

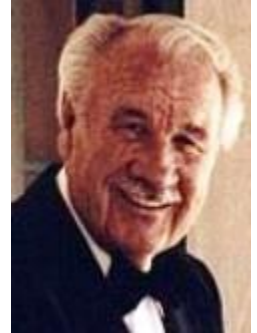
Bible Translation and Study

Does the *New World Translation* Add Words to Colossians 1:16, 17?

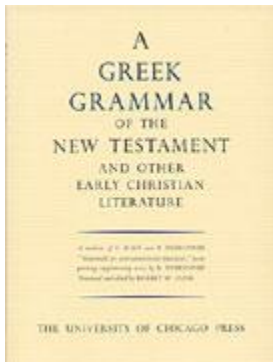
Do not add anything or take anything away! (Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Revelation 22:18, 19) Anyone who undertakes to translate God's Word into another language must see this as a particularly sobering warning. So it is important to consider the common accusation made against the *New World Translation* that it has added words to Colossians 1:16-20.^{i ii}

Typical of such accusations is that made by the late Ray Stedman:

"If you look carefully at the Jehovah's Witnesses' little green translation of the Scriptures, you will notice that in order to substantiate their lie about Jesus Christ, they've inserted the word "other" in these phrases. "All other things were created by him. In him all other things were created." But there is absolutely no warrant whatsoever in the Greek text for the insertion of the word "other." This is a clear instance of the kind of deceitfulness to which these people will stoop in order to propagate their lies."ⁱⁱⁱ (Emphasis added)



Leaving aside the emotive language used by Stedman and his failure to allow even for the possibility that the NWT translators might be sincere in their efforts, the substance of this allegation must be investigated. Has the word 'other' been inserted arbitrarily, without foundation?^{iii iv}



Understanding How Translations are Made

Translation involves rendering the words and thoughts of a writer in one language (generally referred to as the Source Language) into another (called the Target Language). The process of translating anything involves much more than simply substituting a word in the source language for a corresponding word in the target language.

As one textbook used for training translators states:

"Elements of meaning which are represented by several orthographic words in one language, say English, may be represented by one orthographic word in another, and vice versa. ... *There is no one-to-one correspondence between orthographic words and elements of meaning within or across languages.*" (Italics added)^[2]

Frequently, then translators are obliged to use more than one word in English to give a complete picture of what is being said in the Greek text of the Bible. This happens constantly. For instance, Colossians 1 in the original Greek has 551 words, whereas the *King James Version* has 656 words, the *New International Version* has 673, the *New World Translation* has 766 and the *Good News Bible (Today's English Version)* has 797. There is

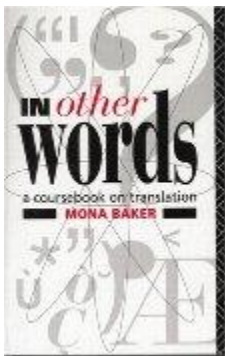
nothing unusual or sinister about this. Often, the extra words are needed to complete the sense in English.

What we have to ask ourselves, then, is not whether there is a particular *word* in Colossians 1:16 that means 'other' but whether the *idea* of 'other' is found in the meaning of the complete *sentence*.

Does Koine Greek Always Require the Use of a Word for "Other"?

The Greek of the New Testament has a number of words that may be translated as 'other'. Frequently, however, the concept of 'other' is not stated expressly, it is simply implied. ^{v vi}

Instructive in this regard is the comment made by noted scholars Blass, Debrunner and Funk, in their *Grammar*:



"Further ellipses: (1) The omission of the notion 'other, whatever' (§ 306 (5)) is specifically Greek." ^[3]

In other words, Greek sometimes takes it for granted that the word 'other' is implied. This phenomenon is not unique to Greek; it is sometimes encountered in English, which may occasionally omit the word 'other' when there is little chance of misunderstanding. But an examination of the New Testament indicates that this type of structure is encountered with much greater frequency in *koiné* Greek. ^{vii viii}

Consider, for example, the following phrases from the book of Acts. The original Greek is followed by the *King James Version* rendering in red and the *New International Version* in blue.

Acts 5:29	<p>αποκριθεις δε Πετρος και οι αποστολοι ειπον [apokritheis de Petros kai oi apostoloi eipon]</p> <p>Then Peter and the <i>other</i> apostles answered and said ^{ix x}</p> <p>Peter and the <i>other</i> apostles replied</p>
Acts 4:6	<p>Καιαφαν και Ιωαννην και Αλεξανδρον και οσοι ησαν εκ γενους αρχιερατικου [Kaiaphan kai Ioannen kai Alexandros kai hosoi esan ek genous archieratiku]</p> <p>Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest,</p> <p>Caiaphas, John, Alexander and the <i>other</i> men of the high priest's family</p>
Acts 16:25	<p>Κατα δε το μεσονυκτιον Παυλος και Σιλας προσευχομενοι υμνου τον Θεον· επηκρωνωτο δε αυτων οι δεσμιοι. [Kata de to mesonyktion Paulos kai Silas proseuchomenoi hymnoun ton Theon; epekroonto de auton oi desmioi]</p>

And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.

It is evident that in the above cases *other* is not expressed in Greek - but it is implied. The Greek expression translated literally as "Peter and the apostles" does not imply that Peter was not an apostle. Likewise, Caiaphas was the High Priest, and Paul and Silas were prisoners. The *New International Version* has correctly supplied the word 'other', which is implicit in the above sentences, although it is not possible to point to a particular word in the above sentences that is translated *other*.^{xii xiii} The *King James Version* has done likewise in Acts 5:29, but not in the other two instances, leaving it to the intelligence of the reader to understand this.^{xiii xiv}

Use of *pas* to mean 'all other'

The omission of words that express the notion 'other' is particularly common with the Greek word *pas* (all). This may be seen by comparing verses in the *New International Version* where a form of the Greek word *pas* is translated by 'all other(s)' or some similar phrase. In the following table, none of the verses cited use any of the Greek words traditionally translated 'other'. The word is merely implied by the context.^{xv xvi}

Matt. 26:35	And all the other disciples said the same.
Mark 12:43	this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others .
Luke 3:19	And all the other disciples said the same.
Luke 11:42	you give God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs
Luke 13:2	Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way?
Luke 13:4	do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem?
Acts 16:32	Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house.
1 Cor. 6:18	All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body.
2 Cor. 9:13	your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else .
1 Thess. 3:12	May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else
1 Thess. 5:15	always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else

In all of the above occurrences, the *New International Version* has used words such as 'other' or 'else' to complete the sense in English.^[4] This does not mean that they are adding to God's word, they are simply making explicit or clear what was already there in the Greek text. Thus, it is by no means wrong to translate *pas* as 'all other,' *where that is what is implied by the context*.

A Greek Lesson from the Apostle Paul

The writings of the Apostle Paul himself, who wrote the letter to the Colossians, teach us that *pas* can have the meaning of 'all other things'. Consider what he writes in 1 Corinthians 15:28:

Greek	<p>παντα γαρ υπεταξεν υπο τους ποδας αυτου οταν δε ειπη οτι παντα υποτετακται δηλον οτι εκτος του υποταξαντος αυτω τα παντα</p> <p>[panta gar hypetaxen hypo tous podas autou. otan de eipe hoti panta hypotetaktai delon hoti ektos tou hypotaxantos auto ta panta^[5]]</p>
KJV	For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under <i>him</i> , <i>it is</i> manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him.
NIV	For he has put everything under his feet. Now when it says that everything has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ.
NWT	For [God] "subjected all things under his feet." But when he says that 'all things have been subjected,' it is evident that it is with the exception of the one who subjected all things to him.

Thus, Paul himself says that it is δηλον, *delon*, 'manifest, clear, evident' that the word *pas* can have exceptions. In this case, when Scripture says that "all things" (*ta panta*) are subjected to Christ, Paul points out that the expression 'all things' has an exception - it does not include God himself. For Paul, this is obvious, as it should be to modern-day readers of the Bible ^{xvii} ^{xviii}. None of the above-mentioned translations use the word 'other', doubtless reasoning that it is so obvious as to be superfluous.

That the word 'other' is often implicit in the Greek text is admitted even by Robert Bowman, who is a critic of the *New World Translation*. He acknowledges:

It is, of course, legitimate for translators to add the word "other" where this does not change the meaning but simply makes for smoother English (e.g., Luke 11:41-42; 13:2,4).

However, Bowman then adds:

In Colossians 1:16-20, however, adding "other" substantially changes the meaning.^[6]

In view of Bowman's comment, we must ask whether the inclusion of the word 'other' changes the meaning of the original Greek text. Rolf Furuli explains why this is not the case:

In NWT the use of "all other" four times in Colossians 1 cannot be viewed as bias, and it is not *interpolation*, since the very words of 1:15 reveal that Jesus Christ is a part of creation ^{xix} ^{xx}, which then implies the word "other" in these four places.^[7]

In view of the statement in verse 15 that Christ is the "firstborn of all Creation", the *New World Translation* has a very strong case indeed for its translation.

Of course, it is true that some would render the phrase in Colossians 1:15 as "firstborn *over* all creation" (*New International Version*; emphasis added) or even to paraphrase it - incorrectly - as "firstborn son, superior to all created things" (*Good News Translation*). This is referred to by some as the "genitive of subordination".^[8] It is true that *prototokos* can at times figuratively refer to supremacy. However, leaving Colossians 1:15 aside, there is no instance

of *prototokos* being used anywhere in the NT or the LXX with a 'genitive of subordination' [19](#) Furthermore, even if one accepts the extremely dubious conclusion that Colossians 1:15 has a genitive of subordination, that does still not rule out the possibility of Christ's being a created being. Indeed, in view of the information cited previously in this article, there is no reason why *prototokos pases ktiseos* could not be translated as 'firstborn over all other creation'!

Jason Beduhn makes an further point in his book *Truth in Translation*:

So what exactly are objectors to "other" arguing for as the meaning of the phrase "all things"? That Christ created himself (v. 16)? That Christ is before God and that God was made to exist by means of Christ (v. 17)? That Christ, too, needs to be reconciled to God (v. 20)? When we spell out what is denied by the use of "other" we can see clearly how absurd the objection is. [110](#)

The point is obvious: *pas* (all) does not always necessarily mean every person, human or spirit, who is living, has ever lived in the past or will ever live in the future. Common sense must be applied.

Created 'by Christ' - In What Sense?

This brings us to the exact meaning of the phrase used by Paul to say that everything was created. We can compare the original Greek text with a number of translations.

Greek	οτι εν αυτω εκτισθη τα παντα [<i>en auto ektisthe ta panta</i>] εν τοις ουρανοις και επι της γης τα ορατα και τα αορατα ειτε θρονοι ειτε κυριοτητες ειτε αρχαι ειτε εξουσιαι τα παντα δι αυτου και εις αυτον εκτισται [<i>ta panta di autou kai eis auton ektistai</i>]
KJV	For by him were all things created , that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether <i>they be</i> thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:
NIV	For by him all things were created : things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.
NWT	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.

Concerning Colossians 1:16, Albert Barnes claimed: "There could not possibly be a more explicit declaration that the universe was created by Christ, than this." [111](#) But is this truly the case? If Paul had wanted to say that, he could have said, for example: "αυτος εκτισεν τα παντα." (*autos ektisen ta panta*; he created all things) What he actually did say is something quite different.

Paul here uses two prepositions with the Greek verb *ktizo* (κτιζω), create. He says that all (or all other) things were created *en auto* (εν αυτω) and *di' autou* (δι' αυτου). The preposition *en* literally means 'in' and the preposition *dia* (shortened here to *di'*) literally means 'through'.

With regard to the rendering of the expression *en auto*, the *Revised Standard Version* and the *American Standard Version* translate it 'in him.' The *Good News Translation* (formerly *Today's English Version*) renders it 'through him'.^[12] As for the expression *di' autou*, the same three translations are unanimous in rendering it 'through him'.^[13]

When the *King James Version* was produced in 1611, the word 'by' was frequently used to indicate the means or agent by means of which an action was performed. Thus, in Matthew 1:22, we have "spoken of the Lord, by the prophet", where we today would say "spoken by the Lord, through (or by means of) the prophet." Or Matthew 12:27, "And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom your children cast them out". So in the *King James Version*, it is clear that the word 'by' frequently has the meaning of 'through' or 'by means of'.

The original Greek says that all things were created *by means of* Christ or *through* him, not *by* him as the ultimate agent

In the twenty-first century, however, a reader seeing the word 'by', particularly after a passive verb, is likely to conclude that reference is being made to the ultimate agent of the verb. To us, a sentence like "The letter was sent by John" is equivalent to saying "John sent the letter". You would understand, not that John carried the letter on behalf of someone else, but that he himself wrote it and sent it. In other words, you would think that the letter came *from* John, not *through* John (which is perhaps how someone living in the 1600's might have understood it). This is a significant difference between seventeenth-century English and today's English.

The translators of the *NIV* clearly recognize this principle, as is seen in their own translation of John 1:17, "the Law was given through Moses". Here *dia* is translated as 'through', not 'by'. Other translations, such as the *Revised Standard Version*, *American Standard Version*, *Good News Translation* and the *New American Standard Bible* likewise use 'through' to translate *dia*.

However, turning back to Colossians 1:16, we see that the *New International Version* has translated both *en auto* and *di' autou* as 'by him'. The problem with this is that modern-day readers are likely to understand 'all things were created by him' as meaning exactly the same as 'he created all things'. Now this is no doubt what the *NIV* translators believe, and quite possibly what they want to convey to their readers. But it is not what the Greek says. The Greek says quite clearly *through* Christ, *in* Christ or *by means of* Christ. Just as the Law was given *through* Moses, not by Moses, in the sense that Moses was simply an intermediary and not the ultimate source of the Law, in the same way, creation was accomplished *through* Christ, or *by means of* him, without his being the ultimate source. Thus, the *Good News Translation* correctly renders the first part of Colossians 1:16: "Through him God created everything."

"Other" is implied in "all" and the NW simply makes what is implicit explicit.
Jason Beduhn

After a verb in the passive voice, the ultimate source of an action in Greek is generally expressed by *υπο* (*hypo*) or occasionally by certain other prepositions without a preposition by the dative case. In such cases, the word after *hypo* may truly become the subject of an active verb with exactly the same meaning. Thus, if Paul had written *υν' αυτου εκτισθη τα παντα* (*hyp' autou ektisthe ta panta*) that would undoubtedly have meant that Christ was the Creator^[14]. But that is not what Paul wrote. What he did write is consistent with the teaching that Christ - the Firstborn of creation - was the one *through whom* God created everything and everyone else.

Conclusion

The *New World Translation* has not 'inserted the word *other*' into Colossians 1:16ff, as Stedman asserts. The word 'other' is implied in the preceding word 'all'. It is simply not true to say that "there is absolutely no warrant in the Greek text whatsoever for the insertion of the word 'other'".

It could well be argued that the use of the word 'other', while a valid and correct translation, is not actually necessary. As we have stated above, English, like Greek, sometimes allows the idea of 'other' to be implicit rather than expressed (although nowhere near as frequently as Greek). Thus, if we say "God created everyone", we don't mean that God created himself. This appears to be the position taken by Rolf Furuli, who feels that, as long as the preceding verse (Colossians 1:15) is translated correctly, "the reader is hardly misled if *pas* is translated 'all'."^[15]

Scholar Jason Beduhn, however, sees the use of the word as valuable:

"Other" is implied in "all" and the NW simply makes what is implicit explicit. You can argue whether it is necessary or not to do this. But I think the objections that have been raised to it show that it is, in fact, necessary, because those who object want to negate the meaning of the phrase "firstborn of creation". If adding "other" prevents this misreading of the Biblical text, then it is useful to have it there.^[16]

It is easy for critics of the *New World Translation* to criticize certain renderings without giving the full picture. And, indeed, it is quite possible for them to persuade an uninformed reader, using the *Kingdom Interlinear* or a similar work, that the NWT has made an interpolation into the text. Those critics who profess to know Greek should be aware of the facts presented in this article. If they do, they are being deceitful when they claim that the NWT adds words. As for those critics who do not know Greek, it should be obvious that their opinion on the quality of a translation of the New Testament can hardly be trusted.

Thus, when Stedman says that "there is absolutely no warrant in the Greek text for the insertion of the word 'other'," what he is saying is simply not true. The *New World Translation* has neither added to, nor taken away from, God's inspired word.

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All translations add words. The interpretation of the scripture is do not add ideas or concepts. Therefore, the issue is does the addition of "other" add a concept.

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iv *****

Another way of posing the same question is the following. The fact of the matter is that the word nor the idea of other is not explicitly stated in the text. If one believes that the word is implied, then the burden of proof is on that person. Have you met that burden?

v

vi *****

Frequently, however, the concept of 'other' is not stated expressly, it is simply implied.

How is it implied? The meaning of the particular word in Greek is the following:

Strong's Concordance 3956. All.

Including all the forms of declension; apparently a primary word; all, any, every, the whole.

: all (manner of, means) always, any (one), ever, every (one, way), as many as, thoroughly, whatsoever, whole, whosoever.

This is a strong definition which explicitly says all without exception. How is the exception generated by the word other implied.

That burden must be met by more than general truths. For example, sometimes such and such is the case. The relationship must be established between sometimes and this time. A case in point is the following: All men are created equal. If you want to change all men to all men except, then the burden of proof that, that is what the author meant is on the speaker. The fact that sometimes the word all is used as a hyperbole does not meet the criteria of the burden. Again, how is the exception generated by the word other implied.

In the next section I will address the issue of the concept of other is not stated expressly in the given examples.

vii

viii

Sometimes, when there is little chance of misunderstanding. But, with much greater frequency in *koine* Greek.

Does this imply that that in Greek it occurs even when there is little chance of misunderstanding, or does it imply that in Greek there is a higher frequency of misunderstanding of Greek to native Greeks?

ix

x *****

Acts 5:29 - Then Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said

In this sentence we have two subjects, Peter and other apostles. Nevertheless, other is a preposition that modifies the second subject. Generally prepositions are not part of the Greek language because the text explains itself. The preposition represents a certain level of redundancy. For example:

Of Creation Vs Over Creation.

Furthermore, the NIV does not say of creation. Thus, implying that Jesus was a member of the class of created things. It says over creation. This interpretation is justified because in the word for word translation of the phrase firstborn of all creation, there is no translation for the preposition, "of ". Thus, making it somewhat subjective. Of implies that he is part of the set of things that were created, but not necessarily so. On the other hand over implies that he is not a member of the class of things which he has a relationship with, yet that is not necessarily so. Natives of the Greek language understand that Jesus was not part of the set of things that were created. Therefore, it is not necessary to explain the obvious.

Nevertheless, native Greeks at that time understood that the creator was not part of the things created. So, again it was not necessary to use words to modify the obvious. Even the Greeks would have been confused at the possible sentence structure where the creator was part of the set of things created. Therefore, he would have used the language that was available to him and to his peers to resolve the probable delimit.

This reasoning also applies to the phrases "faith of Jesus" vs "faith in Jesus". In their minds there is no difference between the two concepts. Therefore, there is no need to state the obvious.

It is evident that in the above cases *other* is not expressed in Greek.

That was a lot of prelude to get to the main point of the list of comparisons. In this verse and the other verses mentioned in the article, the word "and" does not imply the word "others", it explicitly states others. You cannot use the word and, and not mean someone other than those already mentioned. Therefore this represents an improper use of the concept implied or the concept **other is not expressed in Greek**. It is.

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xii *****

It is not possible to point to a particular word in the above sentences that is translated *other*.

That is precisely what I just did. I pointed to the word "and".

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xiv *****

Leaving it to the intelligence of the reader to understand this.

Actually, that is not an uncommon place to be. Often it is by design of the sages. Although, this is not true for the fundamental doctrines relative to the criteria for salvation. A formidable approach to the readers discerning spirit is a both and approach rather than an either or approach. The bible says:

2 Timothy 3:16.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

What we often say is: This scripture says such, but another scripture says this and that. Scripture B is more powerful than scripture A. Therefore, I choose to accept scripture A. We could ask the question, how can scripture A and B be true?

Proverbs 1:6-7.

6. for understanding proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise.

7. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.*

Proverbs, many times don't give up their meaning easily. They say to the reader: you're going to have to work at this, because the mind is a muscle. And just like a bodybuilder will go into the gym and lift those weights to build those muscles, the wise person goes into the gymnasium of Proverbs and works that mental muscle to strengthen it.

So if you read a proverb, and it doesn't make sense to you right away, that's by design. So if you're a lazy reader, if you're not serious about learning, many of these proverbs will never yield up their meaning to you. So my invitation to you is the same as my invitation to me, if you want to live a wise life, you've got to cultivate wisdom. And if you're going to cultivate wisdom, you're going to have to work at it.

So don't blame the Proverbs if you read one and you say, " Huh? That's by design, that's your challenge, that's my challenge to meditate, to prayerfully think my way through, " My challenge is to ask what is the message here?

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xvi *****

The word is merely implied by the context.

Again, in all the examples given under this heading, the word all means all without exception. Other is not implied, it is explicitly stated. The abnormality, or the need for clarity would arise when one of the subjects of the sentence is not a part of the verb of the sentence. That is the issue that we are dealing with in Colossians. All creatures in Colossians explicitly says every creature without exception were created. If Jesus is a creature that was not created, then the text must necessarily say so, because it is inconsistent with the definition of all. I have yet to see an example where one of the subjects of the sentence does not use the verb of the sentence, that is in this case to be created.

For Paul, this is obvious, as it should be to modern-day readers of the Bible.

Finally my brotheren; This verse hits the nail on the head.

1) One point of view might be, if I can find a meaningful exception anywhere, that justifies me defining anything as an exception. My view is that this ultimately leads to chaos, or it implies that the exception is simply a characteristic of the language.

2) Another point of view might be, if I find a meaningful exception somewhere, which is a characteristic of logic and not a characteristic of language, it is the duty of the original writer to address that issue.

What this verse addresses is the following: Because God has put everything under Jesus's feet, and God is a thing. Therefore, it is necessary for the author to comment on this.

But suppose God was not a thing. Then it would be superfluous to even commit on the issue, otherwise it would imply that the author is behaving in a negligent manner.

Since the very words of 1:15 reveal that Jesus Christ is a part of creation.

What text of 1:15 reveals this? The text is:

Colossians 1:15-17 – NIV.

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the [firstborn over](#) all creation.

16 For by him [all things](#) were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.

17 He is before [all things](#), and in him all things hold together.

18 And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the [firstborn](#) from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the [supremacy](#)⁴.

Are we talking about the word image, or are we talking about the word firstborn? Let us examine these words one at a time.

FirstBorn.

The Strong's Concordance says that firstborn means preeminence.

4416. noun from (4413), first, and (5088), to bear, bring forth. Firstborn, preeminent.

The text also says (verse 18) that the purpose of him being declared firstborn is so that he would have the preeminence.

Jesus has the pre-eminent position of firstborn, though this does not mean Jesus was literally the firstborn creature of God, because Jesus was not created.

Firstborn is a title. It is important to note that God calls Ephraim, the son of Joseph, His "firstborn" in Jeremiah 31:9. Since Ephraim was Joseph's second son born after Manasseh, it is evident again how the Scriptures use this concept. As in Colossians 1:15, the meaning is "preeminence" and does not refer to a literal first created son. Compare this verse with Genesis 48:14 where Israel put his right hand on

Ephraim's head and not Manasseh's when he was about to bless them. In the Septuagint, this same Greek word, PROTOTOKOS, is used in Jeremiah 31:9 which says.

Jeremiah 31:9.

They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn.

So the Bible gives its own definition of this word regardless of any other source. A text without a context is a pretext. Scripture best interprets scripture. Firstborn does not require a meaning of first created as some say it means here. "Firstborn" can mean the first born person in a family and it can also be a title of preeminence which is transferable. The title of firstborn is the child that has the rite of pre-eminence in the rite of inheritance, which again is transferable. It is clear that the firstborn always has the pre-eminence, while sometimes the first created has the rite of inheritance and sometimes someone else does.

Jesus is God in flesh (John 1:1,14; 1 Timothy 1:15) and is also the first born-son of Mary. In addition, He is the pre-eminent one in all things (Colossians 1:18). This should be considered when examining Colossians 1:15.

Furthermore, we are told in Genesis 4:51:51-52.

Genesis 41:51-52 - NASB.

"And Joseph called the name of the first-born Manasseh: For, said he, God hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house. And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God hath made me fruitful in the land of my affliction"

Jeremiah 31:9 - NASB

"...for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is My firstborn (NASB)."

So again literally "Firstborn" can mean the first born person in a family, and it can also be a title of preeminence which is transferable, and the two are one. The first created in the family is the one with the preeminence.

If that is not enough to establish that the meaning of firstborn in Jewish custom means preeminence, let me continue to drive the point home.

Psalms 89:20-27.

19. Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people.
20. I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him:
21. With whom my hand shall be established: mine arm also shall strengthen him.
22. The enemy shall not exact upon him; nor the son of wickedness afflict him.
23. And I will beat down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him.
24. But my faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him: and in my name shall his horn be exalted.
25. I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers.
26. He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation.
27. **Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth.**
28. My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him.
29. His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven.
30. If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments;

David had the position of firstborn, even though he was the youngest son. This shows how the idea of firstborn in the Bible is often a position of pre-eminence, not necessarily meaning first out of the womb.

Some say that this is a declaration of Jesus as the firstborn. True there is a parallelism of David and Jesus in this chapter. For we can derive from verse 19 through 20, that the Lord anointed David with the holy oil as a type of Christ. Nevertheless, the verse is literally talking about David as it mentions him by name in verse 20. Therefore, David is the subject of the sentence from verse 20 on. The text continues to use pronouns like his, him right through verse 27 where God states I will make him my firstborn. After which, he continues with keeping my covenant with him, his seed and his children. These are obvious indicators that God is still literally talking about David. Jesus did not have any children, at least not literal children.

Romans 8:29.

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Here again we see that the position of firstborn is assigned after birth. Thus, firstborn is a position of preeminent assigned at or after birth.

Hebrew 12:23.

To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, ;

Of the saints in heaven, probably those formerly highly distinguished on earth by the favor and love of God, such as patriarchs, prophets, apostles. Nevertheless, these are men assigned preeminent positions after their death, which has nothing to do with when they were born or created.

One other thing that is crucial to point out is that neither many who believe that Jesus is the first creation of God, nor theologians understand this word to be a literal meaning of "firstborn." Who is the literal "firstborn" person according to the Bible? It is not Jesus Christ but on the contrary Cain the son of Adam and Eve! So both groups understand this important Greek word metaphorically. Nevertheless, some try to force fit the metaphoric definition on the text whether it fits or not.

Those who claim that Jesus is the "first created" of God, based on the word firstborn, do so without any Biblical or reputable scholarly support. The Christian church on the other hand has uniformly taught that the term means "preeminent" or "superior" with support from virtually all linguistic authorities and the Scriptures themselves. It must be concluded therefore that the correct understanding of this Greek word must be "preeminent" and not "first created."

Nevertheless, those who argue that Jesus is the first created of God, do so because they believe other scriptures imply that Jesus is the first created of God, even though this word does not.

In conclusion of the word firstborn and its relationship to the opening premise, the word firstborn does not come close to revealing that Jesus is a part of creation. To be more precise, there is a very low probability that, that is what the Greeks understood the text to be saying, and that is why they did not complain when the other was not used. Now let us examine the word image.

The text says that Jesus is the image of an invisible God.