He could have simply said ‘our Father’ and ‘our God’ if Jesus considered himself as a son among many others.

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<sup>194</sup> WBTS, *Your Will be Done on Earth* (Brooklyn, NY: WBTS, 1958), 43.

<sup>195</sup> Revelation 20:6.

<sup>196</sup> 2Chronicles 9:7, Job 32:21, 34:19, Luke 20:21.

<sup>197</sup> R. M. Bowman, *Jehovah's Witnesses* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 27.

7) 1 Cor. 8:5-6

Καὶ γὰρ εἴπερ εἰσὶν λεγόμενοι θεοί, εἴτε ἐν οὐρανῷ εἴτε ἐπὶ γῆς· ὥσπερ εἰσὶν θεοὶ πολλοί, καὶ κύριοι πολλοί· ἀλλ' ἡμῖν εἷς θεὸς ὁ πατήρ, ἐξ οὗ τὰ πάντα, καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς αὐτόν· καὶ εἷς κύριος Ἰησοῦς χριστός, δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα, καὶ ἡμεῖς δι' αὐτοῦ.

Indeed, even though there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as in fact there are many gods<sup>198</sup> and many lords—yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

The WBTS<sup>199</sup> insist that since there are many gods (lowercase 'g'), Jesus can be a 'god' but not the Almighty God. However, if it can be proved that Jesus is an integral part of the Triune Almighty One True God, then he cannot be considered in this 'god' category, which would make him a false God, and deserving of God's judgment.<sup>200</sup> (See Appendix 10 for passages speaking of the Almighty God in the Hebrew Bible and applied to Jesus in the NT.)

Furuli states that “only when more than one god is worshiped in a religious sense can we speak of polytheism, and only when one supreme god is worshiped and the worshiper believes in the existence of other gods in a religious sense can we speak of henotheism.”<sup>201</sup> Therefore, if Jesus is to receive worship, as is dictated in Hebrews 1:6, and as confirmed by Stafford,<sup>202</sup> and if he is not the one True God, can we accuse Jehovah's Witnesses of polytheism or henotheism?<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Referring to Psalms 82:1-6 and John 10:34-5.

<sup>199</sup> WBTS, *Reasoning from the Scriptures*, 213.

<sup>200</sup> Exodus 20:3 (You shall have no other gods before me); Exodus 34:14 (for you shall worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God);

<sup>201</sup> Furuli, *Theology and Bias*, 207.

<sup>202</sup> Stafford, *Jehovah's Witnesses Defended*, 424.

<sup>203</sup> “Henotheism, from the Greek word meaning ‘one,’ is the belief in a single god without asserting that he is the only god.” The term was coined by F. M. Müller (1823-1900), professor of comparative philology at Oxford. “Henotheism.” *Online Etymology Dictionary*. Douglas Harper, Historian. 2012. [Cited 18 August, 2012]. Online: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/henotheism>.

8) Heb. 1:2

ἐπ' ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων ἐλάλησεν ἡμῖν ἐν υἱῷ, ὃν ἔθηκεν κληρονόμον πάντων, δι' οὗ καὶ ἐποίησεν τοὺς αἰῶνας·

But in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds (or ages).

Furuli claims that “the Logos is God’s ‘only-begotten’ Son, one of his heavenly ‘S/sons’ who was ‘with’ him in the beginning, and used by God to create ‘all things.’ Indeed, all things’ were not only made ‘through’ him but they were even made ‘*for him*,’ (italics his) as he is the ‘heir of all things.’”<sup>204</sup> This implies that since all things were created by him, through him and for him, it stands to reason that he is the rightful heir of all things, especially considering Jewish customs on the firstborn rights of inheritance.

However, it is because of his faithfulness in his incarnation that the Son has been appointed heir of all things, and since in his incarnation, he redeemed many, those also are co-heirs with him. This does not make them equal to the Son, but adopted as God’s children and therefore redeemed from mankind.

9) Revelation 3:14

Καὶ τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν Λαοδικείᾳ ἐκκλησίας γράψον· Τάδε λέγει ὁ ἀμήν, ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστὸς καὶ ἀληθινός, ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ·

And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the origin of God’s creation.

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<sup>204</sup> Furuli, *Theology and Bias*, 383.

The WBTS interpret the word ἀρχή as the ‘first thing created’. Stafford agrees and quotes BAGD (Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature by William Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich) as saying that it is possible linguistically to translate the word ἀρχή to allow for ‘first created’ but that in Revelation 3:14, it means ‘first cause.’ Stafford disagrees with Arndt and Gingrich because “no biblical passages are cited under this definition as parallels to the meaning provided.”<sup>205</sup> However, Revelation 21:6, after saying that God Himself will reside with mankind, identifies Himself as the ‘Alpha and Omega,’ the ‘beginning and the end’ (τὸ Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ Ὠ, ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος). In Revelation 22:13, we read, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end,” (ἐγὼ τὸ Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ Ὠ, ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος, ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος) but this time it is the Son speaking since he identifies himself in verse 16 by stating “I, Jesus.” However, Stafford admits that in verse 13 the ‘beginning’ is used of God, but explains that he is “the ‘beginning’ of all that he purposes to do or that he permits others to do, all of which also therefore ‘end’ with him. In this way, God can be the ‘beginning’ and the ‘ending’ according to his will, without himself being a created ‘beginning.’”<sup>206</sup> He proposes that there are different understandings of ‘beginning’ depending on the stages of creation and that the use of ἀρχή in Revelation 3:14 is not the same as intended in the use of ‘in the beginning’ of Genesis 1:1 or of John 1:1. He concludes that to translate the word ἀρχή as ‘origin’ or ‘first cause’ as suggested in BAGD amounts to “special pleading.”<sup>207</sup>

However, as seen in the examples below, John regularly uses ἀρχή to mean a ‘beginning point in time.’ (Refer to Appendix 5 for all instances of the word ἀρχή.)

<sup>205</sup> Stafford, *Jehovah's Witnesses Defended*, 419.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid, 419 n112.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid, 423. (the accusation of ‘special pleading’ is also found in Furuli’s writings also in reference to his disagreement with what Athanasius had written about the Son, in *Theology and Bias*, 135).

- John 1:1 Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.
- In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
- John 1:2 Οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν θεόν.
- He was in the beginning with God.
- John 6:64 Ἀλλ' εἰσὶν ἐξ ὑμῶν τινες οἳ οὐ πιστεύουσιν. Ἦδει γὰρ ἐξ ἀρχῆς ὁ Ἰησοῦς, τίνες εἰσὶν οἱ μὴ πιστεύοντες, καὶ τίς ἐστὶν ὁ παραδώσων αὐτόν.
- “But there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him.
- John 8:25 Ἐλεγον οὖν αὐτῷ, Σὺ τίς εἶ; Καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Τὴν ἀρχὴν ὃ τι καὶ λαλῶ ὑμῖν.
- And so they were saying to Him, “Who are You?” Jesus said to them, “What have I been saying to you from the beginning?”
- John 8:44 Ὑμεῖς ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς τοῦ διαβόλου ἐστέ, καὶ τὰς ἐπιθυμίας τοῦ πατρὸς ὑμῶν θέλετε ποιεῖν. Ἐκεῖνος ἀνθρωποκτόνος ἦν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς,
- “You are of *your* father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, ...”
- John 15:27 καὶ ὑμεῖς δὲ μαρτυρεῖτε, ὅτι ἀπ' ἀρχῆς μετ' ἐμοῦ ἐστε.
- ... and you *will* bear witness also, because you have been with Me from the beginning.
- John 16:4 Ταῦτα δὲ ὑμῖν ἐξ ἀρχῆς οὐκ εἶπον, ὅτι μεθ' ὑμῶν ἦμην.
- And these things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you.



1John 1:1 Ὃ ἦν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, ὃ ἀκηκόαμεν, ὃ ἐωράκαμεν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς ἡμῶν, ὃ ἐθεασάμεθα, καὶ αἱ χεῖρες ἡμῶν ἐψηλάφησαν περὶ τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς.

What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life—

1John 2:7 Ἀγαπητοί, οὐκ ἐντολὴν καινὴν γράφω ὑμῖν ἀλλ' ἐντολὴν παλαιὰν ἣν εἴχετε ἀπ' ἀρχῆς· ἡ ἐντολὴ ἡ παλαιὰ ἐστὶν ὁ λόγος ὃν ἠκούσατε.

Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard.

1John 2:13 γράφω ὑμῖν, πατέρες, ὅτι ἐγνώκατε τὸν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς.

I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning.

1John 2:24 Ὑμεῖς οὖν ὃ ἠκούσατε ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, ἐν ὑμῖν μενέτω. Ἐὰν ἐν ὑμῖν μείνῃ ὃ ἀπ' ἀρχῆς ἠκούσατε, καὶ ὑμεῖς ἐν τῷ υἱῷ καὶ ἐν τῷ πατρὶ μενεῖτε.

As for you, let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father.

1John 3:8 ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν ἐκ τοῦ διαβόλου ἐστίν, ὅτι ἀπ' ἀρχῆς ὁ διάβολος ἁμαρτάνει.

the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning.

1John 3:11 Ὅτι αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἀγγελία ἣν ἠκούσατε ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, ἵνα ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους·

For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another;

2John 5      Καὶ νῦν ἐρωτῶ σε, κυρία, οὐχ ὥς ἐντολὴν γράφων σοι καινὴν, ἀλλὰ ἣν εἶχομεν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, ἵνα ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους.

And now I ask you, lady, not as writing to you a new commandment, but the one which we have had from the beginning, that we love one another.

2John 6      Καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἀγάπη, ἵνα περιπατῶμεν κατὰ τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ. Αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἐντολή, καθὼς ἠκούσατε ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, ἵνα ἐν αὐτῇ περιπατῆτε.

And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning that you should walk in it.

John 2:11<sup>208</sup> seems to be the only instance of implying 'first' as in a ranking or series.

Another use of the word is seen in the book of Revelation, where we see ἀρχή in reference to God as the 'the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning (ἀρχή) and the End.'<sup>209</sup>

The word ἀρχή has also been used to mean 'ruler' or 'leader.'<sup>210</sup> (Refer to Appendix 5 for a list of biblical verses where ἀρχή is found.)

To return to our focus pericope, Colossians 1:16-17, states that 'by Him all things were created' and continues to explain that this refers to all things including things on earth and in heaven, but also all things invisible, and all authorities and powers. This seems to state clearly that all created things were made by him.

In the NWT, Colossians 1:16 and 17 reads as follows:

<sup>16</sup>Because by means of him all [other] things were created in the heavens and upon the earth, the things visible and the things invisible, no matter whether they are thrones or lordships or governments or authorities. All [other] things have been created through him and for him. <sup>17</sup>Also, he is before all [other] things and by means of him all [other] things were made to exist.

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<sup>208</sup> "Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him."

<sup>209</sup> See Revelation 21:6 and 22:13.

<sup>210</sup> Luke 12:11, Rom. 8:39, 1Cor. 15:24, Eph. 1:21, 3:10, 6:12, Col. 1:16, 2:10 and 15, and Titus 3:1.

The WBTS have added the word ‘other’ to imply that he also is a created being and that all other things, except for him, were created by him. Furuli claims that the addition of ‘other’ is legitimate since ‘all’ does not always mean ‘all without exception’ and uses 2Timothy 1:15 as supporting evidence:<sup>211</sup>

Οἶδας τοῦτο, ὅτι ἀπεστράφησάν με πάντες οἱ ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ, ὧν ἐστὶν Φύγελος καὶ Ἑρμογένης.

You are aware of the fact that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes.

His argument is that ‘all’ (πάντες) here cannot mean ‘all people living in Asia’ but only those whom Paul is referring to. However, it is quite clear in this instance that Paul means ‘all the Christians’ or at least those who claim to be, and not the entire population at large. Furuli adds that in Luke 21:29, the word ‘other’ has also been added to translate ‘all’. In this verse, the Greek Ἴδετε τὴν συκῆν καὶ πάντα τὰ δένδρα· has been translated in the NWT as: “Look at the fig tree and all the [other] trees” but only serves to show that the NWT has also added the word ‘other’ where none existed in the Greek. Even Furuli admits that the addition of ‘other’ “is not found in any other Bible translation.”<sup>212</sup> The neuter nominative plural τὰ πάντα (all things) means a totality of things, and is reinforced by Paul’s clarifications which follow immediately thereafter in verses 16 and 17. Stafford, however, insists that ‘all things’ speaks only of the physical and material universe. He explains that even things invisible “may not involve immaterial spirits or anything else in the spiritual heavens. After all, much of what is ‘visible’ to us today due to the use of space technology

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<sup>211</sup> Furuli, *Theology and Bias*, 253-54.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid, 252.

was not ‘visible’ or as visible to those who lived in ancient times.”<sup>213</sup> To support his argument he quotes 1Corinthians 15:27 to show that this does not include God Himself. However, this only serves to show that apart from God Himself, all things, without exception, have been created by the Son. Many other verses also reiterate the same thought and all attest to this interpretation τὰ πάντα as meaning a totality:

- |                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| Romans 11:36      | <p>“For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him <i>be</i> the glory forever. Amen.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- reiterates the same thought as Colossians 1:16</li> </ul>   |
| 1 Corinthians 8:6 | <p>“yet for us there is <i>but</i> one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we <i>exist</i> for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we <i>exist</i> through Him.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- refers to all things coming from the Father, and all things existing through the Son<sup>214</sup></li> </ul> |
| Ephesians 3:9     | <p>“and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things;”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- clearly states that God created all things</li> </ul>  |
| Hebrews 2:10      | <p>“For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings.”</p>   |
| Revelation 4:11   | <p>“You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.”</p>  |

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<sup>213</sup> Stafford, *Jehovah's Witnesses Defended*, 385, 402 n75.

<sup>214</sup> See for example: Genesis 1:31, Ecclesiastes 5:11, Jeremiah 10:16 and 51:19, 3 Maccabees 2:3, Wisdom 1:14 and 9:1.

Since many instances of this phrase, referring to the entire creation of God, are also attested to in the LXX version of the Hebrew Bible, Richard Bauckham suggested that the expression ‘τὰ πάντα’ used to speak of creation in its totality “belongs to the standard rhetoric of Jewish monotheism” where God is always considered a the Ruler and Creator of all.<sup>215</sup>

Furuli quotes<sup>216</sup> Athanasius’ claim that Paul called the Son the ‘firstborn of creation’ to show that he was not a creature,

“for it would be inconsistent with His deity for him to be called a creature. For all things were created by the Father through the Son, but the Son alone was eternally begotten from the Father, whence God the Word is ‘firstborn of all creation.’”<sup>217</sup>

Furuli considers Athanasius’s claims to be mere “special pleading” because we find no evidence that the word ‘son’ ever carried with it the implication of being eternal. One would wonder why Furuli would point out such an obvious claim and accuse Athanasius of implying that he meant to extrapolate the word ‘son’ to carry special attributes. Rather it is clear that Athanasius is describing this particular and unique Son as being divine and eternal. Furthermore, the NWT renders Micah 5:2, “And you, O Beth’le-hem Eph’ra-thah, the one too little to get to be among the thousands of Judah, from you there will come out to me the one who is to become ruler in Israel, whose origin is from early times, from the days of time indefinite.” This verse, even in the WBTS’ translation claims that the Son is from ‘time indefinite’ or from eternity.

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<sup>215</sup> R. Bauckham, *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 32. See also Bowman & Komoszewski, *Putting Jesus in His Place*, 188.

<sup>216</sup> Furuli, *Theology and Bias*, 135.

<sup>217</sup> *NPNF* 4, 85.

Furuli then adds that “Jesus Christ as ‘son’ is contrasted with the angels *who are creatures*” (italics mine) because as only-begotten son, he is one of many<sup>218</sup> but special. When comparing different versions of Colossians 1:15, Furuli uses the following translations:

RSV	He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation.
TEV	Christ is the visible likeness of the invisible God. He is the firstborn Son, superior to all created things.
C. B. Williams	Yes, He is the exact likeness of the unseen God, His firstborn Son who existed before any created thing.

One is led to wonder why he chose these three translations rather than the most commonly used and accepted ones. Second, he betrays his theological bias by claiming that of the three examples, “one version includes Jesus in creation and the other two exclude him by making him either superior to creation, or highlighting his existence *prior to creation*” (italics his). However, it is far from being an accepted conclusion that the RSV’s rendition, which he chose to contrast with his other two choices, implies that Jesus is therein included in creation. Furthermore, Furuli admits that most experienced theologians point out that to understand this verse as implying that Jesus is a created being would be inconsistent with the biblical depiction and the Christian understanding of Jesus, especially considering the context of this passage and the words that follow, the representation of Jesus as the divine pre-existent Wisdom, as well as the redeemer being part of the redeemed.<sup>219</sup> Yet, he does not attempt to redress this claim, but instead only approaches it from a grammatical analysis.

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<sup>218</sup> Furuli points to Hebrews 2:11.

<sup>219</sup> Furuli, *Theology and Bias*, 247.

In the next argument, Furuli compares Proverbs 8 and Colossians 1 and 2. He rightly presents that not only did Paul associate Jesus to the ‘wisdom’ of Proverbs 8, but Jesus himself did so also.<sup>220</sup> However, he follows it by stating that “to suggest a parallel between words in the NT and words in the OT, where there is no direct quotation, may be somewhat elusive.”<sup>221</sup>

Concerning the phrase πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως, Furuli admits that it is grammatically acceptable to include or exclude Jesus from the creation. However, he attempts to dissuade anyone from choosing to exclude him by saying that “with all their ingenuity, those seeking a meaning other than ‘the one who is born first’ are able to list just one example, and that is Psalm 89:28.”<sup>222</sup> It is an undisputed fact that Exodus 4:22 (Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the Lord, “Israel is My son, My first-born.”’) shows evidence that God had chosen Israel as His firstborn although no birth order is implied.

The supremacy of the Son over all creation finds support in a quantity of other passages, namely Romans 14:9 (Lord both of the dead and of the living), 1 Corinthians 15:27-28 and Ephesians 1:22 (all things in subjection under His feet), Philippians 2:10 (at the name of Jesus every knee should bow) and 3:21 (subject all things to Himself), Hebrews 1:2 (heir of all things) and 2:8 (nothing that is not subject to him), 1 Peter 3:22 (angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him), and Revelation 1:5 (ruler of the kings of the earth) in addition to his superiority over both human and spirit beings, as evidenced in Eph. 1:21 (above all rule and authority and power and dominion), Phil. 2:10 (every knee

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<sup>220</sup> Paul referred to Jesus as wisdom in 1 Corinthians 1:24 (Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God) and 1:30 (Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom), whereas Jesus made the same association of himself in Matthew 11:19 (The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax-gatherers and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.) and 12:42 (The queen of the South... came from the ends of the earth to listen to the wisdom of Solomon, and see, something greater than Solomon is here!).

<sup>221</sup> Furuli, *Theology and Bias*, 249.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid, 250.

should bow, of those who are in heaven), and Heb. 1: 6 (let all the angels of God worship Him).

In addition, Colossians 1:16, among a variety of similar passages, states that all things were created by/through/for the Son. Therefore, if Isaiah 44:24 states: “I, YHWH, am doing everything, stretching out the heavens *by myself*”<sup>223</sup> (italics mine) then how could Jesus be the one who created all things, unless he himself is God?

As the Son incarnate, he “is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power.”<sup>224</sup> Stafford does not view the incarnate Son as a visible representation of God but as a ‘copy’ or ‘imprint’ of God in the same way that Adam is made in the ‘form’ of God.<sup>225</sup> However, biblical evidence<sup>226</sup> points to the Son, not as a man formed in God’s image, as Adam and all of mankind are, but as deity: through his divine works (creation, judgment, salvation, forgiveness, resurrection), through his names and designations<sup>227</sup> (Immanuel, Jesus, Lord where the context points to God of the Hebrew Bible,<sup>228</sup> God,<sup>229</sup> Son of God, the Rock), and his status (the fullness of the deity<sup>230</sup> dwells in him bodily; his deserving of worship<sup>231</sup> (seen through doxologies, at his baptism and at the Lord’s supper, in hymns, in prayer), his divine attributes,<sup>232</sup> his position as

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<sup>223</sup> NWT.

<sup>224</sup> Heb. 1:3.

<sup>225</sup> Stafford, *Jehovah’s Witnesses Defended*, 367 n7.

<sup>226</sup> See this explained in greater detail in C. W. Morgan and R. A. Peterson, Eds., *The Deity of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 139. See also Bauckman, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 18-25; Bowman & Komoszewski, *Putting Jesus in His Place*, 256; Bowman, *Jehovah’s Witnesses*, 29.

<sup>227</sup> R. A. Peterson, “Toward a Systematic Theology of the Deity of Christ,” in *The Deity of Christ*, 193–227.

<sup>228</sup> Rom. 10:9-13, Phil. 2:9-11, Heb. 1:10-12, 1Pet.2:3 and 3:15.

<sup>229</sup> Isa. 9:6, John 1:1 and 20:28, Rom. 9:5, Tit.2:13, Heb. 1:8, and 2Pet. 1:1.

<sup>230</sup> Colossians 2:9.

<sup>231</sup> He is to be worshipped (Mat. 28:17, Heb. 1:6 and Rev. 22:3) and addressed in prayer (John 14:14, Rom. 10:12-13, and 1Cor. 1:2).

<sup>232</sup> Eternal (John 1:1-2, 8:58, 17:5, Heb. 1:2 and 12), all-mighty (Mat. 28:18 and Eph. 1:21), all-knowing (John 16:30), omni-present (Mat. 18:20 and 28:20, Eph. 1:23 and 4:10, as well as Col. 3:11), unchangeable (Heb. 1:11-12 and 13:8), unfathomable (Mat. 11:27).



sitting on God's throne,<sup>233</sup> and as seen above, his supremacy of creation.<sup>234</sup> Furthermore, for the Gospel writers, Jesus himself made it clear that he was not just an angel, or a mere man chosen among many.<sup>235</sup> The Jewish leaders also understood the meaning of Jesus' claims since they accused him of blasphemy and of making himself equal to God.<sup>236</sup>

Although both Stafford and Furuli are overtly anti-Trinitarians and accuse those who disagree with them to be not only Trinitarians but guilty of theological bias, there is a case to be done for proposing that the Son is part of a Triune God. A multitude of passages in the Hebrew Bible attest to the Son being referred to as God long before the incarnation. In some passages, one can even find allusions to a third entity. For example, in Isaiah 48:12-16 reads:

<sup>12</sup>“Listen to Me, O Jacob, even Israel whom I called; I am He, I am the first, I am also the last. <sup>13</sup>Surely My hand founded the earth, And My right hand spread out the heavens; When I call to them, they stand together.” <sup>14</sup>“Assemble, all of you, and listen! Who among them has declared these things? The Lord loves him; he shall carry out His good pleasure on Babylon, And His arm *shall be against* the Chaldeans. <sup>15</sup>“I, even I, have spoken; indeed I have called him, I have brought him, and He will make his ways successful. <sup>16</sup>Come near to Me, listen to this: From the first I have not spoken in secret, From the time it took place, I was there. And now the **Lord God** has sent **Me**, and **His Spirit**.”

This passage has been ambiguous both in Hebrew and in Greek and has prompted much debate. Some believe that from verse 12 to 16, there has been a change in speaker from God in verse 12 to verse 16 referring to the prophet Isaiah because he had volunteered his services in verse 6:8, when he exclaimed, “Here I am; send me!”. Others, such as Origen,<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> 2Cor 5:10 (judgment seat), Heb. 1:3, 8:1 and 12:2 (at God's right hand), Rev. 22:1 (the throne of God and of the Lamb).

<sup>234</sup> See also Rom. 9:5 (Christ who is over all), Eph. 1:20-21 (Christ, far above all), 4:10 (far above all the heavens, that He may fill all things), Phil. 2:9-11 (a name that is above every name, [...] Jesus Christ is Lord), Heb. 1:3 (at the right hand of the Majesty on high), and 7:26 (exalted above the heavens).

<sup>235</sup> See Luke 24 and Matthew 9.

<sup>236</sup> See Matthew 26:65, John 5:18 and 10:33.

<sup>237</sup> See Origen in *Contra Celsum* lib. 1.

understand this as a continuation of the admonition of the Lord, who in the verses immediately preceding verse 16, claimed to have created the heavens and the earth.

If one is to understand verse 16 as a continuation of the dialogue spoken by the ‘first and the last’ of verse 12, then verse 16 seems to hint at a third divine entity. The speaker (me) describes himself as ‘the first’ and ‘the last’ (v.12) and speaks of the Lord in the third person (v.15), by whom he is sent (v.16), along with His Spirit (v.16). Proponents of this reading understand the speaker (me) to refer to the Messiah as the one being sent.

But even if one were to understand the passage above to refer to Isaiah and not to Jesus as the Messiah, it is clear from the NT that the canonical writers applied a multitude of Hebrew Bible references to Jesus. Paul who had been a zealous adherent to the Jewish faith, after his conversion showed to those who would listen that Jesus was the promised Messiah of the Hebrew Bible. The following chart demonstrates how he clearly applied this:

PSALM 2: 1-12	ACTS 13: 14-39
<p><sup>1</sup>Why do the nations conspire, and the peoples plot in vain? <sup>2</sup>The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and his anointed, saying, <sup>3</sup>“Let us burst their bonds asunder, and cast their cords from us.” <sup>4</sup>He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord has them in derision. <sup>5</sup>Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, <sup>6</sup>“I have set <b>my king on Zion</b>, my holy hill.” <sup>7</sup><b>I will tell</b> of the decree of the Lord: He said to me, “<b>You are my son; today I have begotten you.</b>” <sup>8</sup>Ask of me, and I <b>will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.</b> <sup>9</sup>You shall break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.” <sup>10</sup>Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. <sup>11</sup>Serve the Lord with fear, with trembling <sup>12</sup>kiss his feet, or he will be angry, and you will perish in the way; for his wrath is quickly kindled. Happy are all who take refuge in him.</p>	<p><sup>14</sup>... Antioch in Pisidia. And on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue ... <sup>16</sup>So Paul stood up and with a gesture began to speak: “You Israelites, and others who fear God, listen [...] <sup>22</sup>He made David their king. In his testimony about him he said, ‘I have found David, son of Jesse, to be a man after my heart, who will carry out all my wishes.’ <sup>23</sup>Of this man’s posterity God has brought to Israel <b>a Savior, Jesus</b>, as he promised; [...] <sup>30</sup>But God raised him from the dead; <sup>31</sup>and for many days he appeared to those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, and they are now his witnesses to the people. <sup>32</sup>And we bring you the good news that <b>what God promised to our ancestors</b> <sup>33</sup><b>he has fulfilled for us</b>, their children, <b>by raising Jesus</b>; as also it is written in the second psalm, ‘<b>You are my Son; today I have begotten you.</b>’ <sup>34</sup>As to his raising him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way, ‘I will give you the holy promises made to David.’ <sup>35</sup>Therefore he has also said in another psalm, ‘You will not let your Holy One experience corruption.’ <sup>36</sup>For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, died, was laid beside his ancestors, and experienced corruption; <sup>37</sup>but he whom God raised up experienced no corruption. <sup>38</sup>Let it be known to you therefore, my brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you; <sup>39</sup>by this Jesus everyone who believes is set free from all those sins from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.”</p>

Figure 5 - Psalm 2 vs. Acts 13

Paul, in his discourse to the Jews assembled in the synagogue, made it clear that what God had promised in the Hebrew Bible is now fulfilled in Jesus. He explains that when the Psalmist wrote ‘today I have begotten you,’ he was prophesying for a future time; this

prophecy had now found fulfillment in Paul's day when God raised Jesus as his King.<sup>238</sup>

Other scholars have demonstrated that Jesus, upon his baptism, had also been declared God's Prophetic Messiah where he was anointed for his earthly ministry.<sup>239</sup> In this scenario, Psalm 2 above has been shown to have fulfillment in Luke 3:21-22:

<sup>21</sup>Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, <sup>22</sup>and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

Considering that the first century Christians and early Church Fathers systematically referred to Jesus as having fulfilled the Hebrew Bible messianic prophecies, but also applied a plethora of Hebrew Bible passages to Jesus, it is not surprising that, from a Christian perspective, Jesus is also found to be described as YHWH was in the Hebrew Bible, and which defined the God of Israel.<sup>240</sup> (See Appendix 9 for NT descriptions of the Son taken from the Hebrew Bible attributes of God; see also Appendix 10 for Hebrew Bible passages alluding to various divine entities.)

In the following chart, just a few verses from the book of Revelation alone show parallel scriptures where Jesus is identified with God:<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>238</sup> For an indepth analysis on this topic, see A. Gagné, and S. Paquette, "Le Fils engendré de Luc, messie prophétique (Lc 3.21-22) et royal (Ac 2,33). De la critique textuelle à la critique rédactionnelle." in *Le Vivant qui fait vivre. Esprit, éthique et résurrection dans le Nouveau Testament. Mélanges offerts à la professeure Odette Mainville*. (Sciences bibliques; études 22). Edited by A. Gagné, A. Gignac and S. Paquette Lessard. Montréal: Médiaspaul, 187-215.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid, 194-200. Odette Mainville had made the case that Jesus had being anointed as prophetic Messiah at his baptism in Luke's Gospel, and was attested to by the Ebionites, in Tatian's *Diatessaron*, by Justin Martyr in his *Dialogue with Trypho*, by Jerome, by Clement of Alexandria, and by Origen. O. Mainville, *l'Esprit dans l'oeuvre de Luc*. HP 45 (Montreal: Fides, 1991), 210-3.

<sup>240</sup> Bowman & Komoszewski, *Putting Jesus in His Place*, 141.

<sup>241</sup> Peterson, *The Deity of Christ*, 160.

VERSE	SPEAKER	SELF-DESIGNATIONS
Rev. 1:8	Lord God	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am the Alpha and the Omega</li> <li>• who is and who was and who is to come</li> <li>• the Almighty</li> </ul>
Rev.1:13-18	one like a son of man (Jesus)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am the first and the last</li> <li>• I am the living One [who] was dead</li> <li>• I am the living One; and I was dead</li> <li>• I am alive forevermore</li> <li>• I have the keys of death and of Hades</li> </ul>
Rev. 21:6-7	He who sits on the throne (God -19:4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am making all things new</li> <li>• I am the Alpha and the Omega</li> <li>• I am the beginning and the end</li> <li>• I give [...] the water of life without cost</li> <li>• I will be his God</li> </ul>
Rev. 22:13	Jesus (22:16)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am the Alpha and the Omega</li> <li>• I am the first and the last</li> <li>• I am the beginning and the end</li> </ul>
Rev. 22:16	Jesus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I sent My angel to testify to you</li> <li>• I am the root and the offspring of David</li> <li>• I am the bright morning star</li> </ul>

**Figure 6 – Jesus as God**

Colossians 1:16 specifically, among a variety of similar NT passages, states that all things were created by/through/for the Son. In the Hebrew Bible, Nehemiah 9:6 states that “You are the Lord, you alone; you have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. To all of them you give life, and the host of heaven worships you.” Therefore the Creator has created the heavens and not just the physical, material and visible world but the entire spiritual realm as well. Christians in the first centuries were familiar with Hebrew Bible writings, would have read Isaiah 44:24 which stated that “I, YHWH (יהוה), am doing everything, stretching out the

heavens by myself<sup>242</sup> and reasoned that if God has created the heavens by himself, then the Son was not involved, unless the Son is also God (יהוה).

First century Christians, who were from a monotheistic background, must have found it difficult to reconcile this ambiguity. God was one, yet the Father was described as the Creator and so was the Son. Polytheism was not an option. It is not surprising to see from the writings of the first century writers to the crystalizing of the Christian doctrines into the Nicene Creed, that there was a gradual honing of doctrine from a binitarian concept to a trinitarian one, which finally included the Holy Spirit as part of the Godhead. As previously mentioned, during this time of defining ‘orthodoxy,’ various theories from various camps of Christians surfaced and, one by one, were declared either correct or in error. But in time, there was a general consensus that God, as defined at the Council of Nicea of 325 C.E. and that of Constantinople of 381 C.E., was a Trinity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Contrary to this general consensus of mainstream Christianity, the WBTS teach the relationship of the Son to the Father under adoptionist<sup>243</sup> and subordinationist perspectives.<sup>244</sup> They believe that Jesus, although begotten through the agency of the Spirit of God, was simply a perfect human.<sup>245</sup> They claim that he grew up like any other human and only at his baptism was he anointed as the Christ.<sup>246</sup> This is not a new theory since some had proposed this view as early as the 2<sup>nd</sup> century C.E. by groups such as the Ebionites, but this adoptionist outlook was later declared ‘heretical’ at the Council of Nicea in 325 C.E. Even if some

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<sup>242</sup> NWT.

<sup>243</sup> Adoptionism refers to Jesus becoming the Son of God at a point in time, either at his baptism or at his resurrection, based on Psalm 2:7 which reads, “You are my son; today I have begotten you.”

<sup>244</sup> Subordinationism claims that the Son is not equal, but subordinate, to the Father. The WBTS claim support for this view in John 14:28 where Jesus said that “the Father is greater than I am.”

<sup>245</sup> See Appendix 7 for WBTS quotes describing their views on Jesus.

<sup>246</sup> “Jesus was anointed with holy spirit after his baptism in water and he thus became Christ or Anointed One, so too with his disciples.” WBTS, *Holy Spirit - The force Behind the Coming New Order* (New York: WBTS, 1975), 90, 113.

contemporary scholars<sup>247</sup> consider that such an adoptionist view existed from the first and second centuries<sup>248</sup> and reflects a valid interpretation of Markan and Pauline writings, the Gospels of Luke and Matthew, on the other hand, point to Jesus as the Son of God as Saviour, Messiah and Lord, even ‘God with us,’ from his very birth.<sup>249</sup> John goes a step further in describing him as the pre-incarnate Word of God who existed ‘in the beginning.’

Therefore, the divinity of the Son is not a new debate. First century NT writers greatly used Hebrew Bible texts and applied them to their experience of the Christ, pointing to the fulfillment of Hebrew Bible prophecies in the life of the Messiah of their day. Similarly today, scholars and theologians constantly analyze and reinterpret the texts to find meaning and to challenge or support their beliefs.

It is also clear that there are a variety of hermeneutical perspectives. The traditional perspective generally recognizes the canon of Scriptures to be the touchstone of biblical interpretation, where Scripture is read in the context of other Scripture, much like the Church Fathers of the early centuries. Others, ascribing to a different view of the texts, will prefer to consider texts beyond the canonical boundaries of accepted writings to contrast and compare a much wider selection of witnesses, and in doing so, to attempt a reconstruction of a plausible historical progression of the Christian set of beliefs in evidence today.

More specifically, adoptionist perspectives, as any other diverging theological perspectives, are a product of their particular hermeneutical outlook. The WTBS, who ascribe to an adoptionist and subordonist view of the Son, claim that their Christological and

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<sup>247</sup> See, as an example, B. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 47-48.

<sup>248</sup> Justin Martyr makes allusion to this in his *Dialogue with Trypho*, but Irenaeus spoke of the ‘Ebionites’ as a heretical judaizing sect. Ebionites believed that Jesus was chosen to become the Messiah when he was anointed at his baptism.

<sup>249</sup> See Matthew 1 and 2 and Luke 2.

theological arguments stem from a literal and accurate analysis of the canon of Scriptures. However, in the context of this thesis and more specifically in relation to the WTBS' interpretation of 'firstborn' as the first of God's created beings, one needs to consider both the traditional Christian hermeneutical reappropriation of Hebrew texts and the traditional understanding of the entire Christian canon of Scripture to form a conclusion. Although it is clear that mine is not the only possible canonical reading, based on my survey of related passages, I have not truly found convincing evidence that the Son must be a created being, unless individual passages are considered solely on a grammatical basis and isolated from the rest of the canon of Scripture.



## CONCLUSION

It is evident, therefore, that the matter is likely not settled. Millions of Jehovah's Witnesses, although honestly seeking to uphold the truth of God's Word, may or may not have a proper understanding of the Son of God and Saviour of humanity. Regardless of the conclusion of this study, many God-seeking and honest people cannot help but benefit by having a clearer picture of the theology implied by declaring Jesus to be the firstborn of creation.

Stafford and Furuli are among the very few scholars siding with Arius in declaring the Son to be a created being. Furuli wrote that 'bias should not be defined on the basis of orthodox religion – that any rendition that does not bolster the traditional faith of the majority is biased.' He adds that the NWT "in some instances, particularly when important doctrinal questions such as the trinity are at stake, they are colored by theology," but that "bias has no place in Bible translation, but theology certainly has."<sup>250</sup> Although they do not admit it in their writings, upon further research it has become evident that Stafford and Furuli are both members of the Jehovah's Witnesses community and therefore see all biblical texts through the Watchtower lens. Both, but Stafford more overtly, consistently denounce anyone contradicting them to be Trinitarians<sup>251</sup> and therefore biased in their views or at best misled. To be fair, other scholars have been quite vocal about the need to question what is now deemed 'orthodox' especially since the writings of Walter Bauer challenging the heresy/orthodoxy divide.

However, considering the amount of scholarly studies done on the subject of 'Christ as firstborn' over the last two millennia, with the majority of scholars providing evidence in

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<sup>250</sup> Furuli, *Theology and Bias*, 307.

<sup>251</sup> See for example: Stafford, *Jehovah's Witnesses Defended*, 303, 318, 320-31, 425.

favour of the Nicene<sup>252</sup> conclusions, namely that the Son is ‘one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God’ who is ‘begotten, not made,’ the onus seems to be on the WTBS to make a clearer hermeneutical case for their stand, especially since they claim to be the only true Christian group which still adheres to the unadulterated first century faith. It is clear that, grammatically and in isolation, the firstborn of creation could be read as the first created being of creation. However, I find it more persuasive that a traditional canonical reading, where Scripture is interpreted by Scripture, favours a traditional perspective of interpretation especially since Colossians 1 also states that ‘he is before all things,’ that ‘all things were created through him and for him,’ and nothing at all was ever created which was not created through him.

Nevertheless, as has been mentioned previously, it is also a historical fact that the Watchtower holds views that are not unique to them. Adoptionist and subordinationist positions were evident from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century as various groups struggled to make sense of a monotheistic God as defined by the emerging canon of Scriptures. Justin Martyr understood the Logos to be subordinate to God. He described the Son as Holy Spirit, Wisdom, an angel, and as God. Tertullian understood that God could not have been the Father until there was a Son. Origen explained it as “the Father was the beginning of the Son” but also added that if all things were made through the Logos, “they were not made by the Logos, but by a stronger and greater than he,” namely the Father.

However, history also demonstrates the process by which various ecumenical councils labeled these views, and others which surfaced, as ‘heretical’ while striving to bring

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<sup>252</sup> As defined at the First Council of Nicea in 325 C.E. and later refined at the Council of Constantinople in 381 C.E.

precision to the Christian doctrines and ensure that believers would not be misled by erroneous teaching.

However, although they do not appear to fit the general Christian understanding of the Son and his position within the Godhead, can we still consider Jehovah's Witnesses to be Christians? If we define Christians as followers of Christ, the Watchtower certainly claim Jesus as their Saviour, although they adhere to a different soteriology than most mainstream Christians. Mormons also claim Jesus as their Saviour and as such, include him in their legal denominational name as 'The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.' Many of the early Christians mentioned in this thesis, such as Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Jerome, or even Arius or the Ebionites, were all considered Christians, yet some were later denounced as 'heretical.' Since they all had varied Christological views, what should determine our parameters for declaring certain factions as Christians and others as heretical, both then and now? If we define a Christian as simply a follower of Jesus Christ, then there is a need to demarginalize many groups who claim Jesus as their Saviour but who do not adhere to the Nicene Creed or to the tenets of mainstream Christianity. On the other hand, if we consider the Nicene Creed to be the touchstone of basic Christianity, then even some denominations of mainstream Christianity might need a closer look considering the various schisms which have sprouted over time, most of which originated from doctrinal disagreements.

In furthering this study focusing on the legitimacy of the Watchtower teachings, more attention should be brought to the source of their doctrines. Since they are a relatively new religion,<sup>253</sup> why have they opted to define Jesus as a perfect man rather than a member of the

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<sup>253</sup> In 1870, Charles Taze Russell started an independent group to study the Bible because he disagreed with many mainstream Christian doctrines, such as hellfire, the immortality of the soul, the Trinity, etc. He then joined with Nelson H. Barbour in 1876 with which he jointly published *Herald of the Morning*, in 1878. They later split up over doctrinal issues. In 1879 Russell began publishing *Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of*

Godhead, as other mainstream Christian communities had for nearly two millennia? Why in the same vein, have they veered from most of the traditional Christian doctrines? Many questions are left unanswered and further investigation is necessary to uncover the source of these variations and the reasons for their choice to adopt these as dogma at the onset of the development for their movement.

Regardless of the reasons why the WTBS choose to adopt doctrines that are so divergent from the mainstream Christian communities, the question at the onset of this thesis deserves to be answered. The entire canon of Scripture focuses on God's relationship with mankind and his provision of a Messiah to redeem fallen man from the judgment they deserve. Christology is central to the Christian faith. Can one conclude that there is scriptural legitimacy for Jehovah's Witnesses' Christology of the 'firstborn' as the first of God's created beings? Many first century self-professed Christians held this very view or at least views diverging from the Christology now considered 'orthodox' by mainstream Christian communities. In time, these early teachings, later declared to be either accurate or erroneous, served to crystalize the faith for the majority. The very fact that scholars are still debating these teachings today implies that the answer is not so categorically conclusive. However, as stated in the previous chapter, based on the traditional Christian hermeneutical reappropriation of Hebrew texts and the traditional understanding of the entire Christian canon of Scripture, the claim that the Son must be a created being does not truly find irrefutable substantiation.

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Christ's Presence (now the Watchtower), and thirty congregations were established. For greater historical details, refer to *Jehovah's Witnesses—Proclaimers of God's Kingdom*, (Brooklyn, NY: WBTS, 1993), 42-60.

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APPENDIX 1

*Colossians 1:15-20*

*Comparison of New World Translation and Author's Translation*



## Colossians 1:15-20

NWT	MY TRANSLATION
<p><sup>15</sup>He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; <sup>16</sup>because by means of him all <b>[other]</b> things were created in the heavens and upon the earth, the things visible and the things invisible, no matter whether they are thrones or lordships or governments or authorities. All <b>[other]</b> things have been created through him and for him. <sup>17</sup>Also, he is before all <b>[other]</b> things and by means of him all <b>[other]</b> things were made to exist, <sup>18</sup>and he is the head of the body, the congregation. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that he might become the one who is first in all things; <sup>19</sup>because [God] saw good for all fullness to dwell in him, <sup>20</sup>and through him to reconcile again to himself all <b>[other]</b> things by making peace through the blood [he shed] on the torture stake, no matter whether they are the things upon the earth or the things in the heavens.</p>	<p><sup>15</sup>[He] is a likeness of the invisible God, firstborn of all creation, <sup>16</sup>so that by Him <b>all things</b> were created, in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or lordships, or rulers or authorities; <b>all things were created</b> through Him and in Him; <sup>17</sup>he is before all <b>[things]</b> and in him <b>all [things] hold together</b>. <sup>18</sup>He is the head of the body, the church; [He] is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, so that He Himself might come to have first place in all things. <sup>19</sup>For He is well pleased [for] all the fullness to dwell in him <sup>20</sup>and through Him to reconcile <b>all things</b> to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross, through Him, whether [things] on earth or [things] in heaven.</p>

## APPENDIX 2

### *Occurrences of 'Firstborn' in the Hebrew Bible*

## OCCURRENCES OF FIRSTBORN IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

*bekhor* (בְּכוֹר) is usually translated as ‘firstborn son’, *bekirah* (בְּכִירָה) as ‘firstborn or older daughter’, *bekhorah* (בְּכוֹרָה) as ‘birthright’, *bekhorot* (בְּכוֹרוֹת) as ‘firstlings’, and *bikkurim* as ‘firstfruits’

VERSE # (NRSV)	NRSV TRANSLATION	HEBREW WORD	WORD ANALYSIS	MEANING
Gen 10:15	Canaan became the father of Sidon his <b>firstborn</b> , and Heth	בְּכוֹרִי	noun common masculine singular construct suffix 3rd person masculine singular	oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
Gen 19:31	And the <b>firstborn</b> said to the younger, “Our father is old, and there is not a man on earth to come in to us after the manner of all the world.”	הַבְּכִירָה	הַ particle article בְּכִיר adjective feminine singular absolute	[the] eldest or first-born female (order of birth)
Gen 19:33	So they made their father drink wine that night; and the <b>firstborn</b> went in, and lay with her father; he did not know when she lay down or when she rose.	הַבְּכִירָה	הַ particle article בְּכִיר adjective feminine singular absolute	[the] eldest or first-born female (order of birth)
Gen 19:34	On the next day, the <b>firstborn</b> said to the younger, “Look, I lay last night with my father; let us make him drink wine tonight also; then you go in and lie with him, so that we may preserve offspring through our father.”	הַבְּכִירָה	הַ particle article בְּכִיר adjective feminine singular absolute	[the] eldest or first-born female (order of birth)
Gen 19:37	The <b>firstborn</b> bore a son, and named him Moab; he is the ancestor of the Moabites to this day.	הַבְּכִירָה	הַ particle article בְּכִיר adjective feminine singular absolute	[the] eldest or first-born female (order of birth)
Gen 22:21	Uz the <b>firstborn</b> , Buz his brother, Kemuel the father of Aram,	בְּכוֹרִי	noun common masculine singular construct suffix 3rd person masculine singular	oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
Gen 25:13	These are the names of the sons of Ishmael, named in the order of their birth: Nebaioth, the <b>firstborn</b> of Ishmael; and Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam,	בְּכוֹר	noun common masculine singular construct	oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
Gen 27:19	Jacob said to his father, “I am Esau your <b>firstborn</b> . I have done as you told me; now sit up and eat of my game, so that you may bless me.”	בְּכוֹרִי	noun common masculine singular construct suffix 2nd person masculine singular	oldest or first-born male (order of birth)

Gen 27:32	His father Isaac said to him, "Who are you?" He answered, "I am your <b>firstborn</b> son, Esau."	בְּכֹרֶךָ	noun common masculine singular construct suffix 2nd person masculine singular	oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
Gen 29:26	Laban said, "This is not done in our country-- giving the younger before the <b>firstborn</b> ."	הַבְּכֹרֶה	particle article בְּכֹרֶה adjective feminine singular absolute	[the] eldest or first-born female (order of birth)
Gen 35:23	The sons of Leah: Reuben (Jacob's <b>firstborn</b> ), Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun.	בְּכוֹר	noun common masculine singular construct	oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
Gen 36:15	These are the clans of the sons of Esau. The sons of Eliphaz the <b>firstborn</b> of Esau: the clans Teman, Omar, Zepho, Kenaz,	בְּכוֹרֵי	noun common masculine singular construct	oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
Gen 38:6	Judah took a wife for Er his <b>firstborn</b> ; her name was Tamar.	בְּכוֹרֶי	noun common masculine singular construct suffix 3rd person masculine singular	oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
Gen 38:7	But Er, Judah's <b>firstborn</b> , was wicked in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord put him to death.	בְּכוֹרֵי	noun common masculine singular construct	oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
Gen 41:51	Joseph named the <b>firstborn</b> Manasseh, "For," he said, "God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's house."	הַבְּכוֹרֶה	particle article בְּכוֹרֶה noun common masculine singular absolute	[the] oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
Gen 43:33	When they were seated before him, the <b>firstborn</b> according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth, the men looked at one another in amazement.	הַבְּכוֹרֶה	particle article בְּכוֹרֶה noun common masculine singular absolute	oldest or first-born male
Gen 46:8	Now these are the names of the Israelites, Jacob and his offspring, who came to Egypt. Reuben, Jacob's <b>firstborn</b> ,	בְּכוֹרֵי	noun common masculine singular construct	oldest or first-born male
Gen 48:14	But Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, and his left hand on the head of Manasseh, crossing his hands, for Manasseh was the <b>firstborn</b> .	הַבְּכוֹרֶה	particle article בְּכוֹרֶה noun common masculine singular absolute	[the] oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
Gen 48:18	Joseph said to his father, "Not so, my father! Since this one is the firstborn, put your right hand on his head."	הַבְּכוֹרֶה	particle article בְּכוֹרֶה noun common masculine singular absolute	[the] oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
Gen 49:3	Reuben, you are my <b>firstborn</b> , my might and the <b>first fruits</b> of my vigor, excelling in rank and excelling in power.	בְּכוֹרֵי	noun common masculine singular construct suffix 1st person common singular	oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
		וְרֵאשִׁית	particle conjunction רֵאשִׁית noun common feminine singular construct	beginning, first, best or first-fruit

Exod 4:22	Then you shall say to Pharaoh, "Thus says the Lord: Israel is my <b>firstborn</b> son."	בְּכֹרִי	noun common masculine singular construct suffix 1st person common singular	legal heir by election
Exod 4:23	I said to you, "Let my son go that he may worship me." But you refused to let him go; now I will kill your <b>firstborn</b> son.	בְּכֹרְךָ	noun common masculine singular construct suffix 2nd person masculine singular	oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
Exod 6:14	The following are the heads of their ancestral houses: the sons of Reuben, the <b>firstborn</b> of Israel: Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi; these are the families of Reuben.	בְּכֹרֵי	noun common masculine singular construct	oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
Exod 11:5	Every <b>firstborn</b> in the land of Egypt shall die, from the <b>firstborn</b> of Pharaoh who sits on his throne to the <b>firstborn</b> of the female slave who is behind the handmill, and all the <b>firstborn</b> of the livestock.	כָּל-בְּכוֹרֵי  מִבְּכוֹרֵי בְּכוֹרֵי בְּכוֹרֵי	כָּל noun common masculine singular construct, בְּכוֹרֵי noun common masculine singular absolute  מִן particle preposition, בְּכוֹרֵי noun common masculine singular construct  noun common masculine singular construct	all/each/every oldest or first-born male (order of birth)  out of / from first-born male (order of birth)  first-born or oldest male (order of birth)
Exod 12:12	For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike down every <b>firstborn</b> in the land of Egypt, both human beings and animals; on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord.	כָּל-בְּכוֹרֵי	כָּל noun common masculine singular construct, בְּכוֹרֵי noun common masculine singular absolute	all/each/every oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
Exod 12:29	At midnight the Lord struck down all the <b>firstborn</b> in the land of Egypt, from the <b>firstborn</b> of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the <b>firstborn</b> of the prisoner who was in the dungeon, and all the <b>firstborn</b> of the livestock.	כָּל-בְּכוֹרֵי  מִבְּכוֹרֵי	כָּל noun common masculine singular construct, בְּכוֹרֵי noun common masculine singular absolute  מִן particle preposition, בְּכוֹרֵי noun common masculine singular construct noun	all/each/every oldest or first-born male (order of birth)  out of / from [the] first-born or oldest male (order of birth)

			בְּכוֹר בְּכוֹר	noun common masculine singular construct	first-born or oldest male (order of birth)
Exod 13:2	Consecrate to me all the <b>firstborn</b> ; whatever is the <b>first to open</b> the womb among the Israelites, of human beings and animals, is mine.		כָּל-בְּכוֹר  פֶּטֶר	כל noun common masculine singular construct, בְּכוֹר noun common masculine singular absolute  פֶּטֶר noun common masculine singular construct	all/each/every oldest or first- born male (order of birth)  first-born or first to open a mother's womb
Exod 13:12	you shall set apart to the Lord all that <b>first opens the womb</b> . All the <b>firstborn</b> of your livestock that are males shall be the Lord's.		רַחֵם כָּל-פֶּטֶר  וְכָל-פֶּטֶר	כל noun common masculine singular construct רַחֵם noun common masculine singular construct common masculine singular absolute  וְ particle conjunction כל noun common masculine singular construct פֶּטֶר noun common masculine singular construct	all/each/every that which first opens womb  all/each/every first-born or first to open a mother's womb
Exod 13:13	But every <b>firstborn</b> donkey you shall redeem with a sheep; if you do not redeem it, you must break its neck. Every <b>firstborn</b> male among your children you shall redeem.		פֶּטֶר  בְּכוֹר	פֶּטֶר noun common masculine singular construct  noun common masculine singular construct	first-born or first to open a mother's womb  oldest or first- born male (order of birth)
Exod 13:15	When Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the Lord killed all the <b>firstborn</b> in the land of Egypt, from human <b>firstborn</b> to the <b>firstborn</b> of animals. Therefore I sacrifice to the Lord every male		כָּל-בְּכוֹר	כל noun common masculine singular construct, בְּכוֹר noun common	all/each/every oldest or first- born male

	that <i>first</i> opens the womb, but every <b>firstborn</b> of my sons I redeem.	<p>מִבְּכֹר</p> <p>בְּכֹר</p> <p>פֶּטֶר</p> <p>בְּכֹר</p>	<p>masculine singular absolute</p> <p>מִן particle preposition</p> <p>בְּכֹר noun common masculine singular construct ,</p> <p>noun common masculine singular construct noun</p> <p>common masculine singular construct noun</p> <p>common masculine singular construct</p>	<p>(order of birth)</p> <p>out of / from [the] first-born or oldest male (order of birth)</p> <p>oldest or first-born male (order of birth)</p> <p>first-born or first to open a mother's womb</p> <p>oldest or first-born male (order of birth)</p> <p>oldest or first-born male (order of birth)</p>
Exod 22:29	You shall not delay to make offerings from the fullness of your harvest and from the outflow of your presses. The <b>firstborn</b> of your sons you shall give to me.	בְּכֹר	noun common masculine singular construct	oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
Exod 34:19	All that first opens the womb is mine, all your male livestock, the <b>firstborn</b> of cow and sheep.	כָּל-פֶּטֶר	<p>כל noun common masculine singular construct</p> <p>פֶּטֶר noun common masculine singular construct</p>	all/each/every first-born or first to open a mother's womb
		פֶּטֶר	פֶּטֶר noun common masculine singular construct	first-born or first to open a mother's womb
Exod 34:20	The <b>firstborn</b> of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, or if you will not redeem it you shall break its neck. All the <b>firstborn</b> of your sons you shall redeem. No one shall appear before me empty-handed.	וּפֶטֶר	<p>ו particle conjunction</p> <p>פֶּטֶר noun common masculine singular construct</p>	first-born or first to open a mother's womb
		בְּכֹר	noun common masculine singular construct	oldest or first-born male (order of birth)

Lev 27:26	A <b>firstling</b> of animals, however, which as a <b>firstling</b> belongs to the Lord, cannot be consecrated by anyone; whether ox or sheep, it is the Lord's.	בְּכוֹרִי	noun common masculine singular absolute	oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
Num 1:20	The descendants of Reuben, Israel's <b>firstborn</b> , their lineage, in their clans, by their ancestral houses, according to the number of names, individually, every male from twenty years old and upward, everyone able to go to war:	יְבָכָרִי	verb pual imperfect 3rd person masculine singular	bear first-fruit
Num 3:2	The descendants of Reuben, Israel's <b>firstborn</b> , their lineage, in their clans, by their ancestral houses, according to the number of names, individually, every male from twenty years old and upward, everyone able to go to war:	בְּכוֹרִי	noun common masculine singular construct	oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
Num 3:12	These are the names of the sons of Aaron: Nadab the <b>firstborn</b> , and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar;	הַבְּכוֹרִי	particle article הַ noun common masculine singular absolute	[the] oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
Num 3:12	I hereby accept the Levites from among the Israelites as substitutes for all the <b>firstborn</b> that open the womb among the Israelites. The Levites shall be mine,	כָּל-בְּכוֹרִי	noun common masculine singular construct, בְּכוֹרִי noun common masculine singular absolute	all/each/every oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
Num 3:13	for all the <b>firstborn</b> are mine; when I killed all the <b>firstborn</b> in the land of Egypt, I consecrated for my own all the <b>firstborn</b> in Israel, both human and animal; they shall be mine. I am the Lord.	בְּטֹרִי	noun common masculine singular construct	first-born or first to open a mother's womb
Num 3:40	Then the Lord said to Moses: Enroll all the <b>firstborn</b> males of the Israelites, from a month old and upward, and count their names.			
Num 3:41	But you shall accept the Levites for me-- I am the Lord -- as substitutes for all the <b>firstborn</b> among the Israelites, and the livestock of the Levites as substitutes for all the <b>firstborn</b> among the livestock of the Israelites.			
Num 3:42	So Moses enrolled all the <b>firstborn</b> among the Israelites, as the Lord commanded him.	כָּל-בְּכוֹרִי	noun common masculine singular construct, בְּכוֹרִי noun common masculine singular absolute	all/each/every oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
Num 3:43	The total enrollment, all the <b>firstborn</b> males from a month old and upward, counting the number of names, was twenty-two thousand two hundred seventy-three.			



Num 3:45	Accept the Levites as substitutes for all the <b>firstborn</b> among the Israelites, and the livestock of the Levites as substitutes for their livestock; and the Levites shall be mine. I am the Lord.				
Num 3:46	As the price of redemption of the two hundred seventy-three of the <b>firstborn</b> of the Israelites, over and above the number of the Levites,	מִבְּכֹרִים	מִן	particle preposition, בְּכֹרִי noun common masculine singular construct	out of / from [the] first-born or oldest male (order of birth)
Num 3:50	from the <b>firstborn</b> of the Israelites he took the money, one thousand three hundred sixty-five shekels, reckoned by the shekel of the sanctuary;	בְּכֹרִי		noun common masculine singular construct	oldest or first- born male (order of birth)
Num 8:16	For they are unreservedly given to me from among the Israelites; I have taken them for myself, in place of all <i>that open the womb</i> , the <b>firstborn</b> of all the Israelites.	פִּתְּחֵי בְּכֹרִי		noun common feminine singular construct  noun common masculine singular construct	first-born or first to open a mother's womb  oldest or first- born male (order of birth)
Num 8:17	For all the <b>firstborn</b> among the Israelites are mine, both human and animal. On the day that I struck down all the <b>firstborn</b> in the land of Egypt I consecrated them for myself,	כָּל-בְּכֹרִי	כָּל	noun common masculine singular construct, בְּכֹרִי noun common masculine singular absolute	all/each/every oldest or first- born male (order of birth)
Num 8:18	but I have taken the Levites in place of all the <b>firstborn</b> among the Israelites.				all/each/every oldest or first- born male (order of birth)
Num 18:15	The <i>first issue of the womb</i> of all creatures, human and animal, which is offered to the Lord, shall be yours; but the <b>firstborn</b> of human beings you shall redeem, and the <b>firstborn</b> of unclean animals you shall redeem.	כָּל-פִּתְּחֵי בְּכֹרִי		noun common masculine singular construct, פִּתְּחֵי noun common masculine singular construct  noun common masculine singular construct	all/each/every [which is] first- born or first to open a mother's womb  oldest or first- born male (order of birth)

Num 18:17	But the <b>firstborn</b> of a cow, or the <b>firstborn</b> of a sheep, or the <b>firstborn</b> of a goat, you shall not redeem; they are holy. You shall dash their blood on the altar, and shall turn their fat into smoke as an offering by fire for a pleasing odor to the Lord;	בְּכוֹרִי	noun common masculine singular construct	oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
Num 26:5	Reuben, the <b>firstborn</b> of Israel. The descendants of Reuben: of Hanoch, the clan of the Hanochites; of Pallu, the clan of the Palluites;	בְּכוֹרִי	noun common masculine singular construct	oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
Num 33:4	while the Egyptians were burying all their <b>firstborn</b> , whom the Lord had struck down among them. The Lord executed judgments even against their gods.	כָּל-בְּכוֹרֵי	כל noun common masculine singular construct, בְּכוֹרֵי noun common masculine singular absolute	all/each/every oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
Deut 21:15	If a man has two wives, one of them loved and the other disliked, and if both the loved and the disliked have borne him sons, the <b>firstborn</b> being the son of the one who is disliked,	הַבְּכוֹרִי	ה particle article בְּכוֹרֵי noun common masculine singular absolute	[the] oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
Deut 21:16	then on the day when he wills his possessions to his sons, he is not permitted to treat the son of the loved as the <b>firstborn</b> in preference to the son of the disliked, who is the <b>firstborn</b> .	לְבֶכֶר	ל particle preposition בְּכַר verb piel infinitive construct	to bear first-fruit or child
Deut 21:17	He must acknowledge as <b>firstborn</b> the son of the one who is disliked, giving him a double portion of all that he has; since he is the first issue of his virility, the right of the <b>firstborn</b> is his.	הַבְּכוֹרִי	ה particle article בְּכוֹרֵי noun common masculine singular absolute	[the] oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
Deut 25:6	and the <b>firstborn</b> whom she bears shall succeed to the name of the deceased brother, so that his name may not be blotted out of Israel.	הַבְּכוֹרֵה	ה particle article בְּכוֹרֵה noun common feminine singular absolute	[the] birthright
Deut 33:17	A <b>firstborn</b> bull— majesty is his! His horns are the horns of a wild ox; with them he gores the peoples, driving them to the ends of the earth; such are the myriads of Ephraim, such the thousands of Manasseh.	הַבְּכוֹרִי	ה particle article בְּכוֹרֵי noun common masculine singular absolute	[the] oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
		בְּכוֹרִי	noun common masculine singular construct	oldest or first-born male (order of birth)

Josh 6:26	Joshua then pronounced this oath, saying, "Cursed before the Lord be anyone who tries to build this city-- this Jericho! At the cost of his <b>firstborn</b> he shall lay its foundation, and at the cost of his youngest he shall set up its gates!"	בְּכֹרֹוֹ		בְּ particle preposition כֹּרֹ noun common masculine singular construct suffix 3rd person masculine singular	in/at/by [the] oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
Josh 17:1	Then allotment was made to the tribe of Manasseh, for he was the <b>firstborn</b> of Joseph. To Machir the firstborn of Manasseh, the father of Gilead, were allotted Gilead and Bashan, because he was a warrior.	בְּכֹרִי		noun common masculine singular construct	oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
Judg 8:20	So he said to Jether his <b>firstborn</b> , "Go kill them!" But the boy did not draw his sword, for he was afraid, because he was still a boy.	בְּכֹרִי		noun common masculine singular construct suffix 3rd person masculine singular	[his] first-born (order of birth)
1 Sam 8:2	The name of his <b>firstborn</b> son was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judges in Beer-sheba.	הַבְּכֹרִי		הַ particle article בְּכֹרִי noun common masculine singular absolute	[the] oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
1 Sam 14:49	Now the sons of Saul were Jonathan, Ishvi, and Malchishua; and the names of his two daughters were these: the name of the <b>firstborn</b> was Merab, and the name of the younger, Michal.	הַבְּכֹרִיָּה		הַ particle article בְּכֹרִי adjective feminine singular absolute	[the] oldest or first-born female (order of birth)
1 Sam 17:13	The three eldest sons of Jesse had followed Saul to the battle; the names of his three sons who went to the battle were Eliab the <b>firstborn</b> , and next to him Abinadab, and the third Shammah.	הַבְּכֹרִי		הַ particle article בְּכֹרִי noun common masculine singular absolute	[the] oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
2 Sam 3:2	Sons were born to David at Hebron: his <b>firstborn</b> was Amnon, of Ahinoam of Jezreel;	בְּכֹרֹוֹ		noun common masculine singular construct suffix 3rd person masculine singular	[his] first-born (order of birth)
1 Kgs 16:34	In his days Hiel of Bethel built Jericho; he laid its foundation at the cost of Abiram his <b>firstborn</b> , and set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the Lord, which he spoke by Joshua son of Nun.	בְּכֹרִי		noun common masculine singular construct suffix 3rd person masculine singular	[his] first-born (order of birth)
2 Kgs 3:27	Then he took his <b>firstborn</b> son who was to succeed him, and offered him as a burnt offering on the wall. And great wrath came upon Israel, so they withdrew from him and returned to their own land.	הַבְּכֹרִי		הַ particle article בְּכֹרִי noun common masculine singular absolute	[the] oldest or first-born male (order of birth)

1 Chr 1:13	Canaan became the father of Sidon his <b>firstborn</b> , and Heth,	בְּכוֹרִי	noun common masculine singular construct suffix 3rd person masculine singular	[his] first-born (order of birth)
1 Chr 1:29	These are their genealogies: the <b>firstborn</b> of Ishmael, Nebaioth; and Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam,	בְּכוֹרִי	noun common masculine singular construct	oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
1 Chr 2:3	The sons of Judah: Er, Onan, and Shelah; these three the Canaanite woman Bath-shua bore to him. Now Er, Judah's <b>firstborn</b> , was wicked in the sight of the Lord, and he put him to death.	בְּכוֹרִי	noun common masculine singular construct	oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
1 Chr 2:13	Jesse became the father of Eliab his <b>firstborn</b> , Abinadab the second, Shimea the third,	בְּכוֹרִי	noun common masculine singular construct suffix 3rd person masculine singular	[his] first-born (order of birth)
1 Chr 2:25	The sons of Jerahmeel, the <b>firstborn</b> of Hezron: Ram his <b>firstborn</b> , Bunah, Oren, Ozem, and Ahijah.	בְּכוֹרִי	noun common masculine singular construct	oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
		הַבְּכוֹרִי	particle article הַ common masculine singular absolute	[the] oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
1 Chr 2:27	The sons of Ram, the <b>firstborn</b> of Jerahmeel: Maaz, Jamin, and Eker.	בְּכוֹרִי	noun common masculine singular construct	oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
1 Chr 2:42	The sons of Caleb brother of Jerahmeel: Mesha his <b>firstborn</b> , who was father of Ziph. The sons of Mareshah father of Hebron.	בְּכוֹרִי	noun common masculine singular construct suffix 3rd person masculine singular	[his] first-born (order of birth)
1 Chr 2:50	These were the descendants of Caleb. The sons of Hur the <b>firstborn</b> of Ephrathah: Shobal father of Kiriath-jearim,	בְּכוֹרִי	noun common masculine singular construct	oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
1 Chr 3:1	These are the sons of David who were born to him in Hebron: the <b>firstborn</b> Amnon, by Ahinoam the Jezreelite; the second Daniel, by Abigail the Carmelite;	הַבְּכוֹרִי	particle article הַ common masculine singular absolute	[the] oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
1 Chr 3:15	The sons of Josiah: Johanan the <b>firstborn</b> , the second Jehoiakim, the third Zedekiah, the fourth Shallum.	הַבְּכוֹרִי	particle article הַ common masculine singular absolute	[the] oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
1 Chr 4:4	and Penuel was the father of Gedor, and Ezer the father of Hushah. These were the sons of Hur, the firstborn of Ephrathah, the father of Bethlehem.	בְּכוֹרִי	noun common masculine singular construct	oldest or first-born male (order of birth)

1 Chr 5:1	The sons of Reuben the <b>firstborn</b> of Israel. (He was the <b>firstborn</b> , but because he defied his father's bed his <b>birthright</b> was given to the sons of Joseph son of Israel, so that he is not enrolled in the genealogy according to the <b>birthright</b> ;	בְּכוֹרָה הַבְּכוֹרָה	בְּכוֹרָה הַבְּכוֹרָה	noun common masculine singular construct particle article בְּכוֹרָה noun common masculine singular absolute noun common feminine singular construct suffix 3rd person masculine singular particle preposition לַ particle article בְּכוֹרָה noun common feminine singular absolute noun common masculine singular construct	oldest or first-born male (order of birth) [the] oldest or first-born male (order of birth) birthright to/at/in [the] birthright
1 Chr 5:3	The sons of Reuben, the <b>firstborn</b> of Israel: Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi.	בְּכוֹרָה	בְּכוֹרָה	noun common masculine singular construct	oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
1 Chr 6:28	The sons of Samuel: Joel his <b>firstborn</b> , the second Abijah.	הַבְּכוֹרָה	הַבְּכוֹרָה	particle article בְּכוֹרָה noun common masculine singular absolute	[the] oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
1 Chr 8:1	Benjamin became the father of Bela his <b>firstborn</b> , Ashbel the second, Aharah the third,	בְּכוֹרָה	בְּכוֹרָה	noun common masculine singular construct suffix 3rd person masculine singular	[his] first-born (order of birth)
1 Chr 8:30	His <b>firstborn</b> son: Abdon, then Zur, Kish, Baal, Nadab,	הַבְּכוֹרָה	הַבְּכוֹרָה	particle article בְּכוֹרָה noun common masculine singular absolute	[the] oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
1 Chr 8:39	The sons of his brother Eshek: Ulam his <b>firstborn</b> , Jeush the second, and Eliphelet the third.	בְּכוֹרָה	בְּכוֹרָה	noun common masculine singular construct suffix 3rd person masculine singular	[his] first-born (order of birth)
1 Chr 9:5	And of the Shilonites: Asaiah the <b>firstborn</b> , and his sons.	הַבְּכוֹרָה	הַבְּכוֹרָה	particle article בְּכוֹרָה noun common masculine singular absolute	[the] oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
1 Chr 9:31	and Mattithiah, one of the Levites, the <b>firstborn</b> of Shallum the Korahite, was in charge of making the flat cakes.	הַבְּכוֹרָה	הַבְּכוֹרָה	particle article בְּכוֹרָה noun common masculine singular absolute	[the] oldest or first-born male (order of birth)

1 Chr 9:36	His <b>firstborn</b> son was Abdon, then Zur, Kish, Baal, Ner, Nadab,	הַבְּכוֹרִי	הָ particle article common masculine singular absolute	בְּכוֹרִי noun common masculine singular absolute	[the] oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
1 Chr 26:2	Meshelemiah had sons: Zechariah the <b>firstborn</b> , Jediahel the second, Zebadiah the third, Jathniel the fourth,	הַבְּכוֹרִי	הָ particle article common masculine singular absolute	בְּכוֹרִי noun common masculine singular absolute	[the] oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
1 Chr 26:4	Obed-edom had sons: Shemaiah the <b>firstborn</b> , Jehozabad the second, Joah the third, Sachar the fourth, Nethanel the fifth,	הַבְּכוֹרִי	הָ particle article common masculine singular absolute	בְּכוֹרִי noun common masculine singular absolute	[the] oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
1 Chr 26:10	Hosah, of the sons of Merari, had sons: Shimri the chief (for though he was not the <b>firstborn</b> , his father made him chief),	בְּכוֹרִי	noun common masculine singular absolute	noun common masculine singular absolute	oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
2 Chr 21:3	Their father gave them many gifts, of silver, gold, and valuable possessions, together with fortified cities in Judah; but he gave the kingdom to Jehoram, because he was the <b>firstborn</b> .	הַבְּכוֹרִי	הָ particle article common masculine singular absolute	בְּכוֹרִי noun common masculine singular absolute	[the] oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
Neh 10:36	also to bring to the house of our God, to the priests who minister in the house of our God, the <b>firstborn</b> of our sons and of our livestock, as it is written in the law, and the <b>firstlings</b> of our herds and of our flocks;	בְּכוֹרֹת בְּכוֹרֵי	noun common feminine plural construct noun common masculine plural construct	noun common feminine plural noun common masculine plural	firstlings (order of birth) oldest or first-born males (order of birth)
Job 18:13	By disease their skin is consumed, the <b>firstborn</b> of Death consumes their limbs.	בְּכוֹרִי	noun common masculine singular construct	noun common masculine singular construct	oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
Ps 78:51	He struck all the <b>firstborn</b> in Egypt, the first issue of their strength in the tents of Ham.	כָּל-בְּכוֹרִי	כָּל noun common masculine singular construct בְּכוֹרִי noun common masculine singular absolute	כָּל noun common masculine singular construct בְּכוֹרִי noun common masculine singular absolute	all/each/every oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
Ps 89:27	I will make him the <b>firstborn</b> , the highest of the kings of the earth.	בְּכוֹרִי	noun common masculine singular absolute	noun common masculine singular absolute	first of rank by election
Ps 105:36	He struck down all the <b>firstborn</b> in their land, the first issue of all their strength.	כָּל-בְּכוֹרִי	כָּל noun common masculine singular construct בְּכוֹרִי noun common masculine singular absolute	כָּל noun common masculine singular construct בְּכוֹרִי noun common masculine singular absolute	all/each/every oldest or first-born male (order of birth)

Ps 135:8	He it was who struck down the <b>firstborn</b> of Egypt, both human beings and animals;	בְּכוֹרֵי	noun common masculine plural construct	oldest or first-born males (order of birth)
Ps 136:10	who struck Egypt through their <b>firstborn</b> , for his steadfast love endures forever;	בְּכוֹרֵיהֶם	בְּ particle preposition בְּכוֹר noun common masculine plural construct suffix 3rd person masculine plural	[their] oldest or first-born males (order of birth)
Isa 14:30	The <b>firstborn</b> of the poor will graze, and the needy lie down in safety; but I will make your root die of famine, and your remnant I will kill.	בְּכוֹרֵי	noun common masculine plural construct	oldest or first-born males (order of birth)
Jer 31:9	With weeping they shall come, and with consolations I will lead them back, I will let them walk by brooks of water, in a straight path in which they shall not stumble; for I have become a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my <b>firstborn</b> .	בְּכוֹרִי	noun common masculine singular construct suffix 1st person common singular	[my] oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
Eze 20:26	I defiled them through their very gifts, in their offering up all their <b>firstborn</b> , in order that I might horrify them, so that they might know that I am the Lord.	פְּטוֹרֵי	noun common masculine singular construct	first-born or first to open a mother's womb
Mic 6:7	Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my <b>firstborn</b> for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?	בְּכוֹרִי	noun common masculine singular construct suffix 1st person common singular	[my] oldest or first-born male (order of birth)
Zech 12:10	And I will pour out a spirit of compassion and supplication on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that, when they look on the one whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a <b>firstborn</b> .	הַבְּכוֹר	הַ particle article בְּכוֹר noun common masculine singular absolute	[the] oldest or first-born male (order of birth)

### APPENDIX 3

#### *Occurrences of 'Firstborn' in the Greek NT*



# OCCURRENCES OF FIRSTBORN IN THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

VERSE #	NRSV TRANSLATION	GREEK WORD	WORD ANALYSIS	MEANING
Luke 2:7	And she gave birth to her <b>firstborn</b> son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.	πρωτότοκον	adjective normal accusative masculine singular no degree from πρωτότοκος	first-born son (order of birth)
Luke 2:23	(as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every <b>firstborn</b> male shall be designated as holy to the Lord"),	ἄρσεν  διανοῦγον  μήτραν	adjective normal nominative neuter singular no degree from ἄρσεν  verb participle present active nominative neuter singular from διανοῦγω  noun accusative feminine singular common from μήτρα	male  to open  [the] womb
Rom 8:29	For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the <b>firstborn</b> within a large family.	πρωτότοκον	adjective accusative masculine singular superlative from πρωτότοκος	figurative firstborn (by election) first of the new creation
Col 1:15	He is the image of the invisible God, the <b>firstborn</b> of all creation;	πρωτότοκος	adjective normal nominative masculine singular no degree from πρωτότοκος (πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως)	figurative firstborn (by election) first of the new creation
Col 1:18	He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the <b>firstborn</b> from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything.	πρωτότοκος	adjective normal nominative masculine singular no degree from πρωτότοκος	first-born son (order of birth) from those who have died

Heb 1:6	And again, when he brings the <b>firstborn</b> into the world, he says, “Let all God’s angels worship him.”	πρωτότοκον	adjective normal accusative masculine singular no degree from πρωτότοκος	figurative firstborn (by election) first of the new creation
Heb 11:28	By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, so that the destroyer of the <b>firstborn</b> would not touch the <b>firstborn</b> of Israel.	πρωτότοκα	adjective normal accusative neuter plural no degree from πρωτότοκος	first-born son (order of birth)
Heb 12:23	and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,	πρωτοτόκων	adjective genitive masculine plural superlative from πρωτότοκος	figurative firstborn (by election) of those who are in heaven
Rev 1:5	and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood,	πρωτότοκος	adjective nominative masculine singular superlative from πρωτότοκος	first-born son (order of birth) of the dead

#### APPENDIX 4

##### *Occurrences of 'Firstborn' in the Apocrypha*

# OCCURRENCES OF FIRSTBORN IN THE APOCRYPHA

VERSE #	NRSV TRANSLATION	GREEK WORD	WORD ANALYSIS	MEANING
Wis 18:13	For though they had disbelieved everything because of their magic arts, yet, when their <b>firstborn</b> were destroyed, they acknowledged your people to be God's child.	πρωτοτόκων	adjective normal genitive neuter plural no degree from πρωτότοκος	first-borns
Sir 36:17	Have mercy, O Lord, on the people called by your name, on Israel, whom you have named your <b>firstborn</b> ,	πρωτογόνῳ	adjective normal dative masculine singular no degree	appointed first-born by election
4Es 6:58	But we your people, whom you have called your <b>firstborn</b> , only begotten, zealous for you, and most dear, have been given into their hands.			appointed first-born by election
4Ma 15:18	When the <b>firstborn</b> breathed his last, it did not turn you aside, nor when the second in torments looked at you piteously nor when the third expired;	πρωτότοκος	adjective normal nominative masculine singular no degree from πρωτότοκος	first-born male

## APPENDIX 5

*Occurrences of First or Beginning as ἀρχή in Greek NT*

# OCCURRENCES OF FIRST /BEGINNING (ἀρχή) IN THE GREEK NT

VERSE #	VERSE	ἀρχή, ἡς, ἥ	WORD ANALYSIS	MEANING
Mat 19:4	He answered, "Have you not read that the one who made them at the <b>beginning</b> 'made them male and female,'" all this is but the <b>beginning</b> of the birth pangs.	ἀρχῆς	noun genitive feminine singular from ἀρχή	
Mat 24:8		ἀρχή	noun nominative feminine singular common from ἀρχή	
Mk 1:1	The <b>beginning</b> of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.	Ἀρχή	noun nominative feminine singular common from ἀρχή	beginning, origin
Mk 13:8	For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. This is but the <b>beginning</b> of the birth pangs.	ἀρχή	noun nominative feminine singular common from ἀρχή	
Lk 1:2	just as they were handed on to us by those who from the <b>beginning</b> were eyewitnesses and servants of the word,	ἀρχῆς	noun genitive feminine singular common from ἀρχή	
J 1:1	In the <b>beginning</b> was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.	ἀρχῇ	noun dative feminine singular from ἀρχή	
J 15:27	You also are to testify because you have been with me from the <b>beginning</b> .	ἀρχῆς	noun genitive feminine singular from ἀρχή	
Ac 11:15	And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as it had upon us at the <b>beginning</b> .	ἀρχῇ	noun dative feminine singular from ἀρχή	
Hb 2:3	how can we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? It was declared at <b>first</b> through the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him,	ἀρχῆν	noun accusative feminine singular common from ἀρχή (ἀρχὴν λαβοῦσα)	begin
Heb 5:12	For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the <b>basic elements</b> of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food;	ἀρχῆς	noun genitive feminine singular common from ἀρχή (τὰ στοιχεῖα τῆς ἀρχῆς)	elementary (or first) principles
Herb 6:1.	Therefore let us go on toward perfection, leaving behind the <b>basic teaching</b> about Christ, and not laying again the foundation: repentance from dead works and faith toward God,	ἀρχῆς	noun genitive feminine singular common from ἀρχή (τῆς ἀρχῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ λόγον)	elementary Christian teaching
Heb 3:14	For we have become partners of Christ, if only we hold our <b>first</b> confidence firm to the end.	ἀρχῆν	noun accusative feminine singular common from ἀρχή (τὴν ἀρχὴν τῆς ὑποστάσεως)	original conviction.

J 2:11.	Jesus did this, the <b>first</b> of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.	ἀρχὴν	noun accusative feminine singular common from ἀρχή (ἀρχὴν τῶν σημείων)	first of the signs
J 8:25.	They said to him, "Who are you?" Jesus said to them, "Why do I speak to you <b>at all</b> ?"	ἀρχὴν	noun accusative feminine singular common from ἀρχή	ἤν ἀρχὴν = at all
Col 1:18	He is the head of the body, the church; he is the <b>beginning</b> , the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything.	ἀρχή	noun nominative feminine singular from ἀρχή	beginning
Rev 3:14	And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the <b>origin</b> of God's creation:	ἀρχή	noun nominative feminine singular common from ἀρχή (ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ)	First cause
Ac 10:11	He saw the heaven opened and something like a large sheet coming down, being lowered to the ground by its four <b>corners</b> .	ἀρχαῖς	noun dative feminine plural common from ἀρχή	corner
Lk 12:11	When they bring you before the synagogues, the <b>rulers</b> , and the authorities, do not worry about how you are to defend yourselves or what you are to say;	ἀρχαῖς	noun accusative feminine plural common from ἀρχή	ruler, authority, official
Lk 20:20	So they watched him and sent spies who pretended to be honest, in order to trap him by what he said, so as to hand him over to the jurisdiction and authority of the <b>governor</b> .	ἀρχῇ	noun dative feminine singular common from ἀρχή	
Tit 3:1	Remind them to be subject to <b>rulers</b> and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work,	ἀρχαῖς	noun dative feminine plural from ἀρχή	
Ro 8:38	For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor <b>rulers</b> , nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,	ἀρχαῖ	noun nominative feminine plural common from ἀρχή	Of angels and demons
1 Cor 15:24	Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every <b>ruler</b> and every authority and power.	ἀρχὴν	noun accusative feminine singular common from ἀρχή	
Col 2:10	and you have come to fullness in him, who is the head of every <b>ruler</b> and authority.	ἀρχῆς	noun genitive feminine singular common from ἀρχή	
Col 2:15	He disarmed the <b>rulers</b> and authorities and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in it.	ἀρχαῖς	noun accusative feminine plural from ἀρχή	rule, domain sphere of influence.
Jude 6	And the angels who did not keep their own <b>position</b> , but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains in deepest darkness for the judgment of the great Day.	ἀρχὴν	noun accusative feminine singular common from ἀρχή	

# OCCURRENCES OF RULER/ LORD (ἄρχων, οὐτοϑ, ο) IN THE GREEK NT

VERSE #	VERSE	ἄρχων; οὐτοϑ, ο	WORD ANALYSIS	MEANING
Mt 20:25	But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the <b>rulers</b> of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them."		noun nominative masculine plural common from ἄρχων	ruler, lord, prince
Ac 4:26	The kings of the earth took their stand, and the <b>rulers</b> have gathered together against the Lord and against his Messiah.	ἄρχοντες	noun nominative masculine plural common from ἄρχων	
Rv 1:5	and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the <b>ruler</b> of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood,	ἄρχων	noun nominative masculine singular common from ἄρχων	
Mt 9:18	While he was saying these things to them, suddenly a <b>leader</b> of the synagogue came in and knelt before him, saying, "My daughter has just died; but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live."	ἄρχων	noun nominative masculine singular common from ἄρχων	authorities, officials - Jewish
Lk 8:41	Just then there came a man named Jairus, a <b>leader</b> of the synagogue. He fell at Jesus' feet and begged him to come to his house,	ἄρχων	noun nominative masculine singular common from ἄρχων	
Lk 14:1	On one occasion when Jesus was going to the house of a <b>leader</b> of the Pharisees to eat a meal on the sabbath, they were watching him closely.	ἀρχόντῳ	noun genitive masculine plural common from ἄρχων	
Lk 18:18	A certain <b>ruler</b> asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"	ἄρχων	noun nominative masculine singular common from ἄρχων	
J 3:1	Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a <b>leader</b> of the Jews.	ἄρχων	noun nominative masculine singular common from ἄρχων	
Ac 3:17	"And now, friends, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your <b>rulers</b> ."	ἄρχοντες	noun nominative masculine plural common from ἄρχων	
Ac 16:19	But when her owners saw that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the <b>authorities</b> .	ἄρχοντες	noun accusative masculine plural common from ἄρχων	authorities, officials - Gentile



Mt 9:34	But the Pharisees said, "By the <b>ruler</b> of the demons he casts out the demons."				
Mt 12:24	But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, "It is only by Beelzebul, the <b>ruler</b> of the demons, that this fellow casts out the demons."	ἄρχοντι	noun dative masculine singular common from ἄρχων		
Lk 11:15	But some of them said, "He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the <b>ruler</b> of the demons."				Of evil spirits
J 12:31	Now is the judgment of this world; now the <b>ruler</b> of this world will be driven out.	ἄρχων	noun nominative masculine singular common from ἄρχων		
J 14:30	I will no longer talk much with you, for the <b>ruler</b> of this world is coming. He has no power over me;				
Eph 2:2	in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the <b>ruler</b> of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient.	ἄρχοντα	noun accusative masculine singular common from ἄρχων		
1 Cor 2:6	Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the <b>rulers</b> of this age, who are doomed to perish.				demonic powers or earthly rulers
1 Cor 2:8	None of the <b>rulers</b> of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.	ἀρχόντων	noun genitive masculine plural common from ἄρχων		
Lk 12:58	Thus, when you go with your accuser before a <b>magistrate</b> , on the way make an effort to settle the case, or you may be dragged before the judge, and the judge hand you over to the officer, and the officer throw you in prison.	ἄρχοντα	noun accusative masculine singular common from ἄρχων		Of a judge magistrate

Ro 8:23	and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.	ἀπαρχὴν	noun accusative feminine singular from ἀπαρχή (τὴν ἀπαρχὴν τοῦ πνεύματος)	first fruit foretaste		
Ro 11:16	If the part of the dough offered as first fruit is holy, then the whole batch is holy; and if the root is holy, then the branches also are holy.					
Ro 16:5	Greet also the church in their house. Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who was the first convert (first fruit) in Asia for Christ.					
1 Cor 15:20	But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruit of those who have died.					
1 Cor 15:23	But each in his own order: Christ the first fruit, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.					
1 Cor 16:15	Now, brothers and sisters, you know that members of the household of Stephanas were the first converts (first fruit) in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints;	ἀπαρχή	noun nominative feminine singular common from ἀπαρχή	first fruit		
Rv 14:4	It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins; these follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They have been redeemed from humankind as first fruits for God and the Lamb,					

## APPENDIX 6

*Occurrences of First or Beginning as πρῶτος in Greek NT*

# OCCURRENCES OF FIRST (πρώτος, η, ον) IN THE GREEK NT

VERSE #	VERSE	πρώτος, η, ον	WORD ANALYSIS	MEANING
Mt 12:45	Then it goes and brings along seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and live there; and the last state of that person is worse than the <b>first</b> . So will it be also with this evil generation.	πρώτων	adjective genitive neuter plural superlative from πρώτος	first, earlier, earliest, in the first place, before, to begin with (time or sequence)
Mt 20:8	When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, "Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the <b>first</b> ."	πρώτων.	adjective genitive masculine plural superlative from πρώτος	
Mt 21:28	What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the <b>first</b> and said, "Son, go and work in the vineyard today."	πρώτῳ	adjective ordinal dative neuter singular no degree from πρώτος	
Mt 21:36	Again he sent other slaves, more than the <b>first</b> ; and they treated them in the same way.	πρώτων	adjective genitive masculine plural superlative from πρώτος	
Mk 12:20	There were seven brothers; the <b>first</b> married and, when he died, left no children;	πρώτος	adjective nominative masculine singular superlative from πρώτος	
Lk 2:2	This was the <b>first</b> registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria.	πρώτη	adjective nominative feminine singular superlative from πρώτος	
Lk 11:26	Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and live there; and the last state of that person is worse than the <b>first</b> .	πρώτων	adjective genitive neuter plural superlative from πρώτος	
Lk 20:29	Now there were seven brothers; the <b>first</b> married, and died childless;	πρώτος	adjective ordinal nominative masculine singular no degree from πρώτος	
John 1:15	(John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, "He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was <b>before</b> me." <sup>'''</sup> )	πρώτός	adjective ordinal nominative masculine singular no degree from πρώτος	
John 1:30	This is he of whom I said, "After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was <b>before</b> me."	πρώτός	adjective ordinal nominative masculine singular no degree from πρώτος	

Ac 17:4	Some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the <b>leading</b> women.	πρώτων	adjective genitive feminine plural superlative from <b>πρώτος</b>	first / leading in rank/position
2Pe 2:20	For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overpowered, the last state has become worse for them than the <b>first</b> .	πρώτων	adjective ordinal genitive neuter plural no degree from <b>πρώτος</b>	
Rev 2:19	I know your works-- your love, faith, service, and patient endurance. I know that your last works are greater than the <b>first</b> .	πρώτων	adjective genitive neuter plural superlative from <b>πρώτος</b>	
John 5:4 (KJV)	For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then <b>first</b> after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.	πρώτος	adjective nominative masculine singular superlative from <b>πρώτος</b>	first, earliest, earlier, in the first place of time or sequence
John 20:4	The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb <b>first</b> .	πρώτος	adjective ordinal nominative masculine singular no degree from <b>πρώτος</b>	
Ac 1:1	In the <b>first</b> book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning	πρώτον	adjective ordinal accusative masculine singular no degree from <b>πρώτος</b>	
Ac 20:18	When they came to him, he said to them: "You yourselves know how I lived among you the entire time from the <b>first</b> day that I set foot in Asia,"	πρώτης	adjective ordinal genitive feminine singular no degree from <b>πρώτος</b>	
Ac 26:23	that the Messiah must suffer, and that, by being the <b>first</b> to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.	πρώτος	adjective ordinal nominative masculine singular no degree from <b>πρώτος</b>	
Phil 1:5	because of your sharing in the gospel from the <b>first</b> day until now.	πρώτης	adjective ordinal genitive feminine singular no degree from <b>πρώτος</b>	
2 Ti 4:16	At my <b>first</b> defense no one came to my support, but all deserted me. May it not be counted against them!	πρώτη	adjective ordinal dative feminine singular no degree from <b>πρώτος</b>	
Heb 9:15	For this reason he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, because a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions under the <b>first</b> covenant.	πρώτη	adjective ordinal dative feminine singular no degree from <b>πρώτος</b>	

Heb 10:9	then he added, "See, I have come to do your will." He abolishes the <b>first</b> in order to establish the second.	πρώτον	adjective ordinal accusative neuter singular no degree from πρώτος	first, foremost, most important, most prominent
Rv 1:17	When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he placed his right hand on me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the <b>first</b> and the last,"	πρώτος	adjective ordinal nominative masculine singular no degree from πρώτος	
Mt 20:27	and whoever wishes to be <b>first</b> among you must be your slave;	πρώτος	adjective nominative masculine singular superlative from πρώτος	
Mk 6:21	But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his courtiers and officers and for the <b>leaders</b> of Galilee.	πρώτους	adjective ordinal dative masculine plural no degree from πρώτος (τοῖς πρώτοις τῆς Γαλιλαίας)	
Mk 12:28	One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, "Which commandment is the <b>first</b> of all?"	πρώτη	adjective ordinal nominative feminine singular no degree from πρώτος	
Lk 13:30	Indeed, some are last who will be <b>first</b> , and some are <b>first</b> who will be last.	πρώτοι	BGT: adjective ordinal nominative masculine plural no degree from πρώτος <OR> BYZ: adjective nominative masculine plural superlative from πρώτος	
Ac 25:2	where the chief priests and the <b>leaders</b> of the Jews gave him a report against Paul. They appealed to him	πρώτοι	adjective nominative masculine plural superlative from πρώτος (οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ πρόωτοι τῶν Ἰουδαίων)	
1 Cor 15:3	For I handed on to you as of <b>first</b> importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures,	πρώτους	adjective ordinal dative neuter plural no degree from πρώτος	
Eph 6:2;	"Honor your father and mother"-- this is the <b>first</b> commandment with a promise:	πρώτη	adjective nominative feminine singular superlative from πρώτος	
1 Ti 1:15.	The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners-- of whom I am the <b>foremost</b> .	πρώτος	adjective ordinal nominative masculine singular no degree from πρώτος	

Mt 20:27	and whoever wishes to be <b>first</b> among you must be your slave;	πρώτος	adjective ordinal nominative masculine singular no degree from <b>πρώτος</b>		
Mk 6:21	But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his courtiers and officers and for the <b>leaders</b> of Galilee.	πρώτους	adjective dative masculine plural superlative from <b>πρώτος</b> (τοῖς πρώτοις τῆς Γαλιλαίας)		
Mk 12:28	One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, "Which commandment is the <b>first</b> of all?"	πρώτη	adjective ordinal nominative feminine singular no degree from <b>πρώτος</b>		
Lk 13:30	Indeed, some are last who will be <b>first</b> , and some are <b>first</b> who will be last.	πρώτοι	BGT: adjective ordinal nominative masculine plural no degree from <b>πρώτος</b> <OR> BYZ: adjective nominative masculine plural superlative from <b>πρώτος</b>		first, foremost, most important, most prominent
Ac 25:2	where the chief priests and the <b>leaders</b> of the Jews gave him a report against Paul. They appealed to him	πρώτοι	adjective ordinal nominative masculine plural no degree from <b>πρώτος</b> (οἱ πρώτοι τῶν Ἰουδαίων)		
1 Cor 15:3	For I handed on to you as of <b>first</b> importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures,	πρώτους	adjective dative masculine plural superlative from <b>πρώτος</b>		
Eph 6:2	"Honor your father and mother"-- this is the <b>first</b> commandment with a promise:	πρώτη	adjective nominative feminine singular superlative from <b>πρώτος</b>		
1 Ti 1:15	The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners-- of whom I am the <b>foremost</b> .	πρώτος	adjective nominative masculine singular superlative from <b>πρώτος</b>		
Hb 9:2	For a tent was constructed, the <b>first</b> one, in which were the lampstand, the table, and the bread of the Presence; this is called the Holy Place.	πρώτη	adjective nominative feminine singular superlative from <b>πρώτος</b>		outer, anterior

Hb 9:6	Such preparations having been made, the priests go continually into the <b>first</b> tent to carry out their ritual duties;	πρώτην	adjective accusative feminine singular superlative from πρώτος	outer, anterior
Hb 9:8	By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the sanctuary has not yet been disclosed as long as the <b>first</b> tent is still standing.	πρώτης	adjective ordinal genitive feminine singular no degree from πρώτος	
Mt 5:24	leave your gift there before the altar and go; <b>first</b> be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.	πρώτον	neutral - adverb from πρώτος	adverb of time or sequence  <i>first, in the first place, before, earlier, to begin with</i>
Mt 8:21	Another of his disciples said to him, "Lord, <b>first</b> let me go and bury my father."			
Mk 4:28	The earth produces of itself, <b>first</b> the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head.			
Mk 13:10	And the good news must <b>first</b> be proclaimed to all nations.			
Lk 12:1	Meanwhile, when the crowd gathered by the thousands, so that they trampled on one another, he began to speak <b>first</b> to his disciples, "Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees, that is, their hypocrisy."			
J 15:18	If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me <b>before</b> it hated you.			
J 18:13	<b>First</b> they took him to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year.			
Ro 1:8	<b>First</b> , I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed throughout the world.			
Ro 15:24	when I go to Spain. For I do hope to see you on my journey and to be sent on by you, <b>once</b> I have enjoyed your company for a little while.			
1 Cor 12:28	And God has appointed in the church <b>first</b> apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues.			
1 Cor 15:46	But it is not the spiritual that is <b>first</b> , but the physical, and then the spiritual.			



Mt 6:33	But strive <b>first</b> for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.	πρῶτον	neutral - adverb from πρῶτος	adverb of degree  <i>in the first place, above all, especially</i>
Ac 3:26	When God raised up his servant, he sent him <b>first</b> to you, to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.			
Ro 1:16	For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew <b>first</b> and also to the Greek.			
Ro 2:9	There will be anguish and distress for everyone who does evil, the Jew <b>first</b> and also the Greek,			
2 Cor 8:5	and this, not merely as we expected; they gave themselves <b>first</b> to the Lord and, by the will of God, to us,			
1 Ti 2:1	<b>First</b> of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone,			
2 Pt 1:20	<b>First</b> of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation,			

# Occurrences of First /Former (πρότερος, α, ον) in the Greek NT

VERSE #	VERSE	πρότερος ἂ ον	WORD ANALYSIS	MEANING
Eph 4:22.	You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts,	προτέρων	adjective normal accusative feminine singular comparative from πρότερος	earlier, former
J 7:50	Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus <b>before</b> , and who was one of them, asked,	πρότερον	adjective normal accusative neuter singular comparative from πρότερος	
J 7:51	"Our law does not judge people without <b>first</b> giving them a hearing to find out what they are doing, does it?"	πρώτον (BGT)	adverb from πρότος	
2 Cor 1:15	Since I was sure of this, I wanted to come to you <b>first</b> , so that you might have a double favor;	πρότερον (BYZ)	adverb from πρότερος	
1 Ti 1:13	even though I was <b>formerly</b> a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a man of violence. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief,	πρότερον	adjective normal accusative neuter singular comparative from πρότερος	neutral adjective as adverb without the article
Hb 4:6	Since therefore it remains open for some to enter it, and those who <b>formerly</b> received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience,	πρότερον	adverb from πρότερος	earlier, formerly, in former times
Hb 7:27	Unlike the other high priests, he has no need to offer sacrifices day after day, <b>first</b> for his own sins, and then for those of the people; this he did once for all when he offered himself.	πρότερον	adverb from πρότερος	
Hb 10:32	But recall those <b>earlier</b> days when, after you had been enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings,		adverb from πρότερος	earlier, formerly, in former times with art. as adj. former
1 Pt 1:14	Like obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires that you <b>formerly</b> had in ignorance.	πρότερον		
J 6:62	Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was <b>before</b> ?		adjective nominative neuter singular comparative from πρότερος	
J 9:8	The neighbors and those who had seen him <b>before</b> as a beggar began to ask, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?"		adjective accusative neuter singular comparative from πρότερος	As adverb
1 Ti 1:13	even though I was <b>formerly</b> a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a man of violence. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief,	τὸ πρότερον	adjective accusative masculine singular comparative from πρότερος	before, once, formerly
Gal 4:13	You know that it was because of a physical infirmity that I <b>first</b> announced the gospel to you;	τὸ πρότερον	adjective accusative neuter singular comparative from πρότερος	the first time or -once

# OCCURRENCES OF FIRST / PROMINENT (πρωτεύω / πρωτεύων) IN THE GREEK NT

VERSE #	VERSE	πρωτεύω πρωτεύων	WORD ANALYSIS	MEANING
Col 1:18	He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come <b>to have first place</b> in everything.	πρωτεύων	verb participle present active nominative masculine singular from πρωτεύω	<i>be first, have first place</i>
3 J 1:9	I have written something to the church; but Diotrephes, who likes <b>to put</b> himself <b>first</b> , does not <i>acknowledge</i> our authority.	φιλοπρωτεύων	verb participle present active nominative masculine singular from φιλοπρωτεύω	<i>wish to be first, like to be leader</i>
Ecc 3:19	For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no <b>preeminence</b> above a beast: for all is vanity. (KJV)	ἐπείσσευσεν	verb indicative aorist active 3rd person singular from περισσεύω	
1 Cor 14:12	So with yourselves; since you are eager for spiritual gifts, strive to <b>excel</b> in them for building up the church.	περισσεύητε	verb subjunctive present active 2nd person plural from περισσεύω	
1 Cor 15:58	Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always <b>excelling</b> in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.	περισσεύοντες	verb participle present active nominative masculine plural from περισσεύω	
2 Cor 8:7	Now as you <b>excel</b> in everything-- in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in utmost eagerness, and in our love for you-- so we want you to <b>excel</b> also in this generous undertaking.	περισσεύητε	verb indicative present active 2nd person plural from περισσεύω	<i>Be outstanding, be prominent, excel</i>
Col 2:7	rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, <b>abounding</b> in thanksgiving.	περισσεύοντες	verb participle present active nominative masculine plural from περισσεύω	

Appendix 7  
*Occurrences of Only-Begotten as μονογενής in the LXX and the Greek NT*

# Occurrences of Only-Begotten (μονογενής) in the LXX and the Greek NT

VERSE #	VERSE	μονογενής, ἑς	WORD ANALYSIS	MEANING
<b>Judges 11:34</b>	"Then Jephthah came to his home at Mizpah; and there was his daughter coming out to meet him with timbrels and with dancing. She was his only child; he had no son or daughter except her."	καὶ ἦλθεν Ιεφθαε εἰς Μασσηφα εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ καὶ ἰδοὺ ἡ θυγάτηρ αὐτοῦ ἐξεπορεύετο εἰς ὑπάντησιν ἐν τυμπάνοις καὶ χοροῖς καὶ ἦν αὕτη <b>μονογενής</b> οὐκ ἦν αὐτῷ ἕτερος υἱὸς ἢ θυγάτηρ	adjective normal nominative feminine singular  Hebrew: יְחִידָהּ	
<b>Psalms 22:20</b>	"Deliver my soul from the sword, My only <i>life</i> from the power of the dog."	ῥῦσαι ἀπὸ ῥομφαίας τὴν ψυχὴν μου καὶ ἐκ χειρὸς κυνὸς τὴν <b>μονογενή</b> μου	adjective normal accusative feminine singular  Hebrew: יְחִידָתִי	
<b>Psalms 25:16</b>	"I am an only child and poor."	ἐπίβλεψον ἐπ' ἐμέ καὶ ἐλέησόν με ὅτι <b>μονογενής</b> καὶ πτωχός εἰμι ἐγώ	adjective normal nominative masculine singular  Hebrew: כִּי־יָחִיד	
<b>Psalms 35:17</b>	"Lord, how long wilt Thou look on? Rescue my soul from their ravages, My only <i>life</i> from the lions."	κύριε πότε ἐπόψῃ ἀποκατάστησον τὴν ψυχὴν μου ἀπὸ τῆς κακουργίας αὐτῶν ἀπὸ λεόντων τὴν <b>μονογενή</b> μου	adjective normal nominative masculine singular  Hebrew: יְחִידָתִי	
<b>Jeremiah 6:26</b>	"O my poor people, put on sackcloth, and roll in ashes; make mourning as for an only child, most bitter lamentation: for suddenly the destroyer will come upon us."	ύγατερ λαοῦ μου περιζῶσαι σάκκον κατάπασαι ἐν σποδῷ πένθος ἀγαπητοῦ ποιῆσαι σεαυτῇ κοπετὸν οἰκτρόν ὅτι ἐξαίφνης ἥξει ταλαιπωρία ἐφ' ὑμᾶς		

<b>Tobit 8:17</b>	"Blessed are you because you had compassion on two only children. Be merciful to them, O Master, and keep them safe; bring their lives to fulfillment in happiness and mercy."	εὐλογητὸς εἶ ὅτι ἡλέησας δύο <b>μονογενεῖς</b> ποιήσων αὐτοῖς δέσποτα ἔλεος συντέλεσον τὴν ζωὴν αὐτῶν ἐν ὑγιείᾳ μετὰ εὐφροσύνης καὶ ἐλέους	adjective normal accusative masculine plural	each of them was an only child of different parents
<b>Wisdom of Solomon 7:22</b>	"for wisdom, the fashioner of all things, taught me. There is in her a spirit that is intelligent, holy, unique, manifold, subtle, mobile, clear, unpolluted, distinct, invulnerable, loving the good, keen, irresistible,"	ἔστιν γὰρ ἐν αὐτῇ πνεῦμα νοερὸν ἅγιον <b>μονογενές</b> πολυμέρες λεπτόν εὐκίνητον τρανόν ἀμόλυντον σαφές ἀπήμαντον φιλάγαθον ὀξύ	adjective normal nominative neuter singular	
<b>Psalms of Solomon 18:4</b>	"Your chastisement is upon us as (upon) a first-born, only-begotten son"	ἡ παιδεία σου ἐφ' ἡμᾶς ὡς υἱὸν πρωτότοκον <b>μονογενῆ</b> ἀποστρέψαι ψυχὴν εὐήκοον ἀπὸ ἀμαθίας ἐν ἀγνοίᾳ	adjective normal accusative masculine singular	
<b>Luke 7:12</b>	"As he approached the gate of the town, a man who had died was being carried out. He was his mother's only son, and she was a widow; and with her was a large crowd from the town."	ὡς δὲ ἤγγισεν τῇ πύλῃ τῆς πόλεως, καὶ ἰδοὺ ἐξεκομίζετο τεθνηκῶς <b>μονογενῆς</b> υἱὸς τῇ μητρὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ αὐτὴ ἦν χήρα, καὶ ὄχλος τῆς πόλεως ἱκανὸς ἦν σὺν αὐτῇ.	adjective normal nominative masculine singular	
<b>Luke 8:42</b>	"For he had an only daughter, about twelve years old, who was dying. As he went, the crowds pressed in on him."	ὅτι θυγάτηρ <b>μονογενῆς</b> ἦν αὐτῷ ὡς ἐτῶν δώδεκα, καὶ αὕτη ἀπέθνησκει. Ἐν δὲ τῷ ὑπάγειν αὐτὸν οἱ ὄχλοι συνέπνιγον αὐτόν.	adjective nominative feminine singular	
<b>Luke 9:38</b>	"Just then a man from the crowd shouted, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son; he is my only child."	καὶ ἰδοὺ ἀνὴρ ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄχλου ἐβόησεν λέγων· διδάσκαλε, δέομαί σου ἐπιβλέψαι ἐπὶ τὸν υἱόν μου, ὅτι <b>μονογενῆς</b> μοί ἐστιν,	adjective normal nominative masculine singular	
<b>John 1:18</b>	textual variations : a. "No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained <i>Him</i> ."	Θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε· <b>μονογενῆς</b> θεὸς ὁ ὦν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο	adjective normal nominative masculine singular	

	b. "No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.	Θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε· ὁ <b>μονογενὴς</b> υἱός, ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς, ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο.	adjective normal nominative masculine singular	
<b>John 3:16</b>	"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."	οὕτως γὰρ ἠγάπησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν κόσμον, ὥστε τὸν υἱὸν τὸν <b>μονογενῆ</b> ἔδωκεν, ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν μὴ ἀπόληται ἀλλ' ἔχῃ ζωὴν αἰώνιον.	adjective normal accusative masculine singular	
<b>John 3:18</b>	"Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God."	ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν οὐ κρίνεται· ὁ δὲ μὴ πιστεύων ἤδη κέκριται, ὅτι μὴ πεπίστευκεν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ <b>μονογενοῦς</b> υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ.	adjective genitive masculine singular	
<b>Hebrews 11:17</b>	"By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac; and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son;"	Πίστει προσεινήνοχεν Ἀβραὰμ τὸν Ἰσαὰκ πειραζόμενος καὶ τὸν <b>μονογενῆ</b> προσέφερεν, ὁ τὰς ἐπαγγελίας ἀναδεξάμενος,	adjective accusative masculine singular	only legitimate son
<b>1 John 4:9</b>	"By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him."	ἐν τούτῳ ἐφανερώθη ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν, ὅτι τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ τὸν <b>μονογενῆ</b> ἀπέσταλκεν ὁ θεὸς εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἵνα ζήσωμεν δι' αὐτοῦ.	adjective normal accusative masculine singular	monos = single genos = kind, genes = born, begotten  Only, unique

## APPENDIX 8

### *List of WBTS Cited Sources for Jesus' Status*



The following quotes enunciate the doctrines of the WBTS in relation to Jesus as the Son of God, and some of the published sources of these claims:

Abbreviations:

**Books:**

<i>Yearbook</i>	Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses, published yearly.
<i>Knowledge</i>	Knowledge that Leads to Everlasting Life, 1995
<i>Proclaimers</i>	Jehovah's Witnesses: Proclaimers of God's Kingdom, 1993
<i>Reasoning</i>	Reasoning from the Scriptures, 1989
<i>Insight</i>	Insight on the Scriptures, 1988
<i>Live Forever</i>	You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth, 1982
<i>Aid</i>	Aid to Bible Understanding, 1971
<i>Truth</i>	The Truth that Leads to Eternal Life, 1968
<i>Make Sure</i>	Make Sure of All Things, 1953, 1957 and 1965
<i>New Heavens</i>	New Heavens and a New Earth, 1953
<i>Everlasting Life</i>	This Means Everlasting Life, 1950
<i>Let God Be True</i>	Let God Be True, 1946
<i>Salvation</i>	Salvation, 1939
<i>Vindication</i>	Vindication, 3 Volumes, 1931-2
<i>Reconciliation</i>	Reconciliation, 1928
<i>Divine Plan</i>	The Divine Plan of the Ages, 1906
<i>Studies</i>	Studies in the Scriptures, volumes published from 1906 on

**Pamphlets:**

<i>Peace &amp; Security</i>	"The Desire for Peace and Security Worldwide," 1986
<i>Holy Spirit</i>	"Holy Spirit - The force behind the coming new order," 1975

**Magazines:**

<i>Awake</i>	Awake! (published semimonthly)
<i>Watchtower</i>	The Watchtower Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom, 1939 on (pub. semimonthly) The Watchtower and Herald of Christ's Kingdom, 1931-39 The Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence, 1908-1931
<i>Zion's WT</i>	Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence, 1879 to 1908

STATUS	QUOTE	VERSE	SOURCE
firstborn = created being	"The Bible informs us that he is God's 'firstborn' Son. This means that he was created before the other sons of God's family."	Col. 1:15-17 Rev. 3:14	<i>Truth</i> , 47
	"Jesus Christ is the only one created directly by God himself."	1John 4:9 John 8:23 John 8:53	<i>Proclaimers</i> , 144
	"Jesus Christ is the only one created directly by God himself."		<i>Proclaimers</i> , 144
	"The only-begotten Son of God, the only Son produced by Jehovah alone."		<i>Reasoning</i> , 209
	"He is also God's 'only-begotten' Son in that he is the only one directly created by Jehovah God; all other things came into existence through him as God's Chief Agent."		<i>Truth</i> , 47
	"This means that he was created before all the other spirit sons of God, and that he is the only one who was directly created by God."		<i>Live Forever</i> , 58
created being with prehuman existence	"Jesus was the first of God's creation; thus, before he was conceived and born as a human, Jesus lived in heaven."	Rev. 3:14 John 8:23 John 8:53	<i>Proclaimers</i> , 144
prehuman existence as the Word	"Before being born on earth as a male child he served in the heavens where he was known as 'the Word,' God's spokesman."	John 1:3,10,14	<i>Truth</i> , 48
became the Christ at his baptism	"There at the Jordan, by means of holy spirit, Jesus was anointed by God to be the foretold great high priest, the king of God's kingdom, and to preach while her on earth."	Luke 4:16-21	<i>Truth</i> , 49
	"When did this Jesus become actually 'Christ the Lord'? Not on the eighth day of his birth, when he was circumcised. He was not anointed on that day. It was when he was thirty years old."		<i>Holy Spirit</i> , 90
	"Jesus was anointed with holy spirit after his baptism in water and he thus became Christ or Anointed One, so too with his disciples."		<i>Holy Spirit</i> , 113
	"By pouring out his holy spirit on Jesus, Jehovah was anointing him or appointing him to be the King of his coming kingdom. Being thus anointed with the spirit, Jesus became the 'Messiah,' or the 'Christ,' which words in the Hebrew and Greek languages mean, 'Anointed.' Therefore, he became, in fact, Jesus Christ, or Jesus the Anointed."		<i>Live Forever</i> , 60

not simply a good man	"Either he was what he said or he was a gross impostor, but neither option allows for the view that he was simply a good man."	John 3:13 John 10:36 John 4:25-26 Luke 24:44-48	<i>Reasoning</i> , 210
is not equal to God	"Jesus worships his Father as the only true God; Jesus never claimed equality with God."	John 14:22 John 17:3 John 20:17	<i>Proclaimers</i> , 144
	"It was the unbelieving Jews who reasoned that Jesus was attempting to make himself equal with God by claiming God as his Father. While properly referring to God as his Father, Jesus never claimed equality with God."	John 5:18-19 John 8:58	<i>Reasoning</i> , 214
is not God	"And Jesus himself never claimed to be God but, rather, 'the Son of God.' Jesus was sent into the world by God; so by means of this only-begotten Son, God was with mankind."	John 3:17 John 17:8	<i>Reasoning</i> , 214
	"Jesus referred not to himself but to his Father in heaven as 'the only true God.'"	John 17:3	<i>Reasoning</i> , 212
	"So to the resurrected Jesus, the Father was God, just as the Father was God to Mary Magdalene. Interestingly, not once in Scripture do we find the Father addressing the Son as 'my God.'"	John 20:17	<i>Reasoning</i> , 212
	"Peter did not conclude from the miracles that he observed that Jesus was God but, rather, that God was <i>with</i> Jesus." (italics theirs)	Acts 10:34-38	<i>Reasoning</i> , 215
	"Pre-Christian prophets such as Elijah and Elisha performed miracles similar to those of Jesus. Yet that certainly is no proof that they were God."	John 20:30-31	<i>Reasoning</i> , 216
a lesser god	"The text is not saying that the Word (Jesus) was the same as the God with whom he was but, rather, that the Word was <i>godlike</i> , divine, a god." (italics theirs)	John 1:1	<i>Reasoning</i> , 212
	"There is no objection to referring to Jesus as 'God,' if this is what Thomas had in mind. Such would be in harmony with Jesus' own quotation from the Psalms in which powerful men, judges, were addressed as 'gods.'"	John 20:28	<i>Reasoning</i> , 213
	"Isaiah 9:6 also prophetically describes Jesus as 'Mighty God,' but not as the Almighty God."	Isaiah 9:6	<i>Reasoning</i> , 213
	"...that is the Word was a powerful godlike one. Clearly, Jesus is not Almighty God."	John 1:1	<i>Live Forever</i> , 40
subordinate	"He is the second-greatest personage in the universe."		<i>Reasoning</i> , 209

not a co-creator	"The Son's share in the creative works, however, did not make him a Co-creator with the Father. Rather than a Co-creator, then, the Son was the Agent or instrumentality through whom Jehovah, the Creator worked."		<i>Aid</i> , 918
not part of a Triune God	"Never was there a more deceptive doctrine advanced than that of the trinity."		<i>Reconciliation</i> , 101
	"The doctrine, in brief, is that there are <b>three gods</b> in one: 'God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost,; all three equal in power, substance and eternity."		<i>Let God Be True</i> , 100
	"...sincere persons who want to know the true God and serve him find it a bit difficult to love and worship a <b>complicated, freakish-looking, three-headed God.</b> "		<i>Let God Be True</i> , 100
	"The answer is obvious that there is only one Jehovah....If he is one Jehovah, then could he be <b>three gods</b> , God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost, as the Trinitarians teach?"		<i>Watchtower</i> (April 1, 1970), 210
	"Satan is the originator of the trinity doctrine."		<i>Let God Be True</i> , 82
	"Those who accept the bible as God's Word do not worship a Trinity consisting of <b>three persons or gods</b> in one. In fact the word 'Trinity' does not even appear in the Bible. The true God is one Person, separate from Jesus Christ. God's holy spirit is not a person. It is Jehovah's active force, used by the Almighty to accomplish his purposes."	John 14:28 1Cor. 15:28 Gen. 1:2 Acts 2:1-4, Acts 2:32-33 2Pet. 1:20-21	<i>Knowledge</i> , 31
image of God	"The Word must have been God's beloved 'master worker,' described at Proverbs 8:22-31 as wisdom personified, laboring at Jehovah's side in the making of all things. After Jehovah brought him into existence, the Word spent ages with God in heaven before becoming a man on earth. No wonder Colossians 1:15 calls Jesus 'the image of the invisible God'! Through untold years of close associated, the obedient Son came to be just like his Father, Jehovah."	Prov. 8:22-31 Col.s 1:15	<i>Knowledge</i> , 39
is Abad'don, Apollyon, or Destroyer	"When Jesus was on earth as a man, he was a Hebrew, and now in his capacity as Jehovah's royal Executioner he is called by the Hebrew name Abad'don, which means Destruction. (Job 26:6; 28:22; 31:12; 12:23; 14:19) In the Greek in which the inspired Christian Scriptures were written his similar title is Apollyon, which means Destroyer."		<i>Watchtower</i> (Dec. 1, 1961), 719

is Michael the Archangel before incarnation and after resurrection	“Read carefully the following Bible account: ‘War broke out in heaven: Michael [who is the resurrected Jesus Christ] and his angels battled with the dragon.’”		<i>Live Forever,</i> 21
	“So the evidence indicates that the Son of God was known as Michael before he came to earth and is known also by that name since his return to heaven where he resides as the glorified spirit Son of God.”		<i>Reasoning ,</i> 218
	“At 1 Thessalonians 4:16 (RS), the command of Jesus for the resurrection to begin is described as ‘the archangel’s call,’ and Jude 9 says that the archangel is Michael. Would it be appropriate to liken Jesus’ commanding call to that of someone lesser in authority? Reasonably, then, the Archangel is Jesus Christ.” “So the evidence indicates that the Son of God was known as Michael before he came to earth and is known also by that name since his return to heaven where he resides as the glorified spirit Son of God.”	1Thess. 4:16 Rev.12:7-12 Rev. 19:11-16 Jude 9 John 12:31 Daniel 10:13 Daniel 12:1	<i>Reasoning,</i> 218
Jesus’ exact date of birth and death	“Jesus was evidently born in the month of Ethanium (September-October) of the year 2 B.C.E, was baptized about the same time of the year in 29 C.E. and died about 3 p.m. on Friday, the fourteenth day of the spring month of Nisan (March- April), 33 C.E.”		<i>Aid,</i> 920
	“On Nisan 14 of the year 33 C.E. Jesus’ enemies put him to death on a torture stake.”		<i>Truth,</i> 51
Jesus’ ransom = human life for human life	“By his disobedience the perfect man Adam lost perfect life on a paradise earth for himself and all his children. Jesus Christ gave his own perfect life to buy back what Adam lost. Yes, Jesus gave himself a corresponding ransom for all”		<i>Live Forever,</i> 62
resurrected as an immortal spirit	“Jesus was raised from the dead as an immortal spirit person.”	1Pet. 3:18 Rom. 6:9	<i>Proclaimers,</i> 144
	“If, when he was resurrected, Jesus had taken back his human body of flesh and blood, which had been given in sacrifice to pay the ransom price, what effect would that have had on the provision he was making to relieve faithful person of the debt of sin?” “Jesus evidently materialized bodies on these occasions, as angels had done in the past when appearing to humans.”	1Cor.15:42-50 Luke 24:15-32 John 20:14-16 John 20:26-27	<i>Reasoning,</i> 217

resurrected as an immortal spirit	“Jehovah God did not leave his Son dead in the grave, but raised him to life on the third day. He was not given human life again, because that would have meant that he was taking back the ransom price. But he was ‘made alive in the spirit.’ During a period of forty days after his resurrection he appeared visibly to his disciples a number of times, in materialized bodies, to prove that he really had been raised from the dead.”	1 Peter 3:18	<i>Truth</i> , 52
	“Upon being raised to life in heaven, he became a life-giving spirit.”		<i>Knowledge</i> , 68
	“But now we are in the end of this Gospel age, and the Kingdom is being established or set up. Our Lord, the appointed King, is now present, since October 1874, A.D., according to the testimony of the prophets, to those who have ears to hear; and the formal inauguration of his kingly office dates from April 1878 A.D.”		<i>Studies</i> , Vol. 4, 621
has already returned	“By applying ‘a day for a year’ to Daniel’s prophecy and counting 2,520 years from 607 BCE, however, we arrive at the year 1914 CE.”	Num. 14:34 Ex. 4:6	<i>Knowledge</i> , 97
	“Bible evidence shows that in the year 1914 C.E. God’s time arrived for Christ to <b>return and begin ruling</b> ...Christ’s return invisible...Christ himself gave a visible ‘sign’ by which we may know that he is invisibly present...‘NATION WILL RISE AGAINST NATION’...Surely you have seen this part of the ‘sign’ being fulfilled since 1914! In that year World War I began.”		<i>Live Forever</i> , 141, 147-154
	“Jesus has returned (having directed his attention as King toward the earth) and is now present as a glorious spirit.”	Mat. 24:3; Mat. 23-27; Mat. 25:31-33 John 14:19	<i>Proclaimers</i> , 144
	“ God enthroned Jesus as King in heaven in 1914, exactly 2,520 years after Jerusalem’s destruction. Jesus’ first act as King was to expel Satan and his demons from heaven.	Rev. 12:7-10 Rev. 12:12 Matt. 24:14 Luke 21:10-11 Luke 21:31	<i>Watchtower</i> , (Aug. 1, 2012), 17

has already returned	“As Jesus cleansed the temple in Jerusalem three and a half years after he was anointed with God’s spirit to be King, so three and a half years after he received kingly power in the autumn of 1914 he came to the spiritual temple as Jehovah’s Messenger and began to cleanse it. So this occurred in the spring of 1918. That marked the beginning of the period of judgment and inspection of his spirit-begotten followers.”		<i>Let God be True</i> , 102
	“What was to happen at the end of these appointed times of the nations (Gentiles)? Jehovah was to give the power to rule to the One ‘who has the legal right!’ This One is Jesus Christ.” “This means that Jesus Christ began to rule as King of God’s heavenly government in 1914.”		<i>Live Forever</i> , 140-141
	“How important it is to become better acquainted with Jesus Christ! Yes, it is essential that we never lose sight of Jesus, the living key to the knowledge of God that leads to everlasting life.”		<i>Knowledge</i> , 42
knowledge = salvation	“Accepting the message of salvation and devoting ourselves to God through Christ and being baptized in water is only the beginning of our exercise of faith. It is only the beginning of our obedience to God. It sets us on the way to everlasting life, but it does not mean our final salvation.”		<i>Everlasting Life</i> , 181
salvation is not through faith alone	“Jesus gave his perfect human life as a ransom for humankind. His sacrifice makes possible everlasting life for all who truly exercise faith in it.”	Mark 10:45 John 3:16 John 3:36	<i>Proclaimers</i> , 144
Jesus is worshipped	“It seems clear that His Divinity was retained in humanity because He repeatedly spoke of Himself as having come down from heaven, and because He [...] was yet possessed of the authority and exercised the prerogatives of a God. He was the object of unproved worship even when a babe, by the wise men who came to see the new-born King. Matt. 2:2-11. Even the angels delighted to do Him honor. [... Heb. 1:6]. He never reproved any one for acts of worship offered to Himself, but when Cornelius offered such service to Peter--the leading apostle—he took him up, saying, “stand up; I myself also am a man.” .... Had Christ not been more than a man the same reason would have prevented from receiving worship.”	Matt. 2:2-11 Heb. 1:6	<i>Zion’s WT</i> (Oct.1880), 2-3

Jesus is worshipped	"the disciples worshiped him."		<i>Zion's WT</i> (May 15, 1892), 157
	"The fact that our Lord received worship is claimed by some to be an evidence that while on earth he was God the Father disguised in a body of flesh and not really a man. Was he <i>really</i> worshiped, or is the translation faulty? Yes we believe our Lord Jesus while on earth was really worshiped, and properly so. While he was not <i>the</i> God, Jehovah, he was <i>a</i> God. The word 'God' signifies a 'mighty one,' and our Lord was indeed a mighty one. So it is stated in the first two verses of the gospel of John. It was proper for our Lord to receive worship in view of his having been the only begotten of the Father."		<i>Watchtower</i> , (July 15, 1898), 216
	"In one respect many of Christendom could learn numerous important lessons from these wise Gentiles....They worshiped him in three senses of the word: (1) They fell before him, prostrated themselves, thus physically expressing their reverence. (2) They worshiped him in their hearts and with the tongue gave expression to their rejoicing and confidence. (3) They opened their treasure-box and presented to him three gifts appropriate to royalty: the myrrh representing submission, frankincense representing praise, gold representing obedience."		<i>Zion's WT</i> (Jan 1, 1906), 15
	"For example, to which one of the angels did he ever say: 'You are my Son; today I have become your Father'? And again: 'I shall be a Father to him, and he will be a Son to me'? But when he again brings his Firstborn into the inhabited earth, he says: 'And let all God's angels worship him,'"		<i>New Heavens</i> , 27-28
	"Jehovah God commands all to worship Christ Jesus because Christ Jesus is the express image of his Father, Jehovah, and because he is the Executive Officer of Jehovah always carrying out Jehovah's purpose."	Heb.:3-6	<i>Watchtower</i> (Nov. 15, 1939), 339
	"During the Millennium, 'the princes will lead the people in their worship of Jehovah and of Christ.'"		<i>Vindication</i> , Vol.3, 295



Jesus is worshipped	<p>"The people of all nations who obtain salvation must come to the house of the Lord to worship there; that is to say, they must believe on and worship Jehovah God and the Lord Jesus Christ, his chief instrument."</p>	<p>Philippians 2:10, 11</p>	<p><i>Salvation</i>, 151</p>
	<p>"Now, at Christ's coming to reign as king in Jehovah's capital organization Zion, to bring in a righteous new world, Jehovah makes him infinitely higher than the godly angels or messengers and accordingly commands them to worship him. Since Jehovah God now reigns as King by means of his capital organization Zion, then whosoever would worship Him must also worship and bow down to Jehovah's Chief One in that capital organization, namely, Christ Jesus, his Co-regent on the throne of The Theocracy."</p>		<p><i>Watchtower</i> (Oct. 15, 1945), 313</p>
	<p>"for public Christian worship of Almighty God and Christ Jesus"</p>		<p><i>Yearbook</i>, 1945 (incl. WT legal Charter), 32</p>
	<p>"Christ to be worshiped as a glorious spirit."</p>		<p><i>Make Sure</i>, 33</p>
	<p>"Should we worship Jesus? Consequently, since the Scriptures teach that Jesus Christ is not a trinitarian co-person with God the Father, but is a distinct person, the Son of God, the answer to the above question must be that no distinct worship is to be rendered to Jesus Christ now glorified in heaven."</p>	<p>Eph. 3:14-19 John 15:16 John 16:23-26</p>	<p><i>Watchtower</i> (Jan. 1, 1954), 31</p>
	<p>"At Hebrews 1:6, the angels are instructed to 'worship' Jesus, according to the rendering or RS, TEC, KJ, JB and NAB. NW says 'do obeisance to.' At Matthew 14:33, Jesus' disciples are said to have 'worshipped' him, according to RS, TEV, KJ; other translations say that they 'showed him reverence' (NAB), 'bowed down before him' (JB), 'fell at his feet' (NE), 'did obeisance to him' (NW)." ... "this is the term used at Matthew 14:33 to express what the disciples did toward Jesus; at Hebrews 1:6 to indicate what the angels are to do toward Jesus."</p>	<p>Matt. 14:33 Hebrews 1:6</p>	<p><i>Reasoning</i>, 215</p>

Jesus is not worshipped *	"He taught men, not to worship him, but to worship Jehovah his Father... 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God,'"		<i>Make Sure</i> , 283
	"Jehovah's Witnesses do not worship Jesus. Rather, they worship Almighty God, the One that Jesus himself worshipped,"		<i>Awake</i> (Dec. 22, 1987), 22
	"Though some claim that prayer may properly be addressed to others, such as to God's Son, the evidence is emphatically to the contrary."		<i>Insight</i> , Vol.2, 667
	<p>"Trinitarians who believe that Jesus is God, or at least the second person of the triune God, do not like to have Jehovah's witnesses say that it is unscriptural for worshipers of the living and true God to render worship to the Son of God, Jesus Christ"</p> <p>"Reverent adoration should be expressed only to God. To render worship to anyone or anything else would be a form of idolatry, which is condemned in both the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures. Accordingly, true Christians do well to direct their worship only to Jehovah God, the Almighty."</p>		<p><i>Watchtower</i> (Nov. 1, 1964), 671</p> <p><i>Awake!</i> (Apr. 8, 2000), 26-27</p>
is not the mediator between God and all mankind	"Likewise, the Greater Moses, Jesus Christ, is not the Mediator between Jehovah God and all mankind. He is the Mediator between his heavenly Father, Jehovah God, and the nation of spiritual Israel, which is limited to only 144,000 members."		<i>Peace &amp; Security</i> , 10
all the saints are the Christ	"Thus the saints of this Gospel age are anointed company--anointed to be kings and priests unto God (2 Cor. 1:21; Peter 2:9 [sic]); and together with Jesus, their chief and Lord, they constitute Jehovah's Anointed--the Christ."		<i>Divine Plan</i> , 81-82

\*Jesus was granted worship until the New World Translation was published in the 1950's. In this new publication, προσκυνέω was translated as obeisance rather than worship whenever it referred to Jesus. Out of the 55 occurrences of προσκυνέω, the 15 applied to Jesus were translated as obeisance, while the remaining 37 occurrences were translated as worship, regardless of who it referred to (God, Satan, angels, demons, idols). Therefore, from then on, evidence shows a change in the Watchtower teaching on Jesus.

## IMPORTANT EVENTS RELATED TO JESUS AND THE KINGDOM

(Reproduced from *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life*, 94)

TIME	EVENT	VERSE
	God announced his purpose to produce a 'seed' that would crush the head of the Serpent, Satan the Devil.	Gen. 3:15
1943 BCE	God indicates that this 'seed' would be a human descendant of Abraham.	Gen. 12:1-3, 7 Gen. 22:18
1513 BCE	The Law covenant given to Israel in 1513 BCE provides a shadow of the good things to come.	Ex.24:6-8 Heb. 10:1
1117 BCE	The earthly kingdom of Israel commences in 1117 BCE, and it continues later in the line of David.	1Sam. 11:15 2Sam.7:8, 16
607 BCE	Jerusalem is destroyed in 607 BCE, and 'the appointed times of the nations' begin.	2Kings 25:8-10, 25-26 Luke 21:24
29 CE	In 29 CE, Jesus is anointed a King-Designate and proceeds with his earthly ministry.	Mat.3:16-17 Mat. 4:17 Mat. 21:9-11
33 CE	In 33 CE, Jesus ascends to heaven, there to wait at God's right hand until his rule begins.	Acts 5:30-31 Heb.10-12-13
1914 CE	Jesus is enthroned in the heavenly Kingdom in 1914 CE as 'the appointed times of the nations' end.	Rev. 11:15
	Satan and his demons are cast down to the vicinity of the earth and bring increased woe to mankind.	Rev. 12:9-12
	Jesus oversees the worldwide preaching of the good news of God's Kingdom.	Mat. 14:4 Mat. 28:19-20

## Appendix 9

*Titles and Attributes of God (אלהים) Applied to Jesus.*

## TITLES AND ATTRIBUTES OF YHWH APPLIED TO JESUS

VERSE REFERRING TO GOD	CONTENT	VERSE REFERRING TO JESUS	YET
Psalms 147:5	knows 'all things'	John 16:30	
1 Kings 8:39 Jeremiah 17:9-10	knows the hearts of all men	John 2:24-25 Rev. 2:18, 23	
Exodus 31:13	sanctifies us	Hebrews 10:10	
Judges 6:23	our peace	Ephesians 2:14	
Jeremiah 23:6	our righteousness	1 Corinthians 1:30	
Exodus 15:26	our healer.	Acts 9:34	
2 Corinthians 6:16	dwells in us	Romans 8:10	
Deuteronomy 32:39	is the giver of life who will not allow His people to be 'snatched' out of His hand	John 10:28	
Ezekiel 43:	voice is like the roar of rushing waters	Revelation 1:15	
Proverbs 15:3 Jeremiah 23:24 1 Kings 8:27	omnipresent	John 1:48 Matthew 18:20 Matthew 28:20	
Malachi 3:6	his nature does not change	Hebrews 13:8	
2 Kings 17:35	is to be served	Colossians 3:24	
Exodus 34:14	is to be worshipped	John 5:23 Revelation 5:11-14 cf with Rev. 4:10-11	No angel can receive 'worship.' Revelation 22:8-9
Isaiah 8:12b-13	is to be set apart as holy	1 Peter 3:14b-15a	
Isaiah 42:8	YHWH's glory is not to be given to another	Jn. 17:5	Jesus shares YHWH's glory
Isaiah 42:8	God's name is YHWH	John 17:11 John 16:14-15	Jesus has YHWH's name
Exodus 23:13	is the recipient of prayers	John 14:14	
Joel 2:32	Calling upon Him	Acts 2:21 Romans 10:9-13	
1 John 5:20	'eternal life'	1 John 1:2	
Jeremiah 32:17-18 Isaiah 10:20-21	'mighty God'	Isaiah 9:6	There is only one God (1 Timothy 1:17; Isaiah 44:8)
	is 'Almighty'	Revelation 1:7-8	
Psalms 27:1 Isaiah 60:19-20	'everlasting light'	John 1:4-9 Revelation 21:23	
Isaiah 44:6 Isaiah 48:12	the first and the last	Revelation 1:17-18 Revelation 22:12-13, 20	

Revelation 1:8 Revelation 21:6-7	Alpha and the Omega	Revelation 22:12-13, 20	
Isaiah 47:4	the Holy One	Acts 3:14 John 6:69	
Isaiah 8:13-15	'Stumbling stone' of Israel.	1 Peter 2:6-8	
Isaiah 40:3	John the Baptist was to prepare the way for him	Mark 1:1-4 John 1:6-7, 23	
Zechariah 12:10	is the one who was 'pierced'	John 19:34 Revelation 1:7-8	
Zechariah 11:13	was sold for 30 pieces of silver	Matthew 27:2-6	
Psalms 89:8-9	Lord of the elements.	Matthew 8:26-27 John 2:7-9	
Psalms 98:9 Deuteronomy 32:39 Jeremiah 17:9-10	the great Judge who gives life to whom he wishes and who renders to each man 'according' to his 'deeds'	John 5:21-22 Revelation 2:18, 23	
Mark 2:7 Daniel 9:9	the only one who can forgive sins	Mark 2:10-11 Luke 24:46-47	
Psalms 23:1-2 Revelation 21:6-7	the great 'shepherd' who leads his people to 'the spring of the water of life'	John 10:11-18 Revelation 7:17	There is only one shepherd --John 10:16.
Deuteronomy 10:17	'Lord of Lords'	Revelation 17:14 Revelation 19:16	
Matthew 11:25 Acts 17:24	Lord of all	Acts 10:36	There is only one Lord (Jude 4)
Isaiah 45:21-22	the Savior	Titus 2:13 2 Peter 1:1	There is only one savior (Isaiah 43:11)
Psalms 102:25-27	created the universe	John 1:3 Colossians 1:15-19 Hebrews 1:10-12	There is only one creator (Isaiah 44:24)
Isaiah 6:1-5	was seen by Isaiah	John 12:41	
			"For I am God, and there is <b>no other</b> ; I am God, and there is <b>no one like Me.</b> "—Isaiah 46:9

## Appendix 10

### *Allusions to a Multiplicity of Divine Entities of God in the Hebrew Bible*

Pivotal verse for monotheistic Judeo-Christian faith:

Deut. 6:4      שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד:  
 “Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!”

The Hebrew word for ‘one’ in this verse is אֶחָד which allows for plurality and unity rather than יְחִיד a word which expresses a singular absolute, as used in Judges 11:34 to express ‘his one and only child.’

PLURALITY OF GOD			
Expression	Verse(s)	English translation	relevant phrase
the word <i>echad</i> אֶחָד (one)	Gen. 1:5	And God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, <b>one</b> day.	one day (evening + morning)
	Gen. 2:24	For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become <b>one</b> flesh.	one flesh (man and wife)
	Ezra 3:1	Now when the seventh month came, and the sons of Israel <i>were</i> in the cities, the people gathered together as <b>one</b> man to Jerusalem.	the people as one man
words referring to God	Gen. 1:26	Then God said, “Let <b>Us</b> make man in <b>Our</b> image, according to Our likeness.”	let <b>us</b> make man in <b>our</b> image**
	Isaiah 54:5	“For your <b>husband</b> is your <b>Maker</b> , Whose name is the Lord of hosts; And your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, Who is called the God of all the earth.”	Plur. <b>maker</b> and <b>husband</b>
	Ps. 149:2	Let Israel be glad in his <b>Maker</b> , Let the sons of Zion rejoice in their King.	Plur. <b>maker</b>
	Gen. 11:7	“Come, let <b>Us</b> go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech.”	let <b>us</b>
	Isaiah 6:8	Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for <b>Us</b> ?” Then I said, “Here am I. Send me!”	for <b>us</b>
	Joshua 24:19	You will not be able to serve the Lord, for He is a <b>Holy God</b> .	<b>Holy God</b> is plural absolute
	Eccl. 12:1	Remember also your <b>Creator</b> in the days of your youth.	Plur. <b>Creator</b>
Adonai	Psalm 8:1	O YHWH <b>our Lord</b> , how majestic your name is in all the earth.	Plur. I with a sing. poss. ending always refers to God

\*\* Gen. 1:26 “man was made in the image of God”- not angels; ‘our’ cannot include them



Entities Associated with God		
Person	Verse(s)	English translation
Spirit	Gen. 1:2	And the <b><i>Spirit of God</i></b> moved upon the face of the waters.
	2Sam. 23:2-3	The <b><i>Spirit of the Lord</i></b> spoke by me, and his word was in my tongue. The <b><i>God of Israel</i></b> said, the <b><i>Rock of Israel</i></b> spoke to me, He that rules over men <i>must be</i> just, ruling in the fear of God.
	Isaiah 11:2	And the <b><i>Spirit of the Lord</i></b> will rest on Him, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and strength, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.
	Isaiah 40:13	Who has directed the <b><i>Spirit of the Lord</i></b> , Or as His counselor has informed Him?
	Isaiah 59:19	So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the <b><i>Spirit of the Lord</i></b> shall lift up a standard against him.
	Isaiah 63:10	But they rebelled and grieved His <b><i>Holy Spirit</i></b> , Therefore, He turned Himself to become their enemy, He fought against them.
Father (cannot be seen)	Ex. 33:20	But He said, "You cannot see My face, for <b><i>no man can see Me</i></b> and live!"
	Ex. 33:23	"Then I will take My hand away and you shall see My back, but <b><i>My face shall not be seen.</i></b> "
Son (can be seen)	Ex. 33:11	Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face
	Num. 14:14	And they will tell the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that you, O Lord, are in the midst of this people; for you, <b><i>O Lord</i></b> , are <b><i>seen face to face</i></b> , and your cloud stands over them and you go in front of them, in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night.
Multiple Entities of God in One Passage		
Speaker + Lord + Spirit	Isaiah 48:12-16	"Listen to Me, O Jacob, even Israel whom I called; I am He, I am the first, I am also the last. <sup>13</sup> Surely My hand founded the earth, And My right hand spread out the heavens; When I call to them, they stand together. <sup>14</sup> Assemble, all of you, and listen! Who among them has declared these things? The Lord loves him; he shall carry out His good pleasure on Babylon, And His arm <b><i>shall be against</i></b> the Chaldeans. <sup>15</sup> I, even I, have spoken; indeed I have called him, I have brought him, and He will make his ways successful. <sup>16</sup> Come near to Me, listen to this: From the first I have not spoken in secret, From the time it took place, I was there. And now the <b><i>Lord God</i></b> has sent <b><i>Me</i></b> , and <b><i>His Spirit</i></b> ."
	Isaiah 61:1-3	The <b><i>Spirit</i></b> of the Lord God is upon me, Because the <b><i>Lord</i></b> has anointed <b><i>me</i></b> .

Names Referring to the Son as the Visible Representation of God			
Person	Verse(s)	English translation	
<i>El</i> <i>Shaddai</i> אֱלֹהֵי שְׁדַי or God Almighty (the divine entity within the one God whom man can see face to face)	Gen. 17:1	Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord (יהוה) appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am <b>God Almighty</b> ; Walk before Me."	<b>God Almighty</b> seen by Abraham
	Gen. 18:1-22	The Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day.	
	Gen. 35:9	Then God appeared to Jacob again when he came from Paddan-aram, and He blessed him.	<b>God Almighty</b> seen by Jacob
	Gen. 35:11	God also said to him, "I am <b>God Almighty</b> ,"	
	Ex. 6:2-3	God spoke further to Moses and said to him, "I am the Lord (יהוה)"; <sup>3</sup> and I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as <b>God Almighty</b> , but by My name, Lord (יהוה), I did not make Myself known to them."	יהוה = (Lord) = <b>God Almighty</b>
	Ex. 13:21	And the Lord (יהוה) was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night.	Lord (יהוה)
Lord (יהוה) = <b>Angel of God -</b> <b>Angel of the Lord -</b> <b>Angel of YHWH</b>	Ex. 14:19	And the <b>angel of God</b> , who had been going before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them.	Lord (יהוה) = <b>angel of God</b>
	Ex. 23:20-23	"Behold, I am going to send an <b>angel</b> before you to guard you along the way, and to bring you into the place which I have prepared."	
	Judges 6:12	Then the <b>angel of the Lord</b> appeared unto him, and said unto him, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour.	seen by Gideon
	Judges 13:20-23	...the <b>angel of the Lord</b> ascended in the flame of the altar. When Manoah and his wife saw <i>this</i> , they fell on their faces to the ground. <sup>21</sup> Now the <b>angel of the Lord</b> appeared no more to Manoah or his wife. Then Manoah knew that he was <b>the angel of the Lord</b> . <sup>22</sup> So Manoah said to his wife,	seen by Manoah and his wife

Lord (יהוה) = <b>Angel of          God -          Angel of          the Lord -          Angel of          YHWH</b>		"We shall surely die, for we have seen God."	
	Gen. 32:28-30	And he said, "Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel; for you have striven with <b>God</b> (אֱלֹהִים) and with men and have prevailed." <sup>29</sup> Then Jacob asked him and said, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And he blessed him there. <sup>30</sup> So Jacob named the place Peniel, for <i>he said</i> , "I have seen <b>God</b> (אֱלֹהִים) face to face, yet my life has been preserved."	Jacob (or Israel) saw God (אֱלֹהִים)
	Ex. 3:2	And the <b>angel of the Lord</b> appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush.	seen by Moses
	Gen. 16:7	Now the <b>angel of the Lord</b> found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur.	seen by Hagar
	Gen. 22:11	And the <b>angel of the Lord</b> called unto him out of heaven, and said, "Abraham, Abraham" and he said, "Here am I."	seen by Abraham
	Gen. 31:11	Then <b>the angel of God</b> said to me in the dream, Jacob, and I said, "Here I am." ... <sup>13</sup> "I am the God of Bethel."	seen by Jacob
	Judges 2:1	Now the <b>angel of the Lord</b> came up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, "I brought you up out of Egypt."	see Ex. 19 :4
	Zech. 1:11	So they answered <b>the angel of the Lord</b> who was standing among the myrtle trees.	seen by Zechariah

Other Names Referring to the Son		
Name used	Verse(s)	English translation
Commander of the army of the Lord	Joshua 5:14	He replied, "Neither; but as <b>commander of the army of the Lord</b> I have now come." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and <b>worshiped</b> , and he said to him, "What do you command your servant, my lord?"
Angel of the Presence	Isaiah 63:9	In all their affliction He was afflicted, And the <b>angel of His presence</b> saved them.
	Ex. 33:14-15	He said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."
Redeemer, / Holy One of Israel, God Husband/maker	Isaiah 48:17-18	Thus says the <b>Lord</b> , your <b>Redeemer</b> , the <b>Holy One of Israel</b> : "I am the <b>Lord your God</b> , who teaches you for your own good, who leads you in the way you should go."
	Isaiah 54:5	For your <b>Maker</b> is your <b>husband</b> , the <b>Lord of hosts</b> is his name; the <b>Holy One of Israel</b> is your <b>Redeemer</b> , the <b>God</b> of the whole earth he is called.
Anointed of the Lord	Ps. 2:2	The kings of the earth take their stand, And the rulers take counsel together Against the Lord and against His <b>Anointed</b> .
Son of God	Ps. 2:7	I will surely tell of the decree of the Lord: He said to Me, "Thou art <b>My Son</b> , Today I have begotten Thee."
Messenger of the Covenant	Malachi 3:1	"Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the <b>messenger of the covenant</b> , in whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says the Lord of hosts.
From everlasting	Micah 5:2	But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Too little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of <b>eternity</b> .
Immanuel	Isaiah 7:14	Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name <b>Immanuel</b> .
King, Lord of Righteousness	Jer. 23:6	In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell securely; And this is His name by which He will be called, ' <b>The Lord our righteousness</b> .'
	Jr. 33:16	In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this <i>is the name</i> wherewith she shall be called, The <b>Lord our righteousness</b> .