

7- Demons:

Matt 8:29 “And they cried out, saying, "What business do we have with each other, Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?” Also Mark 3:11; 5:7;

Chapter 15: The eternal generation of the Son. Is it a biblical doctrine?

The eternal generation of the Son is a doctrine that the church fathers believed in. According to the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451) the divine Son was “begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead.”²⁷² Before we move on to what the Bible teaches about the “eternal generation” of the Son; I’d like to point out how these two terms “eternal” and “generation” seems to contradict each other. For what is “eternal” can’t be generated at any point of time. When we say that the Son is “eternal,” that is to say that He is self-existing and that He has no beginning. To say that the Son is “begotten” is to say that the Father is “begetter and that is to say that there is a “begetting” instance. We have seen how the Bible teaches that the Son is self-existed (Isaiah 48:16; John 1:1; 8:58; Rev. 1:11, 17, 18; 2:8; 22:13) and that He has no beginning (Micah 5:2). Now let us study the biblical teaching on the generation or begetting of the Son.

²⁷² John V. Dahms, The generation of the Son, JETS 32/4 (dec.1989) 493

There are five arguments that are used as biblical evidences for the generation of the Son:

- 1- Jesus was described as “the firstborn of all creation” Col.1:15
- 2- Jesus, as the wisdom of God, was created and brought forth Prov.8:22-31
- 3- Jesus was described as “the only begotten Son of God” for example John 3:16
- 4- Jesus was described as “the one born of God” 1 John 5:18
- 5- Jesus said that he is “the beginning of God’s creation” Rev.3:14

1- Jesus is said to be “the firstborn of all creation” Col.1:15. That implies His generation as the first created being.

Col.1: 15 has been used as a strong proof that the Son of God was “begotten” or “generated” or “created” before any other creation because He is “the firstborn of all creation.”

To reply: I’d like to study the meaning of the term “firstborn” in the wider biblical context and in the context of Col.1: 15

A. The meaning of “firstborn” in the biblical context:

Firstborn is used many times in the normal meaning as the one who was born first or the oldest son (Gen. 10:15; 19:31; 27:19...etc). Yet we can’t say that every time this word was used indicated the “one who was begotten first by virtue of birth.”

There are many biblical instances where the “firstborn” indicates superiority and supremacy rather than being “older in time”:

-When Reuben defiled the bed of his father Jacob, the rights of the firstborn didn't go to Simon the 2nd born, but to Joseph who became the firstborn of Jacob (1 Chron. 5:1) because he was the one whom his brothers bowed down to Gen.37.

-In Ex. 4: 22 God told Moses "Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD: 'Israel *is* My son, My firstborn.'" To say that Israel as a nation is God's firstborn is not to say that God has begotten the nation of Israel, then He begat the rest of the nations of the earth. Israel as God's firstborn means they have superiority and supremacy over the nations of the earth because of their association with YHWH (Ex.33:16).

-In Psalm 89:27-28 God spoke about David and said, "I also shall make him *My* firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth. My lovingkindness I will keep for him forever, and My covenant shall be confirmed to him." How is David God's firstborn? He is "the highest of the kings of the earth," so we see here once again that firstborn means superiority.

-Jeremiah 31:9 "They shall come with weeping, and with supplications I will lead them. I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters, In a straight way in which they shall not stumble; For I am a Father to Israel, And Ephraim *is* My firstborn." To say that Ephraim is God's firstborn is to say that Ephraim had superiority over the tribes of Israel. Ephraim wasn't one of Jacob's sons. He was the second born of Joseph.

-Romans 8:29 "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren." What did Paul mean when he wrote that Jesus is "the firstborn among many brethren"? Did Paul mean that God has begotten Christ first and then the rest of the believers? Reading the context of Romans 8:29 doesn't lead to this conclusion. Paul in Rom. 8: 18-30 was

writing about “the sufferings of this present time” v 18, that the whole creation of God suffers v19-25, that the Spirit helps our weaknesses v26-27, and that He turns everything for our good v28. Then in v 29 Paul stated the purpose of the suffering is that we can “*be* conformed to the image of His Son.” When that happens, then Jesus will be “the firstborn among many brethren”. “Firstborn” then doesn’t mean the oldest but rather the head and the leader, the ultimate goal of the rest of the brethren. It is also clear in the relation between Jesus and his brethren that He is “head over all things to the church” (Eph.1: 22) An objection can rise against understanding that Jesus is the “firstborn among many brethren.” That He is the “head of the brethren” is what Paul said in Rom.8: 17, “and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.” If we are joint-heirs with Christ, He is our firstborn brother Rom.8:29 and we are begotten by God James 1:18. Doesn’t that indicate that Christ was begotten of the Father as our “firstborn brother”? It is true that we are co-heirs with Christ. But we should not forget that Christ is the “heir of God” by virtue of His relation with the Father as His only Son (John 16: 14-15), yet we are heirs of God with Christ not because of virtue of who we are to God, but by virtue of who Christ is to us and because of what He has done on the cross for us Rom.8:2-3. We should not forget that we are heirs “because of Him” in as much as we are heirs “with Him.” Yes, we are begotten by God, and we are co-heirs with Christ who is our firstborn brother, but that doesn’t indicate that Christ is begotten of God Himself.

-In Col.1:18 Jesus was described as “the firstborn of the dead.” That doesn’t mean that Christ was the first one to be raised from the dead. For examples: Elijah raised the son of the widow of Zarephath in Sidon 1 Kings 17. Elisha raised the Shunammite’s son 2 Kings 4. Jesus Himself raised the daughter of Jairus Mark 5, the son of the widow of

Nain Luke 7, and Lazarus John 11, and when He died many saints were raised from the dead Matt.27:52. However, Jesus has the supremacy among the dead because He never died again Rom.6:9-10, and because all the people who were raised from the dead before Him were raised by another person, but Jesus raised himself John 10: 17-18.

-Finally, we read about the church in the NT, that it is the “church of the firstborn.” That is not to say that the believers of the NT entered their covenant with God before the believers of the OT, but rather that the believers of the NT have supremacy over the believers of the OT because Jesus for them “is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises” Heb. 8:6.

We can conclude then that the word “firstborn” in many biblical examples means superiority in rank rather than superiority in time.

B. The meaning of “firstborn” in the context of Col.1:15:

Now let us read Col.1:15 in its context. Paul wrote about Christ, “Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence” Col.1:15-18. Here are some important things to take in consideration:

1- After Paul said that Christ is the “firstborn of all creation” v15, he started v 16 with the word “For” “ὅτι”. So we should expect that in v16ff Paul will explain how is it that Christ is the “firstborn of all creation”. He wrote “For by him were all things created

... all things were created by him, and for him.” If Jesus was created or begotten as the oldest “created/begotten” being, one should expect that v 16 would read “for after (ἐπειτα or μετὰ) him were all things created...all things were created after him...” and not “for by him (ἐν αὐτῷ or in him) were all things created...all things were created by him (δι’ αὐτοῦ)...”

2- In v 16 Paul wrote that everything was created by Jesus and “for him” in saying that Paul ascribed to Christ full deity because all things were created for God (cf. Pro. 16: 4). Also, Paul portrayed Jesus as the sustainer of all things when he wrote “and in him all things hold together,” that indicates the full deity of Christ because it is God who sustains everything (cf. Nehemiah 9:6)

3- In v 17 “And he is before all things, and by him all things consist” Paul wrote that Christ “is “ἔστιν” before all things.” Paul used the verb of “being” with Jesus. If Paul was talking about Christ, “the firstborn of all creation”, as the one who was created/begotten as the first created being, it would have made better sense if Paul said that Christ “was created/begotten before all things”.

4- In v 18 Paul concluded his description of Christ (v15-18) by emphasizing His supremacy. He wrote that Christ is:

- The head of the body, the church;
- The beginning;
- The firstborn from the dead, (we have seen that this clause means the supremacy of Christ over those who were raised from the dead);
- So that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.

If Paul concluded his hymn emphasizing the supremacy of Christ, it would make perfect sense to believe that Paul started his hymn talking about the supremacy of Christ over all creation.

So what does the “firstborn” in Col.1:15 mean? By studying the meaning of the “firstborn” in the context of the whole scripture and in the context of Col.1:15-18, we can safely conclude that when Paul wrote that Christ is “the firstborn of all creation,” that is to say that Christ is “the head of all creation” or that He is the one who has “supremacy over all creation” and not to say that Jesus was “created/begotten before all creation.”

2- The second argument for the generation of the Son is that it is commonly argued that Jesus Christ is the incarnate wisdom of God. This is significant because of the generation language used in Pro.8: 22-31²⁷³.

Pro. 8: 22-26 reads, “The LORD possessed me at the beginning of His way, Before His works of old. From everlasting I was established, from the beginning, from the earliest times of the earth. When there were no depths I was brought forth, When there were no springs abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills I was brought forth; While He had not yet made the earth and the fields, Nor the first dust of the world. "When He established the heavens, I was there, When He inscribed a circle on the face of the deep, When He made firm the skies above, When the springs of the deep became fixed, When He set for the sea its boundary So that the water would not transgress His command, When He marked out the foundations of the earth; Then I was beside Him, *as* a master workman; And I was daily *His* delight, Rejoicing

²⁷³ Dahms, 495

always before Him, Rejoicing in the world, His earth, And *having* my delight in the sons of men.”

Those who deny the deity of Christ argue that Pro.8 is the background of Paul’s hymn in Col.1:15-18 that Christ is “the firstborn of all creation” and therefore Christ as the wisdom of God is “brought forth” or “created” by God.

In Col.1:15 “His beloved son” is said to be “the firstborn of all creation”. And even though the word “firstborn” implies superiority; yet it is clear that the phrase is derived from Proverbs 8:22 “The LORD possessed “קָנָנִי” “qanani” me at the beginning of His way, Before His works of old.” Indeed Paul may be quoting from Sirach which interpret Prov.8 that wisdom was “firstborn before all creation”. The point of Prov.8 and Paul is almost certainly implying that the Son is generated.²⁷⁴ In other words, even though Col. 1:15 denotes precedence in rank rather than priority in time, first over the creation rather than the first created being. Yet since dependence on wisdom tradition is so strong here in Col.1, because wisdom was spoken of both as created by God (Prov.8: 22. Sir. 1:4; 24:9), and as the agency through which God created (Pro. 3:19; Wisd. 8:4-6); in which case we may accept that the hymn’s and Paul’s understanding at this point shared something of that ambivalence.²⁷⁵

To answer this argument we will discuss two points. First; was wisdom created according to Prov.8? Second; Is Christ the wisdom of God of Prov. 8? Or is Prov. 8 the background of Paul’s hymn in Col.1:15?

First; Was wisdom created according to Prov. 8?

²⁷⁴ Dahms, 495-496

²⁷⁵ James D.G. Dunn, *Christology in the making*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster press, 1980) 189

This passage (Prov.8:22-31) played a great role in the history of the church and in the developing of the Christian doctrine. In the Arian controversy it was particularly prominent, and in favor of Arius, because of his translation of the opening verse “קָנָנִי” “qanani” as “he created me” Pro. 8:22 following the LXX²⁷⁶. This played into the Arian doctrine that held Sophia/logos/Christ to be a created being, and not eternal²⁷⁷.

Το έαλυατε της Αριαν Αργυμεντ ωε ωιλλ ηάε αν αναλψισο οφ Πρόερβο 8”2226 τηςν ωε ωιλλ στυδψ της χονχεπτ οφ ωισδομ ιν Ηελλενιστιχ Πεωιση Λιτερατυρεσ ανδ φιναλλψ ωε ωαντ το σεε ιφ της τεαχηινγ ον ωισδομ ιν Πρόδ 8 ισ δοχτρινε ορ ποετρψ

- First, Analysis of Prov. 8:22-26:

Proverbs 8:22-31 major points are: the origin of wisdom v22-26, the existence of wisdom during the creation process v27-29, and wisdom’s role in creation v30-31.

The origin of wisdom is our concern now, so let us pay special attention to v22-26:

Verse 22: “, “The LORD possessed me “qanani” at the beginning of His way, Before His works of old.” There are many reasons to understand the verb “קָנָנִי” “qana” as “to acquire or possess”²⁷⁸:

- This is the meaning in other occurrences in Proverbs and more specifically in connection to acquiring wisdom/knowledge/truth (1:5; 4:5, 7; 16:16; 17:16; 18:15; 23:23) or acquiring sense (15: 32; 19:8) and once in a commercial sense (20:14).
- It is the normal use of “קָנָנִי” in the OT.
- It is supported by the translation of Aquila, Symmachus, Theodotion, and Vulgate.

²⁷⁶ LXX or the Septuagint is the Greek translation of the OT which was done before the birth of Christ in Alexandria, Egypt.

²⁷⁷ Ronald E. Murphy, Word Biblical commentary: proverbs, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998), 55

²⁷⁸ Bruce K. Waltke, the book of Proverbs, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), v1, 408

- This interpretation best harmonizes with Job 28:27 where God discovers wisdom and has not created her.

Could “קנה” “qana” be translated “to create” as Arian claimed?

Those who support translating “קנה” as “create” have four arguments for that:

1- “To create” is a better meaning of “קנה” than “possess” in at least Deut.32:6 “Is he not your Father, your Creator “קִנֵּךְ” “qanik”, who made you and formed you?” and Psalm 139:13 “For You formed “קִנֵּיתִי” “qanit” my inward parts” and probably in Gen.4:1 “I have gotten ‘קִנֵּיתִי’ ‘qanit’ a man with the help of the LORD.”; and Gen. 14:19, 22 “Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor/creator ‘קִנֵּהוּ’ of heaven and earth,”²⁷⁹

Against that, however, is that in Deut.32:6 and Psalm 139:13 God is compared to a begetting Father, and in Gen.14:19,22, “אל עליון קנהו” “God the Most high the creator/possessor” is related to a Canaanite cultic epithet meaning “become parent of.” So in these scriptures the translation “to beget” fits better than “to create”²⁸⁰.

But also the meaning “possess” can’t be ruled out in all these scriptures and it fits the text perfectly.

2- “To create” better suits the other verbs in Pro.8:22-31 that speaks about wisdom coming into existence²⁸¹.

²⁷⁹ Ibid, 409

²⁸⁰ Ibid, 409

²⁸¹ Ibid, 409

But to say that God “acquired” or “possessed” wisdom doesn’t contradict that wisdom was “established” or “formed” v23, or that it was “brought forth” v24, 25. On the other hand, “to create” stands against all logic for there is no point in time when God existed without His wisdom.

3- “To create” is supported by the LXX²⁸².

But maybe the LXX translators wanted to eliminate any ambiguity related to personified wisdom, and wanted to emphasize that God alone is self-existing.

Therefore they used the verb “κτίζω” “ktizw” “to create” in a metaphoric way.

4- “קנין” derivative in Psalm 104:24 “the earth is full of your ‘קנינין’, ‘qaninik’”

probably means “creatures”²⁸³.

But the translation “possessions” can’t be eliminated in Psalm 104:24. One can read both readings “the earth is full of your creations” or “the earth is full of your possessions.” As a matter of fact “possessions” fits better with the general meaning of the word in the OT.

Verse 23: The second verb used to describe the generation of wisdom is in v 23. The verb

“נִסְכַּתִּי” “naskty” can be translated as “I was formed”, “I was established”, “I was installed.”

Verses 24,25: in these two verses we see another description of the generation of Wisdom

where Wisdom said “I was brought forth.” The verb “חוללתי” “khollty” in v24, 25 “I

was brought forth” is originated from “חול” khol or “חיל” khil. It means to writhe in

childbirth. It begins with its first contractions and ceases with the baby parturition from

²⁸² Ibid, 409

²⁸³ Ibid, 409

the mother's body (cf. prov.25:23; 26:10; John 16:21) and thus it suggests a birth metaphor for wisdom.²⁸⁴

When did God possess wisdom?

Verse 22: "At the beginning of His way, Before His works of old" v 22. The Hebrew word for "before" is "קָדָם" "qdm" The parallel verses emphasize that God "possessed" wisdom as the earliest of His deeds, not His virility. The word "qdm" can mean eternity (Deut.33:27; Hab.1:12), but in this strophe it probably pertains to wisdom's pre-existence before any other creation and it has its sense of designating the remotest past²⁸⁵.

Verse 23: We find a threefold answer for this question in v 23:

"מֵעוֹלָם" "From everlasting"

"מֵרֵאשִׁית" "From the beginning" Lit. from the head.

"מִקְדָּמֵי-אָרֶץ" "From the earliest times of the earth"

Verses 24-26: Now we see Wisdom was brought forth before the depths v24a, before the springs of water v24b, before the mountains v25a, before the hills v25b, and before the lands and fields v26.²⁸⁶

So we see from our analysis to Pro. 8:22-26 that it is better to understand that wisdom was possessed by God rather than created by Him. The point of these verses is that wisdom was the first thing God ever acquired far long before creation.

- Second, The concept of wisdom in Hellenistic Jewish Literatures:

²⁸⁴ Ibid, 412

²⁸⁵ Ibid, 410

²⁸⁶ Ibid, 411

The LXX rendering of Pro.8:22-31 aims to make God the explicit creator and intentionally eliminates any ambiguity that would suggest that wisdom has a role in creation. The LXX renders “קנה” as “create;” and changes the passive “I was brought forth” to the active “he begets me;” and in v 30 they change “אֵל מוֹרֵךְ” “a master craftsman” to “ἁρμόζουσα” “to be in harmony with” or “to fit together with,” although the meaning is not certain. Sirach (ca. 180 B.C.) emphasized the keeping of the Torah as the way of wisdom (Sir.15:1). In Sirach. 24:8 Wisdom said “He created me from the beginning before the world” Sir.24:23 explicitly identifies the wisdom with the law of Moses. In other words, there is not a straight trajectory in Hellenistic Jewish lecturers that wisdom has an active role in creation.²⁸⁷

- Third, Is Prov. 8 teaching on the generation of wisdom doctrine or poetry?

The OT teaches that God has made all His creation with wisdom. The marvelous creation of God reveals His wisdom and intelligence. The Jerusalem Targum renders Gen.1:1 in conjunction with Prov.8:22, “The lord created heaven and earth by wisdom”²⁸⁸ The Psalmist wrote, “O LORD, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all. The earth is full of Your possessions” Psalm 104:24. “To Him who made the heavens with skill, For His lovingkindness is everlasting” Psalm 136:5 (also compare Jer.10:12; 51:15; Pro. 3:19). Solomon in Proverbs took wisdom to another level. He personified wisdom as a woman (1:20) and ascribed to her divine attributes. She invites the “simple minded” to turn to her (1:23), she will laugh at their calamity (1: 27 Cf. Psalm 2:4; 59:8; 37:13), she was possessed (8:22), established (8:23), and brought forth

²⁸⁷ Waltke, 128

²⁸⁸ Ibid, 129

(8:24) by God from the beginning, from everlasting (8:22:23). She was not only a witness of the creation act of God (8:23-29) but, like God, she was also an active participant in the creation process (8:30). In finding her there is life (8:35), and in sinning against her there is death (8:36).

By definition God's wisdom, being integral with God's person, is as eternal and as pre-existent as God Himself. There never was a time when God was without wisdom, and there is no indication that any ordinary monotheistic Jew ever thought otherwise. If that is the case, we have to accommodate those references that speak about wisdom being created.²⁸⁹

We need to ask ourselves if the writing about wisdom in the OT was doctrine or poetry. The picture of God "acquiring" wisdom or searching for it (Pro.8:22) is surely part and parcel with the anthropomorphism of the OT. Also, the picture of a personal, pre-existent wisdom, working alongside with God in the creation of the world, is a highly poetic representation of the fact that, not only is creation the product of the divine intelligence, but something of God's mind can also be seen in what He has made.²⁹⁰

Therefore we can conclude that the overall teaching of Pro. 8 is highly poetic and wisdom was not created nor an active part of the creation process in the active and literal sense.

Second; Is Christ the wisdom of Prov. 8?

As we have mentioned before some commentators argue that the personified wisdom of Solomon (Prov.8:22-31) could be the background for Paul's hymn in Col. 1:15-18, and therefore Christ like God's wisdom was created. They have five supports for their claim. Let us discuss each one of these claims.

²⁸⁹ John F. Balachin, Paul, wisdom and Christ, Christ the Lord, H.H. Rowdon ed., (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1982) 210

²⁹⁰ Ibid, 210

1. The same term “image” “εἰκὼν” was applied to wisdom (Wisdom 7:26) and Christ (Col.1:15).

To reply: We should notice however that even though the same term “εἰκὼν” was applied to Wisdom and Christ, yet the meaning is very different. Wisdom in Wis. 7:26 is not the “image” of God Himself, but is merely “an image of His goodness” “εἰκὼν τῆς ἀγαθότητος αὐτοῦ” Wisdom 7:26 reads, “For she is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of His goodness”^{RSV}.

Christ, on the other hand, is the express image of God’s very nature (Col.1:15 cf. 2 Cor. 4:4-6; John 1:18; Heb.1:3)²⁹¹.

2. In Prov. 8:22-31 we see that wisdom was begotten before everything else, and in Sir.1:4 we read, “Wisdom was created before all things.” That is similar to what Paul said in Col.1:15, that Christ is “the firstborn of all creation.”

To reply: Concerning Prov. 8: First, we should notice that Paul’s term “πρωτότοκος” “firstborn” doesn’t occur at all in the wisdom tradition. Second, Prov. 8 description of the begetting of wisdom has to be taken metaphorically because there is no point in God’s history in which he was apart from his wisdom. The point of Prov.8:22-31 is that wisdom is God’s first “creation” so that she might be present to frolic as He creates all else. Paul’s use of “firstborn” in Col.1:15-18 is radically different. By “firstborn” Paul meant that Christ as the Son of God holds the rights of primogeniture with regard to every created thing, since they are all created through him and for him²⁹².

Concerning Sir. 1:4: Sirach’s phrase has altogether different words and he means something almost opposite to Paul’s.

²⁹¹ Gordon D. Fee, *Wisdom Christology in Paul*, The way of wisdom, Packer & Soderlund eds., (Grand Rapids: Zondervan; 2000) 259

²⁹² Ibid, 259

Sirach1: 4 wrote that wisdom “*was created* before all things” “προτέρα πάντων ἔκτισται”
 Paul (Col.1: 17) wrote that Christ “*is* before all things” “ἔστιν πρὸ πάντων”
 Paul meant that the Son through whom all things were created “*is*” before them both by
 the virtue of His preexistence temporally as well as by His primacy of rank.²⁹³
 It is noteworthy that Paul in Col.1: 15-18 avoided all words that were used
 metaphorically to imply the generation of Wisdom like “חַכְמָה” “possess” Prov.8:22
 (κτίζω to create LXX), “נָסַד” “established” Prov.8:23 (θεμελιόω to found; establish
 firmly LXX); “לָיַד” “was brought forth” Prov.8:24,25 (γεννάω to be father of; bear,
 give birth to LXX). And instead of using words that implied generation, Paul used words
 that implied supremacy above creation like “πρωτότοκος” “firstborn”; “ἀ πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ
 καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἔκτισται.” “all things were created by him and for him”; “αὐτός ἐστιν ἡ
 κεφαλὴ” “He is the head”; “ὅς ἐστιν ἀρχή” “He is the beginning”; and “γένηται ἐν πᾶσιν
 αὐτὸς πρωτεύων” “in everything He might have the supremacy.”

3. Paul wrote that in Christ “all things hold together” Col.1: 17 is alleged to correspond to Wis. 1:6-7 “for wisdom is a kindly spirit...Because the spirit of the Lord has filled the world, and that which holds all things together knows what is said”

To reply: Whether the intension of the author in v6 to equate wisdom with the Spirit of the Lord or to describe the “spiritual” quality of wisdom; V7 makes it clear that it is the Spirit of God who holds all things together²⁹⁴.

²⁹³ Ibid, 259

²⁹⁴ Ibid, 259

4. In Proverbs 8:22-31, Sir.24: 3-12, and Wis.6:1-10:21 we see that wisdom is God's agent in creation. The same thought we find in Col.1: 15-18, that God created "all things through Him (Christ)"

To reply: It is doubtful whether anywhere in the OT it is explicitly stated that personified Wisdom was the mediating agent of creation. In none of the passages that were brought to support this view, can we find language similar to the one found in Paul; that is, these authors do not come close to saying that God created "all things through wisdom".

Rather, wisdom is personified as present in another sense, namely as the attribute of God that is manifest through the masterful design exhibited in creation²⁹⁵.

Let us take a closer look on the OT passages that takes about the role of wisdom in creation:

a. Psalm 104:24 "O LORD, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all. The earth is full of Your possessions" Here we see that wisdom is "neither instrument nor agent but the attribute displayed by YHWH in creating²⁹⁶

b. Prov.8:22-31: In Prov. 3:19 we read "The LORD by wisdom founded the earth; By understanding He established the heavens." Here Solomon carried the same thought of Psalm 104:24, that the wisdom of God is being manifest in his creation. When wisdom is personified in a literary way in the marvelous poetry of Prov.8:22-31, she is pictured as a *present* in creation, precisely because of what is said in Prov.3:19, but not as its mediator: "When He prepared the heavens, I *was* there, When He drew a circle on the face of the deep". Thus Prov. 8:22-26 asserts in a variety of ways that wisdom was the first of God's creation, emphasizing her priority in time, so that her being present with God when he

²⁹⁵ Ibid, 261

²⁹⁶ Ibid, 261

alone created the universe would reflect God's wise blueprint. The same though was then emphasized by Prov.8:27-31, which further depicts wisdom as present at creation, again in the sense of Prov.3:19²⁹⁷.

But doesn't describing the wisdom as "מְעַלְמָא" "a master worker" in Prov.8:30 imply that she had an active role in creation?

This argument assumes a more hypostatic view of wisdom than can be demonstrated in Proverbs, not to mention that it fails to take the point of the poetry seriously in Prov. 8 itself. Wisdom is the "master worker" who works side by side with God, but she is not the mediator through whom creation came to existence. Rather, for our author the whole created order is so full of evidences of design that God's wisdom, now personified in a literal way, can be the only possible explanation for it²⁹⁸.

c. Sirach 24:1-22: Sirach points out God alone as the sole creator of everything. Wisdom says in v9, "Before the ages, in the beginning, He created me, and for all the ages I shall not cease to be," and in v 8 refers to God as "my creator". Those who find personified wisdom as having an active role in creation appeal to v 3: "I came forth from the mouth of the Most High, and covered the earth like a mist." Yet if we read this verse in the context of v1-22, we see that wisdom was looking for a resting place (v 5-7), which took place historically not in creation but in her presence with Israel in the exodus.²⁹⁹

d. Wisdom of Solomon 6:1-9:18: First, Wisdom 9: 1-2 we read Solomon's prayer to God asking for wisdom: "O God of my ancestors and Lord of mercy, who have made all things by Your word, and by Your wisdom have formed humankind to have dominion

²⁹⁷ Ibid, 361-362

²⁹⁸ Ibid, 262

²⁹⁹ Ibid, 262

over the creatures You have made.” This is so obviously not a personification, either of a divine logos or divine wisdom. Our author’s obvious concern is not with wisdom’s role in creation as such, but in her role in God’s “equipping or constructing” human beings in their lives in the world that God has created with His word. That is why he proceeded to say in v9 “With you is wisdom, she who knows your works and was present when you made the world”. Second, in Wisdom 7:22; 8:6; 14:2 we read that wisdom is the “fashioner of all things” and the “workman who built every thing with skill.” The context of Wisdom 7:21 has nothing to do with creating as such but with the design of the world as it exists so also in Wis.7:24, where wisdom is said to “pervade and penetrate all things” Ps-Solomon is not at all interested in wisdom’s creative role in the world but in her obvious role in a world created by God whose attribute is wisdom. This is also the case in Wis.8:6 when wisdom was described as “the fashioner of all things” and the “workman who built everything with skill” This is not a theological statement of the origin of creation, but rather it is a statement of the role of wisdom to make the current world work well.³⁰⁰

5. Finally, Paul said, “But to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God” 1 Cor.1:24, and “But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God -- and righteousness and sanctification and redemption” 1 Cor.1:30. These scriptures explicitly identify Christ with the wisdom of God mentioned in Prov. 8.

To reply: It is true that Paul here identifies Christ with the Wisdom of God, yet when we read these scriptures in their context we will find that is doubtful if Paul in these scriptures thought of Christ in terms of Jewish wisdom.

³⁰⁰ Ibid, 264

1- The linguistic data tells us much of the story: The noun “σοφία” “wisdom” and its cognate adjective “σοφός” “the wise” occur 44 times in the writings of Paul- 28 times in 1 Corinthians, 26 times in chapters 1-3, and most of them pejorative. The statistics, therefore, not to mention the argument itself, indicate that wisdom is actually a Corinthian thing, and that Paul is trying to counter it by appealing to God’s foolishness as evidence that the gospel that saved them is not to be confused with the wisdom of God.³⁰¹

2- In the Context of 1 Cor. 1 we see that the cross of Jesus Christ divided the world into those who don’t believe and those who believe (v18). To the former the crucified Messiah is “folly and weakness,” and to the later the crucified Messiah is “wisdom and power”. So when Paul described Jesus in v24 as “power and wisdom” that is to say that God’s true power and wisdom is to be found in the weakness and sheer folly of redeeming mankind by means of the cross. This was intended to nullify the wisdom of the wise (hence the citation of Isaiah 29:14 in v19). Therefore we see here that the Jewish wisdom was not necessarily what was in Paul’s mind when he wrote 1 Cor.1, but rather the display of God’s attributes, “power and wisdom,” in the crucified Messiah. In v30 Christ was identified as “wisdom for us.” Paul immediately qualifies it in such a way that the Corinthians could not have imagined that he had personified Jewish wisdom in mind. “Wisdom for us” is clarified in terms of the saving work of Christ-justification, sanctification, and redemption.³⁰²

3- Moving forward in 1 Corinthians³⁰³ 2:7, “But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom* which God ordained before the ages for our glory.” Paul

³⁰¹ Ibid, 256

³⁰² Ibid, 256

³⁰³ Some also argue that the personified wisdom was the background for 1 Cor.8:6 namely because the Son of God is said to be the agent through whom everything was created. Such argument is so weak because

argues that the wisdom of God is found in the Gospel. Contrary to human wisdom, it can only be found through a revelation of the Holy Spirit (v10). Again, if there is Jewish background to this idea at all, is to be found in Jewish apocalypse, not Jewish wisdom.³⁰⁴

What can we say then?

We can conclude that Christ is not by any mean related to the personified wisdom found in Pro. 8. All the argument that were made to say that Christ is the personified wisdom of Solomon are weak and don't stand for a challenge.

there is no linguistic or theological connection between the display of God's wisdom in creation as we have seen in our study in Prov.8:22-31 and the Son of God being the "one lord" through whom everything came to existence as we will see later on in our exegetical study of 1 Cor.8:5-8

³⁰⁴ Ibid, 257

3- The third argument for the generation of the Son is that in John 1:14, 18; 3:16,18;

1 John 4:9 Jesus was described as “μονογενής υἱός” “the only begotten Son”:

The argument is that if the bible plainly declares that the Son of God is “begotten” therefore he was generated as a certain point of time and therefore He is not eternal. To answer this argument we need to study the Greek word “μονογενής”, *monogenies*, translated “the only begotten” in depth³⁰⁵:

The word “μονογενής” could be a compound word of two parts “μονο” “*mono*” and “γενής” “*genies*”. The word “μονο” in Greek means “alone or only” while the word “γενής” refers to derivation or descent in general, rather than to birth in particular or to species. It is related with existence “γενεσθαι”, “*gignesthai*” not to begetting “γεννασθαι” “*ginnasthai*” The idea of birth, although congruous with “μονογενής”, is in no way an essential part of the meaning.

This word could be translated in different ways:

1. The word “μονογενής” could be translated as “of sole descendant” or “ the only child or son”

Examples from the LXX “Septuagint”:

^{NKJ} Judges 11:34 “When Jephthah came to his house at Mizpah, there was his daughter, coming out to meet him with timbrels and dancing; and she *was his* only child “μονογενής”. Besides her he had neither son nor daughter”

³⁰⁵ This study of the word “μονογενής” is summarized from; Murray J.Harris, *Jesus as God*, (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1992) 73-103

Examples from the NT:

^{NKJ} Luke 7:12 “And when He came near the gate of the city, behold, a dead man was being carried out, the only son “μονογενής υἱός” of his mother; and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the city was with her”

^{NKJ} Luke 8:42 “For he had an only daughter “μονογενής” about twelve years of age, and she was dying. But as He went, the multitudes thronged Him.”

^{NKJ} Luke 9:38 “Suddenly a man from the multitude cried out, saying, "Teacher, I implore You, look on my son, for he is my only child “μονογενής”

2- The word “μονογενής” could be translated as “utterly unique”:

Others see that the second part of the word “γενής” is insignificant, and understand the whole word as a fuller meaning of “μονο”; and thus the word “μονογενής” means “alone of his kind” or “unique,” since the 1st part “μονο” means “alone” and the 2nd part “γενής” means “kind or species”

An example for that from the LXX:

Wisdom of Solomon 7:22 “...a spirit that is quick in understanding, holy, alone in its kind “μονογενής”

An example from the NT:

^{NIV} Hebrews 11:17 By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice.

He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son

“μονογενής””

Isaac wasn't Abraham's only son. Abraham had Ishmael before him Gen 16, and even after the death of Sarah, Abraham had more sons Gen 25. Isaac was the unique son of Abraham “μονογενής” because, “Of whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy seed be

called” Heb.11: 18-19. Through Isaac, God promised Abraham to bless all the families of the earth. It was Isaac, neither Ishmael nor any other son of Abraham, through whom God has fulfilled His promises. In that sense Isaac was Abraham’s “μονογενής”³⁰⁶.

3- the word “μονογενής” could be translated as “alone”:

Related to this meaning “unique”, the word “μονογενής” could be translated as “alone” or “lonely.”

Examples from the LXX:

^{NAS} Psalm 25:16 Turn to me and be gracious to me, For I am lonely “μονογενής” and afflicted.

^{NAU} Psalm 35:17 “Lord, how long will You look on? Rescue my soul from their ravages, My only *life* “μονογενή” from the lions.”

In conclusion of our study of the word “μονογενής”, we can say that understanding of “μονογενής” as the “only begotten of the Father” came from the desire to establish from the scripture the doctrine that the son was eternally generated by the Father, but as far as the NT is concerned, it may be safe to say that “μονογενής” is concerned with the familial relationship, not manner of birth. Neither the virgin birth nor the “eternal generation” of the Son was in the mind of John when he described Jesus as “μονογενής”.

³⁰⁶ Dahms wrote that the fact that Isaac could be described as Abraham’s “μονογενής υιοῦ” (Heb.11:7) is not surprising. Philo had stated that “Abraham had not begotten any son in the truest sense but Isaac” and the Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan on Genesis 21 says “In Isaac shall sons be called into thee: this son of the handmaid shall not be genealogized after thee”. (Dahms; 496)

Dahms’ argument can actually be used against him. Because the saying of Philo and the Targum about Isaac can be used to emphasize the uniqueness and the singularity of Isaac, as the son of the promise compared to the rest of Abraham’s children, rather than to say that Isaac was the only child of Abraham who conceived him.

We therefore should understand “μονογενῆς υἱός” that Jesus is the “utterly unique son of God” rather than that Jesus is “begotten by God”

4- According to 1 John 5:18 The Son of God “was born of God” (cf. vv.13, 20). In this verse it is explicitly stated that the Son was generated by the Father.³⁰⁷

1 John 5:18 reads, “We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him”

Those who believe in the generation of the Son argue that “He who was born of God” in the phrase “He who was born of God keeps him” is Christ who can keep the believer from sinning. Therefore the bible explicitly teaches that the Son of God was generated.

To reply: There are textual and exegetical problems with this phrase “He who was born of God keeps him.” When John wrote “He who was born of God”, he either had Jesus in his mind or the believer. If John had Jesus in his mind, then the meaning of the verse is that “We know that no one who is born of God (the believer) sins; but He who was born of God (Jesus) keeps him (The believer).” But if John had the believer in his mind, then the meaning of the verse is that “We know that no one who is born of God (the believer) sins; but He who was born of God (the believer) keeps him (i.e. himself).”

Let us take a closer look on the verse to determine what does it say?

A. the Textual problem:

There are two readings for this phrase:

“ὁ γεννηθεὶς ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ τηρεῖ αὐτόν” “he who was born of God keeps him” or

“ὁ γεννηθεὶς ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ τηρεῖ ἑαυτόν” “he who was born of God keeps himself”

³⁰⁷ Dahms, 496

If “he who was born of God” is taken as a reference to Jesus, the reading “αὐτόν” “him” is to be preferred. Copyists who understood “he who was born of God” as a reference to the believer naturally adapted the reflexive “ἑαυτόν” “himself”. The manuscripts testimony is weighty on both sides.³⁰⁸

Codices Alexandrinus (A) and Vaticanus (B) and a number of Fathers and versions read “him” “αὐτόν”, while a corrector of (A) reads “himself” “ἑαυτόν” and is supported by Sinaiticus (Σ) and the Byzantine tradition and a number of versions and Fathers. The textual evidence in itself is balanced. Perhaps the evidence of correction of Alexandrinus implies a scribal tendency to change “him” to “himself”.³⁰⁹

B. The exegetical problem:

In v 16-17 John is encouraging the believers to pray for one another if they see that a Christian is falling into sin. To encourage the believers John wrote in v18-20 three things that *we know*³¹⁰:

“*We know* that no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him.

We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in *the power of* the evil one.

And *we know* that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.”

Then he concluded with v21 “Little children, guard yourselves from idols”

³⁰⁸ Stephen S. Smalley, Word biblical commentary: 1,2,3 John, (Waco: Word Books publisher, 1984) 293

³⁰⁹ John Painter, Sacra Pagina v 18 1,2,3 John, (MN: The liturgical press, 2002) 320

³¹⁰ Smalley, 302

The question we are about to answer is when John wrote, “He who was born of God keeps him” v18b, whom did John point to is it Jesus or the believer?

Those who support that the phrase “he who was born of God” refers to Jesus have four arguments for their claim:

1- Grammatically, in the phrase “he who was born of God” John used the participle aorist form “ὁ γεννηθεὶς” (literally ‘the one who was born’ referring to a specific event in the past, which could be the birth of Jesus or his generation before all ages). Elsewhere John never referred to the believer in the participle aorist form but rather in the participle perfect form “ὁ γεγεννημένος” (literally ‘anyone who has been born’ which suggests the abiding results of the generation of the child of God cf. 1John 3:9, 5:18a, John 3:6)³¹¹.

To reply: First, whenever John used the verb “γεννασθαι” “to beget” he referred to the believers, as in 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1 twice, 5:4; 5:18a. To say that the change of the form of the verb from “perfect participle” to “aorist participle” indicates a change of the person is a weak argument specially since the verb “γεννασθαι” “to beget” never was applied to Jesus anywhere else in the NT.

If “ὁ γεννηθεὶς” literally “the one born,” in v18b is a description of Christ, then it is a unique description of Jesus in the NT, and surprising in the text. Why not “the Son of God” “ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ” as in v20³¹²

On the contrary; in the move from “everyone who is born of God” v18a to “the one who was born of God” v18b there is no indication of change of subject. As the believer is

³¹¹ Ibid, 293, 303

³¹² Ibid, 303

meant in the first construction, it is clear that the believer was in the mind of John in the second construction as well.³¹³

2-The usage of the reflexive “himself” appears to demand some explanation as that from which the Christian keeps himself. For example, in 2 Cor 11:9 Paul said “I kept myself from being a burden to you” so Paul made it clear what he did keep himself from (cf. James 1:27). Also, the idea of the believers being “kept” by the Son of God is common elsewhere in the NT John 17:12, 11, 15; Rev.3:10; 1 Pet.1:5; Jude 24³¹⁴

To reply: first, what the Christian has to keep himself from is obvious from the context. It is sin v16-17. Second, the subject of the verb “τηρέω” “to keep” is usually the believer John 14:15; 21, 23, 24; 8:51,52; 15:10; 1 Tim.5:22, 6:14; Rev.3:3; 14:12,; 22:9; Matt.28:20; Acts15:5; Eph.4:3; James 1:27; 1 John 2:3,4, 5,10;3:22,24;5:3; Jude 21...etc. So we can see that the subject of “τηρέω” can hardly be God, with the exception of the few examples mentioned above. The whole phrase of 1 John 5:18b can scarcely mean, “he (the believer) holds on to God”³¹⁵.

3- By using the same verb “γεννασθαι” ‘to be born’ to refer to Christ and Christians, John might have wished to emphasize the identity of God’s Son with the disciples (1John 4:17), while the change of the tense (ὁ γεγεννημένος perfect participle for the believer in v18a to ὁ γεννηθείς aorist participle for the Son of God in v18b) indicates the difference between the two sonships (John 5:26)³¹⁶.

³¹³ John Christopher Thomas, *The Pentecostal Commentary on 1,2,3 John*, (New York; T&T Clark international,2004) 275

³¹⁴ Smalley, 293, 303

³¹⁵ Ibid, 303

³¹⁶ Ibid, 303

To reply: there is no scripture that teaches that God has begotten Jesus in the same way that He has begotten the believers. Jesus is always called “μονογενῆς υἱός”, “the utterly unique, the one and only of His kind, Son of God.”

First, “he who was born of God” can’t refer to “the eternal generation” of the Son. We are begotten by the will of God John 1:13; by His word 1 Pet.1:23; James 1:18; and by the Spirit of God John 3:6. Yet Jesus on the other hand is the eternal, self-exciting Son of God (John 1:1; 8:58; Rev. 1:11, 17, 18; 2:8; 22:13). We are “born of God” because of what Jesus has done for us. But Jesus is the Son of God because of who he eternally is. Second, “he who was born of God” can’t refer to the incarnation of Jesus and His physical birth in the womb of the Virgin Mary. The “begetting” of the Son of God in His human form is different than the “begetting” of us, the children of God. When the Son of God incarnated, God prepared a body for Him Heb.10: 5. But when we got “born again,” we received a new nature from God Eph.1: 14.

4- If “he who was born of God” refers to Christ, then the pronoun “αὐτόν”, “him” refers to the believer which is more natural. But if “he who was born of God” refers to the believer, then the reflexive “ἑαυτόν”, “himself” need to be introduced in the text.³¹⁷

To reply: grammatically, if we take both readings of “the one who is born of God” to be the believer, then v18 says that the one born of God keeps himself. This reading is possible even if the reflexive “ἑαυτόν”, “himself” is rejected. In the NT the pronoun “αὐτόν”, “him” can be used reflexively. Scholars generally read “εἰς αὐτόν”, “upon him” reflexively in Mark 1:10.³¹⁸

³¹⁷ Smalley, 303

³¹⁸ Painter, 322-323

We conclude then that all the arguments that Jesus is “the one who was born of God” in 1 John 5:18b are weak. It is even weaker if 1 John 5:18 is used to prove the generation of the Son of God.

5- The last argument for the generation of the Son is what Jesus said about himself that he is “the beginning (ἡ ἀρχὴ ἀρχι) of God’s creation” Rev. 3:14

This saying of Jesus that He is “the beginning of God’s creation” “ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ” was mentioned in His letter to the church in Laodicea. The problem that arises with this phrase is exegetical. Should we understand “ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ”, “the beginning of God’s creation” passively as “the beginning or the first of God’s creation” that is to say that the Son was created or begotten as the first created being. Or should we understand “ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ”, “the beginning of God’s creation” actively as “the origin or the source of God’s creation,” that is to say that the Son is the creator of God’s creation.

To better understand this phrase, we need to understand its context and take a deeper look on the whole letter to the church in Laodicea.

“To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this: I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. Because you say, ‘I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,’ and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I advise you to buy from Me gold

refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” Rev.3: 14-22.

Jesus in v14 introduced himself to the church in Laodicea in threefold:

ὁ ἀμήν,	The Amen;
ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστὸς καὶ ἀληθινός,	The faithful and true witness;
ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ·	The beginning/origin of God’s creation.

The first title that Jesus used to refer to Himself is “the Amen”. This is an unusual title, which is only mentioned here in the NT. It is probably an illusion of Isaiah 65:16 “So that he who blesses himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth; And he who swears in the earth Shall swear by the God of truth.” The “God of truth” “בִּאֱלֹהֵי אֱמֵן” literally “the God of the Amen.” This title of God was only found in Isa.65:16, but its connection with blessings and taking oaths probably indicates that both must be confirmed by God Himself in order to be valid, or perhaps that God, who is sometimes depicted in the OT as swearing oaths, need not to swear by another since He is His own witness (cf. Heb.6:13). Christologically, this title is significant since Christ is attributing to Himself a title associated only with God³¹⁹

³¹⁹ Aune, 255

The second title of Christ is “The faithful and true witness.” This compound title serves to define the essential meaning of “The Amen.” Jesus is the “faithful and true witness” because He reveals what He has received from the Father.³²⁰

The last title of Jesus in Rev.3: 14 is “ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ” which is the subject of our study. Should we understand this phrase as “the beginning of God’s creation,” that is to say “the Son was created/begotten first and then the rest of God’s creation,” or should we understand it as “the origin or the ruler of God’s creation,” which means “the Son is the source and the creator of God’s creation” or that he is “the sovereign ruler and governor over the creation of God.”

As far as grammar is concerned, both translations are possible. The Greek word “ἀρχὴ”, “archie” can mean either “ruler” or “beginning.”³²¹ In order to understand “ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ”, “the beginning of God’s creation” we need to study this phrase in the light of the immediate and wider context:

A. In the immediate context:

1-The Lord Jesus applied to Himself the title “The Amen” v14 which is a title of God Is.65:16.

2- He said “I know your works” v15, which can be an allusion of Isaiah 66:18 “For I know their works and their thoughts.”

3- He proclaimed Himself to be the Judge of the church “will vomit you out of My mouth” v16.

4- He proclaimed Himself to be the healer and the restorer of the church v18

³²⁰ Ibid, 255-256

³²¹ Siegbert W. Becker, Revelation, (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1985), 74

5- He is the chastiser of the believers: “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten” v19 that is an allusion of Deuteronomy 8:5: "You should know in your heart that as a man chastens his son, *so* the LORD your God chastens you.”

6- The church is to obey his voice v20.

7- He is the rewarder of the believers v 21.

Therefore we can see that Jesus in His letter to the church of Laodicea ascribed to Himself the characters and the works that only fit God. If Jesus described Himself as the creator by “ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ”, “the beginning of God’s creation” that would fit the context perfectly. On the other hand, if Jesus described Himself as the first created being by “ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ.” that would be in total contradiction with ascribing the divine attributes and actions to Himself in v14-22.

B. In the wider context:

1- We have seen how the title “The Amen” is quoted from Isaiah 65:16 where God is described as “בֵּאלֹהֵי אֱמֵן”, “the God of the Amen.” The next verse in Isaiah is a marvelous promise where God proclaimed Himself as the creator: “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem *as* a rejoicing, And her people a joy” Isaiah 65:17, 18³²².

Therefore there might be an allusion between Rev. 3:14 and the whole passage of Isaiah 65:16-17:

Revelation 3:14:	Isaiah 65: 16-17:
Jesus is the Amen:	God is the God of the Truth (Amen):

³²² Donald Grey Barnhouse, Revelation an expository commentary, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971) 80-81

The Amen, the faithful and true Witness	Because he who is blessed in the earth Will be blessed by the God of truth; And he who swears in the earth Will swear by the God of truth; ...
Jesus is the origin of creation: the Beginning of the creation of God	God is the creator: "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former things will not be remembered or come to mind.

So if Jesus in Rev. 3:14 was applying to himself the whole passage of Isaiah 65:16-17, then the phrase “the beginning of God’s creation” must be an allusion of Isaiah 65:17 where God declared himself as the creator. Therefore “the beginning of God’s creation” must mean “the origin of God’s creation”

2- There are great similarities between the letter to Laodicea in Rev.3: 14-22 and Paul’s epistle to the Colossians. For examples, compare Rev.3:21 with Col.3:1 and Rev.3:17-19 with Col.1:27; 2:8; 18; 23; 2:2-3³²³. This similarity can be supported that the churches of Colossae and Laodicea exchanged letters (Col.4:16). Therefore the phrase “the beginning of God’s creation” Rev.3:14 may reflect dependence on Col. 1:15 where Jesus is described as “the firstborn of all creation”. The similarity between Rev.3: 14 and Col. 1:15 may lead us to understand “ἡ ἀρχὴ” “the beginning/origin” of Rev.3: 14 is equivalent to “πρωτότοκος” “the firstborn” of Col.1:15. Note also how in Col.1:18 Christ was described as “who is the beginning (ἀρχὴ), the firstborn (πρωτότοκος) of the dead” which helps us to understand (ἀρχὴ The beginning = πρωτότοκος The firstborn).³²⁴ We have seen in our study to Col. 1:15 that “the firstborn of all creation” means “the ruler

³²³ Robert L. Thomas, Revelation 1-7 an exegetical commentary, (Chicago: Moody press, 1992) 303

³²⁴ Aune, 256

over and the creator of all creation,” therefore we can say that “the beginning of God’s creation” is to say that the Son is “the ruler and creator of all creation.”

3- The Lord Jesus is mentioned elsewhere to be the creator and the origin of all the creation of God (Cf. John 1:3, Col.1:16, Heb.1:2, 10). The Son can’t be created and creator in the same time.

We see then that the immediate and the wider context of Rev. 3:14 make us understand “ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ” as “the origin of God’s creation.”

In conclusion: we have studied all the scriptures that are used to support the generation of the Son of God and we have seen that they are weak and that there is no biblical support that Jesus started at any point of time but rather he is the one who is self-existing and over all the creation.