**COLOSSIANS, COSMOLOGY AND CHRIST:**
**A STUDY INTO COLOSSIANS 1:15-17 WITH INSIGHTS FROM PLATO'S TIMAEUS,**
**PHILO OF ALEXANDRIA AND MIDDLE PLATONISM**


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## STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP AND SOURCES:

*This thesis contains no material that has been extracted in whole or in part from a thesis that I have submitted towards the award of any other degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.*

*No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgment in the main text of the thesis.*

MATTHEW C. BUROW _____

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.1 Introduction

1.2 Authorship

1.3 Date and Place of Writing

1.4 Colossians' Place in the *Corpus Paulinum*

       1.4.1 Colossians' Relationship with the Pauline Letters

       1.4.2 Colossians' Relationship with Ephesians

1.5 The Colossian Philosophy/Error

1.6 The Intended Audience(s) of Colossians

1.7 Conclusion – A Summary of Assumptions

2.1 Introduction

2.2 The Nature and Scholarly History of Colossians' Distinctive Language

       2.2.1 19th Century Scholarly Ideas

       2.2.2 20th Century Scholarly Ideas

              2.2.2.1 Distinctive Words

              2.2.2.2 Distinctive Theology

              2.2.2.3 'Cosmic' Christology

2.3 The Colossian Hymn (1:15-20)

       2.3.1 Assumptions on Form, Language, Theology and Structure of the Colossian Hymn

              2.3.1.1 Form

              2.3.1.2 Language

              2.3.1.3 Theology

              2.3.1.4 Structure

              2.3.1.5 The Focus – Colossians 1:15-17

2.4 The Colossians Hymn and the Philosophical Tradition

       2.4.1 The Philosophical Tradition – Overlooked in Colossian Studies

       2.4.2 Hellenistic Philosophy as a way of understanding Colossians' Distinctive Language

              2.4.2.1 Hellenistic Philosophy as the Colossian Problem

                     2.4.2.1.1 Eduard Schweizer – Neo-Pythagoreanism (1970-80s)

                     2.4.2.1.2 Richard E. DeMaris – A Middle Platonic Hybrid (1994)

## PART TWO – AN EXEGESIS OF COLOSSIANS 1:15-17

4.1 Colossians 1:15a

    4.1.1 Syntactical Analysis and Usage in Colossians

    4.1.2 Lexicographical Investigation of Similarities, Differences and Distinctiveness within the *Corpus Paulinum* and Biblical Literature

        4.1.2.1 Εἰκών

        4.1.2.2 Ἀόρατος

    4.1.3 Summary of Distinctive Language

    4.1.4 Emerging Issues for Further Analysis

    4.1.5 Similarities with *Timaeus* and Platonic Texts

        4.1.5.1 Εἰκών in *Timaeus*

        4.1.5.2 Θεός in *Timaeus*

            4.1.5.2.1 Κόσμος

            4.1.5.2.2 Lesser Gods

            4.1.5.2.3 The δημιουργός (Craftsman)

        4.1.5.3 Ἀόρατος in *Timaeus*

    4.1.6 Similarities with Philo's Corpus

        4.1.6.1 Overview

        4.1.6.2 Philo's Image of God – The Logos

        4.1.6.3 Philo's Theology – The Transcendent Invisible Maker God

    4.1.7 Insights gained into Colossians Christology from Distinctive Language and Comparisons with *Timaeus* and Philo's Corpus

4.2 Colossians 1:15b

    4.2.1 Syntactical Analysis and Usage in Colossians

    4.2.2 Lexicographical Investigation of Similarities, Differences and Distinctiveness within the *Corpus Paulinum* and Biblical Literature

        4.2.2.1 Πρωτότοκος

        4.2.2. 2 Κτίσις

    4.2.3 Summary of Distinctive Language

    4.2.4 Emerging Issues for Further Analysis

    4.2.5 Similarities with *Timaeus* and Platonic Texts

    4.2.6 Similarities with Philo's Corpus

        4.2.6.1 Πρωτότοκος and Πρωτόγονος

        4.2.6.2 Κτίσις

    4.2.7 Insights gained into Colossians Christology from Distinctive Language and Comparisons with *Timaeus* and Philo's Corpus

**ABSTRACT:**

**COLOSSIANS, COSMOLOGY AND CHRIST: A STUDY INTO COLOSSIANS 1:15-17 WITH INSIGHTS FROM PLATO'S TIMAEUS, PHILO OF ALEXANDRIA AND MIDDLE PLATONISM**

Colossians 1:15-20 has often been noted for its distinctive use of language and theological nuance, in particular, its 'cosmic' Christology. Pauline and Colossians research have identified Plato's *Timaeus*, Middle Platonism and Philo of Alexandria as potentially offering beneficial insight into this Colossian 'hymn' and for the letter as a whole. Unfortunately, to date, these identifications have lacked a thorough treatment and have seldom been more than assertions or short, incidental statements that are part of larger projects in Biblical studies. This thesis has undertaken to test and advance the above assertions by providing a clear method and a thorough examination. This thesis has selected Colossians 1:15-17, a notable expression of the author's Christology and cosmology. The method proposed for examining Colossians 1:15-17 is an analysis of the passage's terminology and syntactical constructions, and a demonstration of its distinctiveness within the *corpus Paulinum*. These distinctives are then compared with Platonic texts, primarily *Timaeus* and the 'middle platonic' exposition of Jewish scripture expressed in Philonic corpus. Upon completing the investigation, the selected text was found to be highly distinctive and where these distinctives were indicated, overt lexicographical and conceptual similarities were found with *Timaeus* and how it was used by Philo of Alexandria. The implications of these findings present similar beneficial insight for the rest of the Colossian hymn (1:18-20) and the wider distinctive language of Colossians.

# ABBREVIATIONS

This thesis will employ the referencing system and abbreviations outlined in Patrick H. Alexander, *The SBL Handbook of Style: for ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and early Christian studies.* Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999, with the following exceptions for primary sources:

- Biblical Books will be given their full title in the text of the thesis such as 'Colossians', but will be abbreviated in the footnotes e.g. 'Col'. See Society of Biblical Literature Handbook of Style (8.3.6.1-3).
- When common classical texts such as those of Homer, Hesiod, Plato and Aristotle and Patristic authors are cited the common English title will be given, such as Plato, *Republic*, then the reference. Where a work has a number of books the book number will be given prior to the reference such as Plato, *Republic*, 2.379a-c or Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Δ 5.2, 1013b.
- For Platonic references, I have used the 'Stephanus numbers' (1578)
- For Aristotelian references, I have used both the Immanuel Bekker's standard references (1831-1870) and numbering system in Jonathan Barnes, *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation.* Vol. 1-2, Bollingen Series. Volume 71, Issue 2 Princeton University Press, 1995. For example Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Δ 5.2, 1013b.
- Lesser known texts will follow the abbreviation system in Simon Hornblower, et.al. *The Oxford Classical Dictionary,* 4th Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2012.
- References to Presocratic Philosophers will be given with *DK* for their Greek reference in Diels and Kranz, *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, and KR for their English reference in Kirk and Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers: A Critical History with a Selection of Texts*.
- Stoic references will be given the SVF volume and reference number in Hans Friedrich August von Arnim, *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*. 4 vols. Leipzig: Teubne, 1903-1924
- Patristic authors will be given their full name, the title of the work and then the reference in either ANF, NPNF[1-2] or PG (see below).
- The occasion references in footnotes to Pseudo-Plutarch, *De Plactia Philosophorum* in Gregorius N. Bernardakis. *Plutarch Moralia* vol 5. Leipzig: Teubner, 1893 will be cited as 'Aëtius' in light of the extensive treatment given to this topic in the many publications by Jaap Mansfeld and David T. Ruina. The complexities of the *Quellenforschung* associated with this work are not to be implied in the use of this term.
- I shall refer to the author of the *Didaskalikos* as Alcinous rather than Albinus in light of John M. Dillon's acceptance of John Whittaker's reappraisal of J. Freudenthal's 1879 hypothesis in his translation and commentary of the text in John M. Dillon, *Alcinous: The Handbook of Platonism - Translated with an Introduction and Commentary.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), ix-xiii.

## Primary Sources

*Adv. Marc.*          *Adversus Marcionem*          *Against Marcion*

*Adv*. *Haer*.          *Adversus Heretics*          *Against Heretics*

| | |
|---|---|
| ANF | Philip Schaff (ed.), A Selection of the Ante-Nicene Fathers (10 vols., Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1890; reprinted by Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999) |
| *De doctrina Platonis* | Handbook of Platonism (*Didaskalikos*) |
| *De Spititu Sancto* | *On the Holy Spirit* |
| *DK* | Hermann A. Diels and W. Kranz, *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 6th edition. (1952) |
| DL | Diogenes Laërtius, *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers* |
| KR | Geoffrey S. Kirk, and John E. Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers: A Critical History with a Selection of Texts.* Cambridge: CUP, 1957. |
| LXX | *Septuaginta: id est, Vetus Testamentum Graece iuxta LXX Interpretes.* Edited by Alfred Rahlfs Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1935. |
| NPNF[1] | Philip Schaff (ed.), A Selection of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: First Series (14 vols., Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1890; reprinted by Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999) |
| NPNF[2] | Philip Schaff and W. Wace (eds.), A Selection of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Second Series (14 vols., Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1890; reprinted by Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999) |
| PG | Jacques P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologia graeca* (Paris: Imprimerie Catholique, 1857–1866) |
| *Praescr.* | *De Praescr Haer* | *Prescription against Heretics* |
| *Strom* | *Stromata* | *Miscellanies* |
| SVF | *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*. Hans Friedrich August von Arnim. 4 vols. Leipzig: Teubne, 1903-1924 |
| θ' | Theodotion Translation of Daniel, pages 870-936 in *Septuaginta: id est, Vetus Testamentum Graece iuxta LXX Interpretes.* Edited by Alfred Rahlfs Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1935. |

**Secondary Sources**

| | |
|---|---|
| AB | Anchor Bible (Commentary) |
| AJEC | Ancient Judaism and early Christianity |

| | |
|---|---|
| ANRW | *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* |
| BCE | Before Common Era |
| BDAG | Danker, Frederick W., Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000. |
| BDB | Brown F., S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs (eds.), *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1907). |
| BDF | Blass, F., A. Debrunner, and R. W. Funk, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961. |
| BECNT | Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament |
| BHGNT | Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament |
| BJRL | *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* |
| BSac | *Bibliotheca Sacra* |
| BZNW | *Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* |
| CBQ | *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* |
| CBQMS | The Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series |
| CC | Continental Commentaries |
| CE | Common Era |
| CRINT | Compendia rerum iudaicarum ad novum testamentum |
| CQ | *Classical Quarterly* |
| DK | Diels, Hermann A., and W. Kranz, *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 6th edn. (1952) |
| DPL | Gerald F. Hawthorne, et al., *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship.* Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993. |
| ECAM | Early Christianity in Asia Minor |
| ICC | International Critical Commentary |

| | |
|---|---|
| *JBL* | *Journal of Biblical Literature* |
| *JHI* | *Journal of the History of Ideas* |
| *JRH* | *Journal of Religious History* |
| *JSNT* | *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* |
| *JSNTSup* | Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series |
| *JSOTSup* | Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series |
| *JTS* | *Journal of Theological Studies* |
| KR | Kirk, Geoffrey S. and John E. Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers:  A Critical History with a Selection of Texts.* Cambridge: CUP, 1957. |
| LCL | Loeb Classical Library |
| LNTS | Library New Testament Studies (formerly the Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement series) |
| LSJ | Liddell, Scott, Jones, Greek-English Lexicon (Abridged). Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1891 |
| NCB | New Century Bible |
| NIB | Leander E. Keck. (ed.)*The New Interpreter's Bible*. Edited by 12 vols. Nashville: Abingdon, 1994-2004 |
| *NIDNTT* | Colin Brown (ed.), *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Paternoster Press, 1975-78) |
| NICNT | The New International Commentary on the New Testament |
| NICOT | The New International Commentary on the Old Testament |
| NIGTC | New International Greek Testament Commentary |
| NovTSup | *Novum Tetamentum Supplements* |
| NTOA | *Novum Testamentum et orbis antiquus* |
| *NTS* | *New Testament Studies* |
| *OCD*[4] | Simon Hornblower, et al., *The Oxford Classical Dictionary,* 4th Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. |

| | |
|---|---|
| OTL | Old Testament Library |
| PACS | Philo of Alexandria Commentary Series |
| PhA | Philosophia Antiqua: A series of monographs on ancient philosophy |
| *RB* | *Revue biblique* |
| *RGG³* | *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Handwörterbuch für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft 3ʳᵈ Edition* (Edited by Kurt Galling; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1957-1965) |
| *RTR* | *The Reformed Theological Review* |
| *SJOT* | Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament: An International Journal of Nordic Theology |
| SNTSMS | Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series |
| SNTW | Studies of the New Testament and Its World |
| SP | Sacra Pagina |
| *SPhiloA* | *Studia Philonica Annual* |
| Str-B | H. Strack, and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (5 vols., Munich: Beck, 1922-61) |
| SUNT | *Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments* |
| *TDNT* | *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* |
| TNTC | Tyndale New Testament Commentaries |
| *VC* | *Vigiliae christianae* |
| WBC | Word Biblical Commentary |
| WMANT | *Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament* |
| WUNT | *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament* |
| *ZECNT* | Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament |
| *ZNW* | *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* |

# **INTRODUCTION**

This thesis will examine the distinctive language and theological nuance of Colossians within the *corpus Paulinum*. The emphasis will be on Colossians often noted 'cosmic' Christology in Colossians 1:15-17 and how the Middle Platonism of Philo of Alexandria offers a beneficial framework for understanding Colossians' theology and cosmology.

After stating the assumptions and stances for the study of Colossians (chapter 1), part one of this thesis will review scholarly trends in Colossian studies and argue that benefit may be gained from understanding Colossians' distinctive language in light of Middle Platonic terms and conceptual nuances. Colossians 1:15-17, the first *strophe* of the Colossian 'Hymn,' will be selected for an investigation to highlight the benefits of examining Colossians' distinctive language through Middle Platonic concepts (chapter 2).   Part one of the thesis will conclude with an overview of the history, key concepts, and persons that comprise Middle Platonism. Middle Platonism will be defined as a dogmatic and scholastic movement with an exegetical approach to Platonic texts, especially *Timaeus*. This Platonic text, especially its monologue, will be outlined and incorporated into the thesis to aid a study of Colossians' conceptual framework. Philo of Alexandria will be identified as the Middle Platonist best suited for examination with Colossians because of their close proximity of date and their shared interest in the Jewish theology and ideas (chapter 3).

The structure of part two of the thesis will subdivide the text into three sections.[1] Chapter 4 will examine Christ's relationship with both God and creation in Colossians 1:15-16a.

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[1] See page 48 of this thesis for the subdivision of the text.

Chapter 5 will explore the cosmology expressed in Colossians 1:16b-d. Then part two will conclude in chapter 6 with an examination of causation and theology in Colossians 1:16e-17. In doing this, part two will exegete Colossians 1:15-17 through the following structure for each line, or sequence of lines. (1) A syntactical analysis of words and grammatical constructions and their further usage in Colossians. (2) A lexicographical and conceptual investigation of similarities, differences and mostly distinctiveness within the *corpus Paulinum* and where beneficial wider Biblical literature. (3) A summary of the distinctive language of those line(s) will be made; followed by (4) a list of emerging issues that require further analysis. The exegesis will then examine lexicographical and conceptual similarities with (5) *Timaeus* in particular and other Platonic texts where helpful, and (6) the Philonic corpus. A conclusion for each line or lines of Colossians 1:15-17 will be made to establish (7) insights gained into Colossians' cosmic Christology.

The thesis will then conclude with a summative statement of the insights gained from reading Colossians 1:15-17 against a background of Plato's *Timaeus* and Philo of Alexandria with suggested implications for further use of this approach in the study of Colossians.

# PART ONE – PRELIMINARY MATTERS AND THE FOCUS OF THE STUDY

# CHAPTER ONE – GENERAL ASSUMPTIONS FOR THE STUDY OF COLOSSIANS

## 1.1 Introduction

This thesis will begin with a statement about general assumptions for the study of

Colossians so that the thesis may proceed to its intended focus, that of understanding

Colossians' distinctive language and cosmic Christology. There will be no radically new

proposals, nor a thorough review or critique of the myriad of issues pertaining to the study

of Colossians, but rather a general statement of assumptions in light of a diversity of

scholarly views on particular issues.

## 1.2 Authorship

In early Christian literature, the apostle Paul was generally attested to as being the author of

Colossians.[1] In the post-Nicene period, Colossians appears to be part of a relatively settled

*corpus Paulinum* of 13 letters (the exception being that some lists include Hebrews as

Pauline making the list 14).[2] Ulrich Huttner suggests that "…a dispute over the authenticity

of Colossians would have prevented its inclusion in the New Testament canon."[3]  This being

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[1] The Muratorian Canon lists Colossians as the fourth of seven letters attributed to the apostle (after Philippians and preceding Galatians). Interestingly, mention is also made of epistles "forged in the name of Paul according to the heresy of Marcion", Colossians is not mentioned among these. See in Bart D, Ehrman, *After the New Testament: A Reader in Early Christianity.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 312. Translation from "The Muratorian Canon," in *Evidence of Tradition* (ed. Daniel J. Theron; Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980). It also appears that Marcion knew and used Colossians. Tertullian seeks to refute Marcion by using Colossians, see *Adv. Marc.*, 5.19 (ANF 3.470-471). Irenaeus attributes Colossians to Paul and his association with Luke, see *Adv. Haer.* 3.14.1 (ANF 1.438). Tertullian as part of his *'Quid ergo Athenis et Hierosolymis?'* speech says "…when the apostle [Paul] would restrain us, he expressly names *philosophy* as that which he would have us be on our guard against. Writing to the Colossians, he says… [citing Col 2:8]."See *Praescr 7* (ANF 3.246). Clement of Alexandria states "According to the apostle [Paul] (he then cites 1 Cor 9:20-21)… Also the Epistle to the Colossians *he* (emphasis mine) writes (cites Col 1:28), see *Strom* 1.1 (ANF 2.303).
[2] The 13 letters typically ascribed to Paul are Rom, 1-2 Cor, Gal, Eph, Phil, Col, 1-2 Thess, 1-2 Tim, Tit and Phlm). Frequently in post-Nicene New Testament canon lists that name the letters of the Pauline Corpus (some just mention 'the letters of Paul'), Colossians is included. For a helpful set of tables illustrating this see Lee M. McDonald, "Appendix D: Lists and Catalogues of New Testament Collections in *The Canon Debate*. (Edited by Lee M. McDonald and James A. Sanders; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2002), 591-597.
[3] Ulrich Huttner, *Early Christianity in the Lycus Valley* AJEC Vol. 85/ECAM; Vol. 1 (Translated by David Green; Leiden: Brill, 2013), 116.

the case, Colossians as pseudepigraphy has been a hallmark of Colossian studies in modern

scholarship since the 1838 work of Ernst T. Mayerhoff, whose ideas will be explained in

more detail in the next chapter.[4] Authorship and pseudepigraphy in Colossians lay beyond

the scope of this thesis. A case will *not* be made for the author(s) of Colossians.[5] Instead,

throughout this thesis the author(s) of Colossians will be referred to as 'the author'; 'Paul'

will refer to the apostle Paul, 'Pauline letters' will refer to the seven commonly undisputed

letters,[6] and the '*corpus Paulinum*' will refer to the 13 canonical letters ascribed to Paul in

the New Testament.[7]


## 1.3 Date and Place of Writing

It will be assumed that Colossians was composed either during the (latter) reign of Emperor

Nero (60s CE) or in the early part of the Flavian dynasty (70-80s CE). Ernst Käsemann's

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[4] Ernst T. Mayerhoff, *Der Brief an die Kolosser, mit vornehmlicher Berücksichtigung der drei Pastoralbriefe.* (Berlin: H. Schultze, 1838). See section 2.2.1 of thesis.

[5] Colossians has Paul and a co-author Timothy in the opening of the letter, just as in 1-2 Thess; 2 Cor; Phil; Phlm. Some have attributed the authorship of Colossians to Timothy. See Wolf-Henning Ollrog, *Paulus und seine Mitarbeiter: Unters. zu Theorie u. Praxis d. paulin. Mission.* WMANT vol. 50. (Zürich: Neukirchener Verlag, 1979), 220, 237 as cited in Peter T. O'Brien, *Colossians-Philemon.* WBC, Vol. 44 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 44, 49; Eduard Schweizer, *The Letter to the Colossians: A Commentary.* (Translated by Andrew Chester: London: SPCK, 1982 [1976]), 23-24. James D.G. Dunn tentatively argues for an 'amanuensis' or secretary theory with relation to Timothy. "…on the whole the most plausible solution is probably that the letter was written at about the same time as Philemon but actually composed by someone other than Paul himself. We may… envisage Paul outlining his main concerns to a secretary (Timothy) who was familiar with the broad pattern of Paul's letter-writing and being content to leave it to the secretary to formulate the letter with a fair degree of license…", *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon.*, NIGTC Vol. 12 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 38. This position has also been reiterated by Paul R. Trebilco in "Christians in Lycus Valley: the view from Ephesus and from Western Asia Minor," in *Colossae in Space and Time: Linking to an Ancient City. Vol. 94 of NTOA, SUNT*. (Editors: Alan H. Cadwallader and Michael F. Trainor; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 180.

[6] The seven of Paul's letters usually considered 'undisputed' or 'authentic' or from the 'hand' of the apostle Paul are Rom, 1-2 Cor, Gal, Phil, 1 Thess and Phlm.

[7] Excluding Hebrews.

statement seems to offer a cautious appraisal of the situation "*Wenn echt, um des Inhalts and des Stiles willen so spät wie möglich, wenn unecht, so früh wie denkbar.*"[8]

The likely proposals for the place of writing are Ephesus,[9] Caesarea or Rome.[10] If the date of writing was after the death of Paul, then a more likely place for a Pauline School that might compose a letter to Colossae would be Ephesus.[11] Identifying the location of composition is not a significant feature in the argument of this thesis, but of the two most likely candidates, Ephesus or Rome, Ephesus appears more plausible.

### 1.4 Colossians' Place in the *Corpus Paulinum*

### 1.4.1 Colossians' Relationship with the Pauline Letters

This thesis will work with the assumption that all the seven Pauline letters pre-date Colossians, and that Colossians pre-dates the Pastorals.[12]  The author, it appears, was very accustomed with the Pauline tradition. E.P. Sanders argued that Colossians uses the language of Pauline letters in a way that is different from the way the Pauline letters seem to use their common language.[13] It displays a heightened use of verbatim agreement and

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[8] Ernst Käsemann, "Kolosserbrief," in *RGG*[3] (Edited by Kurt Galling. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1957-1965), 3.1727-28. Cited in English with the German in Wilson, *Colossians and Philemon*, 60-61. "If genuine, as late as possible, because of the content and style; if not genuine, as early as conceivable."

[9] Not referred to specifically in Acts or any other know source, but Paul may have had a time of imprisonment or 'house arrest' during his time in Ephesus (Acts 19), and referred to in 1 Cor 15:32; 2 Cor 6:5 (11:16-28). See Ralph P. Martin, *Colossians and Philemon.* NCB. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 26-32; Nicholas T, Wright, *Colossians and Philemon. TNTC Vol. 12.* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1986), 40. Treatments on the location of composition can be found in Markus Barth and Helmut Blanke, *Colossians:* AB *Vol. 34B.* (Translated by Astrid B. Beck. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 126-134; O'Brien, *Colossians-Philemon*, xlix-liv.

[10] Rome being the traditional option. Some later manuscripts have an added subscription Ρωμης δια Τυχιχου χαι Ονησιμου. See Robert McL. Wilson, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Colossians and Philemon.* ICC. (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 20 footnote 40.

[11] See Lohse "It is likely that this school tradition was based in Ephesus as the centre of the Pauline mission in Asia Minor, and that it was cultivated and further developed in the circle of the Apostle's students." See Eduard Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon: A Commentary on the Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon.* Hermeneia: Vol. 65. (Translated by William R. Poehlmann and Robert J. Karris. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971 [1968]), 181.

[12] 1-2 Tim and Titus.

[13] Sanders uses Philippians as a comparison. E. P. Sanders, "Literary Dependence in Colossians." *JBL* 85.1 (1966): 28-45. A similar enterprise was undertaken by Walter Bujard, *Stilanalytische Untersuchungen zum*

conflation of Pauline phrases.[14] Sanders suggests that these bear the mark of someone very familiar with the Pauline tradition who has used and adapted the traditional material in new ways for a different situation.[15]  Mark Kiley argued that the author used Philippians and Philemon extensively,[16] and displays evidence of some kind of a 'Pauline School' at work.[17] Angela Standhartinger has also noted Colossians' engagement with the Pauline tradition but has emphasised the prominence of the oral reception and phraseology in Colossians.[18] Whether the author knew of or used copies of actual Pauline letters is beyond the scope of this thesis, but it is the assumption of this thesis that the author was accustomed to the Pauline tradition. To use the paradigm of J. Chistiaan Beker, the author appears to have a strong *coherence* with the Pauline gospel, that is, the triumph of God in Christ, but feels free to adapt language and expressions (*contingence*) to suit his own particular aims.[19]

## 1.4.2 Colossians' Relationship with Ephesians

Generally speaking, scholars have tended to argue that Colossians was written prior to Ephesians, and that Ephesians has used Colossians in some way.[20]  A detailed explanation of

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*Kolosserbrief als Beitrag zur Methodik von Sprachvergleichen.* SUNT - vol 11. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1973).

[14] See Sanders, *Literary Dependence*, 31-32.

[15] See Sanders, *Literary Dependence*, 32 He also states that the author's "…imitation of Paul is not that of a charlatan. He wished to say nothing other than what Paul himself would have said, and to that end he used Paul's own words." See p. 44. Kiley give a helpful overview of the intention and attitude towards pseudography in the Greco-Roman world. See, Mark C. Kiley, *Colossians as pseudepigraphy.* The Biblical Seminar 4. (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986), 17-35.

[16] Kiley, *Colossians as pseudepigraphy*, 76-91.

[17] Kiley, *Colossians as pseudepigraphy*, 91-102. Although not a strong aspect of his overall argument for pseudegraphy, Kiley does also highlight the lack of reference to financial transaction language outside of the Pauline letters. See pp.46-51.

[18] Angela Standhartinger, "Colossians and the Pauline School." *NTS* 50.4 (2004): 576, 578; A more detailed explanation can be found in her section about oral tradition in Greco-Roman period in *Studien zur Entstehungsgeschichte und Intention des Kolosserbriefes. NovTSup* vol 94. (Keiden: Brill, 1999), 92-102.

[19] See Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, ix, 11-19, 23-24, 351-352.

[20] A treatment of the priority of Colossian and Ephesians' use of Colossians with its main purpose to be a modification of the letter's cosmology and cosmic Christology can be found in George H. van Kooten, *Cosmic Christology in Paul and the Pauline School: Colossians and Ephesians in the Context of Graeco-Roman Cosmology, with a New Synopsis of the Greek Texts.* WUNT - vol 171. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 148-149, 211-213. For the two work's close connection also see Christian Stettler, *Der Kolosserhymnus: Untersuchungen*

the relationship between the two is beyond the scope of this thesis.[21] A Colossian priority to

Ephesians will be assumed for this thesis.

## 1.5 The Colossian Philosophy/Error

Identifying the Colossian error or philosophy lies beyond the scope of this study. Merit can

be found in Morna Hooker's reconsideration of an implicit axiom in Pauline studies that

every letter had to have a *Sitz im Leben*.[22] This thesis will tentatively side with Hooker,

Nicholas T. Wright and others[23] who suggest that the author was interested in exhortation

by instruction rather than giving specific correction or addressing an explicit issue. [24]

## 1.6 The Intended Audience(s) of Colossians

*zu Form, traditionsgeschichtlichem Hintergrund und Aussage von Kol 1,15-20.* WUNT 2/131. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 48-49.

[21] See Barth and Blanke who suggest a common (Pauline) authorship, *Colossians*, 72-126. Ernest Best has demonstrated the difficultly with arguing dependency of one on the other, with literary reliance being used to argue dependence both ways. He also suggests a common author. See Ernest Best "Who used Whom? The Relationship of Ephesians and Colossians." *NTS* 43.1 (1997): esp. 91-92, 96. See also ideas restated in Ernest Best *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians: ICC Vol. 36.* (London: T&T Clark, 1998), 6-36, 40 Some 19th century studies in Colossians have argued that the canonical version of Colossians was based on Ephesians, with some further variations being that Ephesians may have used a now unknown Pauline 'Ur-Colossians' document. See Mayerhoff, *Der Brief an die Kolosser*; Heinrich J. Holtzmann, *Kritik der Epheser- und Kolosserbriefe: auf Grund einer Analyse ihres Verwandtschaftsverhältnisses.* (Leipzig: Wilhelm Engelmann, 1872), esp. 148-168.

[22] Morna D. Hooker, "Were there false teachers in Colossae?" in *Christ and Spirit in the New Testament*. (eds. Barnabas Lindars and Stephen S. Smalley. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973) 315-331.

[23] Nicholas T. Wright *Colossians and Philemon.* TNTC**,** Vol. 12. (Downers Grove: IVP, 1986), 30. This is also restated briefly again in *Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology.* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 1993), 118. On this occasion, Wright makes mention of the similarities between his view with Hooker's article. Those who support Hooker's view are Wesley Carr, *Angels and Principalities: The Background, Meaning and Development of the Pauline Phrase Hai Archai Kai Hai Exousiai.* SNTSMS, vol. 42. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 77-85; Walter Wink, *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament.* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 72;  Stettler, *Der* Kolosserhymnus, 58-60, 74; Adam K. Copenhaver, "Watch out for whom? : reconstructing the historical background of Paul's rhetoric in the letter to the Colossians " (Doctor of Philosophy diss., University of Aberdeen, 2012), 53, 266

[24] See critiques of Hooker's proposal in in Frederick F. Bruce "Colossian Problems Part 3: The Colossian Heresy." *BSac* 141, no. 563 (1984): 195-197. O'Brien, *Colossians-Philemon*, xxxi; Richard E. DeMaris, *The Colossian Controversy: Wisdom in Dispute at Colossae.* JSNTSup Vol.96. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994, 39.

The assumption will be made that Colossians was written to be read (aloud) in the ἐκκλησία (assembly/church)[25] at Colossae, with the intention of it enjoying a wider circulation.[26] The church was more likely made up of people from a non-Jewish background.[27] This may explain why the author does not quote the Jewish scriptures, although there are many possible allusions and echoes to it.[28] The Colossians have learnt the gospel from the gentile born Epaphras,[29] a συναιχμάλωτός (fellow prisoner)[30] and συνδούλους (fellow servant)[31] of Paul who was a native of Colossae.[32] Mention is made of the gospel going to ἐν παντὶ τῷ κόσμῳ (to all the 'cosmos'),[33] being made known ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν (to the nations/gentiles)[34] and that they who were outside of God's kingdom and Judaism (2:13) in both thought and deed have νῦν (now 1:22, 26) been brought in (1:13, 21). Colossians 3:11 demonstrates this inference with the reversal of the common Pauline designation of Ἰουδαῖος (Jews) then Ἕλλην (Greeks) in the Pauline letters[35] to Ἕλλην then Ἰουδαῖος. This appears to suggest not only a prominent gentile demography within the church but a departure or "radical

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[25] On the general nature of the Christian ἐκκλησία in the Graeco-Roman context see Peter T. 'Brien, "Church," *DPL* 123-131

[26] Col 2:1; 4:13, 15-16.

[27] See O'Brien, *Colossians-Philemon*, xxviii.

[28] See Christopher A. Beetham, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letter of Paul to the Colossians.* Biblical Interpretation Series: Volume 96 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), see esp. 1-9; 201-221; Gordon D. Fee, "Old Testament Intertextuality in Colossians: Reflections on Pauline Christology and Gentile Inclusion in God's Story," in *History and Exegesis: New Testament Essays in Honor of Dr. E. Earle Ellis on His Eightieth Birthday*. (Edited by Sang-Won Son. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2006), 201-221; Gregory K. Beale, "Colossians," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*. (Edited by Gregory K. Beale and Donald A. Carson. Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2007), 841-870.

[29] Most probably a shortened form of Ἐπαφρόδιτος. Who was most likely not the Ἐπαφρόδιτος of Phil 2:25; 4:18. See Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, 17, 164; Schweizer, *The Letter to the Colossians,* 14 See Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon,* 22; Dunn, *Colossians and Philemon,* 63.

[30] Phlm 23.

[31] Col 1:8.

[32] ὁ ἐξ ὑμῶν Col 4:12.

[33] Col 1.6.

[34] Col 1:27.

[35] See Rom 1:16; 2:9-10; 3:9; 10:12; 1 Cor 1:22, 24; 10:32; 12:13; Gal 3:28.

modification" of a fundamental Pauline tenet.[36] This thesis will assume that the author had a non-Jewish audience in mind in the construction of this letter.

**1.7 Conclusion – A Summary of Assumptions**

This thesis, a study of the distinctive language of Colossians, will work with the following assumptions. Colossians is a pseudepigraphic Pauline letter and postdates the seven Pauline letters, written in the late 60s-70s CE. It displays a high familiarity with a Pauline tradition (potentially written and oral) and pre-dates Ephesians and the Pastorals, with Ephesians being influenced by Colossians. The intention of the letter was more likely one of exhortation and instruction rather than correction or addressing a specific issue. Finally, the author had a non-Jewish audience in mind in and around Colossae in the construction of this letter.

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[36] See Alan H Cadwallader, "Greeks in Colossae: shifting allegiances in the Letter to the Colossians and its context LNTS vol. 499," in *Attitudes to Gentiles in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*. (Editied by David C. Sim and James S. McLaren; London / New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 224-225.

# CHAPTER TWO – COLOSSIANS' DISTINCTIVE LANGUAGE AND THE PHILOSOPHICAL TRADITION

## 2.1 Introduction

This chapter will be divided into three parts. The first part of this chapter will outline the nature and scholarly identification of Colossians' distinctive language and theology, identifying the work's 'cosmic' Christology as exhibited in Colossians 1:15-20 as the area of focus. The second section will outline assumptions for studying Colossians 1:15-20 and further define Colossians 1:15-17, the first strophe of the Colossians 'hymn' as a helpful candidate for focus in this thesis. The third part of this chapter will then turn to recent studies in Colossians, the Philosophical tradition and Philonic studies as an avenue for exploring the distinctive language and cosmic Christology of Colossians 1:15-17.

## 2.2 The Nature and Scholarly History of Colossians Distinctive Language

Colossians' distinctive language within the *corpus Paulinum* has often been explained in two ways: (1) the assortment of distinctive terminology and syntactical constructions; and (2) the particular theological nuance of wider expressions and concepts. Both these aspects have been demonstrated in 19th and 20th Century Colossian and Pauline Scholarship.

### 2.2.1 19th Century Scholarly Ideas

The pronounced nature of Colossians' distinctives, both lexicographical and theological led Mayerhoff early in the 19th Century to argue that Colossians was dependent on Ephesians

and was typically un-Pauline in theology.[1] This was reiterated by Ferdinand C. Baur when he

identified three *Klassen* (classes) of letters with regards to Pauline authorship.[2] He states:

> *Die paulinischen Briefe scheiden sich in Homologumena und Antilegomena. Zu den Homologumena können nur die vier allen andern in jeder Beziehung voran-gehenden Hauptbriefe des Apostels gerechnet werden, der Brief an die Galater, die beiden Korinthierbriefe und der Brief an die Römer.[3]*

Colossians and Ephesians, belong to the *Antilegomena*[4] and lay outside of Baur's Pauline

*Hauptbriefe*.[5] Their language and theology were directed chiefly to the transcendental

regions of the *Geisterwelt* (Spirit-world).[6] Colossians' Christ is the centre of this *Geisterwelt*,

the letter's distinctive Christology consists in his absolute superiority over everything

created.[7] For Baur, these letters have "*Erscheinungen eigener Art*" (a phenomena of their

own) peculiar from a *paulinischen Charakter* (Pauline character) and stand some distance

from the apostolic age.[8]

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[1] He suggested Colossians' S*itz im Leben* to be in disputation with Certinthus (ca. 2nd Century CE). Mayerhoff, *Der Brief an die Kolosser* in Peter T. O'Brien, *Colossians-Philemon. WBC vol: 44* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), xli.

[2] Ferdinand C. Baur, *Paul: The Apostle of Jesus Christ: His Life and Works, His Epistles and Teachings: a Contribution to a Critical History of Primitive Christianity.* (Translated by A. Menzies and E. Zeller. London: Williams and Norgate, 1873 [1845]), 1.255. That all these thirteen Pauline Epistles, which Christian antiquity unanimously recognized, and handed down as the Epistles of the Apostles, cannot make equal claim to authenticity, and that many of them have against them an overwhelming suspicion of unauthenticity.

[3] Ferdinand C.Baur, *Paulus, der Apostel Jesu Christi: sein Leben und Wirken, seine Briefe und seine Lehre.* 2nd ed. (Leipzig: Fues's Verlag, 1866), 1.276. "The Pauline Epistles divide themselves into Homologoumena, and Antilegomena. In the Homologoumena there can only be reckoned the four Epistles which must on all accounts be considered the chief Epistles of the Apostle, namely the Epistle to the Galatians, the two Epistles to the Corinthians, and the Epistle to the Romans." See Baur, *Paul: The Apostle of Jesus Christ*, 1.256

[4] The second and third class, what Baur calls the 'Antilegomena', "[i]n their entire nature they are so essentially different from the four first Epistles, that even if they are considered as Pauline, they must form a second class of Epistles of the Apostle, as they must have been composed for the most part at a later period of his apostolic course. The Pastorals (Titus and 1 and 2 Timothy) have 'overwhelming probability of real unauthenticity' while Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians and Philemon occupy a second, uncertain, intermediate class of possibly authentic Pauline works. Baur, *Paul: The Apostle of Jesus Christ*, 1.256-257. See also Albert Schweitzer, *Paul and His Interpreters: A Critical History.* (Translated by William Montgomery. London: Adam and Charles Black, 1912 [1911])*, 25-27.

[5] Baur calls them 'Homologoumena'. For these "[t]here has never been the slightest suspicion of unauthenticity cast on these four Epistles, on the contrary, they bear in themselves so incontestably the character of Pauline originality, that it is not possible for critical doubt to be exercised upon them with any show of reason."

[6] Baur, *Paul: The Apostle of Jesus Christ*, 2.6.

[7] Baur, *Paul: The Apostle of Jesus Christ*, 2.7, 29-30.

[8] Baur, *Paul: The Apostle of Jesus Christ*, 2.6; Baur, *Paulus*, 2.8.He suggests the period of second century Gnosticism similar to that of Valentinians in Irenaeus' '*Adversus Hæreses.*' See Baur, *Paul: The Apostle of Jesus*

**2.2.2 20th Century Scholarly Ideas**

**2.2.2.1 Distinctive Words**

The proposals of Baur's have loomed large on 19-20th century Pauline Studies.[9] 20th century Pauline scholarship, while still considering Colossians as 'Deutero-Pauline' along with Ephesians has tended to suggest a *Sitz im Leben* closer to the historical Paul and his letters than Baur. Many of these studies identified the twin distinctives of vocabulary and theology.[10] Eduard Lohse gives a methodical overview of Colossians' distinctive terminology. He lists a number of features describing that Colossians has 34 NT *hapax legomena*; 28 words that appear in the NT, but not in the Pauline letters; 10 words that it has in common only with Ephesians; 15 words in common with Ephesians and the NT works outside the Pauline letters; common Pauline words are missing or used with different connotations; stylistic expressions that have a double use of a verb stem; a piling of synonyms; the heightened use of dependent genitives; attaching nouns to phrases by the preposition ἐν; and longer liturgical-hymnic style sentences.[11] Even in light of this extensive list of lexicographical and syntactic distictives, throughout this section Lohse repeatedly cautions the exegete about assigning too much significance to this phenomena, noting that other works in the *corpus Paulinum* have their own distinctive vocabulary. It is the distinct vocabulary along with Colossians' particular theological assertions that highlight its distinctiveness. It is by considering both the vocabulary and theology that Lohse goes on to

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*Christ*, 2.8, 32. Contra to the language of Colossians and Ephesians he stated that Paul speaks little of a *Geisterwelt*, without any dogmatic intent, only by way of illustration and proverbially. It lays outside the apostle's sphere of vision. See 2.253. In fact they only get a 6 page treatment in a work of over 800 pages (2.276-282).

[9] See an overview in Albert Schweitzer, *Geschichte der Paulinischen Forschung von der Reformation bis auf die Gegenwart.* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1911), especially 10-91.

[10] See Barth and Blanke listing the works of 19th and early 20th century studies in this area. They suggest a 'spurious' reliance on word statistics. See *Colossians*, 57.

[11] Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, 84-91.

assert that in Colossians "....[p]auline theology has undergone a profound change.... Paul cannot be considered to be the direct or indirect author. Rather a theologian schooled in Pauline thought composed the letter."[12]

## 2.2.2.2 Distinctive Theology

Colossians' theological distinctives have also been well noted in Colossian studies. John M.G. Barclay's concise overview of five general categories of theological particulars in Colossians is typical of the general trends in scholarship.[13]  These theological distinctives are generally categorised around Christology, Eschatology, Ecclesiology, Apostolic Importance, and Ethical Codification. It is beyond the scope of this study to treat all of these theological distinctives noted above. This thesis will focus on one category, that of Colossians' Christology. Often further described as 'cosmic'.

## 2.2.2.3 'Cosmic' Christology

This 'cosmic' Christology is perhaps Colossian's chief theological distinctive. By 'cosmic' Christology this thesis means an understanding and framing of Christ in relation to the totality of reality, usually inferring to his supremacy over it. The pre-eminent Colossian Christological passage is Colossians 1:15-20, often called the Colossian 'Hymn'.  It is the cosmic Christology of the Colossians 'Hymn' that will take the focus of this thesis.[14]

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[12] See Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, 180-181.

[13]  See John M. G. Barclay *Colossians and Philemon.* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 25-28. See also Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, 177-183; O'Brien with a similar list, *Colossians-Philemon*, xliv-xlix; A. J. M. Wedderburn, *The Theology of Colossians* in Andrew T. Lincoln and A. J. M. Wedderburn, The Theology of the Latter Pauline Letters. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 23-63; Andrew T. Lincoln, "The Letter to the Colossians," in *NIB Vol.11*. (Nashville Abingdon Press, 2000), 568-577.

[14] In this thesis the term 'hymn' will used on occasions for the sake of brevity when referring to Colossians 1:15-20. The use of hymn is not an argument for a particular form.

**2.3 The Colossians Hymn 1:15-20**

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to engage extensively with the particular scholarly

conjecture about Colossians 1:15-20 such as an independent origin; its *Sitz im Leben*; non-

Pauline and/or possible adaptions of all or portions of the text;[15] the potentiality of it being

a hymn and/or a baptismal confession.[16] This thesis acknowledges the possibility that

portions of Colossians 1:15-20 may have existed prior to the composition of Colossians and

may have enjoyed a circulation for liturgical purposes in Asia Minor among synagogues

and/or early Christian communities.[17]

**2.3.1 Assumptions on Form, Language, Theology and Structure of the Colossian Hymn**

**2.3.1.1 Form**

While identifying a literary form with Colossians 1:15-20 is not imperative to the nature of

this thesis, it remains quite obvious that there are poetic techniques running throughout.[18]

The use of parallelisms, potential chiasms, prepositional phrases, antithetic contrasts and

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[15] See Peirre Benoit, "L'Hymne Christologique de Col 1,15-20: Judgement critique sur l'état des recherches," in *Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults, Part 1: New Testament*. (Edited by Jacob Neusner. Vol. Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity: Volume 12.1. Leiden: Brill 1975), 226-263. See especially page 238.

[16] See Ernst Käsemann, "Chapter 7: A Primitive Christian Baptismal Liturgy" in *Essays on New Testament Themes.* Studies in Biblical Theology No. 41. (London: SCM Press, 1964), 149-167; Rudolf K. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament: Volume 2.* (Translated by Kendrick Grobel. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), 2.134.

[17] Treatments on these issues can be found in O'Brien, Colossians-Philemon, 37-42; Lincoln, *The Letter to the Colossians*, 575-7, 605; Clinton E. Arnold, *The Colossian Syncretism: The Interface Between Christianity and Folk Belief at Colossae.* WUNT 2/77. (Tübigen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1995), 246-251; Roland R. Cox, "By the same word: The intersection of cosmology and soteriology in Hellenistic Judaism, early Christianity and ''Gnosticism'' in the light of Middle Platonic intermediary doctrine." (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 2005), 196-197; Robert E. Moses, *Powerful Practices: Paul's Principalities and Powers Revisited.* (ThD diss.: Divinity School of Duke University, 2012), 236-250; Wilson, *Colossians and Philemon*, 123-124. See footnotes 1 and 5 in particular.

[18] See Wright, *Colossians and Philemon*, 68-69; Stettler argues the hymn is shaped in the style of the Old Testament Psalms. See *Der Kolosserhymnus*, 57, 79-86, with an interesting speculative translation of the Greek back into Hebrew on page 93.

balanced sections are a well noted and explored feature of this passage.[19] No further

argument will be given to ascribing a certain form to Colossians 1:15-20, like that of a

hymn.[20] This thesis simply acknowledges that this passage represents a highly crafted text.

### 2.3.1.2 Language

The language of Colossians 1:15-20 is "striking"[21] and appears to stand out from its

surrounding context.[22] The language itself has been noted for its "…impressive number of

terms which either do not appear at all elsewhere in the Pauline corpus or are used

otherwise with a different meaning."[23] The literary features such as the infrequent usage of

the participle[24] compared to the surrounding text, the absence of references to the

audience and the heightened number of words appearing only here in the *corpus Paulinum*

reiterate the possibility that portions of Colossians 1:15-20, if not all, may have existed prior

to the composition of Colossians.[25] If this is so, its inclusion may be for its central theological

place in the instruction of the letter.[26]  Markus Barth suggests it appears to be the very

"…high point of Colossians. It celebrates… the Jewish Messiah as creator and reconciler of

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[19] See and extensive treatment of these features in John F. Balchin, "Colossians 1:15-20: An Early Christian Hymn? The Arguments from Style." *Vox Evangelica* 15 (1985): 65-94. See also van Kooten, *Cosmic Christology*, 115-121.

[20] For further discussion on the nature and form of Hymns in the New Testament see Jack T. Sanders, *The New Testament Christological Hymns: Their Historical Religious Background.* SNTSMS: Vol 15. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 24-25.

[21] John Behr "Colossians 1:13-20: A Chiastic Reading." *SVTQ* 40 (1996), 247.

[22] On the importance of reading vv,13-14 along with vv.15-20 see Behr, *Colossians 1:13-20: A Chiastic Reading,* 247-264; Gordon D. Fee, *Pauline Christology: An Exegetical-Theological Study.* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 293-295; John A. Dunne, "The Regal Status of Christ in the Colossian "Christ-Hymn": A Re-evaluation of the Influence of Wisdom Traditions ". *TJ* 31, no. 1 (2011): 3-18.

[23] Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon,* 42.

[24] Col 1.20b εἰρηνοποιήσας being the exception.

[25] See treatment in Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon.* Pillar Commentary of the New Testament. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2008), 107-109; Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, 84-88; Moses, *Powerful Practices*, 235.

[26] See Arnold, *The Colossian Syncretism*, 246-69. Cox notes that this *pericope* stands apart from the rest of the letter in the way the author refers to or even cites portions of 1:15-20 throughout the remainder of the letter.

the universe."[27] Ronald R. Cox, agreeing with Barth's sentiment notes that this *pericope*

stands apart from the rest of the letter in the way the author refers to or even cites portions

of it throughout the remainder of the letter.[28] Colossians 1:15-20 will be considered as

representing the author's theology, whether they be his own words or not, he has

intentionally used every word of Colossians 1:15-20 to enhance and explain the core

message of his letter.[29]


## 2.3.1.3 Theology

It is not only the lexicographical distinctiveness that makes Colossians 1:15-20 a helpful

candidate for examination but also the theological propositions of the hymn.  It appears to

affirm sole supremacy to Christ and gives him a unique relationship with God in relation to

the rest of reality.[30] This is particularly the case in vv.15-17 where William Wrede makes the

point that "…*ja Paulus macht die weitgehende Aussage, daß er bei der Weltschöpfung als*

*Vermittler tatig gewesen sei 'durch ihn ist alles geschaffen*.'"[31]  Wright suggests that in

Colossians 1:15-20 the author presents a 'Christological monotheism,' a reframing of Jewish

monotheism and election around Jesus as the messiah.[32]

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[27] Barth, and Blanke, *Colossians*, 194.

[28] He lists the terms (or cognates): εἰκών Col 3:10; κτίσις 1:23; κεφαλή 2:10, 19; σῶμα 1:22, 24; 2:11, 17, 19, 23; 3:15; πλήρωμα 2:9; ἀποκαταλλάσσω 1:22; σταυρός 2:14; and πᾶς  22 times in Col apart from vv. 15-20. See Cox, *By the same word*, 191. See also Copenhaver, *Watch out for whom*, 119-120

[29] George H. van Kooten argues that the hymn was composed by the author of the letter. See van Kooten, *Cosmic Christology*, 111, 115, 120. This sentiment is also expressed by Vicky S. Balabanski who states that the cosmology of the hymn, whatever its source, is shared by the rest of the letter. See Vicky S. Balabanski, "Hellenistic Cosmology and the Letter to the Colossians: Towards an Ecological Hermeneutic," in *Ecological Hermeneutics: Biblical, Historical and Theological Perspectives*. (Edited by David G. Horrell et al.; London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010), 96.

[30] Clinton E. Arnold, *Powers of Darkness: Principalities & Powers in Paul's Letters.* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic 1992), 143.

[31] Citing 1 Cor 8:6 and Col 1:16-17 (Wrede holds the view that Colossians was Pauline) "Paul makes the far-reaching assertion that he took part as agent in the creation of the world". William Wrede, *Paulus* (Tübingen J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1907), 54 [Eng. 87].

[32] Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, 99-119 (esp.114). See also his *Paul and the Faithfulness of God: Parts 1-2.* Christian Origins and the Question of God Vol. 4. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 69.

## 2.3.1.4 Structure

The structure of the passage has generated a number of suggestions. Balchin gives an extensive summary of the array of conclusions.[33] The content of the hymn appears to be concerned with two overarching concerns; cosmogony and soteriology, which although are never far apart, [34] appear to be emphasised in two *strophes*,[35] (some suggest three *strophes*[36]) with the central link to these two being the author's Christology. It will be taken that Colossians 1:15-17 appears to form a *strophe* concerned with cosmogony; Colossians 1:18b-20 seems to at many points use reciprocal language to explain soteriology.  Colossians 1:18a, with the possible addition (or gloss) of τῆς ἐκκλησίας, represents a transitional statement and has been incorporated into either of the *strophes* by different scholars.[37]

## 2.3.1.5 The Focus – Colossians 1:15-17

This thesis will focus attention on the first *strophe*, Colossians 1:15-17 a clear expression of Christology and cosmology and examine the author's understanding of Christ, cosmology and the formation of reality.

## 2.4 The Colossians Hymn and the Philosophical Tradition

## 2.4.1 The Philosophical Tradition – Overlooked in Colossian Studies

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[33] See Balchin, *Colossians 1:15-20: An Early Christian Hymn?*, 77-80.

[34] van Kooten, *Cosmic Christology*, 120.

[35] See Eduard Norden, *Agnostos Theos: Untersuchungen zur Formengeschichte religiöser Rede.* (Leipzig: Verlag B.G. Teubner, 1913), 252; James M. Robinson, "A Formal Analysis of Colossians 1:15-20." *JBL* 76.4 (1957): 285-286; Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, 56; Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, 240-241; Stettler, Christian *Der Kolosserhymnus*, 86-93; Cox, *By the same word*, 192; Copenhaver, *Watch out for whom*, 117

[36] See van Kooten, *Cosmic Christology*, 115-120 for examples in scholarly discussion.

[37] See discussion of this in Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, 55; Wilson, *Colossians and Philemon*, 145-147.

Colossians 1:15-20 has often been framed as the answer to the Colossian 'philosophy,'[38] the

quintessential issue in Colossian studies for attempting to illuminate the letter's *Sitz im*

*Leben*. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to review the vast variety of options expressed,[39]

but the Colossian Philosophy has been a significant reason many have suggested for

Colossians' distinctive language.


Given that φιλοσοφία in Colossians 2:8 is a well noted *hapax legomenon* in the *corpus*

*Paulinum*, looking to the Philosophical tradition has been a surprisingly over-looked area in

the study of Colossians and has often being dismissed immediately from consideration.[40]

Many suggest that Colossians' distinctive language can be understood rather by considering

the Colossian Philosophy from a *religionsgeschichtliche* cultic approach,[41] or a synchronistic

amalgam of beliefs in the assortment of statements found in Colossians 2:16-23.[42] This has

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[38] Col 2.8 Βλέπετε μή τις ὑμᾶς ἔσται ὁ συλαγωγῶν <u>διὰ τῆς φιλοσοφίας</u> καὶ κενῆς ἀπάτης κατὰ τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν ἀνθρώπων, κατὰ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου καὶ οὐ κατὰ Χριστόν. See section 1.5 of thesis.

[39] See the daunting list of 44 options proposed in John J. Gunther's 1973 work *St. Paul's Opponents and Their Backgrounds: A Study of Apocalyptic and Jewish Sectarians Teachings.* NovTSup Vol.35. (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 3-4. Helpful overviews of the issues can be found in Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, 21-41; O'Brien, *Colossians-Philemon*, xxx-xxxviii; Lohse, Eduard, *Colossians and Philemon*, 127-131; Richard E. DeMaris, *The Colossian Controversy: Wisdom in Dispute at Colossae. JSNTSup Vol.96.* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 18-40; Dunn, *Colossians and Philemon*, 23-35; Wilson, *Colossians and Philemon*, 35-58; Lincoln, *The Letter to the Colossians*, 560-568; Ian K. Smith, *Heavenly Perspective: A Study of the Apostle Paul's Response to a Jewish Mystical Movement at Colossae.* LNTS 326. (London: T&T Clark International, 2006) 19-38.

[40] Many scholars cite Michel's dismissal in *TDNT* 9.172-88. See Barth and Blanke, Colossians, 308-309; O'Brien, Colossians-Philemon, 109; Frederick F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians.* NICNT Vol. 10. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 98; Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians.* SP Issue 17 (Edited by Daniel J. Harrington; Minneapolis: Liturgical Press, 2000), 97.

[41] See an overview of Mid-20th century views in Sanders, *The New Testament Christological Hymns*, 75-87. Dibelius sees similarities in the Isis Initiation rites sketched by Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, 11. See Martin Dibelius "The Isis Initiation in Apuleius and Related Initiatory Rites," in *Conflict at Colossae: A Problem in the Interpretation of Early Christianity, Illustrated by Selected Modern Studies*. (Edited by Fred O. Francis and Wayne A. Meeks. Missoula: SBL and Scholars Press, 1975 [1917]), 61-121.Barth and Blanke also suggest that 'Religion' is a better term for the Colossian problem than Philosophy. See *Colossians*, 23. See also Edwin A. Judge's treatment on '*Religio*' in Edwin A. Judge "Did the Churches Complete with Cult Groups?," in *Early Christianity and Classical Culture*. NovTSup vol. 110. (Edited by John T. Fitzgerald, Thomas H. Olbright, and L. Michael White; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 501-524; "The Beginning of Religious History." *JRH* 15.4 (1989): 394-412.

[42] Such as the subjective use of the genitive in θρησκείᾳ τῶν ἀγγέλων See Fred O. Francis, "Humility and Angelic Worship in Col 2:18," in *Conflict at Colossae: A Problem in the Interpretation of Early Christianity Illustrated by Selected Modern Studies*. (Edited by Fred O. Francis and Wayne A. Meeks. Missoula: SBL, 1975). 163-195; Carr,

often led to comparisons with material that though possibly present in the mid-to-late first century, is usually dated from the second century CE, such as gnostic ideas or the magic papyrus fragments.[43]

### 2.4.2 Hellenistic Philosophy as a way of Understanding Colossians' distinctive language

A new departure emerged in the late 1970s with a consideration of Colossians' distinctive language being made against the background of Hellenistic Philosophy. The early proposals considered this language as a response to the Colossian Philosophy. They are as follows:

### 2.4.2.1 Hellenistic Philosophy as the Colossian Problem

### 2.4.2.1.1 Eduard Schweizer – Neo-Pythagoreanism (1970-80s)

In Eduard Schweizer's Commentary on Colossians[44] and article on the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου[45] he suggested that there was a wide spread conviction that the four elements were originally in a harmony or equilibrium but were threatening the world by their 'mighty strife' of unending interchange.[46] By this, he means the four ῥιζώματα (roots) of Empedocles (c.492-432 BCE) πῦρ, ὕδωρ, γῆν, and ἀέρα (fire, water, earth and air).[47] The Colossian Philosophy

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*Angels and Principalities*, 66-72; Bruce, *The Colossian Heresy*, 195-208, especially 200; Smith, *Heavenly Perspective*, 119-127. On an objective genitive interpretation see Arnold, *The Colossian Syncretism*, 91-93

[43] See Arnold, *The Colossian Syncretism*, 11-89

[44] Schweizer, Eduard, *The Letter to the Colossians: A Commentary.* (Translated by Andrew Chester. London: SPCK, 1982 [1976]).

[45] Eduard Schweizer, "Slaves of the Elements and Worshipers of Angels: Gal 4:3, 9 and Col 2:8, 18, 20." *JBL* 107, no. 3 (1988): 455-468.

[46] Schweizer, *Slaves of the Elements*, 464. See also Schweizer, *The Letter to the Colossians, 130-131*

[47] Although Empedocles did not use the term στοιχεῖον for his four 'elements', the term came to associated with his ideas by letter sources. See Aristotle, *On Corruption and Generation*, 2.6 (333b); Aëtius 1.3: (DK B6); DL, 8.76.

finds similar motifs with an emerging Neo-Pythagorean in the first century BCE.[48] It is this

fear/pessimism that Schweizer suggests the Colossian hymn addresses.[49]

### 2.4.2.1.2 Richard E. DeMaris – A Middle Platonic Hybrid (1994)

Richard E. DeMaris' study acknowledges the importance of Schweizer's work on

Colossians.[50] His focus is on identifying the Colossian 'Philosophy' of Colossians 2:8. He

suggests it is a distinctive blend of popular Middle Platonic, Jewish and Christian elements

that cohere around the pursuit of wisdom.[51]  His interest is in Colossians 2:8, 16-23, what he

calls the 'polemical core' of the letter. DeMaris suggests a general interest in the Platonic

tradition is more helpful for framing the general philosophical climate of Colossians.[52] In

particular, he identifies Philo as a similar example of the intersection between Platonic and

Jewish ideas, noting how the influence of a Middle Platonic understanding of *Timaeus* was

embedded throughout Philo's works.[53]

### 2.4.2.1.3 Troy W. Martin – Cynic Philosophy (1996)

Troy W. Martin has suggested that much of the distinct language, especially that of

Colossians 2:16-19 was to combat Cynic philosophers, opponents of Christians at Colossae.[54]

Colossians 1:15-20 being the antidote to Colossians 2:18.[55]

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[48] Schweizer, *The Letter to the Colossians*, 132. See DL, 8.25-33.
[49] Schweizer, *Slaves of the Elements*, 464.
[50] Richard E. DeMaris, *The Colossian Controversy: Wisdom in Dispute at Colossae.* JSNTSS Vol.96. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994).
[51] DeMaris, *The Colossian Controversy*, 17
[52] See DeMaris, *The Colossian Controversy*, 100-101.
[53] DeMaris, *The Colossian Controversy*, 114-118.
[54] See Troy W. Martin, *By Philosophy and Empty Deceit: Colossians as Response to a Cynic Critique.* JSNTSup: Issue 118. (Edited by Stanley E. Porter; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 15, 116-168.
[55] Martin, *By Philosophy and Empty Deceit*, 156.

**2.4.2.2 Hellenistic Philosophy Inspiring Colossians' Language**

These three early explorations of Hellenistic Philosophy and Colossians identified distinctive language with the philosophical tradition, suggesting it was part of the 'problem' the author wished to address. A shift began to take place in the mid-1990s in understanding Colossians' distinctive language and the Philosophical tradition. It was a move away from identifying philosophical language with a Colossians error, to one of exhortation.[56] The Philosophical tradition was now considered as *informing* Colossians' distinctive language rather than *combating* it through a sloganising rhetoric similar to one that may be found in 1 Corinthians.[57]

**2.4.2.2.1 Walter T. Wilson (1997)**

Walter T. Wilson's 1997 work, describes Colossians as a work which conveys a richly symbolic world and a compelling message full of power and mystery.[58] It has an emphasis on human transformation, it seeks to educate, correct, and exhort its audience to foster this transformation.[59] This enterprise appears similar to many Hellenistic philosophical schools. He suggests it would appear that the comparative enterprise of investigating the literature of the Pauline corpus within the context of Greco-Roman philosophy is phenomenologically

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[56] See Walter T. Wilson, *The Hope of Glory: Education and Exhortation in the Epistle to the Colossians.* NovTSup no.88. (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 2, 11-12, 83-131, 255-56.

[57] See Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "Corinthian Slogans in 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 ". *CBQ* 40 (1978): 391-96 and post-script in Murphy-O'Connor, Jerome, *Keys to First Corinthians: Revisiting the Major Issues.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 25-30. See a recent overview of the scholarly discussion surrounding Corinthian Slogans in Timothy A. Brookins, *Corinthian Wisdom, Stoic Philosophy, and the Ancient Economy.* SNTSMS: Volume 159. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014) 81-103.

[58] Wilson, *The Hope of Glory*, 1.

[59] Wilson, *The Hope of Glory*, 2.

valid.[60] Colossians, for Wilson a pseudegraphical Pauline text,[61] is a reshaping of Pauline thought at a key juncture in the life of the Colossian church.[62]

## 2.4.2.2.2 Gregory E. Sterling (1997-1998)

Gregory Sterling contributed two articles that link Middle Platonism with Colossians. He suggested that Colossians 1:15-20, in particular, verse 16, along with a small number of other NT texts demonstrate a use of prepositional phrases to explain philosophical causation and theology that is similar to Hellenistic Philosophical schools of the period. [63] In particular, it is very similar to Philo of Alexandria's instrumental λόγος doctrine. His second article, [64] while lamenting that Philo only receives a passing nod in NT studies focuses attention on similarities between Philo's use of philosophical terms associated with elements and spirits and the *Geisterwelt* expressed in Colossians 2:8-19.

## 2.4.2.2.3 Chris Forbes (2001-2002)

Looking more broadly to Pauline studies, Chris Forbes a little later suggested that the language of a Pauline '*Geisterwelt'* finds its closest analogies with Greek Philosophy.[65] He poses the question and then suggests:

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[60] Wilson, *The Hope of Glory*, 8. He later on suggests that "a letter containing moral exhortation would have been immediately recognisable as a conventional form of philosophic discourse." See p. 48

[61] Wilson, *The Hope of Glory*, 20.

[62] Wilson, *The Hope of Glory*, 18.

[63] Gregory E. Sterling, "Prepositional Metaphysics in Jewish Wisdom Speculation and Early Christian Liturgical Texts." *SPhiloA* 9 (1997): 219-238. See sections 6.1.6.2 and 6.1.7 of thesis.

[64] Gregory E. Sterling, "Philosophy according to the Elements of the Cosmos: Colossian Christianity and Philo of Alexandria," in *Philo d'Alexandrie et le langage de la philosophie*. Edited by Carlos Lévy. Turmhout: Brepols, 1998), 349-373.

[65] Chris Forbes, "Paul's Principalities and Powers: Demythologising Apocalyptic?" *JSNT* 82 (2001): 61-88; "Pauline Demonology and/or Cosmology? Principalities, Powers and the Elements of the World in their Hellenistic Context." *JSNT* 85 (2002): 51-73.

> Why does Paul apparently under-use the 'obvious' terms, and choose instead abstractions, personified abstractions, several of which… have technical meanings in Greek popular philosophy?… Paul's terminology and his conceptual framework find their nearest parallels in the 'Middle Platonism' of Philo and Plutarch. I will suggest that the use, by Paul, of this framework and terminology forms a very early example of the appropriation of popular Hellenistic philosophy by Christian thinkers attempting to express their cosmological and Christological ideas[66]

He highlights two Middle Platonic figures, Philo and Plutarch, and their allegorical method to give insight into *Geisterwelt* language of Paul.[67]  He concludes by stating that:

> I do not wish to suggest that Paul has formally studied philosophy or is *au fait* with the technicalities of Middle Platonic cosmological thinking. I would argue, rather, that he is working creatively between the angelology and demonology of his Jewish heritage, and the world-view of the thoughtful Graeco-Roman philosophical amateur. Neither do I think that he does this simply for the sake of communication, searching for toeholds in the world-view of his audience. Rather I would suggest that Paul, himself in part a product of decades of intelligent engagement with Hellenistic Judaism and Graeco-Roman culture, is here working towards his own synthesis.[68]

Forbes' two articles provide a very compelling avenue for understanding Pauline language. Whether the veracity of his claims can be made for the Pauline letters and Ephesians is beyond the scope of this thesis. But his assertion is worthy of consideration and further explanation in Colossians.

## 2.4.2.2.4 George H. Van Kooten (2003)

George H. van Kooten's 2003 work, aims to "…do justice to the importance of the cosmological side of early Christian theology and Christology," his emphasis is on Colossians and Ephesians.[69] He seeks to show that within the *corpus Paulinum* Greco-Roman cosmology is closely intertwined with the soteriological question of man's existence.[70] For van Kooten, Colossians is permeated by a plea for a wisdom that is contra to στοιχεῖα τοῦ

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[66] Forbes, Paul's Principalities and Powers, 88
[67] See Forbes, "Pauline Demonology and/or Cosmology, 72.
[68] Forbes, "Pauline Demonology and/or Cosmology, 72.
[69] Van Kooten, *Cosmic Christology*, 4.
[70] Van Kooten, *Cosmic Christology in Paul,* 4.

$\varkappa \acute{o} \sigma \mu o \upsilon$.[71] He sees the author as sharing a worldview (by this I suggest he really means

cosmology) similar to Philo and Plutarch.[72] His important claim is that Colossians' cosmology

represents a (further) Hellenisation of Paul's cosmology.[73]


### 2.4.2.2.5 Roland R. Cox (2005)

Roland Cox as part of his doctoral studies examined four NT texts, the Johannine prologue

(1:1-18); 1 Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 1:15-20, and Hebrews 1:1-4 and argued that they all

attest a common cosmological tradition that seems to be inspired by an amalgam of

Hellenistic Judaism and a Middle Platonic intermediary doctrine that is typified by Philo of

Alexandria.[74] Colossians 1:15-20 seeks to identify the ontological primacy, cosmogonic

agency and current cosmological mediation of the intermediary, but then focuses attention

on the historical and soteriological role of the son.[75]


### 2.4.2.2.6 Vicky S. Balabanski (2008/2010)

Vicky S. Balabanski has, as part of a wider project on ecological hermeneutics, identified

Colossians 1:15-20 with Platonic texts.[76] In particular, she has identified the *Timaean* model

of the cosmos as instructive for understanding the Colossians hymn,[77] and that the letter as

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[71] Van Kooten, *Cosmic Christology in Paul,* 11.

[72] See van Kooten, *Cosmic Christology in Paul,* 29.

[73] See van Kooten, *Cosmic Christology in Paul,* 111, 121, 146, 208.

[74] Roland R. Cox, "By the same word: The intersection of cosmology and soteriology in Hellenistic Judaism, early Christianity and ''Gnosticism'' in the light of Middle Platonic intermediary doctrine." (University of Notre Dame, 2005).

[75] Cox, *By the same word*, 210.

[76] Vicky S. Balabanski, "Critiquing Anthropocentric Cosmology: Retrieving a Stoic 'Permeation Cosmology' in Colossians 1:15-20 " in *Exploring Ecological Hermeneutics*. Edited by Norman C. Habel and Peter Trudinger. Atlanta: SBL, 2008), 154; Balabanski, *Hellenistic Cosmology and the Letter to the Colossians*, 95-96, 99-103.

[77] Balabanski, *Hellenistic Cosmology and the Letter to the Colossians*, 95.

a whole shares that same cosmology.[78] Balabanski acknowledges that Middle Platonism was enriched by elements of other philosophical traditions and that *Timaeus* was also a key text in the philosophical tradition beyond the academy.[79] She argues that Colossians 1:15-20, while having a *Timaean* influence framing its Christology and subsequent cosmology, exhibits more of a Stoic cosmology of cosmic permeation.[80]

### 2.4.2.3 What has Philo to do with Colossians?

What is seen here is a growing emphasis on associating the Colossian hymn with Middle Platonism and emphasising Philo of Alexandria as both a Middle Platonist and most helpful in illuminating the Colossian hymn. How one might treat Philo and Middle Platonism will be discussed in section 3.3.2, but a brief survey of scholarly identification of Philo and his potential benefit for understanding the Colossian hymn will now be given.

### 2.4.2.3.1 Friedrich-Wilhelm Eltester and Jack T. Sanders (1958/1971)

Jack T. Sanders in his study on NT Christological hymns[81] gives a helpful review of Friedrich-Wilhelm Eltester 1958 study of εἰκών in the NT.[82]  He (Eltester) sees Colossians 1:15-20, especially vv15-18a as having a strong relationship with pre-Christian Judaism.[83] The examples he gives are displayed in a table where he compares for the subject of Colossians 1:15-16a, e-18a (Christ) with the λόγος of Philo and αἰών and κόσμος of the *corpus*

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[78] Balabanski, *Hellenistic Cosmology and the Letter to the Colossians*, 95.
[79] Balabanski, *Hellenistic Cosmology and the Letter to the Colossians*, 99-100.
[80] See Balabanski, *Critiquing Anthropocentric Cosmology*, 156-159; Balabanski, *Hellenistic Cosmology and the Letter to the Colossians*, 102-103, 105-106.
[81] Sanders, *The New Testament Christological Hymns*, 75-87.
[82] See Friedrich-Wilhelm Eltester, *Eikon im Neuen Testament BZNW* 23. (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1958). In Sanders, *The New Testament Christological Hymns*, 80-85.
[83] See Sanders, *The New Testament Christological Hymns*, 83.

*hermeticum*.[84] Interaction with *corpus hermeticum* is beyond the scope of this study, the source material is also problematic to date and most likely post-dates Philo and Colossians.[85] However, throughout his comparison Philonic references abound and suggest the potential for significant conceptual overlap.[86]

**2.4.2.3.2 Henry Chadwick (1966)**

As part of a wider treatment on Philo and Early Christianity Henry Chadwick's 1966 article suggested that "it seems clear that of all the non-Christian writers of the first century A.D. [CE] Philo is the one from whom the historian of emergent Christianity has most to learn."[87] He sees Philo as helpful for illuminating Hebrews, John and Paul. The focus of his article is *corpus Paulinum* and suggests that "[t]he catalogue of close Philonic parallels extends throughout all the Pauline epistles, except for the Pastorals."[88] He focusses much of his attention on Romans and 1 Corinthians.[89] Interestingly, he incidentally makes reference to Colossians 1:15-20 (2 paragraphs) stating that "It is surely of the highest interest that much of this section uses terminology in ways that are reminiscent of Philo."[90] He then states the 'divine wisdom' of Colossians as identical with the activity of the λόγος in Philo.[91] After making such a dramatic and poignant observation he moves on to Philo's influence in the Patristic period.[92]

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[84] Eltester, *Eikon im Neuen Testament*, 140 f.; Sanders, *The New Testament Christological Hymns*, 84-85.
[85] See Brook W. R. Pearson, "Hermeticism," in *Dictionary of New Testament Background*. (Edited by Graig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 482-485.
[86] See Sanders, *The New Testament Christological Hymns*, 83.
[87] Henry Chadwick, "St Paul and Philo of Alexandria." *BJRL* 48, no. 2 (1966): 288.
[88] Chadwick, *St Paul and Philo of Alexandria*, 292.
[89] Chadwick, *St Paul and Philo of Alexandria*, 292-99.
[90] Chadwick, *St Paul and Philo of Alexandria*, 300.
[91] Chadwick, *St Paul and Philo of Alexandria*, 301.
[92] Chadwick, *St Paul and Philo of Alexandria*, 301-306. He finished his article with a quote from a letter of Samuel T. Coleridge (1772-1834) that "Philo has not been used enough."

### 2.4.2.3.3 Samuel Sandmel (1984)

Samuel Sandmel who is often noted for his cautious warning of the dangers of

'parallelomania' in New Testament studies,[93] also makes a point that in Colossians (he

footnotes the hymn as the most relevant passage) a uniquely Christian development of a

progressive deepening of Christology has occurred along the lines of Philo theology and

Logos-doctrine. This though is only an incidental point made in a larger treatment of Philo.[94]

### 2.4.2.3.4 David T. Runia (1993)

David T. Runia in his work on Philo and early Christian literature[95] reiterates the sentiments

of Chadwick and Sanders[96] and extends his ideas by elaborating on the insights Philo may

give for Paul (pp.66-73), Hebrews (pp.74-78) and John (pp.78-84). Runia makes some

extremely salient points about Philo and Colossians 1:15-20 but only in just a few

paragraphs.[97] He states that there is much that is very close to what is found in Philo, such

as: (i) the image concept; (ii) God's invisibility; (iii) a 'first-born' concept; (iv) causation

language associated with Greek prepositions; (v) the contrast between visible and invisible;

and (vi) the pre-existence of an intermediary (the Logos). For Runia there are also concepts

that the hymn does not seem to have in common with Philo: such as (i) the description of

reality as κτίσις; (ii) the four nouns of Colossians 1:16d; (iii) the creative role of the Logos;

and (iv) much of the reconciliation and soteriological material of vv.18-20.

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[93] See Samuel Sandmel, "Parallelomania." *JBL* 81, no. 1 (1962): 1-13.
[94] Samuel Sandmel, "Philo Judaeus: An Introduction to the Man, his Writings, and his Significance " *ANRW* 2.21. (1984): 41-42
[95] David T. Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature: A Survey.* CRINT vol. 3. (Assen: Brill, 1993).
[96] See Runia's citation of Chadwick and reference to Sanders in Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature*, 64, 85
[97] The following is a summary from Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature*, 84-85

Complementing the assertions of Eltester, Chadwick and Runia have been Cox (see section 2.4.2.2.5), Kenneth Schnenck in his 2005 introduction to Philo and Folker Siegert, who identify Philo with concepts in 1 Corinthians 8:6, Colossians 1:15-20, Hebrews and John, and suggest benefits from comparisons with the Philonic corpus.[98]

## 2.4.3 Summary

The above-mentioned works have identified the potential insight Hellenistic Philosophy may give for Colossians' distinctive language. Schweizer, DeMaris' and Martin's focus on the Philosophical tradition was a welcome development in identifying the distinctive language of Colossians. They appear though, to be misguided in identifying it with the Colossian philosophy/error. Forbes' two articles provide an excellent refocus on the language of the *corpus Paulinum*. Whether this can be argued for all or much of the *corpus Paulinum* remains to be seen, but his insights deserve to be explored further in relation Colossians. Sterling, van Kooten, Cox and Balabanski's identification of Colossians with Middle Platonism figures is worthy of further investigation. The Middle Platonic figure often identified is Philo of Alexandria. He has also been identified by Eltester, Chadwick, Sandmel and Runia as providing insight into the Colossian hymn. Attention will be given to Middle Platonism and Philo's place within it in the next chapter (section 3.3.2).

## 2.5 Conclusions

Colossians' distinctive language is expressed both in its terminology and theological nuance. This thesis selects the cosmic Christology, that is, Christ's relationship with the totality of

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[98] See Kenneth Schenck, *A Brief Guide to Philo.* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 79-91; Siegert, Folker. "Philo and the New Testament," in *The Cambridge Companion to Philo*. Edited by Adam Kamesar. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 175-209

reality as the focus of investigation. Colossians 1:15-17, the first strophe of the Colossians hymn, an expression of the author's understanding of Christ, cosmology and the formation of reality has been identified as the focus of examination. Recent studies have identified Plato's *Timaeus*, Middle Platonism and Philo of Alexandria as potentially offering beneficial insight into this Colossian 'hymn' and for the letter as a whole. Unfortunately, to date, these identifications have lacked a clear and detailed method and have seldom been more than assertions or short, incidental statements that are part of larger projects in Biblical studies. This thesis will, therefore, undertake to test and advance these assertions by providing a detailed method and a thorough examination for analysing Colossians 1:15-17 from the background of Middle Platonism. Before this takes place in part two, the final chapter of part one will further clarify and outline some of the pertinent issues for Middle Platonism, *Timaeus* and Philo of Alexandria.

# CHAPTER THREE – MIDDLE PLATONISM AND PHILO OF ALEXANDRIA

## 3.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter has identified Middle Platonism, *Timaeus* and Philo of Alexandria as offering a potential, but an underutilised conceptual framework for comprehending the distinctive language of Colossians in scholarly literature. This chapter will concisely outline the salient features of these three and construct an overt method for using them to understand Colossians 1:15-17.  First, Middle Platonism's history, key ideas and persons will be defined. This will, second, identify Plato's *Timaeus* as vital for understanding Middle Platonic ideas of theology and cosmology. The chapter will then, third, conclude by giving an overview of scholarly issues for Philo of Alexandria and argue that his expression of Judaism and Middle Platonism provides the most helpful avenue for comparison in an examination of Middle Platonic insights for Colossians' distinctive language.

## 3.2 Middle Platonism

### 3.2.1 Middle Platonism within Ancient Platonism

### 3.2.1.1 The Old Academy: (c. 389-267 BCE)

Plato (429-347 BCE) was a disciple of Socrates. After the death of his teacher (399 BCE) Plato left Athens for a time and travelled throughout the western Mediterranean to Egypt and then to the Greek-speaking colonies west in Sicily and the Italian peninsula. Upon returning to Athens, most likely around 389 BCE, he formed his academy and began or continued his writings. He returned to Sicily from time to time but mostly lived in Athens where he taught and wrote until the time of his death c.347 BCE.[1]

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[1] More detailed accounts of his life can be found in DL 3.1-45. Modern scholarly overviews can be found in Frederick C. Copleston, *History of Philosophy Volume 1: Greece and Rome.* (London: Search Press, 1946), 127-

With the passing of Plato, the leadership of academy passed to his immediate successor and

nephew Speusippus (407-339 BCE).[2] During this period there appears to have been a

number of unwritten Platonic doctrines in the Old Academy[3] as well as the known works of

Plato.[4] Many of these unwritten doctrines appear to be championed and developed by the

next leader Xenocrates (396-314 BCE), often thought of as the second founder of Platonism.

He is attested with moving Platonism towards a Pythagorean emphasis exhibiting a

heightened focus on the issues raised in Plato's *Timaeus*. His views will be particularly

important for Middle Platonism. One of the last leaders of the Old Academy was Polemon

(350-267 BCE).[5] Apart from being an early influence on the founder of Stoicism, it was under

his tutelage that the seeds of a re-emphasis within Platonism would occur, that of

scepticism.[6]


### 3.2.1.2 The Sceptical Academy (267-88 BCE)

After Polemon, the academy would move further away from an emphasis on doctrines and

speculative interests and take a sceptical approach to knowledge. This, of course, finds

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32; Julia Annas, "Plato," *OCD⁴*, 1157-1158; Thomas A. Szlezák, "Plato", in *Brill's New Pauly*. Edited by Hubert Cancik and Helmuth Schneider. Koninklijke Brill (online).

[2] See DL, 4.1-4; Philip Merlan, "Part 1: Greek Philosophy from Plato to Plotinus," in *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*. (Edited by Arthur H. Armstrong. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 30-32; John M. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists, 80 B.C. to A.D. 220.* Revised ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996 [1977])*,* 11-22.

[3] See William K.C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy: Volume 5, The Later Plato and the Academy.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 5.418-42; Merlan, *Greek Philosophy from Plato to Plotinus*, 14-29; Friedrich W. Solmsen, *Aristotle's System of the Physical World: A comparison with his Predecessors.* Cornell Studies in Classical Philology: vol 33. (Edited by Harry Caplan, James Hutton, G.M. Kirkwood, and Friedrich W. Solmsen. Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1960), 20-67; Dillon, *The Middle Platonists,* 1-11.

[4] Plato's written works are often sub-categorised chronologically into the early, middle and late works. See Szlezák, "Plato" for a typical sequence of Platonic books.

[5] See DL, 4.16-20; Dillon, *The Middle Platonists,* 39-42.

[6] See DL, 4.6-15; Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy: Volume*, 5.469-83; Merlan, *Greek Philosophy from Plato to Plotinus*, 32-37; Dillon, *The Middle Platonists,* 22-39; Gretchen J. Reydams-Schils, *Demiurge and Providence: Stoic and Platonist Readings of Plato's Timaeus.* (Edited by Carlos Lévy. Vol. 2, Monothéismes et philosophie. Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), 117-119.

warrant in the Platonic texts themselves, Platonic dialogues often ending in an impasse (ἀπορία), and the most famous character of the dialogues, Socrates, embodying the famous maxim that at least he knows that he knows nothing.[7]

### 3.2.1.3 Middle Platonism (88BCE – 220CE)

Middle Platonism is a common term used in classical studies[8] to speak about philosophers who returned to a dogmatic and text-based Platonism of the Old Academy, especially that of Xenocrates and his interest in the ideas expressed in *Timaeus*. This re-emergence began around 88 BCE after the academy was abandoned in Athens by the academy's head Philo of Larissa (159-84 BCE)[9] around the time of the looming conflict between Sulla (born *c.*138 BCE) and Mithradates VI Eupator Dionysus (120-63 BCE).[10] What followed was a Platonism dispersed throughout the Graeco-Roman world. In the First Century BCE and CE one would not consider this a 'school' rather, a number of thinkers expressing interest in Platonic texts and overt doctrines arising especially from especially *Timaeus*. In the Second Century CE Middle Platonism would formulate again as an academy and emerge as the dominant philosophical tradition or school in late antiquity around 220 CE with Plotinus marking what later became termed in classical studies as Neo-Platonism.[11]

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[7] See Plato, *Apology*, 21d, 29c-d. Potentially popularised later, see DL, 2.32. Explained further in Dillon, *The Middle Platonists,* 43;  Copleston, *History of Philosophy Volume 1*, 413-420; Tiziano Dorandi, "Ch2 Chronology," in *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy*. (Edited by Keimpe Algra, Jonathan Barnes, Jaap Mansfeld, and Malcom Schofield. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 32-35; Peter Adamson, *Philosophy in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds: A History of Philosophy without any gaps, Volume 2.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 108-114.

[8] See John M. Dillon, "Middle Platonism," in *OCD*[4.], 1158.

[9] See Dorandi, *Chronology*, 35; Adamson, *Philosophy in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds*, 154; Gisela Striker, "Philo of Larissa." In *OCD*[4], 1133-1134.

[10] Appian, *Bella civilia*, 1.76; Plutarch, *Vita Sulla*, 11-13.

[11] This division seems to be first expressed in Johan J. Brucker, *Historia critica philosophiae* (Leipzig: Breitkopf, 1742) 2.162-88. Explained further in Leo Catana, "The Origin of the Division between Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism." *Apeiron* 46, no. 2 (2013): 166-200.

### 3.2.2 The Features of Middle Platonism

### 3.2.2.1 A General Overview

While there were a diversity of ideas and nuances within Middle Platonism,[12] there were some general trends that can be expressed. They are as follows: (1) It was a return to dogmatism, a belief in positive and knowable doctrines associated with the Old Academy and the interpretation, often allegorical, of Platonic texts.[13] (2) It was enriched by elements from other philosophical traditions,[14] such as Pythagoreanism, Aristotelianism and Stoicism.[15] It had (3) a heightened, although not exclusive, interest in physical doctrines with theology being a key emphasis.[16] This was expressed as (4) a *Dreiprinzipienlehre* (three principle doctrine) theology and cosmology of (i) God (totally transcendent and beyond reality and sense perception), (ii) ideas (of God or forms operating as an intermediate realm between God) and (iii) matter.[17] Finally and most importantly (5) a scholastic and exegetical approach to Platonic texts, especially *Timaeus*.[18]

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[12] Mauro Bonazzi suggest a battlefield of ideas analogy in, "Towards Transcendence: Philo and the Renewal of Platonism in the Early Imperial Age," in *Philo of Alexandria and Post-Aristotelian Philosophy*. (Edited by Francesca Alesse; Leiden: Brill, 2008) 233.

[13] See David T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and The "Timaeus" of Plato.* PhA vol.44. (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 51, 129.

[14] Bonazzi, *Towards Transcendence*, 233; Dillon states that it oscillated between Aristotelianism and Stoicism. See Dillon, *Middle Platonism*, 1158.

[15] Caution should be taken in assuming Middle Platonism as 'eclectic.' See a though treatment of this in John M Dillon and Anthony A. Long, *The Question of "Eclecticism": Studies in Later Greek Philosophy.* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1988).

[16] See Dillon, *The Middle Platonists,* 45-49; Cox, *By the same word*, 33; Henry F. Hägg, "The Concept of God in Middle Platonism," in *Clement of Alexandria and the Beginnings of Christian Apophaticism*. (Edited by Henry F. Hägg. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 85-89.

[17] See Alcinous, *De doctrina Platonis*, 8-10 (in reverse order). See Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and The* Timaeus *of Plato*, 56, 162; Thomas H. Tobin, *The Creation of Man: Philo and the History of Interpretation.* CBQMS Series 14. (Washington: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1983), 56; Hägg, *The Concept of God*, 97-102.

[18] For a thorough treatment of *Timaeus* in this period see Reydams-Schils, *Demiurge and Providence: Stoic and Platonist Readings of Plato's Timaeus*). This has been summarised in "The Academy, The Stoics and Cicero of Plato's Timaeus," in *Plato and the Stoics*. (Edited by Anthony A. Long. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 29-58; Marco Zambon, "Chapter 29: Middle Platonism," in *A Companion to Ancient Philosophy [Online]*. Edited by Mary L. Gill and Pierre Pellegrin. (London: Blackwell Reference Online, 2006); Tobin, *The Creation of Man*, 15; Jackson P. Hershbell, "Plutarch's 'De animae procreatione in Timaeo': An Analysis of Structure and Content." *ANRW* II.36.1 (1987): 237.

**3.2.2.2 The Importance of *Timaeus* in Middle Platonism**

*Timaeus* is not only Plato's preeminent cosmological work but also the quintessential work

of cosmology in the ancient (and even the medieval) world.[19] It is usually considered to be

an authentic Platonic work and one of his latest.[20] The work itself appears paired with

unfinished work of *Critias*.

**3.2.2.2.1 An Overview of *Timaeus***

*Timaeus* beings with four dialogue partners.[21] After a restating of issues by Socrates (17a-

19b) and Critias' story of Solon and Atlantis (21a-25d), *Timaeus* then takes two notable

departures from a typical Platonic dialogue: (1) most of the work consists of a monologue

(27c-92c), which is (2) delivered by Timaeus of Locri rather than Socrates.[22]  It is the content

of the monologue that has taken the primary concern of Middle Platonists as well as other

Hellenistic Philosophical schools.

**3.2.2.2.2 The Monologue of *Timaeus* – Structure and Content**

*Timaeus'* monologue is referred to within the text itself as both an εἰχὼς λόγος (likely

account)[23] and an εἰχὼς μῦθος (likely myth)[24] adding a level of complexity to how one might

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[19] M. Rosemary Wright suggests "…Timaeus is so innovative and fertile in ideas, and had such an influence on later cosmological thinking, that discussions of various themes in ancient cosmology need to take account of it continually." M. Rosemary Wright, *Cosmology in Antiquity.* London: Routledge, 1995, 25-26.

[20] Copleston, *History of Philosophy Volume 1*, 140; Francis MacDonald Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology: The Timaeus of Plato.* Cambridge: Routledge, 1935, 1; W. David Ross, *Plato's Theory of Ideas.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), 120-121; Ian M. Crombie, *An Examination of Plato's Doctrines: Plato on knowledge and reality.* (London: Humanities Press, 1963), 11. Suggested in Richard D. Mohr, "Plato's Cosmic Manual: Introduction, Reader's Guide, and Acknowledgements," in *One Book: The Whole Universe*. Edited by Richard D. Mohr and Barbara M.  Sattler. Las Vegas: Parmenides Publishing, 2010), 4. Placing it in the middle rather than latter period of Plato's life was advocated by Gwilym E.L. Owen, "The Place of the Timaeus in Plato's Dialogue," in *Studies in Plato's Metaphysics*. (Edited by Reginald E. Allen. London: Routledge 1953), 313-338. This is not a view that appears to have been taken up by many.

[21] Socrates, Critias, Timaeus and Hermocrates.

[22] In 20a and 27a Timaeus is identified as a statesman, philosopher and astronomer, implying the reliability of his impending words.

[23] See Plato, *Timaeus*, 30b.

[24] See Plato, *Timaeus*, 26e, [in contrast to a true account ἀληθινὸν λόγον] 29d, 68d.

seek to interpret the content. It is not the purpose of this thesis to address these

hermeneutical issues,[25] rather this thesis would assume its informative nature for Middle

Platonist and the wider philosophical tradition. The monologue begins with a prologue (27d-

29d) which introduces key ideas and concepts that frame the rest of the work. These may be

generally summarised as follows. (1) A bifurcation or duality of reality.[26] That of ὄντα (being)

and γιγνόμενα (becoming).[27] Ὄντα is comprehended through νόησις (intelligence) μετὰ

λόγου (with reason), γιγνόμενα by δόξα (opinion) and αἴσθησις (sense perception).[28] The

realm of γιγνόμενα also goes by a number of other titles such as τό πᾶν (the all),[29] στοιχεῖα

τοῦ παντός (elements of the all),[30] and the interchangeable terms of οὐρανός (heaven [sing.])

and κόσμος (cosmos/universe/world).[31] (2) The need to express a cause (αἰτιά) for things

becoming. (3) The introduction of a δημιουργός (craftsman) god who crafts πᾶν δὲ αὖ τὸ

γιγνόμενον (everything becoming). And (4) the result of the work of the δημιουργός being the

good ordered κόσμος.[32] After a brief affirmation by Socrates,[33] the rest of the monologue

unfolds in three sections which develop the ideas of the prologue. They are concisely

summarised by Donald J. Zeyl: "…the first [section of the monologue] sets out the

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[25] These issues are explored in Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy: Volume 5*, 250-253; Thomas K. Johansen, *Plato's Natural Philosophy: A Study of the Timaeus-Critias* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 48-68. Treated also in Richard D. Mohr, and Barbara M. Sattler, *One Book: The Whole Universe - Plato's Timaeus Today.* (Las Vegas: Parmenides Publishing, 2010), 213-248.

[26] The term 'Bifurcation' is used in relation to *Timaeus* in Alfred N, Whitehead, *The Concept of Nature.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920), 17-25.

[27] Throughout the course of this thesis the participles ὄντα and γιγνόμενα will be used to express being and becoming although other renderings are also used in the Greek text. This usage is demonstrated in Alfred E. Taylor, *A Commentary on Plato's Timaeus.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928), 62.

[28] Plato, *Timaeus*, 28a. This obviously very similar to and a development on Plato's doctrine of the forms in *Pheado* and the *Republic*. See section 5.1.5.3 in this thesis.

[29] Plato, *Timaeus*, 28c.

[30] See Plato, *Timaeus*, 48a-c.

[31] Plato, *Timaeus*, 28b-c. See Taylor, *A Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, 65-66 for possible pre-Socratic origins for these terms. The term οὐρανός possibly deriving from the Ionians; and κόσμος from Hercules via a Pythagorean influence. See also DL, 8.48.

[32] See further explanation in Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, 21-31; Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and The* Timaeus *of Plato*, 91-130.

[33] Plato, *Timaeus*, 29d.

achievements of Intellect (29d7–47e2), the second gives an account of the effects of

Necessity (47d3–69a5), and the third shows how Intellect and Necessity cooperate in the

production of the psychophysical constitution of human beings (69a6–92c9)."[34]

### 3.2.2.2.3 Importance of *Timaeus*

So important is *Timaeus* in Middle Platonism that it must be explained and examined in any

study of Middle Platonism. John M. Dillon argues that "The Timaeus remained the most

important single dialogue during the Middle Platonic period."[35] If one is to understand how

Philo and Middle Platonism gives insights into the distinctive language of Colossians an

interaction with and examination of this Platonic work must also be included.

### 3.2.2.3 Who Were the Middle Platonists?

### 3.2.2.3.1 The Early Middle Platonist (First Century BCE – First Century CE)

### 3.2.2.3.1.1 Antiochus of Ascalon (b. *c.* 130 BCE)

Antiochus is perhaps the first Middle Platonist (or rather a Platonising Stoic).[36] He was a

member of the academy in Athens in its sceptical phase. He abandoned the sceptical

approach and returned to a dogmatic approach to Plato's teachings, potentially being

influenced by Stoic concepts of Plato, in particular, those of Posidonius (c.135-51 BCE).[37]

Nothing substantive of his writings remain, his life and teachings were preserved, twice

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[34] Donald J. Zeyl, "Plato's Timaeus," in *The Stanford Online Encyclopaedia of Philosophy (Spring 2014 Edition)*. (Edited by Edward N. Zalta), date accessed 12/03/2017 https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/plato-timaeus/. See also the outline in Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, xi-xiv.
[35] Dillon, *The Middle Platonists,* 8.
[36] Dillon argues against giving this term to him. See *The Middle Platonists*, 105, 115.
[37] Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, 106-113. Reydams-Schils, *Demiurge and Providence*, 85-89, 128-131.

removed through, his student Varro (116-27 BCE), who is mentioned in the works of Cicero (106-43 BCE) and later Augustine of Hippo (354-430 CE).[38]

### 3.2.2.3.1.2 Eudorus of Alexandria (fl. *c.* 25 BCE)

Eudorus, whose works are also lost, appears to have written commentaries on Plato's *Timaeus* and Aristotle's *Categories* and *Metaphysics*.[39] He seems to have modified the Stoicised theology of Antiochus in a more Pythagorean direction to that of the Old Academy, in particular, Xenophanes (see 3.2.1.1). His works and ideas may well have influenced Philo also an inhabitant of Alexandria,[40] who is chronologically the next person associated with Middle Platonism. He will be treated in 3.3 of this chapter.

### 3.2.2.3.1.3 Plutarch of Chaeronea (b. before 50 CE, d. after 120 CE)

Following Philo is Plutarch. He studied in Athens under Ammonius around the time of Nero's visit to Greece (66-67 CE).[41] Ammonius may well have been a product of Alexandrian Platonism.[42] This represents the origins of an emerging Middle Platonic school. Plutarch is the Middle Platonist that has the most extensive body of surviving works. He wrote on many different topics, most notably his biographical works on the Parallel lives of Noble Greeks and Romans. But it is his many philosophical works that reiterate the Middle Platonic ideas expressed above.

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[38] Explained in Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, 62-63; Tobin, *The Creation of Man*, 13-15.
[39] Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, 115-135; Tobin, *The Creation of Man*, 15-17.
[40] See Jaap Mansfeld, "Compatible Alternatives: Middle Platonist Theology and the Xenophanes Reception," in *Knowledge of god in the Graeco-Roman world*. Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'Empire romain. Vol. 112 (Edited by R. van den Broek, Tjitze Baarda, and Jaap Mansfeld; Leiden: Brill, 1988), 96-98
[41] Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, 185-86, 89-92. See Plutarch, *On the E at Delphi*, 391e-394c.
[42] Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, 190.

**3.2.2.3.2 Second Century Middle Platonism**

It was not until the Second Century CE that Middle Platonism might begin to be classed as a school. Second century Middle Platonism remains beyond the scope of our study but Dillon has identified three general groups in this period. (1) An Athenian School; (2) A school associated with Gaius of Pergamum; and (3) a fusion with Neo-Pythagoreanism.[43]

This thesis will now turn to Philo of Alexandria (hereafter Philo) and his place within Middle Platonism.

**3.3 Philo of Alexandria**

**3.3.1 Philo's Life and Times**

Despite the extensive corpus of Philo's writings (see section 3.3.3), very little is known about his life.[44] He appears to have been born in Alexandria and resided there or near there for most if not all of his life. He was from a wealthy family and may well have been a priest.[45] Philo's date of birth is unknown, but sometime around 30-20 BCE appears likely.[46] The events of his life most known are those which relate to a delegation he led a before Emperor Gaius about Jewish matters in Alexandria around 37-41 CE.[47] Reflecting on these matters he refers to himself as a γέρων (old man).[48] Although just speculation this would

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[43] See Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, 231-421.

[44] See a reception of life in late antiquity sources in David T. Runia, "Philonic Nomenclature." *SPhiloA* 6 (1994): 1-27.

[45] Jerome, *De viris illustribus (On Illustrious Men)*, 11. For the historical background of Alexandria and Roman Egypt relevant for Philo's context see Sandmel, *Philo Judaeus*, 3-4; Schenck, *A Brief Guide to Philo*, 9-14; Daniel R. Schwartz, "Philo, His Family, and His Times," in *The Cambridge Companion to Philo*. (Edited by Adam Kamesar. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 11-12. An extensive treatment of these issues can be found in John M.G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE - 117 CE).* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 19-228.

[46] Schenck, *A Brief Guide to Philo*, 9. Zeller suggests 30 BCE – 50 CE, see Eduard G. Zeller, *Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy.* (Translated by Sarah F. Alleyne and Evelyn Abbott. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1890 [1883]), 320.

[47] Philo, *Flacc*; *Legat*; Josephus, *Antiquity of the Jews*, 18.259-60.

[48] Philo, *Legatio ad Gaium*, 1.

probably mean that a *terminus ad quem* for his written works would be in the 50s CE at the latest. This makes him the closest Middle Platonist *prior* to Colossians. Philo's works, it is at least possible, may have been an influence on a work like Colossians or represent an example of a similar thinker interested in Jewish paradigms expressing a similar integration of Jewish ideas and Platonic paradigms. They also provide a mode of comparison with a body of works that probably predate or are contemporary with Colossians.

### 3.3.2 Was Philo a Middle Platonist?

Relating Philo to (Middle) Platonism requires further explanation. Friedrich Ueberweg (1894) places him not with *Die mittlere und neuere Akademie, or Die eklektieschen Platoniker* but is rather part of *Die jüdisch-alexandrinische Philosophie*.[49] An early identification of Philo with Platonism came from Classicist Eduard Zeller (1883) who speaks of Philo as an admirer of Plato and Pythagoras, Parmenides, Empedocles, Zeno and Cleanthes, though the philosophy that he follows belongs almost entirely to that of Platonism which was developed in the previous century.[50] This was reiterated in Thomas H. Billings' 1919 work where he states: "Philo seems to have brooded over Plato until the Platonic phraseology became a part of his own mind and his thoughts naturally and at all times tended to be expressed in similar fashion."[51] With this in mind, it was with some surprise that Philo was included in John M. Dillon's 1977 seminal work on Middle

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[49] *Die mittlere und neuere Akademie (the Middle and New Academy); Die eklektieschen Platoniker (the eclectic Platonist); Die jüdisch-alexandrinische Philosophie (The Jewish-Alexandrian Philosophy)*. See Friedrich, Ueberweg, *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie des Altertums*. (Berlin: Ernst Siegfried Mittler und Sohn, 1894), 296-99, 313-323, 327-333. A further discussion on the issues surrounding the classification and division of Platonism in the ancient world by Continental scholarship can be found in Catana, "The Origin of the Division between Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism, 166-200. See section 3.2.1.3 of thesis.
[50] See Zeller, *Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy*, §94, 320-321.
[51] Thomas H. Billings, *The Platonism of Philo Judaeus.* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1919), 88.

Platonism,[52] where he states that "Plato and the Stoics [are] evident on every page of his work... [a]bove all, however, he is steeped in Plato."[53] David T. Runia's extensive analysis on the use of *Timaeus* in Philo's corpus[54] reiterated the prominence of Platonic ideas in Philo's writings. Even so, after an evaluation of Philo with other Middle Platonists,[55] Runia found Dillon's claim that Philo was a Middle Platonist unconvincing, stating that while Philo's works "resemble the procedure of the Middle Platonist, [his works are] not wholly the same. For Philo's is explaining the words of Moses and owes no particular loyalty to the teachings of Plato."[56]

In the 1993 edition of the *Studia Philonica Annual*[57] a section was devoted to Philo and Middle Platonism, comprising of a dialogue between a number of noted Platonic and Philonic scholars. Sterling started the section by stating that Philo "...[f]rom *his* perspective he was a devoted follower of Moses. Yet Philo's Moses was not the Hebrew Moses; he was a Middle Platonist. It is from this perspective that I think *we* can speak of Philo as a representative of Middle Platonism.... For Philo, Plato and Moses are intellectually one."[58] Runia in the same edition seeks to further nuance his earlier position by stating six possibilities of what it might mean for Philo to be a Middle Platonist.[59] He suggests the following: Philo might be (1) a member of a school *de iure*; (2) a member of a school *de facto*; (3) a platonizing expositor of scripture; (4) an eclectic philosophical expositor of

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[52] John M. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists, 80 B.C. to A.D. 220.* (Revised ed. Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1996 [1977]), see in particular 139-183.
[53] Dillon, *The Middle Platonists,* 140.
[54] David T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and The "Timaeus" of Plato.* PhA vol.44. (Leiden: Brill, 1986).
[55] See Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and The "Timaeus" of Plato*, 485-519.
[56] Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and The "Timaeus" of Plato*, 519.
[57] See The *Studia Philonica Annual* 5 (1993) 95-155.
[58] Gregory E. Sterling, "Platonizing Moses: Philo and Middle Platonism." *SPhiloA* 5 (1993): 96-111.
[59] David T. Runia, "Was Philo a Middle Platonist? A difficult question revisited." *SPhiloA* 5 (1993): 125.

scripture; (5) an independent philosopher who argues from a fundamentally Jewish viewpoint or (6) a Jewish religious figure. Runia goes on to suggest that options 2-4 may be plausible explanations and demand further attention, which he goes on to explain. He identifies (Sterling,) Dillon and Winston with '2' but settles himself on '3'. He maintains that "…it is more helpful to describe Philo as a 'Platonizing devotee of Mosaic scripture' rather than a 'Middle Platonist' *tout court*."[60] Philo is not deliberately trying to reconcile Judaism and Greek thought, but rather discerns fundamental Greek philosophical assumptions within scripture itself.[61] This was confirmed by Thomas H. Tobin who concludes the section in the *Studia Philonica Annual* by agreeing with the early contributors, that Philo represents either '2' or '3' on Runia's scale. He adds three points for consideration: (1) Philo's view of reality is Platonic; (2) Middle Platonic writers were vastly different; (3) Philo is very early in the Middle Platonic era. He concludes by suggesting that Philo can be considered Middle Platonism in an 'etic' sense (he reflects many of the basic positions associated with general categories of Middle Platonism), but not in an emic sense (adhering to predetermined general concepts). [62] It is in this vein, the one expressed by Runia, that this thesis will consider Philo a Middle Platonist. An exegete of Jewish scripture who uses Platonic text and paradigms to suit and articulate his own aims. Philo is faithfully Jewish and thoroughly Hellenised, without any great tension.[63]

### 3.3.3 Philo's Corpus of Works

### 3.3.3.1 Overview

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[60] Runia, *Was Philo a Middle Platonist*, 131. See page 147 for Tobin's position on Sterling.
[61] Runia, *Was Philo a Middle Platonist*, 128.
[62] See Thomas H. Tobin, "Was Philo a Middle Platonist? Some Suggestions." *SPhiloA* 5 (1993): 147-150.
[63] See Charles A. Anderson, *Philo of Alexandria's Views of the Physical World.* WUNT - vol 309. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 24. See also Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 91.

Philo of Alexandria has left an extensive corpus of works, many of which have come down to

us in the language in which they were originally written, Greek. Many are full works in-and-

of themselves, while some are fragments embedded in later patristic writings. Along with

these are some other fragments preserved in Armenian translations dating from the sixth

century, and a limited number of Latin texts.[64] Because of the often long Greek and

subsequent Latin titles associated with Philo's works, this thesis will reference Philonic

works by the abbreviated Latin titles in the Society of Biblical Literature Handbook of Style.[65]

 Philo's works can be sub-categorised as follows:[66]


### 3.3.3.2 Commentaries on the Scripture

The vast majority of his works take the exposition of the Jewish scripture to be their chief

aim. They concentrate on the Pentateuch and are in the three general series. (1) Allegorical

commentary:[67] They begin with a scriptural quotation, followed by an interpretation. There

appear to be gaps in the treaties that have been preserved, the texts that survive roughly

cover Genesis 2:1-41:24. These works seek to explain the literal expressions by their

underlying meaning, or their ἀλληγορία.[68] (2) Exposition on the law:[69] These do not begin

with a scriptural quotation but in many ways may not be any less allegorical in

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[64] See James R. Royse, "The Works of Philo," in *The Cambridge Companion to Philo*. (Edited by Adam Kamesar; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 32.

[65] See Patrick H. Alexander, *The SBL handbook of style: for ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and early Christian studies.* Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), 78 (8.3.6).

[66] Further explanations can be found in Harry A. Wolfson, *Philo: foundations of religious philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.* (Third Printing, Revised ed. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968 [1948]), 87; Royse, *The Works of Philo*, 33-58; Sandmel, *Philo Judaeus*, 6-13; Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature*, 15-22, 37-38; Schenck, *A Brief Guide to Philo*, 14-23, 97-117.

[67] *Leg*. 1-3; *Cher*.; *Sacr*.; *Det*.; *Post*.; *Gig*.; *Deus*; *Agr*.; *Plant*.; *Ebr*.; *Sobr*.; *Conf*.; *Migr*.; *Her*.; *Congr*.; *Fug*.; *Mut*.; *Somn*. 1-2. See  Sandmel, *Philo Judaeus*, 10; Schenck, *A Brief Guide to Philo*, 16-17.

[68] See Philo, *Abraham*, 200; *Plant*, 36; See explanation of this approach in Wolfson, *Philo*, 115-143; Sandmel, *Philo Judaeus*, 13-22, This is an approach to texts that is attested in the Philosophic tradition. See Plato's Republic, 2 (378d) and in Stoic, and Middle Platonic methods.

[69] *Opif*.; *Abr*.; *Ios*.; *Decal*.; *Spec* 1-4.; Mos. 1-2; *Virt*.; *Praem*. See Sandmel, *Philo Judaeus*, 11; Schenck, *A Brief Guide to Philo*, 18-19.

interpretation and have a similar style to the allegorical works.[70] (3) Questions and

Answers:[71] This may have been the first of Philo commentaries.[72] A question is posed and

then answered. Substantial portions of these works have been lost, they have been

preserved in Aramean. There may have been 6 works. Texts on Genesis (QG) tends to cover

Genesis 2:4-28:9 and Exodus (QE) 12:2-28:4. These works may have coincided with

scriptural lectionary for the Alexandrian synagogues.

### 3.3.3.3 Philosophical Works[73]

Although much of his commentary writings are saturated with ideas and illusions from the

Philosophical tradition, there are a small number of works that specifically treat issues

important to the philosophical tradition rather than commentating on Jewish Scripture.

### 3.3.3.4 Historical and Apologetic Treaties[74]

These relate to, (1) issues surrounding the events of 38-39 CE, where the Jews of Alexandria

were involved in conflict with other groups of the general populous and the subsequent

envoy of Philo to Emperor Gaius to advocate for the plight of his people. There were also (2)

general apologetic works on the virtuous life associated with Judaism.

### 3.4 Summary

This chapter has identified Middle Platonism as the re-emergence of a dogmatic and

scholastic approach to Platonic texts and doctrines. The key Platonic work of interest for

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[70] Sandmel, *Philo Judaeus*, 11; Schenck, *A Brief Guide to Philo*, 18.
[71] *QG*; *QE.*
[72] Schenck, *A Brief Guide to Philo*, 15.
[73] *Aet.*; *Prob.*; *Prov.* 1-2.; *Anim.*
[74] *Flacc*; *Hypoth*; *Contempl*; *Legat.*

Middle Platonist was *Timaeus*.  Philo is identified as being the most helpful Middle Platonist for examination with Colossians because of their close proximity of date and their shared interest in Jewish theological concepts. He lives early in the phenomena of Middle Platonism and is not associated with a school as such. Philo's works represent, as Runia explains, a Platonising exposition of Mosaic scripture. He displays a deep indebtedness to *Timaeus*, similar with other Middle Platonists, but is committed primarily to Judaism. It is in this light that he provides a helpful insight for illuminating the distinctive language of Colossians (1:15-17).   The Colossian hymn or the letter itself is not similar in form or genre to Philo's works. The author does not cite Plato, Philo or for that matter the Jewish scriptures. Rather, the reason for comparing the work resides in the fact that the author, like Philo, shares similar words and conceptual ideas and a deep interest in Jewish ideas, although in the case of Colossians, through the prism of the early Christian kerygma as expressed in Pauline tradition and is as Forbes asserted 'working towards his own synthesis' (see section 2.4.2.2.3).  This thesis will now seek to demonstrate that Colossians' distinctive language and theology, through the test case of Colossians 1:15-17, may be given greater insight by an examination of its similarities with Middle Platonic thinking, indicative of that found in Philo, based on Platonic texts and ideas, in particular, those associated with *Timaeus*.

# A SUMMARY OF PART ONE OF THESIS

Part one of this thesis has stated working assumptions for a study of Colossians (chapter 1).

After an overview of Colossian distinctives, both terminology and theological nuance

discussed in scholarly literature, the author's cosmic Christology as expressed in Colossians

1:15-17 was selected for further study. This first *strophe* of the Colossian Hymn was selected

as a suitable candidate because of its clear and distinctive emphasis on Christology and

cosmic expressions. A review of recent Colossian studies has revealed that Middle

Platonism, *Timaeus* and Philo have been underutilised and may potentially provide benefit

for illuminating Colossians' distinctive language although these have been rarely more than

assertions or short, incidental statements that are part of larger projects in Biblical studies

(chapter 2). Middle Platonism was then identified as a dogmatic and scholastic

phenomenon, heavily influenced by Plato's *Timaeus*. Philo's Middle Platonism as one of a

Platonising devotee of Mosaic scripture has been selected for examination with Colossians

1:15-17 because of their close proximity of date and their shared interest in the Jewish

theology and ideas. This thesis will seek to advance the assertions of the scholars noted in

2.4.2.2 and 2.4.2.3 including and incorporating not only a thorough treatment of Philonic

texts and relevant scholarship but also an inclusion of *Timaeus* and the scholarly discussions

about its influence and relevance in the early-to-mid first century CE.

# PART TWO – AN EXEGESIS OF COLOSSIANS 1:15-17

# APPROACH FOR PART TWO OF THE THESIS

This thesis will now move to an investigation of Colossians' cosmic Christology in 1:15-17 and how the Platonic language of Philo of Alexandria offers beneficial insight into Colossians' theology and cosmology. In part two of the thesis the text of Colossians 1:15-17 will be numbered accordingly:

<sup>15a</sup> ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου,
<sup>b</sup>    πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως,
<sup>16 a</sup> ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα
<sup>b</sup>    ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς,
<sup>c</sup>    τὰ ὁρατὰ καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα,
<sup>d</sup> εἴτε θρόνοι εἴτε κυριότητες εἴτε ἀρχαὶ εἴτε ἐξουσίαι·
<sup>e</sup> τὰ πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἔκτισται,
<sup>17 a</sup> καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν πρὸ πάντων
<sup>b</sup>    καὶ τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν.

The structure of part two of the thesis will subdivide the text into three sections. Chapter 4 will examine Christ's relationship with both God and creation in Colossians 1:15-16a. Chapter 5 will explore the cosmology expressed in Colossians 1:16b-d. Then part two will conclude in chapter 6 with an examination of Christ's role in causation and incorporation into the author's theology in Colossians 1:16e-17.

# CHAPTER FOUR – EXEGESIS OF COLOSSIANS 1:15-16A
# CHRIST'S RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD AND CREATION

¹⁵ᵃ ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου,

ᵇ         πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως,

¹⁶ ᵃ ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα


## 4.1 Colossians 1:15a ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου

### 4.1.1 Syntactical Analysis and Usage in Colossians

The *strophe* begins with the relative pronoun ὅς,[1] referring back to τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ

of verse 13.[2] This υἱός being the Lord Jesus Christ, the son of the father God.[3] The words

εἰκών and ἀόρατος reoccur again in Colossians on one other occasion, both of which suggest

a different connotation than the one in 15a.[4] In Colossians 3:10 the κατ᾽ εἰκόνα τοῦ κτίσαντος

αὐτόν phrase has a 'new/ecclesial existence connotation,' where one 'puts on' new clothing

as a metaphor for identity in Christ.[5] The ananthous noun εἰκών in verse 15a is a predicative

nominative and although not before the verb ἐστιν, is best understood as definite in

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[1] Martin argues this is "the clearest sign of a hymn-like passage" mentioning Phil 2:5; Col 1:15; 1 Tim 3:16; 1 Pet 1:20; 2:23; 3:18. See Ralph P. Martin, "Aspects of Worship in the New Testament Church" *Vox Evangelica* 2.1 (1963): 17; James L. Bailey and Lyle D. Vander Broek, *Literary Forms in the New Testament: A Handbook.* Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 79. Dunn indicates that the reader has encountered this relative pronoun already in Col 1:13. This Phenomena is also used in Rom 3:25; 4:25; 8:34 to focus on the cross and resurrection of Christ. See Dunn, *Colossians and to Philemon*, 87.

[2] See Murray J. Harris, *Colossians & Philemon.* Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 43; David W. Pao, *Colossians & Philemon.* Edited by Clinton E. Arnold. ZECNT. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 87; Constantine R. Campbell, *Colossians and Philemon: A Handbook on the Greek Text.* BHGNT. (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2013), 10. Fee mentions the dangers of isolating Col 1:15-20 form 1:13-14 of which 1:15-16 form a sentence. See Gordon D. Fee, *Pauline Christology: An Exegetical-Theological Study.* Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 294-95; Dunne, *The Regal Status of Christ*, 8

[3] See Col 1:3. Note that Κύριος, Ἰησοῦς and Χριστός are not used in Col 1:15-20.
Note the varying ways the author refers to Jesus apart from 3ʳᵈ person singular personal pronouns such as: Jesus Christ / Christ Jesus – Col 1:1, 3, 4; 2:6, 4:12; Lord Jesus 3:17; Christ – Col 1:2, 7, 27, 28; 2:2, 5, 6, 8, 11, 17, 20; 3:1[x2], 3, 4, 11, 15, 16, 24; 4:3; Lord Jesus Christ – Col 1:3; The Son – Col 1:13.

[4] Col 1:16c τὰ ὁρατὰ καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα (see section 5.1.2.2); 3:10 …κατ᾽ εἰκόνα τοῦ κτίσαντος αὐτόν.

[5] See a very illuminating study in Rosemary Canavan, *Clothing the Body of Christ at Colossae: A Visual Construction of Identity.* WUNT 2 - vol. 334. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 134-178, especially pp.144-145.

meaning.[6] It is the head noun in the possessive genitive phrase τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου.[7] The

genitive τοῦ θεοῦ is one of relationship expressing Christ's relationship to God. [8] This is the

only explicit mention of θεός in Colossians 1:15-20.[9] The attributive adjective τοῦ ἀοράτου is

added here to further describe God.[10] It is in the second attributive position (article-noun-

article-adjective) so that both the noun (θεός) and the adjective (ἀόρατος) receive emphasis

with the articular adjective added as a sort of climax in apposition.[11]


**4.1.2 Lexicographical Investigation of Similarities, Differences and Distinctiveness within the *Corpus Paulinum* and Biblical Literature**

**4.1.2.1 Εἰκών**

Christ as the εἰκών appears to be an uncharacteristic use of the word in the *corpus Paulinum*

and wider Biblical literature. Εἰκών language in the *corpus Paulinum* whether it be

associated with God[12] or Christ[13] apart from Colossians 1:15a focuses on humanity and their

new/ecclesial existence in Christ. In the Pauline letters εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ refers to Christ in 2

Corinthians 3:18 and 4.4, here Christ as image is associated with his post-resurrection

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[6] Pao, *Colossians & Philemon*, 94; Harris, *Colossians & Philemon*, 43. One might also consider it an anarthrous 'qualitative' with very little sematic difference to that of the definite. See Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar – Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 244-245, 248, 256-263.

[7] See Campbell, *Colossians and Philemon*, 10; Wallace, *Greek Grammar – Beyond the Basics*, 80-82.

[8] See Harris, *Colossians & Philemon*, 43; BDF § 162.

[9] Although he is certainly evoked by subsequent passive verbs. Murphy-O'Connor sights the aorist and prefect passive of κτίζω used in v.16a and e, and the subject of the active εὐδοκέω in v.19. See Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life*, 242.

[10] Lohse mentions Colossians' "particularly striking" feature of using a series dependent genitives. See *Colossians and Philemon*, 88.

[11] Wallace, *Greek Grammar – Beyond the Basics*, 306-307; Archibald T. Robertson, *Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research.* (3rd ed. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1919), 776-77.

[12] 2 Cor 3:18 Col 3:10; Eph 4:24. There is a similar usage in 1 Cor 11:7 εἰκὼν καὶ δόξα θεοῦ. Lohse suggest a different meaning is intended here. See Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon,* 42.

[13] Rom 8:29; 1 Cor 15:49; 2 Cor 3:18.

glorification and the soteriological connotations of that passage with new creation implications.[14] Christ here is God's 'revelatory' image as encountered in the gospel.[15]

The phrase εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ would seem to evoke the notion of the creation of humanity in Genesis 1:26-27 and subsequent texts in the Jewish scriptures.[16] Is Colossians 1:15a an echo to Genesis 1:26-27? Following Charles F. Burney's lead,[17] Lohse and many others since have suggested that it is "out of the question"[18] to interpret εἰκών of Colossians 1:15a with direct reference to Genesis 1:26-27,[19] rather the text seeks to address other issues of creation and the ἀρχή/רֵאשִׁית of Genesis 1:1 and Proverbs 8:22 and ἀπαύγασμα and εἰκὼν *via* the λόγος and σοφία that is exhibited in Hellenistic Judaism,[20] in particular Wisdom 7:25-27, a work contemporaneous with Philo and probably just prior to Colossians.[21]

### 4.1.2.2 Ἀόρατος

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[14] See Victor P. Furnish, *II Corinthians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary.* AB vol. 32a. (Garden City: Doubleday, 1984), 248-249.

[15] Paul W. Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians.* NICNT. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 218-220. See also Ralph P. Martin, *Carmen Christi: Philippians 2:5-11 in Recent Interpretation and in the Setting of Early Christian Worship.* Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series: Vol. 4. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 110-112.

[16] Gen 1:26-27; 5:1-3 (notice that the LXX translates both צֶלֶם and דְּמוּת with εἰκών); 9:6

[17] Charles F. Burney, "Christ as the ΑΡΧΗ of creation." *JTS* 27/106 (1926): 160-177.

[18] Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, 46; Stettler, *Der Kolosserhymnus*, 155-159.

[19] Contra to Bruce who emphatically states that "No reader of the OT scriptures, on reading the words now before us [Col 1:15-16] could fail to be reminded of the statement in Gen 1:26-27," Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians*, 58.

[20] See Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon,* 46-47; Dunn, *Colossians and to Philemon*, 88-89; Schweizer, *The Letter to the Colossians*, 67. Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, 110-113.

[21] On Wis 7:25-27 and other key texts in Hellenistic Judaism see Winston, *The Wisdom of Solomon*, 184-86; John J. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age.* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 196-202. For an early-to-mid first century CE date see George W.E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah: A Historical and Literary Introduction.* Second Edition (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 211-212, 394. Winston suggest Wisdom was deeply influenced by Philo. See Winston, *The Wisdom of Solomon*, 59. This may place to date of Wisdom even closer to Colossians.

The term ἀόρατος in Colossians 1:15a is used to describe God as in four out of the five

occurrences in the NT.[22] In the Pauline letters ἀόρατος is only used once, in Romans 1:20.

Here the emphasis is on explaining God's invisible attributes as embedded and immanent in

the things he has made, the κόσμος,[23] and apprehended by the senses. Colossians 1:15a is

closer to 1 Timothy 1:17 in connotation which uses ἀόρατος with a number of other

'negative' terms in doxology, to praise God by defining what he is not.[24] In Hebrews and the

Johannine literature there is the use of similar 'negative' phraseology to refer to God as the

one whom no-one has ever seen, except the son (Christ), and through whom (Christ) the

believer is able to see (or know) God.[25]  Otherwise, the concept of God as ἀόρατος is found

nowhere else in Biblical Greek,[26] with the concept of ἀόρατος being very rare itself in Biblical

literature.[27]


### 4.1.3 Summary of Distinctive Language

The use of εἰκών to describe Christ in Colossians is distinct in the way that it frames Christ's

relationship to God, rather than God's relationship to humanity or the new existence of the

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[22] See Rom 1:20; Col 1:15, 16; 1 Tim 1:17; Heb 11:27.

[23] Rom 1:20 τὰ γὰρ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου τοῖς ποιήμασιν νοούμενα καθορᾶται. See explanation in Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans.* (Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1980), 42; James D.G. Dunn., *Romans 1-8.* WBC: vol 38a. (Dallas: Word 1988), 87; Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans.* NICNT. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1996), 104-05.

[24] 1 Tim 1:17 Τῷ δὲ βασιλεῖ τῶν αἰώνων, ἀφθάρτῳ ἀοράτῳ μόνῳ θεῷ, τιμὴ καὶ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων, ἀμήν.

[25] See Hebrews 11:7 [μηδέπω βλεπομένων], 27; John 1:18 [οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν]; 6:46; 14:9; 1 John 1:1-3; 4:20 [οὐχ ἑώρακεν].

[26] Dunn, *Colossians and to Philemon*, 87.

[27] In the LXX it is mentioned in Gen 1.2; Isa 45:3 and 2 Macc. 9.5. Of the three times it is mentioned in the LXX, only Genesis 1:2 is of interpretative significance. In Gen 1:2, the Hebrew תֹהוּ (formless) is translated with ἀόρατος. OT commentators tend to associate תֹהוּ with the χάος of Hesiod, *Theogony*, 5, 16. No comment is given of the LXX translation of ἀόρατος in Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis* OTL. (Translated by John H. Marks; London: SCM Press LTD, 1961), 47; Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary.* CC (Translated by John J. Scullion; London: SPCK, 1984), 102-104; or Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15.* WBC: Vol. 1. (Waco: Word Books, 1987), 15-16. Note the varied use of Greek words used to translate the concept associated with תֹהוּ in the LXX.

saints. God is also referred to as ἀόρατος, an idea that is expressed in similar terms in

Hebrews and the Johannine literature, but otherwise rare in the NT.  While not unique to

Colossians in the *corpus Paulinum*, It exhibits a heightened use of the term to specifically

describe the transcendent nature of God rather than just his immanent attributes

embedded in nature.


### 4.1.4 Emerging Issues for Further Analysis

The interrelatedness of the terms εἰκών, θεός and ἀόρατος in Colossians 1:15a require further

investigation.  This thesis will now approach these issues through a Middle Platonic

framework by looking to *Timaeus* and Philo for further clarity on the following two issues:

(1) how might Christ be understood as εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ, is an echo to Genesis 1:26-27 out of

the question? And (2) what is understood by the conception of θεός as ἀόρατος.


### 4.1.5 Similarities with *Timaeus* and Platonic Texts: Insights on εἰκών, θεός and ἀόρατος

### 4.1.5.1 Εἰκών in *Timaeus*

In *Timaeus*, the κόσμος [28] is referred to as εἰκών, a concept that bookends the monologue.[29]

The κόσμος as εἰκών is further described at the conclusion of *Timaeus* as a ζῷον ὁρατόν.[30] The

word εἰκών is used to convey a tangible (or sensible) presence of a reality which is accessible

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[28] In *Timaeus* κόσμος and οὐρανός are frequently used in a synonymous manner. This is explained in further detail in *Timaeus* in comment for Colossians 1:16a. See section 5.1.5.1.

[29] Plato, *Timaeus*, 29b, 92c. Cornford warns of assuming synonymous language around 'image'. He states that εἰκών speaks more of 'likeness', whereas ἄγαλμα speaks more of image, especially in a cultic setting. See Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, 99-105.  A similar explanation is also given about these terms in Simon R.F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 176-181.

[30] Plato, *Timaeus*, 92c.

only by intellect.[31] The κόσμος, explained as the εἰκὼν τοῦ νοητοῦ (image of the intelligible), is an image in motion and the representation of ὄντα in the realm of γιγνόμενα.[32]

## 4.1.5.2 Θεός in Timaeus

Identifying κόσμος as εἰκών in *Timaeus* leads to the broader categories of the varied use of the term θεός. *Timaeus'* usage is threefold:[33]

### 4.1.5.2.1 Κόσμος

Κόσμος is not only referred to as the εἰκών, but generated as a εὐδαίμονα θεόν (blessed god)[34] and again as a θεὸς αἰσθητός as the εἰκὼν τοῦ νοητοῦ.[35]

### 4.1.5.2.2 Lesser gods

A second usage of θεός, this time in the plural, can be found *within* the κόσμος, these are 'lesser' θεοί composed from the materials of the κόσμος, in particular, ἐκ πυρός,[36] and the γῆ.[37] This usage may be further categorised into three subsections (i) kinds of heavenly gods such as the heavenly bodies, the sun, moon and stars;[38] (ii) the δαίμων, of which *Timaeus* takes only a passing interest in;[39] and (iii) the Olympian gods of Hesiod and Homer culminating with Zeus and Hera, and their generation and progeny.[40]

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[31] See Sarah J. Broadie, *Nature and Divinity in Plato's Timaeus.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 31-38.
[32] Plato, *Timaeus*, 28a, 37d. (Expanded further in section 4.3.5.1.)
[33] The following three points are also explained further in Reginald Hackforth, "Plato's Theism," in *Studies in Plato's Metaphysics*. (Edited by Reginald E. Allen. London: Routledge, 1936), 440-441; Dirk Baltzly, "Is Plato's Timaeus Panentheistic?" *Sophia* 49 (2010): 194-196, 200-206; Drozdek, Adam, *Greek Philosophers as Theologians: The Divine Arche.* (Cornwall: Ashgate, 2007), 151-153, 157-164.
[34] Plato, *Timaeus*, 34b.
[35] Plato, *Timaeus*, 92c "...εἰκὼν τοῦ νοητοῦ θεὸς αἰσθητός"
[36] Plato, *Timaeus*, 40a.
[37] Plato, *Timaeus*, 40c.
[38] Plato, *Timaeus*, 40b "...οὐράνιον θεῶν γένος"
[39] Plato, *Timaeus*, 40d-e. See also *Cratylus*, 398b; *Symposium*, 202 d-e also an inference in *Apology*, 40a
[40] Plato, *Timaeus*, 40e-41a. This appears to be a retelling of Hesiod, *Theogony*, 126-146. See explanation in Taylor, *A Commentary on the Timaeus*, 247.

**4.1.5.2.3 The Δημιουργός (Craftsman)**

The most important and frequent use of θεός in *Timaeus* has to do with the 'crafter' of both

the κόσμος and the lesser gods just described, the δημιουργός. He is first identified in 28a[41]

and self-described as "θεοὶ θεῶν, ὧν ἐγὼ δημιουργὸς πατήρ τε ἔργων"[42] and is subsequently

given a range of titles, such as θεός,[43] αἴτια εἶναι τῶν πάντων (to be the cause of all),[44] ἀγαθός

(good),[45] ὁ ἄριστος τῶν αἰτίων (the greatest of causes),[46] and ὁ συνιστὰς συνέστησεν (the one

composing).[47] The latter two titles will provide significant insight for Colossians 1:16e-17

(see sections 6.1.5 and 6.2.5). The most significant title given to him in *Timaeus* is the

pairing of ποιητὴν καὶ πατέρα τοῦδε τοῦ παντὸς (maker and father of this all).[48] This dual title

seeks to attribute to the δημιουργός, both *technological* or creative and *biological* or

generative qualities. These two qualities of the δημιουργός are re-expressed throughout the

work and will become very important for Philo's theology.[49]

Of the three uses of θεός in *Timaeus*, the δημιουργός represents the chief usage of this term.

This striking and innovative nature of Plato's 'god' as an artisan has been noted by modern

scholarship.[50] While a thorough explanation of Plato's δημιουργός is beyond the scope of this

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[41] See also Plato, *Timaeus*, 29a, 40c, 41a, 42e, 68e, 69c. See also in implicit reference to the role of a craftsman in *Gorgias* 503e-504a;  *Republic*, 10.596 b-c; *Laws* 10.903c.

[42] Plato, *Timaeus*, 41a Trans. "O gods, works divine whose father and maker I am."

[43] Plato, *Timaeus*, 30a, 30d, 31b, 32b, 34b-c, 38c, 39b, 46c, 53b, 55c, 68d, 69b, 71e, 73b, 74d, 75d, 78b, 80e, 90a.

[44] Plato, *Timaeus*, 46d. See also 29b.

[45] Plato, *Timaeus*, 29e, 30c.

[46] Plato, *Timaeus*, 29e.

[47] See Plato, *Timaeus*, 29a; 29e-30a   … with associated superlatives: ἄριστος (29b, 30a).

[48] For the use of πατήρ (father) see Plato, *Timaeus*, 28c, 37c, 41a, 42e, 50d. For ποιητής (maker) see participle form 31b.

[49] See Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and The* Timaeus *of Plato*, 107-11, 420-26, 438-44.

[50] See Friedrich W. Solmsen, "Nature as Craftsman in Greek Thought." *JHI* 24.4 (1963): 480; "That the supreme god of the Plato's cosmos should wear the mask of a manual worker is a triumph of the philosophical imagination over ingrained social prejudice" in Gregory Vlastos, *Plato's Universe.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 26.

theses,[51] Plato's δημιουργός was very influential for subsequent thinkers in the ancient world.[52] Plato's theology[53] in *Timaeus* would be taken up by subsequent philosophical traditions in a number of ways. The Stoics, influenced by *Timaeus* would consider the δημιουργός as the world soul and take a pantheistic approach (explained further in section 6.1.5.4 of thesis).[54] Middle Platonists, would rework this into a transcendent theism.

### 4.1.5.3 Ἀόρατος in *Timaeus*

*Timaeus* does not refer to his δημιουργός as ἀόρατος. The use of this term in *Timaeus* and the Platonic canon will be treated in Colossians 1:16b-c (section 5.1.5.3).

### 4.1.6 Similarities with Philo's Corpus

### 4.1.6.1 Overview

The words εἰκών, θεός and ἀόρατος are used to articulate key doctrines in Philo, that of a heightened emphasis on the transcendence of God, and the immanence of this God through intermediaries. These ideas are also found in the Platonic tradition and can be attributed in the old academy to Xenocrates, who is attested as taking a tripartite view of reality. It is not

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[51] See treatments of the δημιουργός in Luc Brisson, "The Intellect and the Cosmos: The demiurge in the Timaeus." *Methodos. Savoirs et textes* 16 (2016): 5-7.

[52] Arthur D. Nock, "The Exegesis of Timaeus 28c." *Vigiliae Christianae* 16 (1962): 79-86.

[53] Some interesting assertions about Plato's theology or theism in *Timaeus* are explored in Baltzly, *Is Plato's Timaeus Panentheistic?*, 196-197 where he proposes a number of possibilities, such as: are (1) a kind of monotheism, (2) a being chief above and the ultimate source of all other gods; (3) many gods, a kind of polytheism; and (4) the cosmos as living and a god, representing some kind of pantheism like that of some of the pre-Socratics. Baltzly proposes an insightful suggestion that in the *Timaeus* there is an unusual polytheistic pan*en*theism. Which he explains as "… [a] necessarily a species of monotheism… a position that is inevitably contrasted with traditional theism on its right and pantheism on its left…. The fault line between traditional theism, on the one hand, and pantheism and panentheism, on the other, runs through the issue of god's transcendence…. Panentheism insists on *some kind* of commonality between god and the universe… [s]o panentheists must hold that god and the universe have *something* in common, but not *everything* in common. God is divine and the universe is divine too, though neither is identical to the other."

[54] See an explanation of this in Reydams-Schils, *Demiurge and Providence*, 34-36, 41-42, 65-79, 85-115; Nathan Powers, "Plato's Demiurge as Precursor to the Stoic Providential God." *CQ* 63, no. 2 (2013): 713-722.

a heaven-earth-underworld cosmology typically ascribed to the ancient world but one of a modality of being, similar to that of the Neo-Pythagoreans.[55] The move from a *Zweiprinzipienlehre* (two principle doctrine) to a *Dreiprinzipienlehre* (three principle doctrine) of God, ideas and matter appears to have been developed by Eudorus of Alexandria,[56] and would become a core doctrine for latter second-century scholastic Middle Platonism.[57] With this, gave rise to a doctrine of intermediaries between the Transcendent God who is associated with a νοητός realm and the κόσμος αἰσθητός. God's transcendence and unknowableness necessitate the formation of intermediaries to conceptually safeguard his transcendence.[58]

### 4.1.6.2 Philo's Image of God – The Logos

Philo's principal intermediary agent is highlighted in his exegesis of the LXX of Genesis 1.26-27.[59] Where the Hebrew בְּצַלְמֵנוּ (v.26) and בְּצַלְמוֹ (v.27) are rendered by the LXX as κατʼ εἰκόνα θεοῦ.[60] He argues that κατʼ εἰκόνα θεοῦ means that humanity is not made *in* the image of God, but *after* or *according* to the image of God.[61] The image of God being the λόγος.[62] For Philo, humanity is no longer created directly as the image of God Himself but rather as

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[55] Sextus Empericus, *Adv. Math*. 7.147ff; Plutarch, *De Fac*. 943f.

[56] See Simplicius, *Physics*, 1.5. Further explanation and translation of texts can be found in Dillon, *The Middle Platonists,* 126-127; John M. Dillon, "The Ideas as thoughts of God." *Études platoniciennes* 8 (2001): 31-42. Tobin, *The Creation of Man:* 16-17; Cox, *By the same word*, 49.

[57] See Alcinous, *De doctrina Platonis*, 8-10.

[58] See Christina Termini, "Philo's Thought within the Context of Middle Judaism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Philo*. (Edited by Adam Kamesar. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 99.

[59] See Tobin, *The Creation of Man*, 20; Cox, *By the same word*, 142-143.

[60] The Hebrew prefixed preposition בְּ is translated as κατά. See also the change of the preposition ב to כ in Gen 5:1 and 3. See a diversity of usages in Waltke, Bruce K. and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax.* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 189, 196-199; Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 145-147; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 28-29. A semantic overlap is suggested in BDB 88-90, 453-454.

[61] See Tobin, *The Creation of Man*, 57-59 and his explanation of Philo *Her*. 230-231.

[62] Philo, *Opif*. 25, 69; *Spec*. 1.81; 3.83; *Leg*. 3.96; *Conf*. 169; *Her*. 164; *Fug*. 68; *Somn*. 1.74 See also Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and The "Timaeus"*, 435, 446-447; David T. Runia, *On the Creation of the Cosmos According to Moses*. PACS vol. 1. (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 149-150; Schenck, *A Brief Guide to Philo*, 58-63.

the image of an image.[63] Philo's doctrine of man does not concern this thesis,[64] but Philo's

λόγος as εἰκών is not only a revising of the εἰκών/צֶלֶם language of the Jewish scriptures, but

also a reworking of the Platonic notions of mind and idea.[65] One is unable to have

knowledge of God through the pre-emanate sense of sight. Because God is invisible, and by

inference unknowable, he is made known through his word, his image.[66] Philo's λόγος

functions as the chief and embodied sum of all God's powers[67] guiding all to a knowledge of

God.[68]

At this point, it is important to explain that Philo's λόγος is also explained spatially as the

νοητὸς κόσμος.[69] Whereas Plato's inspiration for γιγνόμενα comes from the external realm of

ὄντα, Philo has inverted the ontological hierarchy of priority to have God as the ultimate

necessity, with his ideas and words being in effect, his image. They function as an

intermediary κόσμος, a metaphysical space/place, a νοητός κόσμος through which the

αἰσθητός κόσμος is created. The logos doctrine of Philo is where he deviates the most from

*Timaeus*.[70] Where *Timaeus* has the δημιουργός using the ὄντα as his ideas, something

external to himself, to construct the κόσμος, the idea or word of God originates in God for

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[63] Tobin, *The creation of man*, 57.
[64] Extensively treated in Tobin, *The creation of man*.
[65] See Wolfson, *Philo: foundations of religious philosophy*, 230-31, 253; Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and The* Timaeus *of Plato*, 446.
[66] Philo *Somn*. 1.239 "...οὕτως καὶ τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ εἰκόνα, τὸν ἄγγελον αὐτοῦ λόγον, ὡς αὐτὸν κατανοοῦσιν."
[67] Philo, *Fug*. 94-95. Further explained in Francesca Calabi, "The Powers of God: Seraphim, Cherubim and the Powers in Philo of Alexandria," in *Studies in Philo of Alexandria, Volume 4: God's Acting, Man's Acting: Tradition and Philosophy in Philo of Alexandria.* (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2007), 82-85.
[68] See Philo, *Fug*. 101. See Eltester, *Eikon im Neuen Testament*, 35.
[69] Philo, *Opif*. 24. Further explanation in Reydams-Schils, *Demiurge and Providence*, 151-152.
[70] Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and The* Timaeus *of Plato*, 446-49. He lists 3 differences (1) The Logos as place of the noetic cosmos. (2) The logos is the instrument of creation; (3) the logos is the replacement of the cosmic soul.

Philo. It becomes the noetic place in which he creates the sensible cosmos. This will be further explained in the comment on Colossians 1:16a, b-c.


**4.1.6.3 Philo's Theology – The Transcendent Invisible Maker God**

The transcendent nature of God is a key feature of Philo's doctrine of God and is unambiguously grounded in the Jewish scriptures, in particular, the Pentateuch.[71] Philo's theology is monotheistic,[72] expressing the utter transcendence of God,[73] and based on the study of the Jewish scriptures. This is best expressed in Philo's explanation of the LXX Genesis 17:1 statement ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ θεός σου, where God changes Abram's name to Abraham in *Mut*. 27-28:

> "τὸ γὰρ ὄν, ᾗ ὄν ἐστιν, οὐχὶ τῶν πρός τι· <u>αὐτὸ γὰρ ἑαυτοῦ πλῆρες</u> καὶ <u>αὐτὸ ἑαυτῷ ἱκανόν</u>, καὶ πρὸ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου γενέσεως καὶ μετὰ τὴν γένεσιν τοῦ παντὸς ἐν ὁμοίῳ. 28 <u>ἄτρεπτον</u> γὰρ καὶ <u>ἀμετάβλητον</u>, χρῇζον ἑτέρου τὸ παράπαν οὐδενός, ὥστε αὐτοῦ μὲν εἶναι τὰ πάντα, μηδενὸς δὲ κυρίως αὐτό."[74]

It is in this sense of God's transcendence, of saying what God is not, that Philo also speaks of God as ἀόρατος.[75] It means he his not apprehended by the senses, rather a higher form of knowledge is required. This is not the only way Philo uses ἀόρατος. This usage of the word ἀόρατος will be further explored in Colossians 1:16c in association with ὁρατός (see 5.1.6.7).

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[71] See Williamson, *Jews in the Hellenistic World: Philo*, 29.

[72] See Philo, *Opif*. 171; *Leg*. 3.82; *Virt*. 214. See also explanations in Radice, *Philo's Theology and Theory of Creation*, 129; David T. Runia, "Philo and Hellenistic Doxography," in *Philo of Alexandria and post-Aristotelian philosophy*. Vol. 5 Studies in Philo of Alexandria. (Edited by Francesca Alesse; Leiden: Brill, 2008), 45-57.

[73] A helpful treatment of a variety of ideas associated with God transcendence in Philo's works can be found in Calabi, *God's Acting, Man's Acting*, 15-16. See also Wolfson, *Philo: foundations of religious philosophy*, 210-211; David Winston, *Logos and Mystical Theology in Philo of Alexandria.* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1985), 45.

[74] "for the living God, inasmuch as he is living, does not consist in relation to anything; for <u>he himself is full of himself</u>, and <u>he is sufficient</u> for himself, and he existed before the creation of the world, and equally after the creation of the universe;  for he is <u>immovable</u> and <u>unchangeable</u>, having no need of any other thing or being whatever, so that all things belong to him, but, properly speaking, he does not belong to anything."

[75] See *Cher*. 101; *Post*. 15, (168 not visible); *Abr*. 75; *Dec*. 60, 120; *Spec*. 1.20, 46; 4.31.

Philo continues to explain his theology in *Mut*. 29 where he [the father] is described as the

one who begets and makes all things (τὰ πάντα ὁ γεννήσας καὶ τεχνιτεύσας πατήρ). Philo

then equates the God of Abraham with the δημιουργός of *Timaeus* 28c:

ὥστε τὸ "ἐγώ εἰμι <u>θεὸς σὸς</u>" ἴσον ἐστὶ τῷ ἐγώ εἰμι <u>ποιητὴς καὶ δημιουργός</u>.[76]

Philo frames Plato's δημιουργός as the transcendent God.[77] Runia states that "Philo is the

first thinker to associate the goodness of Plato's demiurge with the Judaeo-Christian

conception of God the creator, an event of enormous significance in the history of ideas."[78]

Throughout his works, language ascribed to the δημιουργός in *Timaeus* is used to explain

Philo's God. Not only does Philo refer to God as the δημιουργός a number of times,[79] but

also with other craftsmen associated titles,[80] such as τεχνίτης,[81] ποιητής,[82] κτίστης,[83] and

πλάστης[84] often pairing these with πατήρ. The most common pairing is that of ποιητής and

πατήρ, an obvious illusion to *Timaeus* 28c.[85] This pair seeks to attribute to God both

*technological* or creative and *biological* or generative qualities. Philo's God possesses both

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[76] Philo, Mut. 29 the expression, "I am thy God," is equivalent to, "I am thy maker and creator [crafter]."
[77] Philo, *Opif* 10; *Cher.* 112; *Gig.* 12, 23; *Mut.* 29; *Som.* 1.76, 204, 206, 214; *Pre.* 42; *Aet.* 15, 41 [verbal Leg 2.73].
[78] Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and The* Timaeus *of Plato*, 135. See also 421 and 459.
[79] *Opif.* 10; *Cher.* 112; *Gig.* 12, 23, 31; *Mut.* 29; *Somn.* 76, 204, 206, 214; *Pream.* 42; *Aet.* 15, 41.
[80] An explanation on the use of these titles in Philo can be found in Wolfson, *Philo: foundations of religious philosophy*, 1.301-305; Sandmel, *Philo Judaeus*, 23; Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and The* Timaeus *of Plato*, 107-108.
[81] Philo, *Leg.* 1.31; *Cher.* 32; *Gig.* 23; *Mut.* 29; *Som.* 123; *Aet.* 8, 42; *Deus.* 130.
[82] Philo, *Opif.* 21, 28, 35, 53, 77; *Post.* 19; *Plant.* 53; *Her.* 98, 200, 236; *Conf.* 144, 170; *Fug.* 177; *Mut.* 29, 30; *Somn.* 123; *Abr.* 9; 58; *Mos.* 1.158; 2:256; 2.76, 2.138, *Dec.* 41 51, 64; *Spec.* 1.30, 1.34, 1.209, 1.294; 2.6, 2.256; 3.189, 3.199; 4.180; *Vir.* 34, 64, 77: *Prae.* 24, 32; *Cont.* 90; *Aet.* 15; *Legat.* 115, 293.
[83] Philo, *Somn.* 76; Ebr 42; *Spec.* 1.30, 294; *Vir.* 179.
[84] Philo, *Conf.* 194.
[85] See Philo, *Opif.* 7, 10, 21, 77; *Post.* 175; *Conf.* 144; 170; *Her.* 98, 200, 236; *Fug.* 84, 177; *Mut.* 29; *Abr.* 58; *Mos.* 1.158; 2.48, 238, 256; *Dec.* 51, 64, 105; *Spec.* 1.34; 2.6, 2.56; 3.178, 189, 199; 4.180; *Vir.* 34, 64, 77; *Prae.* 24, 32; Cont. 90; *Aet.* 13, 15 [Timaeus quote]; *Legat.* 115, 293; *Prov.* 2.62, 72; *QG* 1.58, 2.34 (FE 33.107); 4.130, fr. 10 (FE 33.223); *QE* 2.33 (EES 2.75). Runia has complied them into a list of ποιητὴς καὶ πατήρ (the Platonic order) and πατὴρ καὶ ποιητής (the reverse order) See Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and The* Timaeus *of Plato*, 108-109. In addition to Runia's list I have added *Opif.* 77; *Mut.* 29; *Mos.* 2.238; *Dec.* 69 where ποιητὴς and πατήρ do not directly follow each other but are in close association. Observations also made in Nock, *The Exegesis of Timaeus 28c*, 82.

these qualities. He explains both of these in *Opif*. 10 where God cares for his progeny and

seeks to ensure the longevity of his works.

> "καὶ γὰρ <u>πατὴρ</u> ἐκγόνων καὶ <u>δημιουργὸς</u> τῶν δημιουργηθέντων στοχάζεται τῆς διαμονῆς καὶ ὅσα μὲν ἐπιζήμια καὶ βλαβερὰ μηχανῇ πάσῃ διωθεῖται..." [86]

It is an important distinction to note that the λόγος is never given the status of ποιητὴς and

πατήρ or demiurgic creator, the logos' role in creation is expressed in different terms in

Philo and will be explained in further detail throughout the thesis.

### 4.1.7 Insights gained into Colossians Christology from Distinctive Language and Comparisons with *Timaeus* and Philo's corpus

Colossians' use of εἰκών to identify Christ and ἀόρατος to describe God are uncharacteristic

of the *corpus Paulinum*. An examination of *Timaeus* and Philo has demonstrated that they

also use 'image' language to identify the creative work of God. The first line of Colossians in

our investigation has highlighted a strong resonance with the language of *Timaeus* as

understood through the lens of Philo's works. That of an invisible transcendent God, and his

chief intermediary, the εἰκών. The author may well be echoing Genesis 1:26 through a

Middle Platonic framework, similar to Philo. The Christ of Colossians appears to be initially

framed in a very similar way to Philo's λόγος, being the means and immanent presence of a

transcendent and invisible God to the sensible world.

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[86] Philo, *Opif*. 10  "for reason proves that the father and creator has a care for that which has been created; for a father is anxious for the life of his children, and a workman aims at the duration of his works." A similar explanation is given in Plutarch, where he seeks to explain the phrase in *Timaeus* for what he calls the ἀνωτάτω θεός (supreme God). Plutarch explains the use of ποιητὴς language to seek to explain a care for an object that is in one sense distinct from its maker; while the familial language of πατήρ speaks of his nature embedded in it. In both cases, it is the whole of reality that is in mind here. See Plutarch , *Platonicae quaestiones*, 1000f-1001c (2.1-2). A further explanation in Francesca Calabi, *God's Acting, Man's Acting: Tradition and Philosophy in Philo of Alexandria.*, Studies in Philo of Alexandria, Volume 4. (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 4-5.

## 4.2 Colossians 1:15b πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως

### 4.2.1 Syntactical Analysis and Usage in Colossians

This brings this thesis to the second ananthous nominative noun that refers to Christ,

πρωτότοκος. This stands in apposition to εἰκών.[87] Where Colossians 1:15a emphasises Christ's

relationship to God, Colossians 1:15b designates his relationship to creation.[88] The reader is

left without any doubt that Christ is both εἰκών and πρωτότοκος. Both words, Dunn suggests,

bridge the gulf between creator and created, it is their ambiguity that allows the words to

serve an intermediary function, maintaining a transcendent-immanent tension to express a

continuum between an unknowable God and his self-revelation in creation.[89] Here

πρωτότοκος seeks to remind the reader of 'father-son' language mentioned in Colossians

1:2-3, 13; [3:17] where God is expressed as the father of both the saints (v.2) and Christ

(v.3).  The word is used again in Colossians 1:18, this time with a genitival phrase that has

the preposition ἐκ.

The word πᾶς is used adjectively a genitival modifier for the singular κτίσεως. One is left to

ponder the nuance of the singular. Is this genitive one of subordination, placing Christ *over*

the κτίσις, or a possessive genitive where Christ is first-born *among* all κτίσεως?[90]  In

Colossians, the pair of lexemes πασ- and κτισ- appear again in Colossians 1:16a and then in a

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[87] Campbell, *Colossians and Philemon*, 10. Harris suggest that πρωτότοκος is anarthrous for the same reasons as εἰκὼν. See Harris, *Colossians & Philemon*, 43
[88] O'Brien, Colossians-Philemon, 44.
[89] Dunn, *Colossians and to Philemon*, 90. Although also suggesting that "…these three words are among the most contested in NT interpretation." James D.G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: An Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation.* Second ed. (London: SCM Press, 1989), 189.
[90] This issues are further explained in Campbell, *Colossians and Philemon*, 10-11; Pao, *Colossians & Philemon*, 95; Harris, *Colossians & Philemon*, 43; Wallace, *Greek Grammar – Beyond the Basics*, 103-104.

very similar way in Colossians 1:23, also in the singular, but as a dative prepositional phrase.[91]

## 4.2.2 Similarities, Differences and Distinctiveness within the *Corpus Paulinum* and Biblical Literature

### 4.2.2.1 Πρωτότοκος

The word πρωτότοκος appears 130 times in the LXX, mostly in genealogies or historical narratives to indicate temporal priority or sovereignty of rank.[92]  In the NT it occurs on eight occasions.[93] When considering the use of πρωτότοκος to express some kind of superiority or temporal priority, the phrases' use or absence of a preposition and/or article is an important factor to consider. Apart from Colossians 1:15b and Hebrews 1:6, statements of Christ's priority or superiority almost always use a preposition. The possessive genitive, firstborn from among a particular group, appears to be a more acceptable meaning when used with the addition of a preposition and/or an article such as is the case in the second *strophe* in Colossians 1:18 with the use of ἐκ, and in Romans 8:29, the only other occurrence of πρωτότοκος in the *corpus Paulinum*, where the ἐν dative construction is used.[94]

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[91] Col 1:23 "...τοῦ κηρυχθέντος <u>ἐν πάσῃ κτίσει</u> τῇ ὑπὸ τὸν οὐρανόν".

[92] See Michaelis, "πρωτότοκος," *TDNT*, 6.871; O'Brien, Colossians-Philemon, 44; J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: a revised text with introductions, notes and dissertations.* 9th ed. (London: Macmillan & Co., 1890 [1875]), 144-146.

[93] Luke 2:7 καὶ ἔτεκεν τὸν υἱὸν αὐτῆς τὸν <u>πρωτότοκον</u>
Rom 8:29 εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτὸν <u>πρωτότοκον ἐν πολλοῖς ἀδελφοῖς</u>·
Col 1:15 <u>πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως</u>
Col 1:18 ὅς ἐστιν ἀρχή, <u>πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν</u>
Heb 1:6 ὅταν δὲ πάλιν εἰσαγάγῃ <u>τὸν πρωτότοκον</u> εἰς τὴν οἰκουμένην, λέγει· καὶ προσκυνησάτωσαν αὐτῷ πάντες ἄγγελοι θεοῦ.
Heb 11:28 ...ἵνα μὴ ὁ ὀλοθρεύων τὰ <u>πρωτότοκα</u> θίγῃ αὐτῶν.
Heb 12:23 καὶ ἐκκλησίᾳ <u>πρωτοτόκων</u> ἀπογεγραμμένων ἐν οὐρανοῖς καὶ κριτῇ θεῷ πάντων καὶ πνεύμασιν δικαίων τετελειωμένων
Rev 1:5. καὶ ἀπὸ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὁ μάρτυς, ὁ πιστός, <u>ὁ πρωτότοκος τῶν νεκρῶν</u> καὶ ὁ ἄρχων τῶν βασιλέων τῆς γῆς.
A possible reference has also been found in a textual variant of א Matt 1:25.

[94] See explanation in Dunn, *Romans 1-8,* 484.

### 4.2.2.2 Κτίσις

Edward Adams gives a helpful linguistic background of the term κτίσις in his study of it in the Pauline letters,[95] he explains that κτίσις occurs sixteen times in the LXX, with no equivalent Hebrew terms that may carry the meaning of creature,[96] or the wider sense of "creating/or the created world."[97] This phrase in Colossians 1:23 adds to the argument of Adam's that κτίσις more often denotes the wider creation.[98]  This seems to also be the case in Revelation 3:14 where ἀρχή is used in a genitival phrase to state the supremacy/priority of Christ to κτίσις, [99] a term used without the genitive in Colossians 1:18b[100]

### 4.2.3 Summary of Distinctive Language

Both πρωτότοκος and κτίσις are infrequent in the *corpus Paulinum* and the NT. The lack of a preposition and article in this genitival construction increases Colossians 1:15b's syntactical distinctiveness in the *corpus Paulinum*. This distinction also suggests an innovation in Christology. Colossians 1:15b introduces the concept that Christ is prior and/or superior to κτίσις, a pioneering aspect of Christology in the *corpus Paulinum*.

### 4.2.4 Emerging Issues for Further Analysis

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[95] Edward Adams, *Constructing the World: A Study in Paul's Cosmological Language.* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 77-80.

[96] Tob 8:5, 15; Judith 9:12; Sir 16:17; 43:26.

[97] Judith 16:14; Ps 74[73]:18; 104[103]:24; Sir 49:16; 3 Macc 2:2, 7; 6:2. See also Wisd. 2:6; 5:17; 16:24; 19:6

[98] Adams, *Constructing the World*, 19.

[99] Rev 3:14 ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ. See an extensive treatment in Gregory K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation.* NICGT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 296-301.

[100] Aune alludes to a potential dependence of Rev 3:14 on Col 1:15b, considering that it forms part of the letter written to Laodicea and that it demonstrates a product of early Christian literature to identify Christ with Wisdom. David E. Aune, *Revelation 1-5.* WBC Vol. 52. (Edited by Ralph P. Martin. Dallas: Word 1997), 256.

Two interpretive issues arise: (1) understanding the relationship and priority of πρωτότοκος to κτίσις, and (2) identifying what κτίσις might be. Could κτίσις possibly be translated collectively (creation) or distributive (creature), of what is Christ the firstborn? This thesis will now turn to *Timaeus*, then Philo for greater insight into these issues.

**4.2.5 Similarities with *Timaeus* and Platonic Texts**

*Timaeus* on this occasion offers very little insight into the above interpretive issues. The use of πρωτότοκος or any similar term or idea does not appear to be a prominent feature in *Timaeus* or the wider Platonic corpus. When speaking of γιγνόμενα Plato uses words like πᾶς or τὸ πάν (all), οὐρανός (heaven) or κόσμος (universe). These words will be discussed further in verse 16a when πᾶς is used as a noun. The use of the word κτίσις appears to not be a word in the Platonic vocabulary for either the total work of the δημιουργός or the living things within γιγνόμενα. Plato prefers to use the neuter ζῷον, his κόσμος being a ζῷον ὁρατόν (visible living [animal]),[101] comprised of a body,[102] built of the τέσσαρα (four [elements]) πῦρ, ὕδωρ, γῆν, ἀέρα which are subject to γιγνόμενα.[103] One may tentatively suggest that Plato's ζῷον is a rough equivalent for the author's κτίσις, and adds to the case for a collective understanding of the noun κτίσις.

**4.2.6 Similarities with Philo's Corpus**

**4.2.6.1 Πρωτότοκος and Πρωτόγονος**

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[101] Plato, *Timaeus*, 93c. See Taylor, *A Commentary on the Timaeus*, 646-648; Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, 358-359.
[102] Plato, *Timaeus*, 53c.
[103] Plato, *Timaeus*, 36d-e; 46d.

Philo's use of πρωτότοκος mirrors that of the LXX.[104]  For example, he uses it to describe Cain as the firstborn son of Adam.[105] He does not use this term for his chief intermediary the λόγος, but rather a similar one, πρωτόγονος.[106] Runia suggests Philo's choice of πρωτό<u>γονος</u> rather than πρωτό<u>τοκος</u> may be because of the latter's association with 'passive matter.'[107]

In *Agr*. 51, as part of Philo's allegorical interpretation of Noah as a γεωργός (farmer),[108] the πρωτόγονος plays a pivotal role as an intermediate for God. His role is to administer the rule and care of the shepherd (Philo has just referred to Psalm 23:1) for the flock (the four elements of the cosmos) as his [God's] ὕπαρχος (viceroy).[109] In *Conf*. 146 the πρωτόγονος is also called the λόγος and is expressed with two titles that are also attributed to Christ in Colossians 1:15-20, εἰκών and ἀρχή.[110]

κἂν μηδέπω μέντοι τυγχάνῃ τις ἀξιόχρεως ὢν υἱὸς θεοῦ προσαγορεύεσθαι σπουδαζέτω κοσμεῖσθαι

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[104] See Philo *Leg.* 2:48; 3:74; *Cher.* 54; *Sacr.* 1:19, 88, 89, 118, 119, 126, 134, 136; *Sobr.* 21-22, *Her.* 117, 124; *Congr.* 1:98; *Somn* 1.202 *Mos.* 1:134, 145; *Spec.* 1:135, 138, 139, 248; *Virt.* 1:95; *QG* 1:60; 4.206; *QE* 22

[105] See Philo, *Cher.* 54 "...οὐκοῦν πολὺ μᾶλλον ἐχρῆν ἐπὶ <u>τοῦ πρωτοτόκου</u>, ὃς ἦν ἀρχὴ τῆς ἐξ ἀλλήλων γενέσεως ἀνθρώποις."

[106] Used infrequently in the LXX. See Micah 7:1 for the first-ripe fruit; Sir 36:11 for Israel.

[107] See QG 4.160 commenting of Esau the πρωτότοκος in LXX Gen 25:25. Explained in Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and The* Timaeus *of Plato*, 284-285. The two terms and the association between Philo and Colossians has been briefly mentioned in  Chadwick, *St Paul and Philo of Alexandria*, 302; Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature*, 85.

[108] LXX Genesis 9:20 ...Νωε ἄνθρωπος γεωργὸς γῆς...

[109] Philo, *Agr.* 51

τοῦτο μέντοι τὸ ᾆσμα παντὶ φιλοθέῳ μελετᾶν ἐμπρεπές, τῷ δὲ δὴ κόσμῳ καὶ διαφερόντως· καθάπερ γάρ <u>τινα ποίμνην γῆν καὶ ὕδωρ καὶ ἀέρα καὶ πῦρ</u> καὶ ὅσα ἐν τούτοις φυτά τε αὖ καὶ ζῷα, τὰ μὲν θνητὰ τὰ δὲ θεῖα, ἔτι δὲ οὐρανοῦ φύσιν καὶ ἡλίου καὶ σελήνης περιόδους καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἀστέρων τροπάς τε αὖ καὶ χορείας ἐναρμονίους ὁ ποιμὴν καὶ βασιλεὺς θεὸς ἄγει κατὰ δίκην καὶ νόμον, προστησάμενος τὸν <u>ὀρθὸν αὑτοῦ λόγον</u> καὶ <u>πρωτόγονον</u> υἱόν, ὃς τὴν ἐπιμέλειαν τῆς ἱερᾶς ταύτης ἀγέλης <u>οἷά τις μεγάλου βασιλέως ὕπαρχος διαδέξεται</u>· καὶ γὰρ εἴρηταί που· "ἰδοὺ ἐγώ εἰμι, ἀποστέλλω ἄγγελόν μου εἰς πρόσωπόν σου τοῦ φυλάξαι σε ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ".

and let everyone in his turn say the same thing, for it is very becoming to every man who loves God to study such a song as this, but above all this world should sing it. For God, like a shepherd and a king, governs (as if they were <u>a flock of sheep) the earth, and the water, and the air, and the fire</u>, and all the plants, and living creatures that are in them, whether mortal or divine; and he regulates the nature of the heaven, and the periodical revolutions of the sun and moon, and the variations and harmonious movements of the other stars, ruling them according to law and justice; appointing, as their immediate superintendent, <u>his own right reason</u>, <u>his first-born son</u>, who is to receive the charge of this sacred company, as <u>the lieutenant</u> of the great king; for it is said somewhere, "Behold, I am he! I will send my messenger before thy face, who shall keep thee in the road."

[110] See explanation in Tobin, *The Creation of Man*, 140-141.

κατὰ τὸν <u>πρωτόγονον αὐτοῦ λόγον</u>, τὸν ἀγγέλων πρεσβύτατον, ὡς ἂν ἀρχάγγελον, πολυώνυμον ὑπάρχοντα· καὶ γὰρ <u>ἀρχὴ</u> καὶ ὄνομα θεοῦ καὶ <u>λόγος</u> καὶ <u>ὁ κατ' εἰκόνα ἄνθρωπος</u> καὶ ὁ ὁρῶν, Ἰσραήλ, προσαγορεύεται [111]

Philo speaks of God as a father having two sons, the first-born or elder as the λόγος (logos) or νοητὸς κόσμος (intelligible world) the younger as the αἰσθητὸς κόσμος (sensible world).[112] This Philonc concept is further explained in section 4.3.6.1, but the inference of the concepts is one of prominence *over* rather than *among*.


### 4.2.6.2 Κτίσις

Philo offers little insight into the use of κτίσις. He differs from *Timaeus* in only using ζῷον, to speak of ἄνθρωπος (humanity).[113] For Philo, humanity is a rational[114] and double natured animal[115] or a τὸ σύνθετον ζῷον (composite animal) comprising of body and soul,[116] humanity is ζῷον ἄριστον (the most excellent of animals).[117] Philo seems to only use ζῷον to refer to the total created order when referring to other philosophical schools.[118] Runia has argued that Philo has an aversion to considering the universe as living, because of its pantheistic connotations.[119] Philo wants to avoid comparing his intermediary with a world-soul concept potentially suggested in *Timaeus* as is used later in Stoicism,[120] rather Philo prefers to use

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[111] Philo, *Conf*. 146 "And even if there be not as yet anyone who is worthy to be called a son of God, nevertheless let him labor earnestly to be adorned according to <u>his first-born word</u>, the eldest of his angels, as the great archangel of many names; for he is called, <u>the authority</u>, and the name of God, and the <u>Word</u>, and <u>man according to God's image</u>, and he who sees Israel."

[112] Philo, *Deus* 31; *Cong*. 63; *Aet*. 1; See explanation in Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and The* Timaeus *of Plato*, 422. See also Sanders, *The New Testament Christological Hymns*, 81.

[113] See Philo, *Opif*. 72; *Det*. 139; Abr. 41; *Praem* 92; *Aet*. 68.

[114] Philo, Det. 139; Abr. 32; QG. 31.

[115] Philo, *Det*. 83 [a double natured animal τὸ διφυὲς ζῷον].

[116] Philo, *Ebr*. 101, 144.

[117] Philo, *Decal*. 134; *Spec*. 3.108;. This is in contrast to other ζῷον which are considered ἄλογος *Virt*. 117

[118] Philo, *Aet*. 26, 95.

[119] See in Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and The* Timaeus *of Plato*, 157, 159.

[120] See further explanation in Wolfson, *Philo*, 325-328; Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and The* Timaeus *of Plato*, 200-208.

words for the creation which will be elaborated on in the analysis of Colossians 1:16b-c (see 5.1 of thesis).

### 4.2.7 Insights gained into Colossians Christology from Distinctive Language and Comparisons with *Timaeus* and Philo's Corpus

Where Colossians 1:15a explains Christ's relationship to God, Colossians 1:15b explains Christ's relationship with creation. It invokes the father-son language of Colossians 1:2-3 but with greater scope. Colossians 1:15b introduces but does not fully explain the innovative Christological concept of Christ having priority over creation. Plato and Philo both offer little lexicographical or syntactical insight into the genitival construction of Colossians 1:15b. Philo does though offer a conceptual framework for understanding this priority. Philo has identified God's λόγος by many titles, one of them being πρωτόγονος. Philo's πρωτόγονος or λόγος is God's eldest (son) of two κόσμοι, the elder being the νοητὸς κόσμος and younger as the αἰσθητὸς κόσμος.  If Colossians' πρωτότοκος could be considered a slight word variation of Philo's πρωτόγονος but with a similar connotation, this potentially provides significant insight

into the nature of the priority of Christ to κτίσις and what κτίσις might be. It suggests that Christ has priority to the *collective* totality of existence rather than a *distributive* 'every creature.' Here the κτίσις is better understood as 'creation' rather than 'creature' and the singular πᾶς is better understood collectively rather than the distributive.[121]

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[121] See Pao, *Colossians & Philemon*, 95.

## 4.3 Colossians 1:16a ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα

### 4.3.1 Syntactical Analysis and Usage in Colossians

This curiosity about the relationship between Christ and creation is elaborated on with ὅτι,

which indicates a subordinating conjunction where the preceding phrase will now be

amplified with a verbal idea.[122] This is also reinforced by the repetition of the two Greek

lexemes πασ- and κτισ- from 15b.


### 4.3.1.1 Ἐν αὐτῷ

Colossians 1:16a is the first of eight times the ἐν αὐτῷ prepositional phrase occurs in

Colossians.[123] This is a perplexing spatial expression, similar to the very familiar Pauline

expression of ἐν Χριστῷ.[124] Apart from the common use to speak of the believer's new

existence in Christ,[125] Colossians also uses the prepositional phrase in two other categories:

(1) Christ's relationship to God;[126] and (2) Christ's interaction with the entirety of reality.[127]

It is this last category that concerns Colossians 1:16-17.


The prepositional phrase ἐν αὐτῷ poses an interesting interpretative question. Does this

dative have an instrumental feel, whereby Christ is the means or ὄργανον (instrument)

through which God creates τὰ πάντα,[128] or is it rather a locative dative (dative of place or

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[122] Wallace, *Greek Grammar – Beyond the Basics*, 674.
[123] Col 1:16, 17, 19; 2:6, 7, 9, 10, 15. There are also the slight variations of ἐν Χριστῷ and ἐν ᾧ. In Col 1:2, 14, 28; 2:3. See Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 50.
[124] A helpful overview of this and associated phrases in Pauline studies can be found in Constantine R. Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study.* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 31-64.
[125] See Col 2:6, 7, 10.
[126] Col 1:19; 2:9.
[127] Col 1:16-17.
[128] Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon,* 50.

sphere) where Christ becomes more the centre-point of creation?[129]  The issue of this prepositional phrase will be explored further when it reoccurs in Colossians 1:17b (see 6.2 of thesis).

### 4.3.1.2 Κτίζω

This collective sense of the neuter plural $\pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\alpha$ is emphasised here by the singular verb $\kappa\tau\acute{\iota}\zeta\omega$.[130] The noun explains the totality of reality and serves both as a synonym for $\kappa\tau\acute{\iota}\sigma\iota\varsigma$ in Colossians 1:15b, [131]  and points to the totality of the noun demarcations that will follow in v.16b-d. The verb $\kappa\tau\acute{\iota}\zeta\omega$ also appears twice in verse 16 in relation to $\tau\grave{\alpha}$ $\pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\alpha$. Here it is in the aorist passive, which Lohse suggests is a 'divine passive' that implicitly signifies God as the creator.[132]

### 4.3.1.3 Τὰ πάντα

The potential collective meaning of $\pi\tilde{\alpha}\varsigma$ in 15b is clarified now by the articular neuter plural $\tau\grave{\alpha}$ $\pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\alpha$ which should also be understood collectively rather than distributive.[133] The word $\pi\tilde{\alpha}\varsigma$ appears five times in Colossians 1:15-17,[134] a further three times in vv.18-20,[135] and 25 more times in Colossians.[136] Throughout Colossians, this term is used as a noun, an adjective

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[129] Campbell, *Colossians and Philemon*, 11; *Paul and Union with Christ*, 180-181. See further explanations in BDF § 195, 199; Wallace, *Greek Grammar – Beyond the Basics*, 153-158, 158-166.

[130] Although not uncommon in Koine Greek, It is more common in Attic Greek See Robertson, *Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 403-404; BDF § 133.

[131] Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, 199. They go on compare $\tau\grave{\alpha}$ $\pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\alpha$ with the Hebrew כֹּל. See also Stettler, *Der Kolosserhymnus*, 162-164

[132] Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon,* 49; Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, 198; Wilson, *Colossians and Philemon*, 136; Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life*, 242.

[133] See Lightfoot, *Colossians and Philemon*, 149; Harris, *Colossians & Philemon*, 44

[134] Col 1:15b, 16a, e 17a, b.

[135] Col 1:18d 19, 20a.

[136] Col 1:4, 6, 9, 10, 11x2, 28; 2:2, 3, 9, 10, 13 19, 22; 3:8, 11x2, 14, 16, 17, 20, 22, 4:7, 9, 12

and in articular and anarthrous fashions to convey a number of semantic meanings.[137]  The

audience is left to ponder this as v.16b-d goes on further to demarcate the make-up of this

πάντα.


**4.3.2 Similarities, Differences and Distinctiveness within the *Corpus Paulinum* and Biblical Literature**

**4.3.2.1 Κτίζω**

The verb κτίζω is one of a number of verbs used in the LXX to describe the creative activity

of God.[138] Alongside it the LXX also (more frequently) uses ποιέω (I make), πλάσσω (I

mould/shape), θεμελιόω (I lay a foundation). Κτίζω is used in Sirach and Wisdom in their

reflection on the LXX of Proverbs 8 to speak of the prior existence σοφία to πάντα.[139] In the

NT κτίζω occurs 15 times, 10 of which are in the *corpus Paulinum*.[140] It is used only twice in

the Pauline letters. In Romans 1:25 it functions as a substantive participle τὸν κτίσαντα to

speak of God as creator (similar to Colossians 3:10) and 1 Corinthians 11:9 as part of a larger

comment on gender relations in the *ekklesia*. It finishes with the expression τὰ δὲ πάντα ἐκ

τοῦ θεοῦ in 1 Corinthians 11:12.  It has its most frequent use in Ephesians where the new

existence of the saints is emphasised.[141]  Colossians 1:16a is the first time κτίζω, functioning

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[137] They are elaborated further in BGAD 782-84; Bo Reicke, "πᾶς, ἅπας" *TDNT*: 5.887-889.

[138] Κτίζω is used to translated the Hebrew קָנָה (Gen 14:19, 22; Deut 32:6) and בָּרָא (Deut 4:32; Psalm 148:5). See helpful explanations for these terms for the former in Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis 1-17.* NICOT (Edited by Robert L. Hubbard; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 411-12. For the latter in John H. Walton, *Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology.* Winona Lake, (Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 127-33. Κτίζω is also used in LXX 1 Esdras 6:12; Judith 13:18; 3 Macc 2:3, Bel 1:59; Sir 43:33.

[139] Sir 1:4, 9; 24:9 See further explanation in  Patrick W. Skehan, and Alexander A. Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira: A New Translation with Notes*. (New York: Doubleday, 1987), 333-334.

[140] Matt 19:4; Mark 13:19; Rom 1:25; 1 Cor 11:9; Eph 2:10, 15; 3:9; 4:24; Col 1:16x2; 3:10; 1 Tim 4:3; Rev 4:11; 10:6.

[141] Ephesians 2:10 αὐτοῦ γάρ ἐσμεν ποίημα, κτισθέντες ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ἐπὶ ἔργοις ἀγαθοῖς οἷς προητοίμασεν ὁ θεός, ἵνα ἐν αὐτοῖς περιπατήσωμεν.
 Ephesians 2:15 τὸν νόμον τῶν ἐντολῶν ἐν δόγμασιν καταργήσας, ἵνα τοὺς δύο κτίσῃ ἐν αὐτῷ (that is Christ Jesus mentioned in v.13) εἰς ἕνα καινὸν ἄνθρωπον ποιῶν εἰρήνην.

as a verb, is used to express world creation, and it has Christ playing a significant role in this action. Christ's creating relationship with πάντα is expressed with other verbs in the NT, this will be explored later in the thesis in the treatment of Colossians 1:16e.

**4.3.2.2 Τὰ πάντα**

Markus Barth suggests that τὰ πάντα in NT texts is a synonym of both κόσμος and κτίσις and more frequently includes all created things rather than only people.[142] Yet in the *corpus Paulinum*, the neuter πάντα enjoys a wide range of semantic usages. It can be used in speaking about a range of issues, actions and imperatival instructions for the saints;[143] God's providential work and action.[144] When referring to Christ[145] it mainly denotes the soteriological aspects of his ministry.[146] There are only two potential occasions in the *corpus Paulinum* where πάντα is used with a cosmological connotation.[147] The first is in the Pauline Letters in 1 Corinthians 8:6:

> 6a ἀλλ' ἡμῖν εἷς θεὸς ὁ πατὴρ ἐξ οὗ <u>τὰ πάντα</u> καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς αὐτόν,
> 6b καὶ εἷς κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς δι' οὗ <u>τὰ πάντα</u> καὶ ἡμεῖς δι' αὐτοῦ.

Jerome Murphy-O'Connor has mounted the case that 1 Corinthians 8:6b has an exclusively soteriological meaning.[148] Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to deliberate on this, if this is the case, Colossians 1:16-17 may be the only occasion in the *corpus Paulinum* where

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Ephesians 3:9 καὶ φωτίσαι [πάντας] τίς ἡ οἰκονομία τοῦ μυστηρίου τοῦ ἀποκεκρυμμένου ἀπὸ τῶν αἰώνων ἐν τῷ <u>θεῷ τῷ τὰ πάντα κτίσαντι</u> (referring to the τὸ ἀνεξιχνίαστον <u>πλοῦτος τοῦ Χριστοῦ</u> in v.8 )
Ephesians 4:24 καὶ ἐνδύσασθαι τὸν <u>καινὸν ἄνθρωπον</u> τὸν <u>κατὰ θεὸν κτισθέντα</u>…
[142] Markus Barth, "Christ and All Things," in *Paul and Paulinism*. (Edited by Morna D. Hooker and S. G. Wilson. London: SPCK), 163.
[143] Rom 14:2, 20; 1 Cor 2:15; 3:21-22; 4:13; 6:12; 9:12, 22-23, 25; 10:23; 13:7; 14:26, 40; 2 Cor 2:9; 4:15; 6:10; 7:14; 11:6; Eph 5:20; Phil 2:14; 3:8; 3:20; 1 Tim 3:11; 4:8; 2 Tim 2:10; 4:5; Titus 1:15; 2:7.
[144] Rom 8:28, 32; 1 Cor 2:10; 12:6; Eph 1:10; 3:9; 1 Tim 6:13.
[145] See 1 Cor 8:6b; 15:27-28; Eph 1:10, 22; 4:10; Phil 3:21; Col 1:16, 17, 20.
[146] 1 Cor 15:27-28; Eph 1:10, 22; 4:10; Phil 3:21; Col 1:20.
[147] 1 Cor 8:6b; Col 1:16, 17.
[148] Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "1 Cor. 8:6: Cosmology or Soteriology?" *RB* 85 (1978): 253-67. Explained further in Cox, *By the same word*, 164-87.

πάντα is expressed in cosmological terms in referring to the creation of reality. This is also significant for Colossians' distinctive language and Christology for two reasons. Christ is here for the first time in the *corpus Paulinum* suggested as having a pre-existence to reality and identified as playing a role in its formation.

### 4.3.3 Summary of Distinctive Language

Leaving aside the issue of ἐν αὐτῷ, to be covered in Colossians 1:17b. Colossians exhibits a distinctive use of the verb κτίζω and the noun τὰ πάντα. The use of κτίζω prior to Colossians refers to God alone doing the creating. Colossians appears to be the first place where Christ is acknowledged in the creation process.[149] In Colossians 1:16a (and Colossians 1:15-20 in general) there is a distinctive use of τὰ πάντα as a cosmological expression.

### 4.3.4 Emerging Issues for Further Analysis

Two interpretive issues have emerged from identifying the distinctive language in Colossians 1:16a that require further analysis. (1) What to make of the term πάντα that is used in a (potentially) unique way to speak about the creation as the totality of reality. (2) What to make of the use of the verb κτίζω in relation to Christ? It is used to describe the creative activity of God in the LXX and the Pauline letters but in verse 16 it is used twice to speak of the creation of πάντα with passive verbs implying the action of the invisible God but with prepositional phrases used to associate Christ somehow in the creation event. *Timaeus* and Philo will now be examined to offer further insight?

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[149] See Wrede, *Paulus*, 54 [English 87]. Cited in Chapter 2.2.2.3.

### 4.3.5 Similarities with *Timaeus* and Platonic Texts

### 4.3.5.1 Plato's Bifurcation of Reality - ὄντα and γιγνόμενα

*Timaeus*, at the beginning of the monologue, states a twofold reality, consisting of two

realms or ontologies, that of ὄντα (being) and γιγνόμενα (becoming).[150] The ambiguity of the

Platonic γιγνόμενα[151] leaves it open to being expressed with a number of titles such as τό

πᾶν (the all),[152] τὸ τοῦ παντὸς,[153] στοιχεῖα τοῦ παντὸς,[154] and also the interchangeability of

the terms οὐρανός and κόσμος.[155]  The δημιουργός is stated as the maker and father of τό

πᾶν,[156] by this is meant the formation of γιγνόμενα.

### 4.3.5.2 - *Weltbildung* rather than *Weltschöpfung*

At the beginning of the second section of the monologue, the τό πᾶν is explained as existing

prior to the intervention of the δημιουργός and is spoken of as a reality of στοιχεῖα τοῦ παντός

governed by ἀνάγκη (necessity).[157] Hermann A. Diels highlights that no-one before Plato

used the term στοιχεῖον for physical doctrines.[158] The separate origins of the δημιουργός and

τό πᾶν appears to not concern Plato in *Timaeus*.[159] *Timaeus'* cosmogony represents a

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[150] Plato, *Timaeus*, 28a. See explanation in Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, 24-27.
[151] The complexities on being and becoming and their implication for knowledge were explored in Michael Frede, *Being and Becoming in Plato* in Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 37-52.
[152] Plato, *Timaeus*, 28c.
[153] See Plato, *Timaeus*, 31b, 32a, 44d, 88d.
[154] See Plato, *Timaeus*, 48a-c.
[155] Plato, *Timaeus*, 28b-c. See also *Statesman*, 269d. E
[156] Plato, *Timaeus*, 28c.
[157] See Plato, *Timaeus*, 48a-c.
[158] "*daß vor Plato Niemand* [στοιχεῖον] *in Bezug auf die physikalischen Prinzipen terminogisch verwandt habe..*" See in Hermann A Diels, *Elementum: Eine Vorarbeit Zum Griechischen und Lateinschen Thesaurus.* (Leipzig: Druck und Verlag Von B.G. Teubner, 1899), 17.
[159] The locus of the work of the δημιουργός, the 'receptacle' (ὑποδοχή) 49a and 51a or 'space' (χώρα) 52b lies beyond the scope of this work thesis. Treatments of this issues can be found in Taylor, *A Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, 312-313; Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, 177-188; Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, 5.262-270; Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and The* Timaeus *of Plato*, 283-291; Johansen, *Plato's Natural Philosophy*, 117-136.

*creation ex hules* (from matter). He is not creating something from nothing (*creation ex nihilo*), but rather takes over pre-existing material before fashioning it,[160] preparing and fashioning a kind of 'material' that already lies at hand.[161] Cosmology for the Platonist is *'Weltbildung'* (world-construction), rather than '*Weltschöpfung*' (world-creation).

**4.3.5.3 The Δημιουργός as 'Crafter'**

In this vein, it is not surprising that the verb κτίζω is not associated with the action of the δημιουργός nor used in *Timaeus* at all. Construction verbs are used instead such as δημιουργεῖν[162] and more frequently συνίστημι. The latter verb is associated with Christ in Colossians 1:17b, which will be elaborated further in section 6.2.5.2 of the thesis. This is complemented by crafting titles like ποιητής[163]and ἔργων.[164] The tools that the δημιουργός wields are that of λόγος (reason) and φρόνις (prudence/wisdom),[165] when the δημιουργός crafts the στοιχεῖα τοῦ παντός (mis)directed by ἀνάγκη the product is one of order and harmony.[166] The δημιουργός has used the realm of ὄντα as his ἰδέα (idea/model)[167] in this construction, his product is an idea in motion after the realm of ὄντα.[168]

This completed product takes on a different title, that of οὐρανός or κόσμος which are used interchangeably throughout *Timaeus*.[169] It is spoken of as ἀγαθὸς (good), "Plato's craftsman

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[160] Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, 165.
[161] See in Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and The* Timaeus *of Plato*, 132, 493.
[162] See Plato, *Timaeus*, 31a, 47e, 69c [76d implicit in causation language].
[163] Plato, *Timaeus*, 28c.
[164] Plato, *Timaeus*, 41a.
[165] Plato, *Timaeus*, 29a "…οὕτω δὴ γεγενημένος πρὸς τὸ λόγῳ καὶ φρονήσει περιληπτὸν καὶ κατὰ ταὐτὰ ἔχον δεδημιούργηται."
[166] Plato, *Timaeus*, 32c.
[167] Plato, *Timaeus*, 28b, 29a. Further explanation given in Cynthia Freeland "The Role of Cosmology in Plato's Philosophy," in *A Companion to Plato*. (Edited by Hugh Benson. Blackwell Reference Online, 2006), no page numbers.
[168] Plato, *Timaeus*, 37c.
[169] See section 3.2.2.2.2.

is driven by the desire to share his excellence with others; the more beauty and goodness outside of him, the better his unenvious nature is pleased."[170] He brings τάξις, (organisation) from ἄτακτος (disorganisation) to this visible and tangible reality.[171]

**4.3.6 Similarities with Philo's Corpus**

**4.3.6.1 Νοητὸς Κόσμος and Αἰσθητὸς Κόσμος – The Intelligible Cosmos and the Sensible Cosmos**

Philo's language about reality, while Platonic, marks a development in the Platonic bifurcation of ὄντα and γιγνόμενα. While using Platonic terminology to express reality, Philo has re-worked God, the noetic and sensible reality in line with his exegesis of Jewish scripture. The product or creation of God in Philo is overtly bound with his interpretation of the seven days of creation of Genesis 1:1-2:4. The LXX renders the Hebrew Bible's ordinal יוֹם אֶחָד (first day) in Genesis 1:5 with a cardinal ἡμέρα μία (day one), while keeping the שֵׁנִי (second) etc... to seventh days as ordinals in the translation.[172] Philo sees this as highly significant and explains that Genesis 1:1-5 (day one) represents God's ideas, the νοητὸς κόσμος, the idea of God out of which αἰσθητός κόσμος or ὁρατός κόσμος is formed on the second to seventh days.[173] Wolfson suggests that the expression νοητὸς κόσμος was not known before Philo, he may indeed be the innovator of this expression.[174] This expression may derive from Plato's concept of a νοητός τόπος, a metaphysical spatiality as a way of explaining the form of the ἀγαθός (good),[175] and offers some insight into Colossians' use of

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[170] Vlastos, *Plato's Universe*, 28.

[171] Plato, *Timaeus*, 30b "…οὐρανὸν ὁρατὸν καὶ ἁπτόν."

[172] See ἡμέρα δευτέρα (Gen 1:8) ἡμέρα τρίτη (Gen 1:13) ἡμέρα τετάρτη (Gen 1:19) ἡμέρα πέμπτη (Gen 1:23) ἡμέρα ἕκτη (Gen 1:31) τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ ἕκτῃ (Gen 2:2).

[173] See Philo, *Opif*. 19 "….ἐξ ὧν κόσμον νοητὸν συστησάμενος ἀπετέλει καὶ τὸν αἰσθητὸν παραδείγματι χρώμενος ἐκείνῳ."

[174] Wolfson, *Philo: foundations of religious philosophy*, 227-228; See also Runia, *On the Creation of the Cosmos*, 136.

[175] See Plato, *Republic*, 6.508c. To be treated in section 5.1.5.3.1.1 of thesis.

the spatial expression ἐν αὐτῷ. Philo believed that in Genesis[176] there was a description of a double creation; (1) the νοητὸς κόσμος (intelligible world) serving as a model for, (2) the αἰσθητός κόσμος (sensible world).[177] In *Opif*. 29-35 he exegetes LXX Genesis 1:1-3, taking the seven nouns from Genesis 1:1-3 and interpreting them as being the model and ideas, out-of-which the sensible world comes to be.[178] These seven are not perceptible by the senses, only by the mind. The seven act as the model and idea from which the αἰσθητός κόσμος is made on days 2-6.[179] Philo explains the νοητὸς κόσμος (intelligible world's) relationship to the αἰσθητός κόσμος in a number of ways. It is the παράδειγμα (model), ἰδέα (idea) and πρεσβύτερος (elder) out of which the αἰσθητός κόσμος as the νέος is made.[180] This complements and confirms the nuance of the relationship between Christ and creation in Colossians 1:15b, one of superiority or priority over the totality of things.

**4.3.6.2 Κτίσ- and God**

Philo uses the lexeme κτισ both as a verb and noun to describe God. God as father is spoken of by the noun 'creator,'[181] and very interestingly at the beginning of *Opif* the verb is used to speak about God's creation/construction activity in close association with συνίστημι, the two verbs also used in Colossians 1:16-17 in connection to Christ's activity.[182] In *Opif*, Philo uses the metaphor of an architect who before planning the construction of a city, has an invisible

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[176] Which is titled in the LXX as γένεσις. Note how one with a Platonic way of thinking might imply the realm of becoming into the title and content of this work.

[177] Philo, *Opif*, 16. See further explanation in Dillon, *The Middle Platonists,* 158-159.

[178] LXX Gen 1:1-3 ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν <u>οὐρανὸν</u> καὶ τὴν <u>γῆν</u> ² ἡ δὲ γῆ ἦν ἀόρατος καὶ ἀκατασκεύαστος καὶ <u>σκότος</u> ἐπάνω τῆς <u>ἀβύσσου</u> καὶ <u>πνεῦμα</u> θεοῦ ἐπεφέρετο ἐπάνω τοῦ <u>ὕδατος</u> ³ καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεός γενηθήτω <u>φῶς</u> καὶ ἐγένετο <u>φῶς</u>.

[179] Further explanations of this can be found in Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and The* Timaeus *of Plato*, 159-162, 207, 290-291; Runia, *On the Creation of the Cosmos*, 163-173; Tobin, *The Creation of Man*, 58-65, 113-114; Radice, *Philo's Theology and Theory of Creation*, 131-135.

[180] See Philo, *Opif* 16. Explained further in Wolfson, *Philo: foundations of religious philosophy*, 204-206.

[181] See Philo, Abr. 122; Virt. 179; Ebr 42; Somn 1.76, 93; Spec 1.30.

[182] See Philo, *Opif*. 17, 19. This is explained further in chapter six of this thesis.

idea of it in his mind then, he constructs it (συνέστηκεν) into a visible reality.[183] God is not

the world, nor is he in the world. God's transcendence for Philo is safeguarded by the

development of the idea of an intermediate reality where God's ideas are immanent in the

world and mediated through the λόγος. In fact, the λόγος represents the totality of God's

ideas, he is the idea of ideas, an intermediate place through which the sensible world is

constructed.[184]


### 4.3.7 Insights gained into Colossians Christology from distinctive language and comparisons *with* Timaeus and Philo's corpus

Colossians 1:16a elaborates on Christ's supremacy over all things by introducing his role in

its creation, a pioneering idea in the *corpus Paulinum*. This has been explained through the

use of the first of three different prepositional phrases to explain Christ's role with God in

the creation process. This ἐν + dative typically evokes connotations of new existence in

Christ, but here is used with the word πάντα in world-construction terms. Τὰ πάντα is used

here to explain the totality of reality rather than the typical soteriological usage of the

*corpus Paulinum*. This is similar to τό πᾶν and cognates of *Timaeus*. *Timaeus* has his

δημιουργός acting within reality. Philo has reimagined this κόσμος construction, with God

using his own λόγος in κόσμος construction, preferring to use νοητὸς κόσμος and αἰσθητός

κόσμος rather than the ὄντα and γιγνόμενα of *Timaeus*.  Whereas in *Timaeus*, world-

construction is the domain of the δημιουργός, Colossians' Christ similar to Philo's λόγος

stands apart and over all things and has a curious role in its construction. Philo's λόγος as

νοητὸς κόσμος potentially offers a framework into Colossians' use of the spatial expression ἐν

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[183] See Philo, *Opif*. 17-18. See Further explanation in Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and The* Timaeus *of Plato*, 165.
[184] See Philo, *Mig*. 102-103 "….ἰδέα ἐστὶν ἰδεῶν, καθ᾽ ἥν ὁ θεὸς ἐτύπωσε τὸν κόσμον" See further explanation in Wolfson, *Philo: foundations of religious philosophy*, 76.

αὐτῷ for Christ. It is becoming apparent that when Colossians exhibits distinctive language from the *corpus Paulinum,* semantic and conceptual similarities can be found with Platonic language as exhibited through the paradigms of Philo as identified by Eltester, Chadwick, Sandmel and Runia in section 2.4.2.3.

**4.4 Summary**

Colossians 1:15-16a introduces the audience to Christ's relationship to God and creation. The distinctive language finds overt similarities with Platonic texts and ideas, as expressed in Philo. The God of Colossians 1:15a is expressed as transcendent, his immanence is expressed through his εἰκών. This εἰκών has priority over the reality and plays a curious role in its creation. These ideas and words are distinctive in the *corpus Paulinum*, but bear close similarity with Philo's λόγος doctrine. The final word of Colossians 1:16a introduces the audience to the author's cosmology. The author, though, does not appear constrained to comply with Platonic paradigms. Where *Timaeus* uses τό πᾶν to speak about γιγνόμενα. The impression is given that Colossians' τὰ πάντα has in mind a greater scope than the Platonic τό πᾶν. Does Colossians express a duality of reality? Can an examination from *Timaeus* and Philo yield further insights into the author's cosmology? This thesis will now consider the author's cosmology as expressed in Colossians 1:16b-d.

# CHAPTER FIVE – EXEGESIS OF COLOSSIANS 1:16B-D
## COLOSSIANS' COSMOLOGY

16 b     ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς,

   c     τὰ ὁρατὰ καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα

   d     εἴτε θρόνοι εἴτε κυριότητες εἴτε ἀρχαὶ εἴτε ἐξουσίαι

**Introduction**

Colossians 1:16b-d leads the audience into a purposeful digression from the author's

Christology to further elaborate on the nature of τὰ πάντα, through a sequence of eight

nouns. The intended purpose is *not* to be to present a detailed cosmology but to elaborate

on the implications of Christ's supremacy and creative work. This being the case, the section

illuminates the author's understanding of the nature of things.  The syntax suggests three

statements of reality: Colossians 1:16b has two preposition-article-noun expressions;

Colossians 1:16c has two articular neuter plurals; and Colossians 1:16d has four anarthrous

plural nouns. Noticeable throughout the sequence is the absence of a verb.

Colossians 1:16c has often been linked to 16b in some way and to a lesser extent 16d. Do

these eight nouns relate to one another? All three lines appear to be further explanations of

τὰ πάντα of 16a, e and 17b. Ernst Bammel suggested a very overt semantic relationship

between the nouns.[1] The connection is inferred through a chiastic structure:

     a ἐν τοῖς <u>οὐρανοῖς</u>

         b καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς <u>γῆς</u>

         b' τὰ <u>ὁρατὰ</u>

     a' καὶ τὰ <u>ἀόρατα</u>

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[1] *Ernst Bammel*, "Versuch zu *Col 1,15-20*," ZNW 52 (1961), 89, 92-95.

The heavens are invisible and the earth is visible. He also suggested that Colossians 1:16d

may also be connected to Colossians 1:16b-c through the following chiasm:

       a ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς
             b καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς
             b' τὰ ὁρατὰ
     a' καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα
             b εἴτε θρόνοι
     a εἴτε κυριότητες
     a' εἴτε ἀρχαὶ
             b' εἴτε ἐξουσίαι

He links the heavens with the invisible, and earth with the visible, then links this with an

inverse chiasm suggesting that θρόνοι and ἐξουσίαι are the visible entities and κυριότητες and

ἀρχαί are invisible ones.[2] This is but one of a number of suggestions of interrelationship

between the terms.[3] This chapter will explore the cosmology of Colossians 1:16b-d. It will

address Colossians 1:16b-c together and then 16d.


## 5.1 Colossians 1:16b-c

### 5.1.1 Syntactical Analysis and Usage in Colossians

### 5.1.1.1 Colossians 1:16b ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς

Colossians 1:16b introduces the audience to two preposition-article-noun expressions.

These are expressions of space/place, demarcations of the τὰ πάντα in 16a, and refer to the

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[2] *Bammel, Versuch zu Col 1,15-20*, 95.

[3] Wink says that the meaning of κυριότης blurs to become synonymous with ἐξουσία. See Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 20. Van Kooten suggests that θρόνος and κυριότης may have astronomical connotation and may represent things invisible. See van Kooten, *Cosmic Christology*, 122. Carr associated ἀρχαί and κυριότης as unseen and θρόνοι and ἐξουσίαι as visible. See Carr, *Angels and Principalities*, 48-49. These is also the noticeable pairing of ἀρχαί and ἐξουσίαι in 1 Cor 15:24; Col 1.16 2:10, 15; Eph 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Titus 3:1.

space/place that was created in Christ. The dative ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς is locative and ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς

is a genitive of place.[4]

### 5.1.1.1.1 Οὐρανός

The οὐρανός here is in the plural like the Hebrew שָׁמַיִם,[5] surprisingly different to the LXX

which is almost always in the singular.[6] The term οὐρανός is mentioned four other times in

Colossians. Twice in the plural, twice in the singular.[7] When used in the plural, the exact

same preposition-article-noun dative expression is found. This occurs once again with ἐπὶ

τῆς γῆς in Colossians 1:20 to conclude the hymn in an inverse order of the 16b expression

and with the conjunction εἴτε.  The other occasion is in Colossians 1:5 which locates the

place of the audience's hope that has come through faith.[8] The other two occasions are in

the singular. Colossians 1:23 is similar to 1:6 and speaks of hope, faith and the proclamation

of the gospel, the location is again given, this time instead of ἐν παντὶ τῷ κόσμῳ (in all the

cosmos) it is ἐν πάσῃ κτίσει τῇ ὑπὸ τὸν οὐρανόν (in all creation under heaven). It is unlikely

that the author means that everyone has heard the gospel or that the gospel mission is

completed. Rather it is a rhetorical expression to explain the universal scope and

significance of the gospel.[9] The final occurrence is in Colossians 4:1 where masters (κύριοι)

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[4] See Campbell, *Colossians and Philemon*, 11-12; Explanation of these can found in BDF § 185, 199; Wallace, *Greek Grammar – Beyond the Basics*, 124-125, 158-166.
[5] See Stettler's translation of the Greek back into Hebrew in *Der Kolosserhymnus*, 93
[6] The exception to this in the LXX seems to be when heaven(s) is personified and preceded by an imperative. See Deut 32:42; Isa 44:23; 49:13; Psalm 68:53 [HB 69:35]; 95:11 [HB 96:11]; 148:4.
[7] Plural Col 1:5, 20; Singular Col 1:23; 4:1.
[8] διὰ τὴν ἐλπίδα τὴν ἀποκειμένην ὑμῖν ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς, ἣν προηκούσατε ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τῆς ἀληθείας τοῦ εὐαγγελίου
[9] See O'Brien, *Colossians-Philemon*, 70-71.

are exhorted to treat slaves with justice and fairness knowing that they too are slaves to *their* master (κύριος) Jesus, whose abode is in heaven.[10]

### 5.1.1.1.2 Γῆ

In Colossians γῆ occurs on three other occasions, each with the exact same preposition-article-noun genitival expression.[11] In the second strophe of the hymn, with heaven(s) as already explained, then twice again, both times in ethical exhortation, given with a negative connotation that is antithetic to new existence of the saints in Christ.[12]

### 5.1.1.2 Colossians 1:16c τὰ ὁρατὰ καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα

The syntactical issues for Colossians 1:16c are straightforward; both are nominative neuter plurals[13] and are best understood adjectivally with an article acting as a 'substantiver' to denote a generic class, such as 'things visible,' and 'things invisible.'[14] They are connected by the καί, in a coordinate relationship like the two preposition-article-noun expressions in 16b. Ὁρατός does not appear again in Colossians, ἀόρατος has been used adjectivally to describe God in Colossians 1:15a, this is the only other occasion of its use in Colossians.

### 5.1.2 Lexicographical Investigation of Similarities, Differences and Distinctiveness within the *Corpus Paulinum* and Biblical Literature

### 5.1.2.1 Heaven and Earth

### 5.1.2.1.1 Pairing in the *corpus Paulinum*

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[10] Col 4:1 Οἱ κύριοι, τὸ δίκαιον καὶ τὴν ἰσότητα τοῖς δούλοις παρέχεσθε, εἰδότες ὅτι καὶ ὑμεῖς ἔχετε κύριον <u>ἐν οὐρανῷ</u>.
[11] Col 1:20; 3:2, 5.
[12] Col 3:2 τὰ ἄνω φρονεῖτε, μὴ τὰ <u>ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς</u>; Col 3:5 Νεκρώσατε οὖν τὰ μέλη τὰ <u>ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς</u>
[13] There is little reason to consider them to be in the accusative rather that nominative.
[14] See BDF § 263; Wallace, *Greek Grammar – Beyond the Basics*, 227, 231-32; Harris, *Colossians & Philemon*, 45.

In Biblical literature, the term οὐρανός is frequently paired with γῆ. It is a common Hebraism.[15] What is surprising about the pairing in the *corpus Paulinum* is: (1) how *un*common it is;[16] (2) the non-uniform renderings and (3) the varied use of singular and plural for οὐρανός.[17] O'Brien suggests that "Paul uses both singular and plural forms of οὐρανός with a singular meaning,"[18] his suggestion potentially implies an arbitrary choice between the singular and the plural. Perhaps an investigation of Platonic concepts may produce greater clarity?

In the Pauline letters, οὐρανός and γῆ only appear together three times, and with vastly different renderings and connotations. (1) 1 Corinthians 8:5 is the only example similar to Colossians 1:16 where the same ἐν + dative, ἐπί + genitive construction is given, but the nouns lack an article and οὐρανός is singular and has the εἴτε rather than the καί, like in Colossians 1:20. It is used to locate the λεγόμενοι θεοί (so-called gods), being in both places, heaven and earth.[19]  The other two potential references are: (2) 1 Corinthians 15:47 γῆ is

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[15] Gen 1:1; 2:1, 4; 11:4; 14:19, 22; 26:4; 27:28, 39; 28:12; Exodus 9:23; 20:4, 11; 31:17 Deut 3:24; 4:26, 32, 39; 10:14; 11:21; 30:19; 31:28; 32:1; 1 Sam 2:10; 2 Sam 18:9; 1 Kings 8:23, 27, 43; 2 Kings 19:15 1 Chron 16:31; 21:16; 29:11; 2Chron 2:12; 6:14, 18, 33; 36:23; Ezra 1:2, 5:11 Neh 9:6; Job 20:27; 28:24; 37:3 38:33; Psalms 8:1; 19:4; 50:4; 57:5, 11; 68:8; 69:34; 73:9, 25; 76:8; 78:69; 89:11; 96:11; 102: 19, 25; 103:11; 108:5; 113:6; 115:15-16; 121:2; 124:8; 134.2; 135:6; 146:6 147:8; 148:13 Prov 3:18; 25:3; 30:4; Eccl 5:2; Isa 1:2; 13:5, 13; 24:18; 37:16 37:16; 40:12, 22; 43:23-24; 44:22;45:8; 48:13; 51:13, 16; 55:10; 65:17; 66:22; Jer 4:23, 28; 10:11-13; 23:24; 31:37; 32:17; 33:25 51:15-16, 48; Dan 4:15, 20, 22, 35; 6:27; 8:10; Hos 2:21; Joel 2:10, 30; 3:16; Amos 9:6; Hab 3:3; Hag 1:10; 2:6, 21; Zech 6:5.
Outside the *corpus Paulinum*, in the rest of the NT Matt 5:18; 6:10; 11:25; 16:19; 18:18; 18:19; 23:9; [24:30], 35; 28:18; Mk 13:27, 32: Lk2:14; 10:21; 16:17; 21:33; Jn 3:31; Acts 2:19 [Joel 3:3 LXX]; 4:24; 7:49 [Isa 66:2 LXX]; 14:15; 17:24 Heb 12:25-26; James 5:18; Rev 5:3; 5:13; 9:1; 10:6; 12:4; 14:7; 18:1; 20:11; 21:4.
Apocrypha: Tob 10:13;13:11; Judith 7:28; 9:12; 13:18; Wis 9:16; 18:16; Esth (Greek) 13:10; Sirach 1:3; 16:18; Baruch 1:11; Epist Jer 1:55; Bel 1:5; 1 Macc 2:37; 2 Macc 7:28; 1 Esdras 4:34; Prayer of Manasseh 1:22; 4 Esdras 2:14; 6:38; 11:2; 16:55.
[16] 1 Cor 8:5; 15:47 Phil 2:10; Deutero-Pauline Col 1.16, 20; [3:2]; Eph 1:10; 3:15.
[17] Singular usage: Rom 1:18; 10:6 [quoting LXX Deut 30:12]; 1 Cor 8:5; 15:47; 2 Cor 5:2 Gal 1:8; Col 1:23; 4:1; 1 Thess 4:16; 2 Thess 1:7. Plural usage: 1 Thess 1:10 Phil 3:20; Col 1:5, 16, 20; Eph 1:10; 3:15; 6:9. A Special case can be found in 2 Cor 12:2 where a 'subdivision' of heaven is referred to as the τρίτου οὐρανοῦ.
[18] Peter T. O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians.* NICGT. (Edited by I. Howard Marshall and W. Ward Gasque. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 461.
[19] 1 Cor 8:5 καὶ γὰρ εἴπερ εἰσὶν λεγόμενοι θεοὶ εἴτε ἐν οὐρανῷ εἴτε ἐπὶ γῆς

used first and then οὐρανός. This verse is used to explain Paul's second Adam Christology for the present and future existence of the saints.[20] In Philippians 2:10 (3) the pair occurs as part of a tri-partite designation of reality but with the adjective ἐπουράνιος (heavenly) rather than οὐρανός.[21] In all three occasions, there are noticeable syntactic differences. In the wider *corpus Paulinum* outside of Colossians, the exact phrase ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς occurs only in 2 Corinthians 5:1 where a future heavenly existence for the saints is described.[22]

The pair of οὐρανός and γῆ appear twice in Ephesians. Ephesians 1:10 is part of a very similar expression to Colossians 1:16b, referring to Christ and in association with τὰ πάντα but with a slight stylistic difference, that of a dative plural for heaven preceded by an ἐπί instead of ἐν.[23] The tone of the verse implies an eschatological meaning rather than the creation emphasis in Colossians 1:16b. In Ephesians 3:15 the pair is used with the same preposition but an anarthrous noun is used in a wider expression of God's universal fatherhood.[24]

### 5.1.2.1.2 Ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς

### 5.1.2.1.2.1 LXX

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[20] "ὁ πρῶτος ἄνθρωπος ἐκ γῆς χοϊκός, ὁ δεύτερος ἄνθρωπος ἐξ οὐρανοῦ." See C. Kinsley Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians.* (Peabody Hendrickson, 1968), 375-376; Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians.* NICNT. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1987), 791-793.

[21] "ἵνα ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ πᾶν γόνυ κάμψῃ ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ καταχθονίων." See O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, 243-245 for further explanation.

[22] See further explanation in Ralph P. Martin, *Second Corinthians,* WBC vol. 40, (Edited by Ralph P. Martin; Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1986), 258. Interestingly, heavenly language reverts to the singular in 2 Corinthians in next verse. "Οἴδαμεν γὰρ ὅτι ἐὰν ἡ ἐπίγειος ἡμῶν οἰκία τοῦ σκήνους καταλυθῇ, οἰκοδομὴν ἐκ θεοῦ ἔχομεν, οἰκίαν ἀχειροποίητον αἰώνιον ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς. ² καὶ γὰρ ἐν τούτῳ στενάζομεν τὸ οἰκητήριον ἡμῶν τὸ ἐξ οὐρανοῦ ἐπενδύσασθαι ἐπιποθοῦντες."

[23] "...τὰ πάντα ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ, τὰ ἐπὶ τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἐν αὐτῷ."

[24] Further explained in Markus Barth, *Ephesians 1-3.* AB vol 34a. (Edited by William F. Albright and David N. Freedman. Garden City: Doubleday, 1974), 367-68, 380-82; Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* WBC vol.42 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 202-03.

The phrase ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς occurs only twice in the LXX.[25] The singular ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ occurs commonly, and very frequently with the γῇ preposition-article expression of Colossians 1:16b.[26] This pairing is often accompanied by spatial designations, such as ἄνω (above) for heaven or κάτω (below) for earth.

### 5.1.2.1.2.2 The New Testament

In the NT ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς and its singular form are a common phrase. In Matthew[27] it is used as an expression of Jesus where he states the location of the Father and rewards associated with kingdom (of heaven) living (in the plural).[28] In Revelation the phrase is used in the singular to denote locality.[29] In Hebrews, it appears twice with Christological significance. Hebrews 8:1 is a likely illusion the Psalm 110:1 [LXX 109:1], to locate the abode of the exulted Jesus a high priest, and in Hebrews 9:23, again explaining Jesus as the perfect high priest entering the heavenly tabernacle. A similar, although not exact, pairing can be found in John. Where Jesus is expressed as coming from heaven,[30] or 'above' in contrast with earth/cosmos or 'below,'[31] an implicit echo to the spatial association in the LXX. This may give potential insight to use of ἄνω, κάτω and γῇ in Colossians 3:1-5.

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[25] In Psalm 89:2 [LXX 88:3] as the place of YHWH's עוֹלָם חֶסֶד (LXX αἰῶνα ἔλεος). In Psalm 115:3 the Greek text [LXX 113:11] has in addition to the translation of Hebrew "…ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐν τῇ γῇ". See further explanation in Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*. CC. (Translated by Hilton C. Oswald; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 376-77.

[26] A common Greek translation of בַּשָּׁמַיִם וּבָאָרֶץ and variations. See Ex 20:4; Deut 3:24; 4:39; 5:8; 1 Kings 8:23; 1 Chron 29:11; Ps 72:25; 113:11 [HB 115:3]; 134:6 [HB 135:6]; Eccl 5:1; Joel 3:3 [HB & LXX]; Jer 28:16; Ezek 32:8 Tobit 5:17.

[27] Matthew 5:12, 16; 6:1, 9; 7:11, 21; 10:32-33; 16:17-19

[28] Hagner describes the phrase with a temporal (future) and eschatological connotation. See Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13.* WBC vol. 33a. (Edited by Ralph P Martin. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993), 95.

[29] Rev 4:1-2; 5:3, 13; 8:1; 11:15, 19; 12:1, 3, 7-8, 10; 13:6; 14:17; 15:1, 5; 19:1, 14.

[30] See John 3:13, 31; 6:32-58;

[31] John 3:31 Ὁ ἄνωθεν ἐρχόμενος ἐπάνω πάντων ἐστίν· ὁ ὢν ἐκ τῆς γῆς ἐκ τῆς γῆς ἐστιν καὶ ἐκ τῆς γῆς λαλεῖ. ὁ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἐρχόμενος [ἐπάνω πάντων ἐστίν]·
John 8:23 "ὑμεῖς ἐκ τῶν κάτω ἐστέ, ἐγὼ ἐκ τῶν ἄνω εἰμί· ὑμεῖς ἐκ τούτου τοῦ κόσμου ἐστέ, ἐγὼ οὐκ εἰμὶ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου."

**5.1.2.1.3 ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς**

By itself, the phrase ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς is extremely common outside of the *corpus Paulinum*,

occurring frequently in the LXX, the Synoptics (especially Matthew), and Revelation. In the

*corpus Paulinum*, the phrase occurs only once in the Pauline letters. In Romans 9:28, itself a

conflated quotation form LXX Isaiah 10:23 and 28:22b, and used to locate the place where

the Lord's δικαιοσύνη is exercised.[32]  The other two occurrences are in Ephesians 1:10 which

has already been explained[33] and Ephesians 6:3, a reference to the fifth commandment in

LXX Exodus 20:12.

**5.1.2.2 Ὁρατός and Ἀόρατος**

Both these nouns are far less common in the *corpus Paulinum* and the wider Biblical

literature than οὐρανός and γῆ. As has already been stated ἀόρατος occurs five times in the

NT.[34] This is the only occasion where ἀόρατος does not refer to God, but rather to part of

creation, a unique usage of the term. The term ὁρατός is a *hapax legomenon* in the NT. The

pairing of ἀόρατος with ὁρατός forms a unique combination not only in the *corpus Paulinum*

but in the wider Biblical literature.

**5.1.3 Summary of Distinctive Language**

The pairing of οὐρανός with γῆ is uncommon in the *corpus Paulinum*, but finds similarities in

the LXX. The two preposition-article-noun expressions in Colossians 1:16b occur together in

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[32] Further explained in Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary.* AB: vol. 38. (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1993), 574-75; James D.G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16.* WBC vol 38b. (Dallas: Word, 1988)*,* 573.
[33] See sections 5.1.2.1 and 6.2.2.2 of thesis.
[34] See section 4.1.2.2. Rom 1:20; Col 1:15, 16; 1 Tim 1:17; Heb 11:27. The Johannine literature and 1 Timothy refer to God in a similar way as unseen. See the following with a negative: ὁράω in John 1:18; 5:37; 6:46; 1 John 4:20; 1 Tim 6:16 and θεάομαι in 1 John 4:12.

a similar fashion to that of 1 Corinthians 8:5 and Ephesians 1:10, but in Colossians 1:16b the heavens are not the abode of Christ and God, nor so-called gods; nor the eschatological hope and destination of the saints. They along with the earth are the creation of God in Christ, here God and Christ receive a heightened ontological status *beyond* reality. In Colossians and the wider *corpus Paulinum* both the singular and plural of οὐρανός are used, more often the singular, following the LXX. Colossians 1:16b may allude to Colossians 2:20-3:5 which finds similarities with spatial above and below language of the LXX, Ephesians, Hebrews and John.

Τὰ ὁρατὰ καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα is a strikingly unique phrase in Biblical literature for two reasons. (1) It is a unique pairing within the NT and the LXX. (2) It is the use of the term ἀόρατα to refer not to God as is the case in every other NT occurrence, but to speak of some aspect of τὰ πάντα.

**5.1.4 Emerging Issues for Further Analysis**

Given the highly distinctive nature of the 16b-c in the *corpus Paulinum*, this thesis will now turn to Plato and Philo to explore potential insights into these two pairings. The first issue requiring further analysis is the use of the plural for οὐρανός? Second, can the pairing of οὐρανός with γῆ and ἀόρατος with ὁρατός or something similar explain the totality of reality in some way?

**5.1 5 Similarities with *Timaeus* and Platonic Texts**

**5.1.5.1 Οὐρανός**

In *Timaeus* οὐρανός is not typically paired with γῆ.[35] The term οὐρανός is used in the singular[36] and is synonymous with κόσμος,[37] as a title for the product of the constructed work of the δημιουργός.[38] *Timaeus* uses the singular but refers to it in a collective sense suggesting it is made of many components.[39] It is spoken of as visible,[40] spherical[41] and comprising of two hemispheres.[42]

**5.1.5.2 Γῆ**

The word γῆ rather than being paired with οὐρανός is initially paired with πῦρ as the two principle components that the δημιουργός used to construct (συνίστημι) the σῶμα (body) of the πᾶς.[43] These evoke two of four ῥιζώματα (roots) of the Pre-Socratic philosopher Empedocles (c. BCE 492-432).[44] Πῦρ coincides with ὁρατὸς (visible), γῆ with ἁπτός (tangible). Between these two opposites were placed two μεσότης (middle [points]) to make the τὸ τοῦ παντὸς σῶμα a στερεὰ (solid). These were the remaining ῥιζώματα of Empedocles, ὕδωρ and ἀέρα. These were συνέδησεν (bounded) and συνεστήσατο (constructed) into an οὐρανὸν ὁρατὸν καὶ ἁπτόν.[45]

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[35] Exceptions are Plato, *Timaeus*, 22d, 40c, 40e [Γῆς τε καὶ Οὐρανοῦ], 52b, 90a. Where the ordering is reversed, perhaps to reflect Hesiod, *Theogony*, 126. There are occasional examples of the pairing in the wider Platonic canon. See Plato, *Pheado*, 96b, 99b, 108e-110b; *Philebus*, 28c.

[36] Plato, *Timaeus*, 22d, 23d, 28b, 31a-b, 32b, 34b, 36e, 37d-e, 38b, 39b, 39d, 40a, 40c, 40e, 41a-b, 47a-b, 48b, 52b, 52d, 63a, 81d, 90a, 91e, 92c.

[37] Plato, *Timaeus*, 28b, 31a-b, 32b, 37d-e, 38b, 40c, 47b, 48b, 52d, 63a, 91e, 92c; See also *Statesman*, 269d

[38] Plato, *Timaeus*, 28b.

[39] ὁ δὴ πᾶς οὐρανὸς *Timaeus*, 28b and; οὐρανὸν ὅλον whole heaven 28b, 39b, 62d 63a. See also in Plato, *Philebus*, 30b.

[40] Plato, *Timaeus*, 32b, 36e.

[41] Plato, *Timaeus*, 34b, 36e, 40a, 62d, 63a; *Philebus*, 29e.

[42] Plato, *Timaeus*, 33b-c.

[43] Plato, *Timaeus*, 31b, 32b; See also a potential reference in Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Δ 5.2, 1013b.

[44] Aristotle, *On Corruption and Generation*, 2.6 (333b); Aëtius 1.3: (DK B6); DL 8.76; Simplicius, *Physics*, 158, 13 (KR 424); 159, 21 (KR 425); 25, 21 (DK 31A 28/ KR 426). See John Burnet, *Greek Philosophy - Thales to Plato*. (London: MacMillan & Co LTD, 1964 [1914]) 55.

[45] See Plato, *Timaeus*, 31b-32c.

From this point onwards γῆ is often spoken with the other three πῦρ, ὕδωρ, ἀέρα.[46] They are

expressed of as σώματα (bodies),[47] or more specifically σώματα ὀρατὰ (visible bodies), things

apprehended by the senses, in contrast to the invisible soul,[48] that was around 'prior [πρό]

to the becoming of heaven.'[49] Γῆ is likened to the form of a cube that is the most

ἀκινητοτάτη (immovable),[50] something that will never change into another form.[51] It also

shares a close relationship of composition with the element of water.[52] Of the four

elements, γῆ is referred to as (first and eldest of all the gods) formed by the δημιουργός.[53]


Around γῆ are the seven πλανητά (wanderers/planets) that orbit in circles.[54] The closest

'planet' to orbit is the σελήνη (moon), followed by the ἥλιος (sun), then the other πλανητά

and ἄστρα (stars).[55] These serve in Plato's cosmology as the custodians of time (explained

further in section 6.2.5.2).[56]


## 5.1.5.3 Visible/Invisible

Platonic dialogues and ideas provide insight into Colossians' conceptual framing of visible

and invisible. A necessary digression is required to explore this idea in the wider Platonic

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[46] Plato, *Timaeus*, 32b, 32c, 42c, 42e, 46d, 48b, 49c, 51a-b, 53b, 55d, 56d-e, 73b, 74c [not air], 78a [not fire], 82a, 86a.
[47] Plato, *Timaeus*, 53c, 82a, 86a.
[48] Plato, *Timaeus*, 46d. λεκτέον ψυχήν - τοῦτο δὲ ἀόρατον, πῦρ δὲ καὶ ὕδωρ καὶ γῆ καὶ ἀὴρ σώματα πάντα ὀρατὰ γέγονεν
[49] Plato, *Timaeus*, 48b "δὴ πρὸ τῆς οὐρανοῦ γενέσεως". The term πρό will be further treated in section 6.2.5.2.
[50] Plato, *Timaeus*, 55d "γῆ μὲν δὴ τὸ κυβικὸν εἶδος δῶμεν: ἀκινητοτάτη γὰρ τῶν τεττάρων γενῶν γῆ καὶ τῶν σωμάτων πλαστικωτάτη"
[51] Plato, *Timaeus*, 56d "οὐ γὰρ εἰς ἄλλο γε εἶδος ἔλθοι ποτ' ἄν". See also 59b.
[52] Plato, *Timaeus*, 60e-61c, 66d.
[53] Plato, *Timaeus*, 40c "πρώτην καὶ πρεσβυτάτην θεῶν".
[54] Plato, *Timaeus*, 38d, 39b.
[55] Plato, *Timaeus*, 38c-d. See further explanation of their understanding in the ancient world in Wright, *Cosmology in Antiquity*, 50-51.
[56] See a thorough treatment of this in Taylor, *A Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, 192-221; Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, 72-93, 105-116.

corpus. Plato's doctrine of forms provides a key to understanding invisible with visible.[57]

This is demonstrated by the terms εἶδος and ἰδέα. They are derived from the verb ἰδεῖν,

meaning to see, with the connotation of both terms meaning 'visible form'.[58] The usage of

these two words are as W. David Ross states the fundamental principles of Plato's

metaphysics.[59]


**5.1.5.3.1 *Phaedo* – Platonic Forms and Knowledge**

One sees the close usage of invisible with visible (ἀόρατος with ὁρατός) in the *Phaedo*.[60] In

*Phaedo*, we see emerging doctrines that will become important in *Timaeus*. In particular,

that there are two εἴδη τῶν ὄντων (forms of being), they are the invisible and visible. He will

go on to give a lengthy account about this in *Phaedo* 79a-88c, incorporated into this is the

development of the Platonic doctrines of the soul (ψυχή) and body, and epistemology.

Throughout the passage the soul is likened to the invisible, an existence that is explained as

always remaining the same, pure, eternal, immortal and unchanging and is understood, not

through the senses but is grasped by νοητός (intelligence), the pursuit of philosophy. Here in

*Phaedo* the concept of invisible is expressed some 15 times.[61] The most common term here

is ἀϊδής, with ἀόρατος being used only twice.[62] In this passage the invisible soul is contrasted

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[57] For a thorough explanation of Plato's doctrine of the forms see Burnet, *Greek Philosophy - Thales to Plato*, 125-145 (§ 119-136); Copleston, *History of Philosophy Volume 1*, 163-206; Ross, *Plato's Theory of Ideas*; Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy: Volume 4*, 340-45, 503-521;  Terence H. Irwin, *A History of Western Philosophy: 1 Classical Thought.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 88-101.
[58] Ross, *Plato's Theory of Ideas*, 13*.*
[59] Ross, *Plato's Theory of Ideas*, 13.
[60] The *Phaedo* is dialogue between Phaedo and Echecrates where Phaedo retells his last conversation with Socrates just prior to his [Socrates] death by the drinking of hemlock. Most Platonic scholars assume *Phaedo* to come from the middle period of Plato's writing phase and pre-dates *Timaeus*.
[61] Mostly in Plato, *Phaedo*, 79a-c, 80e-81c, 83b and 86a.
[62] Plato, *Phaedo*, 79b, 86a.

with the σῶμα (body) which is comprehended by the senses (αἰσθητός), the chief being sight, and always explained as being ὁρατός.

### 5.1.5.3.1 The *Republic*

In the *Republic* at the end of book 6 and the beginning of book 7 Plato threads three stories together to speak about cosmology, epistemology and ontology, the concepts of invisible and visible are a prominent feature throughout. The three stories are: (1) The Sun and the Idea of the Good (6.504e-509c); (2) The Divided Line (6.509c-511e); and (3) The Allegory of the Cave (7.514a-518a).[63]

### 5.1.5.3.1.1 The Sun and the Idea of the Good

The first story recalls the importance of the sun in making things visible. In *Phaedo*, the term ὁρατός is used to describe this. In the Republic, not only is this term used, but also the infinitive ὁρᾶσθαι and the articular participle plural τὰ ὁρώμενα.  The previous designations for things visible are paired in contrast with the epistemological term νοητός, and can take a spatial connotation when explaining the doctrine of the forms. For Plato, there is an ἰδέα (form) for everything, such as the good, beauty, etc. The form of the ἀγαθός (good) is located by a metaphysical spatiality, the νοητός τόπος.

### 5.1.5.3.1.2 The Divided Line

The second story likens comprehension to a divided line, between ἐπιστήμη (knowledge) and δόξα (opinion). The former has to do with νοητός the latter with ὁρατός.[64] These two are

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[63] See a thorough treatment in Ross, *Plato's Theory of Ideas*, 39-80.
[64] See Plato, *Republic*, 6.509d.

further subdivided into four; νόησις (understanding), [65] διάνοια (thought), πίστις (belief) and εἰκασία (imagination).[66] These are considered to be states of being of the soul. The important epistemological concept here is that νοητός and ὁρατός are not separate realities but the former is understood to govern the latter. Ross' warns against assuming a complete bifurcation of the universe into ideas and sensible things is important to consider here.[67] Plato's bifurcation of reality is where the superior governs the lesser.

### 5.1.5.3.1.3 The Allegory of the Cave

The next story, which is at the beginning of book 7, is the Allegory of the Cave.[68] It reiterates again the merger of epistemology and cosmology, this time with an ethical implication. Plato here uses a number of opposites to draw the audience to the ethical aspiration of the ascent of the soul to the νοητός τόπος. From prison to freedom,[69] down to up,[70] dark to light.[71] It is not the intention of this thesis to explore Platonic epistemology, but the important point to be made here is that concepts surrounding invisible and visible have an epistemological and ontological connotation to them as well as spatial and cosmological.[72]

### 5.1.5.3.1 *Timaeus*

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[65] Plato, *Republic*, 6.511d-e.
[66] This last and lowest form of understanding also is defined as shadows and phantasms/reflections in the water. See Plato, *Republic*, 6:510a λέγω δὲ τὰς εἰκόνας πρῶτον μὲν τὰς σκιάς, ἔπειτα τὰ ἐν τοῖς ὕδασι φαντάσματα.
[67] Ross, *Plato's Theory of Ideas*, 25.
[68] Plato, *Republic*, 7:514a-517a.
[69] Plato, *Republic*, 7:517b.
[70] Plato, *Republic*, 7:517b-c.
[71] Plato, *Republic*, 7:518a.
[72] For a detailed explanation of Platonic Epistemology see Burnet, *Greek Philosophy - Thales to Plato*, 139-143 (§ 131-133); Copleston, *History of Philosophy Volume 1*, 142-162; William K.C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy: Volume 4, Plato: The Man and His Dialogues: Earlier Period.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 503-521; *A History of Greek Philosophy: Volume 5*, 73-120; Irwin, *A History of Western Philosophy: 1 Classical Thought*, 88-89.

These ideas are further developed in *Timaeus*. In the first section of the monologue, the epistemological language of the *Phaedo* and *Republic* and the concept of the doctrine of the forms are developed and used to explain reality. The unchanging ὄντα is 'embraced' by intellect with reason, the changing γιγνόμενα by opinion and unreasoning sense [perception].[73] In *Timaeus*, one does not equate ἀόρατος with οὐρανός and ὁρατός with γῆ. Both οὐρανός and γῆ are represented as ὁρατά which is tangible and perceptible to the senses, they are part of the γιγνόμενα. The term γῆ is one of the four elements of the κόσμος. The term οὐρανός, as previously stated, a synonym for κόσμος, is that which God constructed to be both visible and tangible.[74] In *the Republic,* the contents of heaven (embroidery of the heavens) are described by the superlative (κάλλιστα) as the most beautiful of things visible.[75]

The ἀόρατα in *Timaeus* is that which originates, not with the γιγνόμενα, but from ὄντα. Things described as ἀόρατα are the ψυχή (soul),[76] the unchanging,[77] things unable to be apprehended by sense.[78] The terms ὁρατός and ἀόρατα do not appear together in *Timaeus*, exactly like they do in Colossians 1:16c but words of close association and of close semantic intention do. Often in Platonic works, including *Timaeus*, expressions of reality coincide with the concepts associated with ἀόρατος of ὁρατός. The former with ὄντα, the latter with γιγνόμενα. Platonic language uses a number of synonyms to frame the same concept. For

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[73] Plato, *Timaeus*, 28a "τὸ μὲν δὴ <u>νοήσει μετὰ λόγου περιληπτόν</u> …. τὸ δ᾽ αὖ <u>δόξῃ μετ᾽ αἰσθήσεως ἀλόγου</u> δοξαστόν." See further explanation in Taylor, *A Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, 62; Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, 24

[74] Plato, *Timaeus*, 30a-b, 32b [ὁ θεός]…συνέδησεν καὶ συνεστήσατο <u>οὐρανὸν ὁρατὸν</u> καὶ <u>ἁπτόν</u>; 33c, 93c

[75] Plato, Republic, 7.529c "ταῦτα μὲν <u>τὰ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ποικίλματα</u>, ἐπείπερ <u>ἐν ὁρατῷ πεποίκιλται</u>, κάλλιστα μὲν ἡγεῖσθαι καὶ ἀκριβέστατα τῶν τοιούτων ἔχειν…"

[76] Plato, *Timaeus*, 36e, 46d.

[77] Plato, *Timaeus*, 52a.

[78] Plato, *Timaeus*, 91d.

ἀόρατος, ἀιδές is also used and is known by νοητός and is often associated with ψυχή.

Ὁρατός is known by αἰσθητός and is associated with σῶμα.

**5.1.6 Similarities with Philo's Corpus**

**5.1.6.1 Heaven and Earth**

**5.1.6.1.1 Use of the LXX**

Philo often uses the Jewish Bible pairing of οὐρανός and γῆ.[79] A noticeable point of departure

from *Timaeus* is that κόσμος and οὐρανός are not synonymous terms for Philo. He, like the

LXX, uses the singular of οὐρανός, whether paired with γῆ or not.[80] When used together they

seek to explain the totality of things.[81] Philo also uses another pair, οὐρανός and κόσμος, (not

as synonyms) to express the totality of reality, which is often proceeded by the adjective

σύμπας.[82] In Philo, like Plato, there is no use of the plural preposition-article-noun

expression (in Colossians 1:16b) for the heaven(s). On three occasions he uses ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ,

these are references to the LXX Deuteronomy 4:39.[83]

**5.1.6.1.2 Geocentric View of Reality**

Philo, like Plato, seems to suggest a geocentric view of reality,[84] with οὐρανός comprising

ἑπτὰ κύκλοις (seven circles) or σφαῖραι (spheres),[85] which correspond to seven πλάνης

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[79] Philo, *Opif*. 26, 29, 45, 111, 129, *Leg*. 1.1, 19, 21; 2.9; 3.4, 42, 82, 3.99, 101; *Cher*. 62, 111; *Post*. 65; *Deus* 19, 79, 155, 181; *Ebr*. 105; *Her*. 110; 122; *Mos*. 2.105; *Spec*. 4.232; *Aet*. 19. Sometimes reversing the order which may reflect the Platonic ordering in *Timaeus* to speak of a migration of the soul. See Philo, *Opif*. 62, 171, *Cher*. 41 plant. 145; *Det*. 88; *Abr*. 161. See section 5.1.5.3.1.3.
[80] An exception to this seems to be Philo, *Mig*. 178.
[81] Philo, *Opif*. 111; *Det*. 80; *Deus* 19.
[82] See Philo, *Cher*. 88; *Sacr*. 40; *Det*. 62, 90; *Deus* 30, 62; *Mig*. 138; *Mut*. 140; *Somn*. 1.243; *Abr* 57, 166; *Mos*. 2.53, 209; *Spec*. 1,336; 2.255; *Vir*. 212.
[83] Philo, *Leg*. 3.4, 82; *Mig*. 182.
[84] Philo, *Mos*. 1.212; *QG*. 1.64.
[85] Philo, *Cher*. 21; *Her*. 225 *Somn*. 203; *Dec*. 57.

(wanderers/planets) which revolved around γῆ.[86] It comprises of two ἡμισφαιρίοιν (hemispheres), [87] which are allegorically likened to the two cherubim on the Ark of the Covenant.[88] What relationship does οὐρανός have with γῆ?

### 5.1.6.1.3 Heaven is Superior to Earth

Heaven is considered superior to earth,[89] the latter being assigned as κακός (evil/bad), the former ἀγαθός (good).[90] Heaven is spoken of spatially as ἄνω (above), earth as κάτω (below).[91] Both are used together to speak allegorically of the σῶμα (body) and the ψυχή (soul) or νοῦς (mind) and the αἴσθησις (senses).[92] Philo gives primacy to οὐρανός in his allegorical exegesis of Jacob's ladder,[93] where it is the head of the root of which earth is the foundation.[94] Interestingly heaven may also be part of the sensible world. It is the visible and highest part of reality which humans can observe with the chief of their senses, sight.[95]

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[86] Philo, *Opif*. 111-113. further explanation can be found in Runia, *On the Creation of the Cosmos*, 284. A concise statement of Philo's cosmology can be found in *Congr*. 104 "ἐννέα γὰρ ὁ κόσμος ἔλαχε μοίρας, ἐν οὐρανῷ μὲν ὀκτώ, τήν τε ἀπλανῆ καὶ ἑπτὰ τὰς πεπλανημένας ἐν τάξεσι φερομένας ταῖς αὐταῖς, ἐνάτην δὲ γῆν σὺν ὕδατι καὶ ἀέρι." (For the world had nine portions assigned to it, eight in heaven, namely the portion of the fixed stars and the seven planets which are all borne forward in the same arrangement, and the ninth being the earth in conjunction with the air and water).

[87] Philo, *Mos*. 2.98, 122-123, 133; *Dec*. 57; *Spec*. 1.86. See explanation in Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and The* Timaeus *of Plato*, 186-187; Gert J. Steyn, "Elements of the universe in Philo's De Vita Mosis: Cosmological theology or theological cosmology?". *In die Skriflig* 47, no. 2 (2013): 2.

[88] Philo, *Cher*. 23 (21-30) This is further explained in Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and The* Timaeus *of Plato*, 209-210; Fred Strickert, "Philo and Cherubim." *SPhiloA* 8 (1996): 48-51. Similar allegorical usages for τὰ Χερουβὶμ can be found in *Mos*. 2.97-98; and *QG* 1.57.

[89] Philo, *Mos*. 1.217.

[90] Philo, *Fug*. 62.

[91] Philo, *Mig*. 182.

[92] Philo, *Conf*. 96, 133; *Fug*. 192; *Somn*. 1.35; *Virt* 85; Spec. 3.202.

[93] Gen 28:10-22.

[94] Philo, *Somn*. 1.144.

[95] See Philo, *Plant.* 21.

**5.1.6.1.4 The Four Elements**

Philo also like Plato mentions γῆ with πῦρ, ὕδωρ, ἀέρα as a regular quartet.[96] One way he adapts Plato's language is with the inclusion of other items in the totality of existence, such as in *Deus* 107.[97]

χάριν ὄντα θεοῦ τὰ πάντα, γῆν, ὕδωρ, ἀέρα, πῦρ, ἥλιον, ἀστέρας, οὐρανόν, ζῷα καὶ φυτὰ σύμπαντα

Fire is also spoken about by Philo as possessing a different or even heavenly quality.[98] This might explain the reason why Philo often only mentions the three, leaving fire out.[99] He also seems to sometimes substitute οὐρανός for πῦρ.[100] He sometimes includes heaven as well as fire with other phenomena.,[101] sometimes leaves out fire but includes other phenomena,[102] and on occasion speaks of heaven as a fifth element.[103] Philo appears to be polyvariant with his language about οὐρανός. But as Runia suggests remains true to the Biblical account of it as part of the cosmos rather than describing it as the whole.[104]

**5.1.6.1.5 On ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς**

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[96] Philo, *Opif.* 146; *Deus* 107; *Agr.* 51; *Plant.* 3-4, 6, 10, 12, *Conf.* 157; *Her.* 134-136, 146, 197-198, 226, 281-282; *Congr.* 117; *Fug.* 110; *Mos.* 1.96-97, 143; 2.88, 133, 148; *Dec.* 31, 53, 54 [water replaced with sea]; *Spec.* 1.97; 2.255; 4.118; *Aet.* 24-25, 33, 45, 87, 103, 107, 110, 115; *QG.* 1.64; 3.6, 3.49.

[97] Philo, *Deus* 107 "…that all things that exist, the earth, the water, the air, the fire, the sun, the stars, the heaven, all animals and plants whatever, are the grace of God."

[98] Philo, *Det.* 62; *Somn.*1.33; *Abr.* 159; *Mos.* 2.148.

[99] Philo, *Opif.* 84; *Plant.* 14; *Conf.* 136; *Ebr.* 106; *Congr.* 104; Mut. 59; *Mos.* 103, 202; 212; 2.121, 126; *Spec.* 3.8; 4.118; *QG.* 1.7; 3.3.

[100] Philo, *Opif.* 29; *Leg.* 3.5, 301; *Cher.* 62, 111; *Sacr.* 97; *Det.* 88-89; *Plant.* 127; *Ebr.* 106; *Her.* 247; Somn. 1.16, 39, 134; 2.116; *Mos.* 1.113, 212; 2.37, 133, 238; Spec. 1.94, 207; 3.152; *QG* 1.64; 3.45. See Steyn, *Elements of the universe*, 4.

[101] Philo, *Deus* 107; *Plant.* 12; Spec 2:255.

[102] Philo, *Mut.* 107.

[103] Philo, *QG* 3.6. Working with the traditions behind Plato, *Timaeus*, 55c and Aristotle's 'quinta essentia' or αἰθέρα (aether), because it always (ἀεὶ) runs (θεῖν). See Aristotle, *On the Heavens*, 1.4 (270b). See explanation in Wright, *Cosmology in Antiquity*, 114.

[104] See Philo, *Her.* 233. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and The* Timaeus *of Plato*, 178.

Philo uses the phrase ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς in 21 instances, on all of these occasions Philo is referring

to the Jewish scriptures, which he will subsequently offer an interpretation (usually

allegorically). This phrase does not appear to be one in his own vocabulary.[105]


### 5.1.6.1.6 God's Transcendence Above All Things: Philo, *Somn*. 1:157 and Colossians 1:16b-c

While God may on occasion be considered to reside in heaven. Philo's οὐρανός is not God's

abode nor contains him. He is in both heaven and earth,[106] and beyond and above it. He

governs heaven much like heaven governs the cosmos or the soul governs the body and the

mind the soul.[107] God is in all things, but is transcendent and above all things. In Philo's

commentary on Jacob's encounter with God at Bethel in Genesis 28 a comprehensive list of

cosmological terms is mentioned. The point of this list is to express God's transcendence

above all [these] things expressed here, with a list of designations that are very similar to

the four nouns found in Colossians 1:16b-c:

> ὑπεράνω γὰρ ὡς ἅρματος ἡνίοχον ἢ ὡς νεὼς κυβερνήτην ὑποληπτέον ἵστασθαι τὸ ὂν ἐπὶ σωμάτων, ἐπὶ ψυχῶν, ἐπὶ πραγμάτων, ἐπὶ λόγων, ἐπὶ ἀγγέλων, ἐπὶ γῆς, ἐπ᾽ ἀέρος, ἐπ᾽ οὐρανοῦ, ἐπ᾽ αἰσθητῶν δυνάμεων, ἐπ᾽ ἀοράτων φύσεων, ὅσαπερ θεατὰ καὶ ἀθέατα· τὸν γὰρ κόσμον ἅπαντα ἐξάψας ἑαυτοῦ καὶ ἀναρτήσας τὴν τοσαύτην ἡνιοχεῖ φύσιν.[108]

Where Colossians 1:16b-c is distinctive in the *corpus Paulinum* a strong similarity, both in

terminology and nuance, can be found in Philo and his Middle Platonic expression of

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[105] See Philo, *Opif*. 129 [Gen 2:5]; *Leg*. 1.21 [Gen 2:5]; 2.53 [Gen 3:1], 71 [Gen 3:1], 106 [Gen 3:1]; 3.4 [Deut 4:39], 82 [Deut 4:39], 169 [Ex 16:14], 172 [Ex 16:14]; *Det*. 119 [Gen 4:12]; *Gig*. 1 [Gen 6:1]; 58 [Gen 6:4]; 66 [Gen 10:8]; *Deus* 20 [Gen 6:5]; 33; 140 [Gen 6:12]; *Conf*. 24 [Gen 6:12]; *Mig*. 64 [Lev 11:42]; 182 [Deut 4:39]; *Her*. 162 [Deut 25:15]; *QG* 1:72 Greek fragment [Gen 4:12].

[106] Philo, *Leg*. 3.4 *Mig*. 182.

[107] Philo *Abr*. 272

[108] Philo, *Somn*. 1:157 "for we must imagine that the living God stands above all things, like the charioteer of a chariot, or the pilot of a ship; that is, above bodies, and above souls, and above all creatures, and above the earth, and above the air, and above the heaven, and above all the powers of the outward senses, and above the invisible natures, in short, above all things whether visible or invisible; for having made the whole to depend upon himself, he governs it and all the vastness of nature. "

theology and cosmology of placing God above and beyond all things [designations of reality].

Philo, like the developing Platonic tradition of his day, had come to express reality differently than that of *Timaeus*. This thesis has already noted that ἀόρατα has been used by Philo as one of a number of terms to define the transcendence of God. This is not the only use of the word by Philo. Philo, like Plato, equates ἀόρατος with νοητός.[109] And ὁρατός with αἰσθητός. Philo makes explicit what Plato often inferred implicitly by often pairing these and similar terms together, making concepts of visible and invisible a noticeable pair in Philo.[110]

### 5.1.6.1.7 Visible and Invisible

Philo also uses invisible to identify things that are part of the intermediate realm, things that can be discerned only by the intellect,[111] that of the νοητὸς κόσμος,[112] the logos,[113] the mind,[114] the soul;[115] super-natural beings;[116] and certain cosmic ontological powers.[117] Philo's use of ὁρατός relates to things of the external senses,[118] such as things created,[119] bodies,[120] and counter-intellect and non-monotheistic theological views.[121] In Philo, both

[109] See Philo, *Opif*. 12; Erb. 132;.
[110] Philo, Philo, *Opif*. 12; *Cher* 96; *Mig* 183 (Exodus 17:6); *Her*. 280; *Congr*. 144; *Somn*.1.73; *Spec*. 1.302. θεατὰ καὶ ἀθέατα in *Somn*. 1:157; ἀειδῆ κόσμον .... ὁρατοῦ in *Somn*. 1:188.
[111] Philo, *Opif*. 12; *Plan*. 20; *Ebr* 132; *Conf*. 100; *Mig*. 5, 105; *Her*. 75; 111; 280; *Cong*. 25; *Abr*. 69 *Dec*. 59); *Spec*. 1.20; 1.46, 1.302; 4.192; *QG* 1.8, 3.49
[112] Philo, *Opif* 29, *Conf*. 172; *Somn*. 188; *Spec*. 1.302
[113] Philo, *Opif*. 31; *Her*. 119; *Fug* 46.
[114] Philo, *Conf*. 100, *Mig*. 51; *Her*. 111; *Abr*. 73-74
[115] Philo, *Opif*. 69; *Cher*. 98, 101; *Det*. 98; 128; *Ebr*. 86; *Somn*. 135-136; *Ios*. 255; *Mos*. 1.78; 2.17; *Vir*. 57, 172; *QG* 2.11.
[116] Philo, Gig. 2, 8; Pant. 4, 14. See Wolfson, *Philo: foundations of religious philosophy*, 370, 379
[117] Philo, *Somn*. 1.111, 157; *Abr*. 181.
[118] Philo, *Opif*. 12, 16, 19, *Plant*. 20; *Her*. 280; *Mut*. 267; *Somn*. 1.185-186; 2.16; 2.283; *Spec*. 1.279; 2.141; 3.52, 191; *Praem*. 1.28, Mos. 1.11; *Aet*. 11, 15, 46.
[119] Philo, *Opif*. 37, 54, 188; *Somn*. 2.283.
[120] Philo, *Opif*. 188, *Leg*. 2.38; *Her*. 82, 209.
[121] Philo, *Opif*. 145; *Aet*. 46.

οὐρανός and γῆ can be associated with ἀόρατος or ὁρατός. The totality of reality is often described as the σύμπας ὁ κόσμος and comprises of both ὅ τε ὁρατὸς καὶ ὁ ἀόρατος καὶ ἀσώματος, τὸ παράδειγμα τοῦ ὁρατοῦ οὐρανοῦ.[122] The terms for visible and invisible in Philo are used to express designations of the totality of reality.

### 5.1.7 Insights gained into Colossians Christology from distinctive language and comparisons *with* Timaeus and Philo's corpus

Colossians 1:16b-c gives insight to what the author in Colossians 1:16a means by τὰ πάντα. What the author means by τὰ πάντα are the heavens and the earth, a common pairing in the LXX. In the *corpus Paulinum* this pairing of οὐρανός then γῆ is rare. The two preposition-article-noun expressions in Colossians 1:16b find similarities with 1 Corinthians 8:5 and Ephesians 1:10, but are different in usage by referring to the demarcations of God's creation in Christ, rather than the abode of supernatural beings or the eschatological hope and destination of the saints.  Where the pairing of ἀόρατος of ὁρατός in Colossians 1:16c is distinct in Biblical literature, a strong equivalent is found in the Platonic tradition. Platonic works, including *Timaeus*, often express the totality of reality with the concepts associated with ἀόρατος of ὁρατός. The former associated with ὄντα, the latter with γιγνόμενα.

The exact expressions of Colossians 1:16b-c are not found in *Timaeus* or Philo, apart from Philo's reference to the Jewish scriptures. Its most significant point of departure is the plural usage of οὐρανός in Greek.  Although Plato and Philo both use the singular, they speak of a heaven that is a multifaceted nature of circles. An argument could be made for the author's

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[122] See Philo *Spec*. 1.302 "…that which is visible and that which is invisible and incorporeal, being a model of the real heaven?"

knowledge of the Hebrew and this may be reflected in the Greek plural, but a more

plausible explanation seems to be that Colossians' use of the plural reflects Plato's and

Philo's geocentric/multiple heavens view of reality. This offers an explanation for the plural

use in Colossians 1:16b. Philo *Somn*. 1.157 also offers a precedent for understanding

heavens and earth together with the invisible and the visible as demarcations of the creative

work of God in Christ, Colossians' own bifurcation of reality. Colossians' use of τὰ πάντα

displays a vaster nuance of the term than *Timaeus*' τὸ πᾶν. It comprises of *all* aspects of

reality.

To assume that ἀόρατος equates with οὐρανός and ὁρατός with γῆ would not seem to coincide

with Platonic concepts. In Philo, both οὐρανός and γῆ can be ἀόρατος and/or ὁρατός. Reading

Colossians 1:16b-c in light of Philonic understanding would not warrant an association of

ἀόρατος with οὐρανός and ὁρατός with γῆ.[123] Rather as Murray states concerning Colossians

1:16b-c there are two different but partially overlapping classifications of reality, one by

locality or spatially (earth–heaven), the other epistemologically or conceptually (visible-

invisible).[124] On comparison with Philo's language, ἀόρατος relates to ὁρατός in the same way

that οὐρανός with γῆ, with the former displaying supremacy over the latter. Colossians

1:16b-c does not express the sophisticated metaphysical reality of Plato and Philo, but does

show similarity with their bifurcation of reality. Up until this point Colossians 1:15-16a has

displayed a remarkable similarity with Philo's λόγος. The striking difference that Colossians'

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[123] Contra *Ernst Bammel*, "Versuch zu *Col 1,15-20*," ZNW 52 (1961), 89.
[124] Harris, *Colossians & Philemon*, 45. See also Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 149.

Christology has with Philo's λόγος, is that Christ is with God prior and superior to all of reality, rather than as the supreme part of it.

## 5.2 Colossians 1:16d εἴτε θρόνοι εἴτε κυριότητες εἴτε ἀρχαὶ εἴτε ἐξουσίαι

### 5.2.1 Syntactical Analysis and Usage in Colossians

After the double, two-fold expressions of reality in Colossians 1:16b-c, the verse continues with four nouns threaded together by the repetition of the coordinating conjunction εἴτε. This εἴτε feature is used again once in Colossians at the conclusion of the hymn in Colossians 1:20c with the preposition-article-noun expressions of heaven and earth encountered in Colossians 1:16b.[125]  This is common when a verb is absent and in this case, has a correlative rather than a disjunctive meaning.[126] All four nouns are anarthrous abstract plurals. They appear to serve the same intention of Colossians 1:16b-c, to frame reality, things created ἐν αὐτῷ (Christ) and are used in order to instil an understanding of Christ's pre-eminence in τὰ πάντα. The first two nouns do not appear again in Colossians. The last two nouns, ἀρχαί and ἐξουσίαι, reoccur by themselves,[127] and as a noticeable pair in Colossians 2:10, 15.[128]

#### 5.2.1.1 The Individual use of Ἀρχή and Ἐξουσία

The singular use of ἀρχή in Colossians 1:18b is an obvious title attributed to Christ and clearly a different meaning than intended for the noun in Colossians 1:16d. The ἐξουσία of

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[125] Col 1:20 "εἴτε τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς εἴτε τὰ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς."
[126] On the use and meaning of εἴτε…εἴτε see Robertson, *Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 1025, 1179, 1188-1189; Wallace, *Greek Grammar – Beyond the Basics*, 669, 672.
[127] Col 1:18 "ὅς ἐστιν ἀρχή, πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν"
Col 1:13 "ὅς ἐρρύσατο ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ σκότους"
[128] Col 2:10 "καὶ ἐστὲ ἐν αὐτῷ πεπληρωμένοι, ὅς ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ πάσης ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας."
Col 2:15 "ἀπεκδυσάμενος τὰς ἀρχὰς καὶ τὰς ἐξουσίας ἐδειγμάτισεν ἐν παρρησίᾳ, θριαμβεύσας αὐτοὺς ἐν αὐτῷ."

Colossians 1:13 evokes a hostile domain from which the saints have been rescued and appears unusual to the use of the terms expressed in Colossians 1:16d. This suggests the collective nature of nouns may evoke a different meaning than when used individually.

**5.2.1.2 The Combined use of Ἀρχή and Ἐξουσία**

Apart from Colossians 1:16d, the combined use of ἀρχαί and ἐξουσίαι reoccur twice more in Colossians. First in Colossians 2:10, where it follows an extremely important Christological statement and uses singular subordinating genitives, to assign subordinated positions to certain groups under the κεφαλὴ, who is the Christ referred to in Colossians 1:18 and 2:8.[129] Second in Colossians 2:15, the author's final use of ἀρχαί and ἐξουσίαι, uses accusative articular direct object plurals connected to the aorist middle participle ἀπεκδυσάμενος demonstrating a victory triumph over a certain group.[130] While ἀρχαί and ἐξουσίαι are a noticeable pair in Colossians their syntactic use varies throughout the letter. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to fully explore their varied usage here, but an examination of the use within the *corpus Paulinum* will illuminate the distinctive use in Colossians 1:16d.

**5.2.2 Lexicographical Investigation of Similarities, Differences and Distinctiveness within the *Corpus Paulinum* and Biblical Literature**

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[129] See further explanation in Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, 205-207, 312-317; Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, 52-55, 99-101; Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 94-97, 151-153; O'Brien, *Colossians-Philemon*, 48-49, 111-118, ; Wilson, *Colossians and Philemon*, 144-147, 198-200.

[130] See further explanation in Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, 332-336; Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, 108-113; Carr, *Angels and Principalities*, 61-63; Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 166-170; O'Brien, *Colossians-Philemon*, 126-129; Wilson, *Colossians and Philemon*, 211-214.

### 5.2.2.1 The Principalities and Powers

Colossians 1:16d (along with Colossians 2:10, 15) has typically been associated with a wider body of Pauline texts, typically called *'die Mächte und die Gewalten'* (the Principalities and the Powers). The words, phrases and passages identified in the work of Heinrich Schlier and Hendrik Berkhof are indicative of the scope of this endeavour.[131] The Principalities and Powers have often been associated with a Pauline *Geisterwelt*, the four nouns of Colossians 1:16d have been understood as referring to supernatural entities that share a curious relationship with civic and political designations of power.[132] If Colossians 1:15-20 [15-17 in particular] has a strong connection with Philo and the Platonic tradition, Colossians 1:16d would seem to be the intrusion of an obvious Paulinism.[133] But do the lexicographical terms in Colossians 1:16d representative of an obvious and overt Paulinism? It is to this which the thesis will now turn.

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[131] Heinrich Schlier, *Principalities and Powers in the New Testament.* (West Germany: Herder and Herder, 1961), 11-12. The terms in the *Corpus Paulinum* are: abstracted singular and plural nouns ἀρχαί, ἐξουσίαι and δυνάμεις; (Rom 8:38; 1 Cor 15:24; Eph 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Col 1:16; 2:10, 15); terms of dominions - κυρίοητες, θρόνοι and ὀνόματα; (Eph 1:21; Col 1:16); other titles in singular and plural ἄρχοντες (τοῦ κόσμου [ἀιῶνος]), κύριοι, θεοί, ἄγγελοι, δαιμόνια, δαίμονες, πνεύματα, πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας, στοιχεῖα (1 Cor 2:6, 8; Eph 2:2; 1Cor 8:5; 2 Cor 4:4; Gal 4:8; Rom 8:38; 1 Cor 4:9 6:3; Col 2:18; 2 Cor 12:7; 1 Cor 10 :20; 1 Tim 4:1; 1 Cor 2:12; Eph 2:2; 6:12; Gal 4:3, 9; Col 2:8, 20); names and titles of Satan - ὁ σατανᾶς, ὁ διάβολος, βελίαρ titles - ὁ τειράζων, ὁ ὀλεθρευτής, ὁ ἄρχων τοῦ κόσμου [τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου], ὁ ἄρχων τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ ἀέρος (Rom 16:20; 1 Cor 5:5; Eph 4:27; 6:11; 1 Tim 3:6-7, 11; 2 Tim 2:26; 3:3; Titus 2:3; 2 Cor 6:15; 2 Cor 11:3; 2 Tim 4:17; Eph 6:16; 2 Thess 3:3; 1 Thess 3:5; 1 Cor 10:10; 1 Cor 15:25; 1 Cor 2:6, 8; 2 Cor 4:4; Eph 2:2).
The common Pauline texts here are 1 Cor 2:8; 15:24-26; Rom 8.38-39; [Rom 13:1-3] Eph 1:20-21; 2:1-2; 3:10; 6:12; Col 1:16; [2:10]; 2:15. See Hendrik Berkhof, *Christ and the Powers.* (Translated by Johh H. Yoder. Scottdale: Herald Press, 1962), 13-14.

[132] Summaries of scholarly interpretative trends can be found in Carr, *Angels and Principalities:* 1-2; Peter. T. O'Brien 'Principalities and Powers and their Relationship to the Structures', *RTR* 40 (1981), 1-4. Expanded somewhat in 'Principalities and Powers: Opponents of the Church', in *Biblical Interpretation and the Church*, (ed. D.A. Carson; Exeter: Paternoster, 1984), 111-128.; Arnold, *Power and Magic: The Concept of Power in Ephesians.* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1989), 42-51; Andrew T. Lincoln, "Liberation from the Powers: Supernatural Spirits or Societal Structures?" in *The Bible in Human Society: Essays in Honour of John Rogerson*. *JSOTSup* Vol: 200. (Edited by M. Daniel. Carrol, David J. A. Clines, and Peter R. Davies; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 335, 338-348. Robert E. Moses also gives an overview of the 4 major interpretive trends in *Powerful Practices: Paul's Principalities and Powers Revisited.* (ThD diss.: Divinity School of Duke University, 2012), 6-44.

[133] Dunn argues that Col 1:16d "…disrupt[s] what would otherwise be a more compact and better balanced sequence of lines." See *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 92. Its dissimilarity with Philo is also indicated in Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature*, 85.

**5.2.2.2 εἴτε … εἴτε**

The use of coordinating copulative conjunction is a recognisable Pauline expression,[134] yet it

is not used in any of the Principalities and Powers passages apart from Colossians 1:16d. The

most comparable example in the Pauline letters is found in Romans 8:38-39,[135] where a

similar construction is used, but with the negative οὔτε. Although Walter Wink suggests a

strong theological correlation between the two, indicating that what was only hinted at in

Romans 8:38-39 is now made explicit,[136] there is very little lexicographical similarity with

only one of the ten nouns (ἀρχαί) in common with Colossians 1:16d.

The lexicographical data for the four nouns of Colossians 1:16d have received thorough

attention in a number of studies.[137] This thesis will not restate these here but focus on the

pertinent issues as they relate to Colossians' distinctive language.

**5.2.2.3 Θρόνοι and Κυριότητες**

Θρόνος is a *hapax legomenon* in the *corpus Paulinum*. Κυριότης is not used in the Pauline

letters.[138] The only other *corpus Paulinum* occurrence of Κυριότης is in Ephesians 1:21 where

a similar expression is used to Colossians 1:16d.[139] It is used again in the NT by the author(s)

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[134] 1 Cor 3:22; [8:5]; 12:13, [26] Gal 3:26. "…à qui il emprunte cette expression, il reconnaît le caractère paulinien de leur style" See Benoit, *L'Hymne Christologique de Col 1,15-20*, 243. See also Rom 12:7-8; 1 Cor 10:31; 13:8; 14:7; 2Cor 5:9-10; 1 Thess 5:10.

[135] Rom 8:38-39 "πέπεισμαι γὰρ ὅτι οὔτε θάνατος οὔτε ζωὴ οὔτε ἄγγελοι οὔτε ἀρχαὶ οὔτε ἐνεστῶτα οὔτε μέλλοντα οὔτε δυνάμεις οὔτε ὕψωμα οὔτε βάθος οὔτε τις κτίσις ἑτέρα δυνήσεται ἡμᾶς χωρίσαι ἀπὸ τῆς ἀγάπης τοῦ θεοῦ τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τῷ κυρίῳ ἡμῶν."

[136] Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 64.

[137] See relevant articles in *BDAG*, 137-38, 352-3, 460, 579. Delling, G. "ἀρχή" *TDNT* 1. 479-484; Forester, Werner "ἐξουσία" *TDNT* 2.562-574; Schmitz, O. "θρόνος" *TDNT* 3.160-67; Forester, Werner, "κυριότης" *TDNT* 3.1096-97; Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 13-17, 18-21, 64-67, 151-58; Wilson, *Colossians and Philemon*, 139-142

[138] Baur, *Paul: The Apostle of Jesus Christ*, 2.6-7; Stettler, *Der Kolosserhymnus*, 185-187

[139] This will be commented on below in 5.2.2.4.3.

of 2 Peter 2:10 and Jude 8 to describe concepts of authority. The first two nouns are very

distinctive!

### 5.2.2.3 Ἀρχαί and Ἐξουσίαι

### 5.2.2.3.1 The Individual use of Ἐξουσία

Ἐξουσία is the most frequent of the four nouns of Colossians 1:16d in the *corpus*

*Paulinum*.[140] Its broadest semantic connotation is that of authority, ability or impersonal

capacity that is bestowed by an office.[141] Can ἐξουσία mean both human and super-

mundane/natural designations of authority? [142]  The affirmative answer, yes, has been a

prominent feature of Pauline studies in the 20th Century. Martin Dibelius (1907) has

advocated this position.[143] Working with Otto Everling's 1888 thesis, who stated there is a

vast hierarchy of supernatural beings who have a pervasive presence in the world, they are,

as a matter of fact, component parts of Paul's cosmology.[144] To this, Dibelius adds another

category of terms, phrases and concepts; the *Herrscher dieses Äons* (rulers of the age). [145]

These are part of a Pauline *Geisterwelt* that contain, constrain and explain the plight of man.

Dibelius' ideas were championed by Oscar Cullmann, in his exegesis of 1 Corinthians 2:6-8,

6:2-3 Romans 13:1-3 and issues surrounding the church and state in the NT.[146]  Here he

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[140] Rom 9:21; Rom 13:1-3; 1 Cor 7:37; 8:9; 9:4-6, 12, 18; 11:10; 15:24; 2 Cor 10:8; 13:10; Eph 1:21; 2:2; 3:10; 6:12; Col 1:13, 16, 18; Col 2:10, 15; 2 Thess 3:9; Titus 3:1.

[141] See Forester, "ἐξουσία " *TDNT,* 2.571; Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 15; *BDAG*, 352-353.

[142] Wink argues that of the vast majority of references are to human arrangements of power, with only an occasional use to designate spiritual beings. See Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 15.

[143] Martin Dibelius, *Die Geisterwelt im Glauben des Paulus.* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1909)

[144] See Otto Everling, *Die Paulinische Angelologie und Dämonologie: Ein Biblischtheologischer Versuch.* (Göttingen: Vandenhpeck und Ruprecht's Verlang., 1888), 51 (Satan); Angels in 9 (Rom. 8:38), 87 (Col. 1:16); and Demons in 28; Schweitzer, *Paul and His Interpreters*, 57.

[145] See Dibelius, *Die Geisterwelt*, 77-110 where he examines passages that use other *Geisterwelt* language.

[146] Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and time: the primitive Christian conception of time and history.* (Translated by Floyd V. Filson. London: SCM Press, 1962 [1948]), 191-206; *The State in the New Testament.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1957), 55-70, 95-115.

interprets the ἀρχόντων τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου as well as ἐξουσία as both invisible princes of this

world and their actual human instruments.[147] Here he is influenced by Dibelius' concept of a

*Völkerengel* (inspired by Daniel 7 and 10) for each of the '70 nations' as a view wide-spread

in Judaism at the time of Paul and important for understanding Pauline theology.[148]


## 5.2.2.3.2 The Individual use of Ἀρχή

Ἀρχή is a term with a wide semantic range and well attested in both Ancient literature and

modern scholarship.[149] Ἀρχή appears three times in the Pauline letters.[150] In Philippians 4:15

it has a temporal connotation to speak about 'beginnings' or first things.[151] It is used twice

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[147] I Corinthians 2:8 it has a double meaning. It means here at once 'angelic powers' and 'State.' See Cullmann, *The State in the New Testament*, 66, 113-114.

[148] "*Der Glaube im Völkerengel ist im Jüdentum gut bezeugt und weit verbreitet*" Dibelius, *Die Geisterwelt*, 10. See also Cullmann, *Christ and time*, 191-194; Carr, *Angels and Principalities,* 30, 41; John E. Goldingay, *Daniel.* WBC: vol 30. (Edited by David A. Hubbard; Nashville: Word Books, 1989), 314. Its origin is in Dan 10:13, 21; 12:1 where The שר in the HB gets translated a number of different ways. In v. 13 וְשַׂר מַלְכוּת פָּרַס is translated as καὶ ὁ στρατηγος βασιλέως Περῶν in LXX, but as καὶ ὁ ἄρχων βασιλέως Περῶν in θ'. Michael מִיכָאֵל אַחַד הַשָּׂרִים הָרִאשֹׁנִים is translated Μιχαηλ εἷς τῶν ἀρχόντων τῶν πρώτων in both LXX and θ'. In 10:21 שר gets translated ἄγγελος in the LXX, but as ἄρχων in the θ' and the same in 12:1. See aslo the LXX text of Deut 32:8. See in the final clause of יַצֵּב גְּבֻלֹת עַמִּים למִסְפַּר בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל it gets translated by LXX as κατὰ ἀριθμον ἀγγέλων θεοῶ. In 10:21 שר gets translated as ἄγγελος in the LXX, but as ἄρχων in the θ' and the same in 12:1. Jub 15:31-32; 1 En 20:5; Sir 17:17 where supernatural beings stand behind human rulers. See Dibelius, *Die Geisterwelt*, 9-11.

[149] For ἀρχή six usages are given by Aristotle. Common to all these is the first thing from which something is, becomes, or is known. Any factor responsible for any sort of change of knowledge of something Aristotle, Metaphysics Δ 5.1 (1012b33-1013a23). Ἀρχή is the (1) its first/original motion; (2); best point of contact (3) its immanent part; (4) place of origin; (5) the one beginning a motion or movement among other explanations; (6) that by which a thing can first be known. See Claudia Baracchi, *The Bloomsbury Companion to Aristotle*, 354. Delling, "ἀρχή" *TDNT* 2.479-81. It always signifies primacy He goes on to explain that this primacy might (1) denote time, (2) an expression of office or power or (3) some kind of spatial expression.  He goes on to state that in philosophy is of greatest significance in cosmic physics." He gives the following examples: In the LXX, ἀρχή has been used to translate a variety of Hebrew words. It is used in temporal contexts (Gen 1:1) to translate רֵאשִׁית or spatially for רֹאשׁ in Gen 2:10 40:13, 20; 1 Chron 26:10; Jer 22:6; or even a treetop (צַמֶּרֶת) in Ezek 31:3, 10, 14.

[150] Rom 8:38; 1 Cor 15:24; Phil 4:15 [2 Thess 2:13]. There is a textual variant in 2 Thess 2:13. (2 Thess is also a 'disputed' letter in the *corpus Paulinum*).  It could either be the compound ἀπαρχὴν (B F G^gr P 33 81 1739 vg syr^h cop^bo) or ἀπ᾽ ἀρχὴν (א D K L Ψ). See Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament.* (2nd ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 568. See also Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, 42, especially footnote 67.

[151] Phil 4:15 "…ὅτι ἐν ἀρχῇ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου"

as part of a sequence of opposing 'powers' to the work of Christ, in 1 Corinthians 15:24 and Romans 8:38.

### 5.2.2.3.2 1 1 Corinthians 15:24

In 1 Corinthians 15:24[152] ἀρχαί appears as one of a series of hostile ἐχθροί (enemies) defeated by Christ.[153] This time it is used with ἐξουσίαι, although non-exclusively, and δύναμις for the first and only time in the Pauline letters. Here syntactically ἐξουσία and δύναμις share a stronger connection, through the shared use of the adjective πᾶς, rather than ἀρχαί and ἐξουσίαι.  The three terms are suggested to be part of a standard demonology of Jewish apocalyptic literature.[154]

### 5.2.2.3.2.2 Romans

In Romans 8:38 it appears to be paired with ἄγγελοι, both terms are *hapax legomena* in Romans.[155] Many commentators acknowledge the ambiguity on the nature of its coupling with ἄγγελοι. Are they contrasting opposites, like θάνατος and ζωή? Are ἄγγελοι to be interpreted as 'good' supernatural beings? If so, what is the nature of their opposition? Are

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[152] ὅταν καταργήσῃ <u>πᾶσαν ἀρχὴν</u> καὶ <u>πᾶσαν ἐξουσίαν καὶ δύναμιν</u>.
[153] Probable allusions to LXX Ps109:1[110:1]; 8:6 [7:6].
[154] Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 271-272; Gordon D. Fee, *the First Epistle to the Corinthians.* NICNT. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1987), 754; Raymond F. Collins, *First Corinthians.* SP - vol. 7. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1999), 553. Common references are 1 En 1:5, 6:1-10:17; 18:13-16; 41:8; 61:10; 69:10; 91:16. See also Str-B. 3: 472, 581-584, 626.
[155] See Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 507; Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary* – Hermrneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 551. There is a minority textual reading that moves οὔτε δυνάμεις prior to οὔτε ἐνεστῶτα, linking ἀρχαί with δυνάμεις. Also some later scribal additions of ἐξουσίαι (See Textual footnotes in *NA 27*, 424) giving it a close connection to 1 Cor 15:24. See *Textus Receptus*, following Κ L Ψ also in the KJV. Metzger suggests "…there is no reason to expect that the apostle would give a systematic classification of angelic-beings; on the other hand, the rearrangement of the items has every appearance of being the work of copyists or editors who wished to improve the sequence." See, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 458-459. See also Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary.* AB - vol. 38. (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1993), 535.

they 'evil' supernatural beings like demons,[156] or are they just 'natural' beings such as human agents? Commentators such as Joseph Fitzmyer,[157] James Dunn,[158] Leon Morris[159] and Douglas Moo[160] tentatively side with interpreting ἀρχαί as referring to supernatural beings with a curious relationship to human rulers; while others such as Robert Jewett argue for a solely human political interpretation.[161]

What are we to make of the connection between ἀρχή and ἄρχων?[162] Are they cognate terms? In Roman 13:1-3 the ἄρχοντες of v.3 appears to be referring back to the ἐξουσίαι of vv.1-2. Dunn appears hesitant to link ἀρχή with its potential cognate ἄρχων in Romans 13:3 here it means human rulers rather than angelic powers.[163] Many commentators see ἄρχων (and ἐξουσίαι) as "clearly human rulers"[164] along with it the 'ἀρχόντων τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου' of 1 Corinthians 2:6-8.[165] The rest of the times ἀρχή occurs in the *corpus Paulinum* it is always accompanied with ἐξουσία. It is to this pairing that thesis will now turn.

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[156] See Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 48-49.
[157] Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 535. "…[s]pirits probably of different kind, order, or rank… cosmic powers or supermundane power rulers of the world… [w]hether there are good or bad spirits is not clear."
[158] Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 507 "…Paul probably has in mind particularly the idea of angels inhabiting the lower reaches of heaven… the fact that it [presumably ἀρχαί] also devotes civil or political offices implies that the heavenly community was conceived of as similarly structured."
[159] Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans.* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 341. "…ἀρχαί refers to rulers sometimes earthly and sometimes in the spiritual realm… the problem here [in Rom 8.38] is that it might denote either…"
[160] Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 545. "[ἀρχαί]…is never used with 'angels' elsewhere in Paul. Paul can use 'ruler' to denote a secular authority, but more often he uses it to denote…the spirit world… it is natural to think that 'rulers' denotes evil spiritual powers, but the lexical evidence makes it impossible to be sure."
[161] Jewett, *Romans,* 552. He argues that "it seems likely to me that the rulers [ἀρχαί] in view are political."
[162] Found in Rom 13:3; 1 Cor 2:6-8; Eph 2:2.
[163] James D.G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 763. A view also shared by Forbes, *Paul's Principalities and Powers*, 68.
[164] See Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 667; Jewett, Romans, 788, 792; Moo, Romans, 800; Dunn, Romans 9-16, 760,763; Contra to Cullmann's 'double meaning' in *Christ and Time*, 194-195; *The State and the New Testament*, 95-114 esp.100.
[165] See Fee, 1 Corinthians, 104; Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians.* (Translated by James W. Leitch. Hermeneia - vol.1. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975 [1969]), 63. On the wider conjecture over ἄρχων and it's the potential double meaning. See Raymond F. Collins, *First Corinthians.* SP - vol. 7. (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1999), 129; Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 70

### 5.2.2.4 The Combined use of Ἀρχαί and Ἐξουσίαι

Ἀρχαί and ἐξουσίαι appear together eight times in the *corpus Paulinum*.[166] Ἀρχαί and

ἐξουσίαι do not appear together exclusively in the Pauline letters. The first exclusive

appearance is in Colossians![167] There are seven occasions where a list is given of powers

that relate in some way to Christ. Colossians 1:16d is distinctive because it is the only time

that they refer to things created by Christ, rather than things in opposition or subjection. It

is also the first time that a list of four is mentioned (the other potential occasion being

Ephesians 1:21 [treated in 5.2.2.4.3]).[168] Schnackenburg suggests, implicitly about Colossians

1:16d although in the comment about Ephesians 1:21, the significance of the fourfold usage

is to encompass the totality of reality.[169]

> "…[t]he number [four] may in general express completeness, but is also frequently used for the expanse of the earth or of heaven ('four corners of the earth', 'four points of the compass') and consequently a kind of 'cosmic' symbolic number for the extent as well as for the limitedness of the created world"

Can anything be made of this fourfold designation in *Timaeus* and Philo? This will be taken

up in sections (5.2.5.2 and 5.2.6.4).

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[166] 1 Cor 15:24; Col 1.16 2:10, 15; Eph 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Titus 3:1. See the Greek text in subsequent footnotes.
[167] 1 Cor 15:24 has already been treated in section 5.2.2.3.2.1.
[168] 1 Cor 15:24 – a list three; … πᾶσαν <u>ἀρχὴν</u> καὶ πᾶσαν <u>ἐξουσίαν</u> καὶ <u>δύναμιν</u>.
Rom 8:38-39 – a list of ten; … ³⁸ πέπεισμαι γὰρ ὅτι οὔτε <u>θάνατος</u> οὔτε <u>ζωὴ</u> οὔτε <u>ἄγγελοι</u> οὔτε <u>ἀρχαὶ</u> οὔτε <u>ἐνεστῶτα</u> οὔτε <u>μέλλοντα</u> οὔτε <u>δυνάμεις</u> ³⁹ οὔτε <u>ὕψωμα</u> οὔτε <u>βάθος</u> οὔτε τις <u>κτίσις</u> ἑτέρα
Col 1:16d – a list of four; …εἴτε <u>θρόνοι</u> εἴτε <u>κυριότητες</u> εἴτε <u>ἀρχαὶ</u> εἴτε <u>ἐξουσίαι</u>·
Col 2:15 – a list of two; … τὰς <u>ἀρχὰς</u> καὶ τὰς <u>ἐξουσίας</u> …
Eph 1:21 – a list of four (or five); ὑπεράνω πάσης <u>ἀρχῆς</u> καὶ <u>ἐξουσίας</u> καὶ <u>δυνάμεως</u> καὶ <u>κυριότητος</u> καὶ παντὸς <u>ὀνόματος ὀνομαζομένου</u>
Eph 3:10 – a list of two; …ἵνα γνωρισθῇ νῦν ταῖς <u>ἀρχαῖς</u> καὶ ταῖς <u>ἐξουσίαις</u> ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις διὰ τῆς ἐκκλησίας
Eph 6:12 – a list of four; … ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὰς <u>ἀρχάς</u>, πρὸς τὰς <u>ἐξουσίας</u>, πρὸς τοὺς <u>κοσμοκράτορας τοῦ σκότους τούτου</u>, πρὸς <u>τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις</u>.
1 Pt 3:22 a list of three. ὅς ἐστιν ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θεοῦ πορευθεὶς εἰς οὐρανὸν ὑποταγέντων αὐτῷ <u>ἀγγέλων</u> καὶ <u>ἐξουσιῶν</u> καὶ <u>δυνάμεων</u>.
[169] Rudolf Schnackenburg, *Ephesians: A Commentary.* (Translated by Helen Heron. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 77-78.

**5.2.2.4.1 Greek Translations of Daniel**

In Daniel, although not mentioned as a pair, a very interesting conflation and amalgam of

ἀρχαί and ἐξουσίαι takes place in two Greek translations of the Jewish scriptures, the LXX

and the Theodotion edition. The exact date of the composition of the LXX is uncertain, but

sometime in the second or third century BCE is likely with Philo and others knowing of its

legendary origin.[170] The Theodotion (hereafter θ') was probably produced in the second

century CE.[171] In Daniel 7:14 the Aramaic שלטן (dominion) is translated as ἐξουσία in the LXX,

but as ἀρχή in the θ'.[172]


 This is repeated again in Dan 7:26 and interestingly in Daniel 7:27 both LXX and θ' firstly

translated שֻׁלטן with ἐξουσία (LXX with the accusative; θ' with the nominative). Then they

translate the Aramaic מלכות, LXX as ἀρχή and θ' as βασιλεύς and then for the second

occurrence of שלטן the LXX translates it as ἐξουσία  and θ' as ἀρχή (see below). [173]


> **NRSV Daniel 7:27**
> The kingship and <u>dominion</u> and the greatness of the <u>kingdoms</u> under the whole heaven shall be given
> to the people of the holy ones of the Most High; their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and
> <u>all dominions</u> shall serve and obey them."

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[170] See *Letter of Aristeas*, 308-11; Philo, *Mos.* 2.25-44; Josephus, *Antiquities*, 12.17-188.  Explained in Everett Ferguson, *Background of Early Christianity.* 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 432-36; Nickelsburg, Jewish *Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah*, 192-93.

[171] See Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period.* Translated by John Bowden. Vols. 1-2. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974[1973]), 1.101-02, 2.70;

[172] Aramaic Daniel 7:14 וְלֵהּ יְהִיב שָׁלְטָן

LXX Daniel 7:14 καὶ ἐδόθη αὐτῷ <u>ἐξουσία</u>...

θ' Daniel 7:14 καὶ αὐτῷ ἐδόθη ἡ <u>ἀρχή</u>…

[173] This has been recognised in Caird, *Principalities and Powers*, 11-12; Carr, *Angels and Principalities*, 31; Matthew Black "Πᾶσαι ἐξουσίαι αὐτῷ ὑποταγήσονται" in *Paul and Paulinism: Essays in honour of C. K. Barrett*. (Edited by Morna D. Hooker and S. G. Wilson; London: SPCK, 1982), 65; Arnold, *Power and Magic*, 52; *The Colossian Syncretism*, 33; Forbes, *Paul's Principalities and Powers*, 74-75; Stettler, *Der Kolosserhymnus*, 182; van Kooten, *Cosmic Christology*, 94.

וּמַלְכוּתָה וְשָׁלְטָנָא וּרְבוּתָא דִּי מַלְכְוָת תְּחוֹת כָּל־שְׁמַיָּא יְהִיבַת לְעַם קַדִּישֵׁי עֶלְיוֹנִין מַלְכוּתֵהּ

מַלְכוּת עָלַם וְכֹל שָׁלְטָנַיָּא לֵהּ יִפְלְחוּן וְיִשְׁתַּמְּעוּן

**LXX Daniel 7:27**

καὶ τὴν βασιλείαν καὶ τὴν <u>ἐξουσίαν</u> καὶ τὴν μεγαλειότητα αὐτῶν καὶ <u>τὴν ἀρχὴν</u> πασῶν τῶν ὑπὸ τὸν οὐρανὸν βασιλειῶν ἔδωκε λαῷ ἁγίῳ ὑψίστου βασιλεῦσαι βασιλείαν αἰώνιον, καὶ <u>πᾶσαι αἱ ἐξουσίαι</u> αὐτῷ ὑποταγήσονται καὶ πειθαρχήσουσιν αὐτῷ.

**Θ Daniel 7:27**

καὶ ἡ βασιλεία καὶ ἡ <u>ἐξουσία</u> καὶ ἡ μεγαλωσύνη τῶν <u>βασιλέων</u> τῶν ὑποκάτω παντὸς τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἐδόθη ἁγίοις ὑψιστου καὶ ἡ βασιλεία αὐτοῦ βασιλεία αἰώνιος καὶ <u>πᾶσαι αἱ ἀρχαὶ</u> αὐτῷ δουλεύσουσιν καὶ ὑπακούσονται

The point to be made here is that there appears to be a conflating, overlap and blending of meaning of the terms ἀρχαί and ἐξουσίαι around civic and rulership concepts in the First Century BCE to CE.

### 5.2.2.4.3 Ephesians

Like Colossians, ἀρχαί and ἐξουσίαι are paired together 3 times in Ephesians (1:21; 3:10; 6:12). Ephesians 1:20-23 places Christ's supremacy, not in the creation of τὰ πάντα, as does Colossians 1:16a, but after his resurrection where he is seated at the right hand of God ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις (the heavenly [places]).[174] This supremacy is expressed spatially as ὑπεράνω (far above) a fourfold sequence similar to Colossians 1:16d. The Ephesians 1:21 sequence has changed order with ἀρχαί and ἐξουσίαι appearing first followed by δύναμις (a triad found in 1 Corinthians 15:24) which may have replaced θρόνοι and then κυριότης.[175] All nouns here

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[174] See a thorough treatment of the five occurrence of ἐπουρανίοις in Ephesians (1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12) in M. Jeff Brannon, ""The Heavenlies" in Ephesians." (PhD dissertation: University of Edinburgh, 2010), especially 1-2, 117-219, 241-242.

[175] Observations about the 'glorification' connotations of the passage are explained further in Martin Dibelius, *An die Kolosser, Epheser, An Philemon.* 2nd ed. Handbuch zum Neuen Testament. Vol. 12, (Tübigen: Mohr, 1927), 49; Heinrich Schlier, *Der Brief an die Epheser: ein Kommentar.* Kommentare und Beiträge zum Alten und Neuen Testament. (Düsseldorf: Patmos-Verlag, 1965), 86-88; Barth, *Ephesians 1-3*, 154-157; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 62-65.

are in the singular but have a collective connotation by the adjectival use of πᾶς prior to the

sequence (similar to Colossians 1:15b; 2:10). The verse then concludes with a restatement

of the idea with an eschatological connotation, of Christ being above all names. Ephesians

3:10 uses the ἀρχαί and ἐξουσίαι as articular plurals. Here, it is the church who is to make

known to the ἀρχαί and ἐξουσίαι, which are also ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις, the wonder of God's

plan in Christ.[176] The final occurrence of ἀρχαί and ἐξουσίαι in Ephesians is in 6:12 again

located ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις. They are equated with κοσμοκράτορας τοῦ σκότους τούτου and τὰ

πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας the 'real' enemies of the believer and juxtaposed with αἷμα καὶ

σάρκα.[177]


Ἀρχαί and ἐξουσίαι appear together once again in the *corpus Paulinum* in Titus 3:1. Quinn

suggests that the asyndetic 'ἀρχαῖς ἐξουσίαις' makes a civil/judicial understanding more

likely,[178] similar in meaning to the use of ἄρχοντες and ἐξουσίαι in Romans 13:1-3.[179]


**5.2.2.4.3 The Rest of the New Testament**

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[176] Observations about the 'ecclesial' and 'kerygmatic' connotations of the passage are explained further in Dibelius, *An die Kolosser, Epheser, An Philemon*, 57; Schlier, *Der Brief an die Epheser: ein Kommentar*, 155-157; Barth, *Ephesians 1-3*, 345-346, 364-365 (especially 365); Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 184-189.

[177] Observations about the hostile connotations of the passage are explained further in Dibelius, *An die Kolosser, Epheser, An Philemon*, 75-76; Schlier, *Der Brief an die Epheser: ein Kommentar*, 290-292; Markus Barth, *Ephesians 4-6.* AB vol. 34a. Edited by William F. Albright and David N. Freedman. Garden City: Doubleday, 1974, 761-764, 800-803; Carr, *Angels and Principalities*, 109-10 (Carr argues that this is a later interpolation); Arnold, *Power and Magic*, 103-122; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 442-445.

[178] See Jerome D. Quinn, *The Letter to Titus.* AB - vol 35. New York: Doubleday, 1990), 178-179. Metzger notes a late variant reading (in the *Textus Receptus*) of adding a καί. He says "it appears that the author deliberately framed his sentence concisely, and that the presence of καί is the result of the desire of copyists to relieve the asyndeton." See Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 586.

[179] See Quinn, *The Letter to Titus*, 179.

Ἀρχαί and ἐξουσίαι are used again only in NT in Luke 12:11[180] and 20:20.[181] In these occurrences, the use of ἀρχαὶ and ἐξουσίαι is a Lukan addition to what is found in the synoptic parallels in Matthew and Mark to denote religious and political leaders, a reference to supernatural beings is scarcely intended here.[182]  Interestingly a similar usage to 1 Corinthians 15:24 can be found in 1 Peter 3:22 exulting Christ as defeating the powers and seated at the right hand of God, he refers to them as ἀγγέλων  [rather than ἀρχαί] καὶ ἐξουσιῶν καὶ δυνάμεων. In the NT ἀρχαί and ἐξουσίαι have a wide semantic range making it possible to include both political and supernatural inferences

### 5.2.3 Summary of Distinctive Language

This examination of the four nouns in the wider *corpus Paulinum* has revealed a number of salient points that highlight the distinctive language of Colossians 1:16d. The four nouns are here things created by/in Christ, rather than things he has defeated as a result of his death and resurrection or subject to him in his post-resurrection glorification. Colossians 1:16d is the only 'Principalities and Powers' occasion where the εἴτε…εἴτε is used. Most opting for the καί conjunction. Colossians 1:16d is distinctive not only in the use of these terms but

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[180] See in Matt 10:19-20 ¹⁹ ὅταν δὲ παραδῶσιν ὑμᾶς, μὴ μεριμνήσητε πῶς ἢ τί λαλήσητε· δοθήσεται γὰρ ὑμῖν ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ὥρᾳ τί λαλήσητε· ²⁰ οὐ γὰρ ὑμεῖς ἐστε οἱ λαλοῦντες ἀλλὰ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ πατρὸς ὑμῶν τὸ λαλοῦν ἐν ὑμῖν. Mark 13:11¹¹ καὶ ὅταν ἄγωσιν ὑμᾶς παραδιδόντες, μὴ προμεριμνᾶτε τί λαλήσητε, ἀλλ᾽ ὃ ἐὰν δοθῇ ὑμῖν ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ὥρᾳ τοῦτο λαλεῖτε· οὐ γάρ ἐστε ὑμεῖς οἱ λαλοῦντες ἀλλὰ τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον.
Luke 12:11-12 Ὅταν δὲ εἰσφέρωσιν ὑμᾶς ἐπὶ τὰς συναγωγὰς καὶ <u>τὰς ἀρχὰς καὶ τὰς ἐξουσίας</u>, μὴ μεριμνήσητε πῶς ἢ τί ἀπολογήσησθε ἢ τί εἴπητε· τὸ γὰρ ἅγιον πνεῦμα διδάξει ὑμᾶς ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ ὥρᾳ ἃ δεῖ εἰπεῖν.
[181] Matt 22:16 καὶ ἀποστέλλουσιν αὐτῷ τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτῶν μετὰ τῶν Ἡρῳδιανῶν λέγοντες· διδάσκαλε, οἴδαμεν ὅτι ἀληθὴς εἶ καὶ τὴν ὁδὸν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ διδάσκεις καὶ οὐ μέλει σοι περὶ οὐδενός· οὐ γὰρ βλέπεις εἰς πρόσωπον ἀνθρώπων.
Mark 12:13 Καὶ ἀποστέλλουσιν πρὸς αὐτόν τινας τῶν Φαρισαίων καὶ τῶν Ἡρῳδιανῶν ἵνα αὐτὸν ἀγρεύσωσιν λόγῳ.
Luke 20:20 Καὶ παρατηρήσαντες ἀπέστειλαν ἐγκαθέτους ὑποκρινομένους ἑαυτοὺς δικαίους εἶναι, ἵνα ἐπιλάβωνται αὐτοῦ λόγου, ὥστε παραδοῦναι αὐτὸν <u>τῇ ἀρχῇ καὶ τῇ ἐξουσίᾳ</u> τοῦ ἡγεμόνος.
[182]  See I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke.* NICGT (Edited by I. Howard Marshall and W. Ward Gasque; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 520, 734; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (X-XXIV): Introduction, Translation, and Notes.* AB Vol. 28a. (Edited by William F. Albright and David N. Freedman; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 966, 1295; Darrell L. Bock, *Luke - Volume 2: 9:51-24:53.* BECNT. (Edited by Moisés Silva. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), 1143, 1609.

also in their relationship to Christ. The lexicographical data shows that there is no established list of 'Principalities and Powers' in the *corpus Paulinum*. Lists may range from two to ten in number, they may be ordered in a number of ways. The first pair Κυριότης and θρόνος do not reoccur in the Pauline letters. The most commonly used nouns are ἀρχαί and ἐξουσίαι, and they also occur as a pair in Ephesians. This second pair, ἀρχαί and ἐξουσίαι do not appear together solely in the Pauline letters. In the *corpus Paulinum* they occur with δύναμις,[183] but not in Colossians, a term absent from its vocabulary. Colossians 1:16d appears to *not* be an obvious Paulinism.

### 5.2.4 Emerging Issues for Further Analysis

The interpretative questions to be considered are (1) are these four nouns purely political designations or may they (also) be understood with supernatural phenomena? (2) Is there a connection with the heavens, earth, invisible and visible nouns of Colossians 1:16b-c? (3) Can one infer meaning from the fourfold expression? Do *Timaeus* and Philo offer insight?

### 5.2.5 Similarities with *Timaeus* and Platonic Texts

The lexicographical phenomena encountered in Colossians 1:16d and the other Principalities and the Powers texts in the *corpus Paulinum* are not found in *Timaeus*. In the wider Platonic corpus θρόνος, κυριότητες, ἐξουσία have little to no lexicographical or doctrinal significance.[184] This is not the case for ἀρχή. It has, as stated above, a wide semantic range. It may explain

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[183] 1 Cor 15:24; [Rom 8:38]; Eph 1:21; [1 Peter 3:22].

[184] On θρόνος see Plato, *Protagoras*, 315c. Used as a seat of importance. Schmitz lists a number of references from Greek playwrights, especially Aeschylus, that explain the use of θρόνος as a seat reserved for gods and kings. See Schmitz *Thronos*, TDNT 3.160-161. Plato's incidental use of θρόνος does not reflect this. See Plato, *Protagoras*, 315c as seat of instruction; *Republic, 553b*, as the ruling faculty of a person's soul.
On ἐξουσία see Plato, *Crito*, 51d a political connotation.

temporal beginnings.[185] It's most significant usage is in an epistemological and ontological sense to explain the nature of reality and its origins. This is demonstrated in the *Republic* with the divided line analogy.[186] In *Timaeus*, a significant cluster of the term ἀρχή occurs at the beginning of the second part of *Timaeus'* monologue in relation to reason's persuasion of necessity. Cornford observes that ἀρχή is reiterated many times, with a certain fluctuation of sense.[187] These uses of the word bear little insight to Colossians 1:16d. Plato does use ἀρχή with a civic or political connotation in close semantic connection with or instead of ἄρχων to name a ruler or designate some kind of rule, more so in the *Republic*.[188]

### 5.2.5.1 Ἀρχαί and Ἐξουσίαι

This political meaning is heightened with its occasional use with ἐξουσία. Within the Platonic corpus ἀρχαί and ἐξουσίαι appear together on two occasions. The first instance occurs near the conclusion of (first or greater) Alcibiades,[189] where Socrates is extolling Alcibiades to attain ἀρετή (virtue). Socrates makes an analogy between the ship sinking with its sailors

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[185] Meaning 'beginning' Plato, *Phaedo*, 58c, 59d, 67d, 88d, 95d, 105b, 107d; *Republic*, 1.341a, 348b; 6.485a, 503a; 7.533c; *Timaeus*, 17b, 21d, 23b, 24c, 27a, 28b, 29b, 31b, 36e, 44a, 56e, 57d, 67d, 69c, 72b, 79d, 89c or 'starting point' see *Timaeus*, 48b,e, 69a,b, 90e; *Philebus*, 23c.

[186] See Plato, *Republic* 6.510b,d, 511b-d. It is also referred to in passing 7.533d.

[187] Plato, Timaeus, 48a-e. See explanation in Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, 161; See also Taylor, *A Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, 306.

[188] See Plato, *Republic*, 1. 341d, 342e, 343e, 345d-346a, 346e-347d; 3.412bff; 7.520e-521b, 539e; *Timaeus* 20a. Also a ruler of a ship (τῷ ὄντι νεὼς ἀρχικὸς ἔσεσθαι) like a κυβερνήτης (captain) in Plato, *Republic*, 6.502d-503a, 503d.

[189] See 135b Οὐκοῦν ὡσαύτως ἐν πόλει τε καὶ <u>πάσαις ἀρχαῖς καὶ ἐξουσίαις</u> ἀπολειπομέναις ἀρετῆς ἕπεται τὸ κακῶς πράττειν. (Likewise, if a city or any <u>ruler or administrator</u>, is lacking in virtue, then bad conduct will result). This reference has been noted by Carr, *Angels and Principalities*, 42; Pao, *Colossians & Philemon*, 96. This potentially the same document referred to in DL 3.59 as περὶ ἀνθρώπου and 3:62. In the 19th and early 20th century from the time of Friedrich Schleiermacher (1836), it has been common to doubt Alcibiades as Platonic. This appears not to have been the case in the ancient world and was considered an authentic Platonic work, it was not mentioned among the known νόθοι (illegitimate) Platonic works, but rather as the leading dialogue of the τέταρτη τετραλογία (fourth group of four dialogues). See DL 3.59-62. On a reassertion of Platonic authorship see Nicholas Denyer, *Plato: Alcibiades - Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 14-15. Challenging Platonic authorship see Nicholas D. Smith, "Did Plato Write the Alcibiades 1?". *Apeiron* 37, no. 2 (2004): 335-350; Jakub Jirsa, "Authenticity of the Alcibiades 1: Some Reflections." *Listy filologické* 134, no. 3/4 (2009): 225-244.

perishing through poor navigation and a πόλις falling into evil κακῶς πράττειν, because of the lack of ἀρετή of its leaders. The leaders are mentioned as πάσαις ἀρχαῖς καὶ ἐξουσίαις, clearly, the designation of this phrase has in mind civic and political leaders.

The second occasion is found in the Ὁροί (Definitions), a 'spurious work in the Platonic canon.'[190] The work itself is a list of 185 terms and their definitions. Here ἀρχή and ἐξουσία are found one after the other in the second section of the work with terms about political figures, civic and social realities on either side of this pair.[191] They are defined as Ἀρχὴ ἐτιμέλεια τοῦ παντός (being in charge of all) then followed immediately by Ἐξουσία ἐπιτροπὴ νόμου (authority [granted] by the law).  The above-mentioned occurrences display (1) their close semantic relationship in the Platonic tradition, and (2) When paired together have a connotation associated with political and civic rulers and realities.  These though are coincidental and relatively inconsequential in the wider Platonic tradition and do not appear to have been a common or a widespread phrase in Platonism. Also Colossians 1:16d is comprised of a quartet of terms. Might the fourfold expression bear any meaning?

### 5.2.5.2 The Use of the Fourfold Expression of Reality

Reality as consisting of 4 regions, though prominent in *Timaeus*, can be traced back even to the Poets. In Hesiod, Tartarus and Earth (Γαῖα) with her progeny sky (Οὐρανός) and sea make

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[190] This work may be attributed to Speusippus (ca. 410-338 BC). See DL 4.5. Dillon suggests that there is no obvious order to the definitions but acknowledges a general tripartite ordering of 411a-414c according to physics, ethics and knowledge. See John M. Dillon, "Dubia and Spuria," in *The Continuum Companion to Plato*. (Edited Gerald A. Press. London: Continuum 2012), 51. See also Douglas S. Hutchinson, "Definitions," in *Plato: Complete Works*. (Edited by John M. Cooper and Douglas S. Hutchinson; Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 1677-1678.

[191] Second Section is from 414e-416d.  See 415b as Βασιλεύς, νομοθέτης, and νόμος. Later in 416a  ἀρχή is again described metaphysically as πρώτη τοῦ εἶναι αἰτία (the first cause of being).

up the four main general areas of reality.[192] In Homer Zeus, Poseidon and Hades reside over

three portions of πάντα. Zeus resides in οὐρανός εὐρύς (broad sky/heaven) and clouds,

Poseidon the ἅλα παλλομένων (swaying salty [sea]) and Hades the ζόφος ἠερόεις (empty

darkness [underworld]). The fourth area was held in common to the three, the γαῖα and

Ὄλυμπος (earth and [mount] Olympus).[193] This four-fold expression of reality may have

inspired the pre-Socratic use of πῦρ, ὕδωρ, γῆν, and ἀέρα;[194] which Empedocles calls

ῥιζώματα[195] and Anaxagoras calls seedbed' (πανσπερία) for σπέρμα (seeds) or τὰ ὁμοιομερῆ

(the homoeomeries).[196]

In the wider Platonic Corpus Plato also describes πάντα (all things) in a fourfold manner. In

*Philebus* where Socrates divides all things into four (τὰ τέτταρα ἐκεῖνα): ἀπειρία (unlimited)

πέρας (limited) μικτός (mixture) αἰτία (cause).[197] Ross equates τὰ τέτταρα ἐκεῖνα of Phibius

30b with the τὰ τέτταρα γένη of Timaeus 53a.[198]

Four plays a prominent feature in *Timaeus*. The text opens with "εἷς, δύο, τρεῖς...

τέταρτος,"[199] suggesting that numbers and in particular four will play a prominent feature

throughout. The most prominent use of four in *Timaeus* is that of the components of

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[192] Hesiod, *Theogony*, 116-134. See Wright, *Cosmology in Antiquity*, 93.
[193] Homer, *Iliad*, 15.187-193.
[194] See explanation in William K.C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy:* Volume 2, The Presocratic Tradition from Parmenides to Democritus. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 141.
[195] Aristotle, *On Corruption and Generation*, 2.6 (333b); Aëtius 1.3; DL 8.76; Simplicius, *Physics*, 158, 13 (KR 424); 159, 21 (KR 425); 25, 21 (DK 31A 28/ KR 426). See John Burnet, *Greek Philosophy,* 55. He explains that this meant something eternal and irreducible to anything else.
[196] See also Geoffrey S. Kirk and John E. Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers: A Critical History with a Selection of Texts.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957)*,* 367-68.
[197] See Plato, *Philebus*, 27b, 30b.
[198] Ross, *Plato's Theory of Ideas*, 136-137.
[199] Plato, *Timaeus*, 17a.

γιγνόμενα ordered by the δημιουργός, that of πῦρ, ὕδωρ, γῆν, and ἀέρα. These fourfold

components of reality are frequently mentioned together throughout the *Timaeus*,[200] an

obvious connection here with the ῥιζώματα of Empedocles.[201] *Timaeus* also refers to these

four with a very Pythagorean phrase, τὸν ἀριθμὸν τεττάρων (32c) as the things that have

begotten τὸ τοῦ κόσμου σῶμα ἐγεννήθη (the body of the cosmos). Taylor observes that

"*Timaeus* reveals himself thus early in his narrative as aiming at a combination of

Pythagorean mathematics with Empedoclean chemistry and biology"[202] These four also are

referred to as the στοιχεῖα τοῦ παντός at the beginning of the second section of the

monologue. The noun στοιχεῖα commonly being associated with these four throughout

antiquity from Aristotle onwards.[203]


### 5.2.5.3 Timaeus' Cosmology and Plato's Politics

One must also remember that *Timaeus* begins with Socrates recalling the topics he spoke

about on the previous day. They were περὶ πολιτείας (about politics).[204] Although there is no

evidence that this is a clear reference to the *Republic*, DL suggests that the *Republic*

proceeded *Timaeus* in some compilations of Plato's works; and that the *Republic*, *Timaeus*

and *Critias* may have been read together as a group in antiquity.[205] After the digression of

Timaeus' monologue about cosmological concerns (27c-92c), the dialogue between

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[200] Plato, *Timaeus*, 32b-d, 40a, 46d, 48b, 49b, 53b, 53c (bodies), 55d-57c, 60e-61a, 73b, 74c, 78a-b, 82a, 86a. See also footnote 46

[201] See footnote 194.

[202] Taylor, *A Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, 88.

[203] Aristotle, *Physics*, 1.1 (184a); *Metaphysics*, Δ 5.3 (1013a26-1014a15); Aëtius 1.2. See an extensive treatment on this in Timothy J. Crowley, "On the Use of stoicheion in the Sense of 'Element'." *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 29 (2005): 367-394; Timothy J. Crowley, "Aristotle on the Matter of the Elements." (D.Phil diss.: Oxford University, 2009), 47-53, 83-85, 218.

[204] Plato, *Timaeus*, 17c.

[205] See DL 3.60.

Socrates, Critias, Timaeus and Hermocrates resumes (but does not conclude) in *Critias* [an unfinished work] with discussions about political structures and the story of Athens and Atlantis.[206] The point to be made here is the implicit role that cosmology has with Plato's political views. With this in mind, it is not unreasonable to assume that if the author (of Colossians) is working with Platonic paradigms a statement about political structures as a way to comprehend reality in Colossians 1:16d would naturally go hand-in-hand with spatial and conceptual statements about reality in Colossians 1:16b-c.

### 5.2.6 Similarities with Philo's Corpus

Moving to Philo, θρόνος appears only once.[207] Κυριότης is not used. Where ἐξουσία is the most frequent of the four nouns in the *corpus Paulinum* followed by ἀρχή, the converse is the case in Philo.

### 5.2.6.1 Ἀρχή

Philo's use of ἀρχή, both singular and plural forms, reflects the wider use in the classical world, similar to that of the Platonic corpus. He uses it to express temporal beginnings[208] and a number of things that relate to primacy. Wink explains that Philo normally uses ἀρχή for abstract or structural power with a strong political inference.[209] Philo also uses ἀρχή to

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[206] This is discussed further in Johansen, *Plato's Natural Philosophy*, 7-23; Broadie, *Nature and Divinity in Plato's Timaeus*, 115-129.

[207] Philo, *Congr*, 118. This occurrence is a group of three symbols of authority issued to Egypt as part of an act of chastisement and humiliation for rebelling against the reign of God.

[208] Singular: *Opif*. 26 [Gen 1:1], 27,44, 82 52 151, 170; *Leg*. 1.5, 6; 2:15; 3:78, 185 (virtue); *Cher*. 54; *Sacr*.120; *Post*. 174; *Conf*. 68; Her. 121; *Cong*. 2; *Fug*. 107, 172; *Abr*. 7; *Ios*. 173; *Mos*. 1.256; 2.60, 93; *Prob*. 139; *Flacc*. 2,91; *Legat*. 76.
Plural: Leg. 1.65; Det. 118; Agr. 157-158, 173; *Conf* 42, 153; *Her* 114, 120 (in God); *Congr*. 120; *Fug* (virtue *Dec*. 52); 148; *Somn*. 2,243 *Ios*. 137; Dec 5; *Praem*. 68, 102.

[209] Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 152. He references each occurrence with a list following the English terms used to translate it in the LCL: sovereignty (41 times), office (35), government (13), authority (9), rule/governance

refer to God as the originator of that which is becoming.[210] He also names the λόγος as ἀρχή along with a number of other designations that appear in Colossians 1:15-20,[211] which might be more instructive for Colossians 1:18. Philo on occasion uses ἀρχή with concepts associated with the philosophical tradition for such concepts as 'first principles'[212] and language associated with the four 'elements.'[213] In *Dec*. 53-54 πῦρ, ὕδωρ, γῆν, and ἀέρα are described as τέσσαρες ἀρχαί and allegorically associated with the sun, moon and other planets, which Philo explains people wrongly worship as divine, associating them with the Olympian deities.[214] Philo uses the term ἀρχή in a way that is similar to the Platonic use of ἄρχων to name some kind of human ruler or the phenomena of authority associated with that kind of rule.[215]

### 5.2.6.1.1 Ἀρχή as the Fourfold Reality – Philo, *Her*. 281

The Allegorical Philonic work of Abra(ha)m's vision in Genesis 15 considers whether one can become the inheritor of incorporeal and divine things by of αἴσθησις.[216] Philo answers in Platonic fashion, that one must μετανίστημι (migrate) from αἴσθησις. Just as Abram left

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(8), dominion (6), leadership (2), command (2), empire (2) and once for rulership, reign, throne, magistracy and queenship.

[210] Philo, *Mig*. 42; *Her*. 172

[211] Such as πρωτόγονος (a slight variation of πρωτόγονος) and εἰκών. See section 4.2.6.1. See Philo, *Conf*. 146. "...κατὰ τὸν <u>πρωτόγονον</u> αὐτοῦ λόγον, τὸν ἀγγέλων πρεσβύτατον, ὡς ἂν ἀρχάγγελον, πολυώνυμον ὑπάρχοντα· καὶ γὰρ <u>ἀρχὴ</u> καὶ ὄνομα θεοῦ καὶ λόγος καὶ ὁ κατ' <u>εἰκόνα</u> ἄνθρωπος καὶ ὁ ὁρῶν, Ἰσραήλ, προσαγορεύεται."

[212] Philo, *Congr* 146; *Somn*. 1.211; *Mos*. 2.285; *Praem*. 46; *Contempl*. 65.

[213] Philo, *Det*. 153, 154; *Her*. 281; *Congr*. 146; *Dec*. 53-54.

[214] Philo, *Dec*. 54 "...καλοῦσι γὰρ οἱ μὲν τὴν <u>γῆν Κόρην, Δήμητραν, Πλούτωνα</u>, τὴν δὲ <u>θάλατταν Ποσειδῶνα</u>, δαίμονας ἐναλίους ὑπάρχους αὐτῷ προσαναπλάττοντες καὶ θεραπείας ὁμίλους μεγάλους ἀρρένων τε καὶ θηλειῶν, <u>Ἥραν δὲ τὸν ἀέρα</u> καὶ <u>τὸ πῦρ Ἥφαιστον</u> καὶ ἥλιον Ἀπόλλωνα καὶ σελήνην Ἄρτεμιν καὶ ἑωσφόρον Ἀφροδίτην καὶ στίλβοντα Ἑρμῆν·" A similar sentiment is made in *Contempl*. 3 where the four a mentioned, this time as στοιχεῖα. See Philo, *Contempl*. 3 "...ἆρά γε τοὺς τὰ στοιχεῖα τιμῶντας, <u>γῆν, ὕδωρ, ἀέρα, πῦρ</u>; οἷς καὶ ἐπωνυμίας ἔθεντο ἑτέρας ἕτεροι, τὸ μὲν <u>πῦρ Ἥφαιστον</u> παρὰ τὴν ἔξαψιν, οἶμαι, καλοῦντες, <u>Ἥραν δὲ τὸν ἀέρα</u> παρὰ τὸ αἴρεσθαι καὶ μετεωρίζεσθαι πρὸς ὕψος, τὸ δὲ <u>ὕδωρ Ποσειδῶνα</u> τάχα που διὰ τὸ ποτόν, τὴν δὲ <u>γῆν Δήμητραν</u>."

[215] See Philo *Opif*. 17; *Leg*. 3.73; *Sacr*. 59; *Somn*. 2.294; *Ios*. 166; *Virt*. 218; *Spec*. 1.294; *Legat*. 26, 28, 54, 190

[216] See Philo, *Her*. 1, 63-65, 68-74.

Chaldea, so one must pursue those things that are only perceptible through intellect.[217] It is in this vain that Philo allegorically exegetes the phrase σὺ δὲ ἀπελεύσῃ πρὸς τοὺς πατέρας in LXX Genesis 15:15. Philo allegorically interprets the ' fathers' that the Abram has emigrated from in Genesis 12:1 as the Platonic four γῆν, ὕδωρ, ἀέρα, πῦρ, calling them τὰς τέτταρας ἀρχάς τε καὶ δυνάμεις, ἐξ ὧν συνέστηκεν ὁ κόσμος.[218] Philo explains that these are τὰ μὲν σωματικὰ ταῦτα (bodily things). The meaning of fathers in Genesis 15:15 is for the soul to ascend past these four to the αἰθήρ (aether) which is described as the πέμπτος (fifth), superior to the four.[219] Philo's use of ἀρχή, like that of Plato, is an expression *of* all four rather than *one* of the four in itself as in Colossians 1:16d

### 5.2.6.2 Ἐξουσία

Both Foerster and Wink ascribe a 'normal' usage of the term Ἐξουσία in Philo.[220] By this, they infer that the term has a political or civic connotation that expresses authority. Philo also pairs ἐξουσία with ἀγαθός as the two manifestations of God that correspond with the divine names κύριος (Lord) and θεός (God), the former with his governance, the latter with his creative qualities.[221] These two qualities are described by Philo as δυνάμεις and also allegorically likened to τὰ χερουβιμ of LXX Gen 3:24 who along with the flaming sword of λόγος between them are the greatest cause by which God creates all things.[222]

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[217] τὰ νοητὰ δεδιδαγμένοις Philo, *Her*. 71.
[218] Philo, *Her*. 281.
[219] Philo, *Her*. 283.
[220] Forester,"ἐξουσία" *TDNT* 2.564; Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 15, 157-158. Wink also suggests that Philo never uses it for spiritual powers.
[221] Philo, Cher. 27-28; Sac. 59. See further explanation in Wolfson, *Philo*, 1.223-225; Dillon, *The Middle Platonists,* 161-162; Schenck, *A Brief Guide to Philo*, 62.
[222] See Philo, *Cher*. 27-29.

### 5.2.6.3 Ἀρχαί and Ἐξουσίαι

When Philo's also uses ἀρχή and ἐξουσία together, they tend to explain the power

incumbent on human rulers, describing a position of power, such as in Philo *Legat.* 71:[223]

> ὅσον πατέρα γνήσιον παρ᾽ υἱῷ καίτοι πατέρες ἰδιῶται γενομένων <u>ἐν ἀρχαῖς μεγάλαις καὶ ἐξουσίαις</u> υἱῶν ὑποστέλλουσιν ἀγαπητῶς φερόμενοι δευτερεῖα.

This is also used for Moses, similar to the expression in Titus 3:1.[224]

> ...ᾔδεσαν γὰρ αὐτὸν οὐ καταλαζονευόμενον <u>ἀρχῆς ἐξουσίᾳ</u>, προκηδόμενον δὲ πάντων καὶ δικαιοσύνην καὶ ἰσότητα τιμῶντα καὶ τὸ μισοπόνηρον

Interestingly Philo expresses the concept of ruling/governance and authority with ἐξουσία in

*Cher.* 27 and then changes the term to ἀρχή in *Cher.* 28.[225] A phenomenon that also takes

place in the next sequential work of Philo's allegorical commentary, in *Sac.* 59.[226] This may

represent a similar phenomenon to what was demonstrated in the Greek translations of

Daniel (explain in section 5.2.2.4.1 of this thesis). Philo's use of ἀρχή with ἐξουσία tends to

(1) overlap in meaning to describe the incumbent power of rule; (2) can be used together to

describe this ruling power; and (3) may blend in meaning to also describe the reality of the

universe. Morrison gives a helpful explanation of Philo's 'political' cosmology suggesting

that he [Philo] understood that "[t]he one God ruled through his powers, and civil

government was to be comprehended in these terms"[227] Philo's use of the terms ἀρχή and

ἐξουσία carry a wide semantic range, but used in close proximity they tend towards a

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[223] See Philo, *Legat.* 71. "And yet even real fathers who are in a private station submit to their sons when they are in <u>great offices and in places of high authority</u>, being quite content with the second place."

[224] See Philo, *Mos.* 1.328. "...for they knew he [Moses] was not a man to behave insolently because of his <u>power and authority</u>, but one who cared for all of them, and honored justice and equality, and who hated wickedness."

[225] Philo, *Cher.* 27 "...πρώτας δυνάμεις ἀγαθότητα καὶ <u>ἐξουσίαν</u>"; Philo, *Cher.* 28 "...<u>ἀρχῆς</u> μὲν οὖν καὶ ἀγαθότητος τῶν δυεῖν δυνάμεων."

[226] Philo, *Sacr.* 59 "ὁ θεὸς δορυφορούμενος ὑπὸ δυεῖν τῶν ἀνωτάτω δυνάμεων <u>ἀρχῆς</u> τε αὖ καὶ ἀγαθότητος ... ἡ μὲν οὖν ἀγαθότης αὐτοῦ μέτρον ἀγαθῶν ἐστιν, ἡ δὲ <u>ἐξουσία</u> μέτρον ὑπηκόων."

[227] Clinton D. Morrison, *The Powers That Be: Earthly Rulers and Demonic Powers in Romans 13.1-7.* Studies in Biblical Theology – vol. 29 (Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1960), 95.

meaning of civil authority that has its origins in God, and reflect an image of the creator's cosmic concord.[228]

### 5.2.6.4 The Use of the Fourfold Expression of Reality

Philo also sees the number four as a prominent way of explaining the nature of things. Philo uses the Platonic quartet of four elements in his writings, as explained in a previous section (see 5.1.6.1.4) where Philo refers to the four elements as πῦρ, ὕδωρ, γῆν, and ἀέρα. The number four is important in its own right. It is used allegorically to explain ethical virtues and vices.[229] It is a prominent feature in explaining the nature of things[230] and it corresponds with the sensible realm which is the perfect product of a perfect creator.[231]

### 5.2.7 Insights gained into Colossians Christology from distinctive language and comparisons *with* Timaeus and Philo's corpus

After a lexicographical and syntactic examination and a comparison with similar texts in the *corpus Paulinum*, Colossians 1:16d, commonly treated as part of the 'Principalities and Powers' texts of the *corpus Paulinum*, has very distinctive terminology. The author may well be the innovator of the ἀρχαί and ἐξουσίαι pairing in the Christian tradition, influenced by the pairing in the Greek translations of Daniel, Plato and Philo. This feature is then taken up by Ephesians. Colossians 1:16d does not appear to be drawing from a known Pauline or other Christian vocabulary. Colossians 1:16d is also unique in its use of these terms for two reasons: (1) it is used as expressions of reality created in Christ, rather than the typical

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[228] Explained further in Glenn F. Chesnut, "The Ruler and the Logos in Neopythagorean, Middle Platonic, and Late Stoic Political Philosophy." *ANRW* II.16.2 (1978): 1326-29.
[229] Plato, *Republic*, 427e, 436b; *Protagoras*, 330b;  Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1336b1; Cicero, *De Inventione*, 2.53 Philo, *Leg*. 1.63; *Somn*. 2.243; Abr. 236; Mos 2.115; *QG* 1.12. See also in Wisd. 8:7; 4 Macc 1:18-19.
[230] See Philo, *Opif*, 102, *Plant*. 124-25; Abr. 13; *Dec*. 26-27; Spec 1.87. See explanation in Mireille Hadas-Lebel, *Philo of Alexandria: A Thinker in the Jewish Diaspora.* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 168.
[231] See Philo, *Opif*. 47-53; *Det*. 153-154.

convention of denoting them as enemies that the exulted Christ has supremacy over by way of his death and resurrection; (2) this is the first time these types of terms are used in a fourfold expression. In this particular instance it does not appear that the author has in mind any clear or defined ranks or groups of supernatural entities, rather all the terms point to a civic and political connotation that find their ultimate source and origin in the creative work of God. In this sense, one might imply both a civic/political and supernatural connotation. Looking to Plato and Philo, one finds little lexicographical similarities. The incidental pairing of ἀρχαὶ and ἐξουσίαι suggest a political and civil connotation. But it is unlikely that the author is working with a prominent Platonic expression. Plato and Philo do, though, often express γιγνόμενα in a fourfold manner with the four 'elemental' nouns, πῦρ, ὕδωρ, γῆν, and ἀέρα. This potentially gives insight to the τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου phrase of Colossians 2:8 and 20.[232] It makes the most sense that this fourfold expression is a re-expression of the πάντα of Colossians 1:16a. It seems that Colossians 1:16d, similar conceptually to Plato, Philo, Romans 13:1-3 and Titus 3:1, is a fourfold expression of reality, with a civic and political inference, reiterating the scope of that which God has created in Christ.

## 5.3 Summary

Colossians 1:16b-d represents a concise representation of the author's cosmology for the purposes of framing Christ's supremacy. Each line displays noteworthy distinctives with the corpus *Paulinum*, which find a lexicographical and/or conceptual connection with Platonic texts and Philo. These insights from the Platonic tradition do not suggest that the nouns in

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[232] Plato is potentially the first to associate the term στοιχεῖον with this fourfold expression. See section 4.3.5.2 of this thesis.

Colossians 1:16d have any overt or obvious semantic connection with four in 16b-c, nor 16b-c with each other. Rather Colossians 1:16b-d comprises of three expressions or facets about the same reality. The text does not thoroughly express the sophisticated metaphysical reality found in Plato and Philo, but does implicitly show similarity with their cosmic expressions and concepts. Colossians 1:16:b-c twice expresses a bifurcation of reality, one spatial and the other conceptual. Colossians 1:16d finds conceptual similarity with the fourfold expression of γιγνόμενα and political/civic authority finding its origins in God, and reflecting an image of cosmic concord, in the centre of which Colossians has placed Christ. What is inferred here is an elevation of Christ with God in a way that Philo does not do with his logos doctrine. Colossians is again working with Platonic vocabulary and concepts, but is reworking them into his own ideas about the significance of Christ and his relationship to reality. This thesis will now move to the final section of examination, Colossians 1:16e-17b, to further explore the author's treatment of causation and theology.

# CHAPTER SIX – EXEGESIS OF COLOSSIANS 1:16E-17B
# CAUSATION AND THEOLOGY IN COLOSSIANS

¹⁶ᵉ τὰ πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἔκτισται,

¹⁷ ᵃ καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν πρὸ πάντων

ᵇ    καὶ τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν.

## 6.1 Colossians 1:16e τὰ πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἔκτισται

### 6.1.1 Syntactical Analysis and Usage in Colossians

After the purposeful digression in Colossians 1:16b-d to further demarcate and explain the πάντα of which Christ takes a curious role in creating. The author now returns to the premise introduced in 16a, the creation of τὰ πάντα. The nominative τὰ πάντα is reiterated again here as the totality of reality created by the son. Two prepositional phrases, δι' αὐτοῦ and εἰς αὐτὸν, are used to express the cause of τὰ πάντα and reoccur in the second *strophe* of the hymn in verse 20 in the same order. The aorist of κτίζω (16a) has now been replaced by the perfect.[1]  The perfect seeks to highlight the current and ongoing relevance of the completed creative action.[2] The verb is again in the passive, suggesting God's implicit role as creator with Christ.[3]

### 6.1.2 Lexicographical Investigation of Similarities, Differences and Distinctiveness within the *Corpus Paulinum* and Biblical Literature

#### 6.1.2.1 The Use of Both Phrases in the *corpus Paulinum*

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[1] Harris suggests a potential chiasm. Verse 16 begins with κτίζω (aor.), τὰ πάντα; in ends with τὰ πάντα, κτίζω (perfect). See Harris, *Colossians & Philemon*, 45.; Stettler, *Der Kolosserhymnus*, 153.
[2] Pao, *Colossians & Philemon*, 97.
[3] Stettler suggests the Hebrew *Niphal* verb stem maybe inferred in the Greek passive. Stettler, *Der Kolosserhymnus*, 153.
[3] Pao, *Colossians & Philemon*, 97.

The use of the genitive δι' αὐτοῦ and/or accusative εἰς αὐτὸν (or a relative pronoun) with the noun τὰ πάντα occurs on six other occasions in the NT.[4] There are two occasions in the Pauline letters. In Romans 11:36 both phrases appear with a doxology directed towards God at the conclusion of Paul's diatribe about the question of Israel in God's plan. It contains both genitive and accusative prepositional phrases. A similar idea is expressed in Ephesians 4:6. The other occurrence in the Pauline letters is in 1 Corinthians 8:6 (see section 4.3.2.2). It has two parts to it. Verse 6a is directed to the father God and has the εἰς accusative prepositional phrase. Verse 6b is about Christ and has only the genitive prepositional phrase. Colossians 1:16 and 20 are the only occasions where *both* the genitive and the accusative appear together to refer to Christ.

**6.1.2.2 The use of δι' αὐτοῦ in the NT**

In Hebrews 1:2 the accusative relative pronoun ὃν refers to the Father who appoints the (son) as heir of πάντα. The next clause refers to the son genitivally (δι' οὗ) denoting Christ's involvement in the creative activity of God. In Hebrews 2:10 both the genitive and accusative of διά refer to God and his relationship to all things.

Colossians 1:16e finds a conceptual similarity with the Johannine prologue where a genitive δι' αὐτου is used to speak about the λόγος (Christ) and πάντα with the verb ἐγένετο, rather

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[4] John 1:3 "…πάντα <u>δι' αὐτοῦ</u> ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἕν. ὃ γέγονεν"
Rom 11:36 "…ὅτι <u>ἐξ αὐτοῦ</u> καὶ <u>δι' αὐτοῦ</u> καὶ <u>εἰς αὐτὸν</u> τὰ πάντα"
1 Cor 8:6 "ἀλλ' ἡμῖν εἷς θεὸς ὁ πατὴρ <u>ἐξ οὗ</u> τὰ πάντα καὶ ἡμεῖς <u>εἰς αὐτόν,</u>
  καὶ εἷς κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς <u>δι' οὗ</u> τὰ πάντα καὶ ἡμεῖς <u>δι' αὐτοῦ</u>."
Col 1:20 "…καὶ <u>δι' αὐτοῦ</u> ἀποκαταλλάξαι τὰ πάντα <u>εἰς αὐτόν</u>, εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ,
[<u>δι' αὐτοῦ</u>] εἴτε τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς εἴτε τὰ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς."
Eph 4:6 εἷς θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ πάντων, ὁ ἐπὶ πάντων καὶ <u>διὰ πάντων</u> καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν.
Heb 1:2 "…<u>δι' οὗ</u> καὶ ἐποίησεν τοὺς αἰῶνας"
Heb 2:10 "…Ἔπρεπεν γὰρ αὐτῷ, <u>δι' ὃν</u> τὰ πάντα καὶ <u>δι' οὗ</u> τὰ πάντα."

than κτίζω. In John 1:10 and 3:17 the author again uses the genitive δι᾽ αὐτου but this time with κόσμος.[5] The use of δι᾽ αὐτου, even when not used with πάντα is uncommon in the NT and on these occasions usually, apart from the Johannine examples, refer to Christ in a soteriological sense.[6]

### 6.1.2.2 The use of εἰς αὐτόν in the NT

In the *corpus Paulinum*, apart from its use with δι' αὐτοῦ, εἰς αὐτόν occurs twice in the Pauline letters: in 2 Corinthians 2:8 to refer to the restoration of someone after a matter of ecclesial discipline; and in Philippians 1:29 it associates the phrase in a Johannine way with belief in Christ.[7] Apart from its use in Colossians 1:16 and 20, the only other two occurrences are found in Ephesians. Ephesians 1:5 uses the phrase διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ along with εἰς αὐτόν to speak about the saint's adoption.[8] The 'linguistically awkward' nature of this phrase has been noted, but the εἰς αὐτόν is best understood as referring to father God in verse 3.[9] In Ephesians 4:15 εἰς αὐτόν occurs prior to neuter τὰ πάντα,[10] here it is used to refer to Christ and the believer's close association with him.

In the Synoptics and Acts, the use of εἰς αὐτόν occurs with 'verbs of motion' to give a resultant meaning of 'on him,'[11] or 'into him'[12] or 'at him'[13] given the context.[14] In the

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[5] John 1:10. "ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἦν, καὶ ὁ κόσμος δι᾽ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ ὁ κόσμος αὐτὸν οὐκ ἔγνω." A soteriological inference is implied in John 3:17 "πάντα, οὐ γὰρ ἀπέστειλεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν υἱὸν εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἵνα κρίνῃ τὸν κόσμον, ἀλλ᾽ ἵνα σωθῇ ὁ κόσμος δι᾽ αὐτοῦ."
[6] See Rom 5:9; Eph 2:18; Heb 7:25; 13:15; 1 Peter 1:21; 1 John 4:9.
[7] O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, 160.
[8] Eph 1:5 "προορίσας ἡμᾶς εἰς υἱοθεσίαν διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς αὐτόν, κατὰ τὴν εὐδοκίαν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ."
[9] See Barth, *Ephesians 1-3*, 80-81. See also Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 25.
[10] ἀληθεύοντες δὲ ἐν ἀγάπῃ αὐξήσωμεν εἰς αὐτὸν τὰ πάντα, ὅς ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλή, Χριστός.
[11] Matt 27:30; Mark 1:10; Luke 22:65.
[12] Mark 7:15; 9:25; Luke 8:30; Acts 28:6.
[13] Acts 3:4; 6:15; 13:9; 22:13.
[14] See Robertson, *Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 593-594

Gospel of John, it is associated with belief 'in' Jesus, [15] overlapping in semantic meaning with the dative plus ἐν as seen in John 3:15.[16] The only other usage outside the *corpus Paulinum* is in Hebrews 9:24, here εἰς αὐτόν has a rare intensive/reflective use to emphatically describe the singular οὐρανός as the place of God's dynamic presence which Christ enters into to appear before God on behalf of humanity.[17]

### 6.1.3 Summary of Distinctive Language

Prepositional phrases associated with τὰ πάντα are rare in the *corpus Paulinum*. Colossians 1:16e is similar only to 1 Corinthians 8:6 in the use of δι' αὐτοῦ and εἰς αὐτόν. But it only uses δι' αὐτοῦ for Christ. In this sense, it finds similarities with Hebrews and John through the use of δι' αὐτοῦ. Colossians 1:16e is distinctive in attributing both phrases, δι' αὐτοῦ and εἰς αὐτόν, to Christ.

### 6.1.4 Emerging Issues for Further Analysis

What are we to make of these prepositional phrases in Colossians 1:16e? They along with Colossians 1:16a and 17b seek to explain how God and Christ caused τὰ πάντα to be. The interpretative issues are two-fold:  (1) how to understand the nuance of the two prepositional phrases and (2) the significance of them being attributed to Christ. Valuable

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[15] John 2:11,; 3:16, 18; 4:39; 6:40; 7:5, 31, 39, 48; 8:30; 9:36; 10:42; 11:45, 48; 12:37, 42; Acts 10:43. In the name τὸ ὄνομα (John 2:23; 3:18); In the Son εἰς τὸν υἱὸν John 3:36; In me εἰς ἐμὲ John 6:35; 7:38; 11:26; 12:44, 46; 14:12.

[16] See a further explanation of this in Robertson, *Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 591-592; Murray J. Harris, "Appendix: Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament," in *NIDNTT*. (Edited by Colin Brown. Grand Rapids: The Paternoster Press, 1976), 3:1185-1186.

[17] See William L. Lane, *Hebrews 9-13.* WBC vol. 47a. (Edited by Ralph P Martin; Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1991), 248.

insights can be gained from a necessary digression into causation language of classical and Hellenistic philosophy.

### 6.1.5 Similarities with *Timaeus* and Platonic Texts – Platonic Causation

### 6.1.5.1 Causation in the Wider Platonic Corpus

In classical philosophy explanations about an object's (1) origin; (2) classification, (3) composition and (4) purpose are expressed through causation language. These explanations often, although not solely, centre around the Greek term αἰτία (cause).[18] Plato defines αἰτία as:[19]

> ...καὶ τὸ αἴτιον· <u>δι' ὅ</u> γὰρ γίγνεταί [τι], τοῦτ ἔστι τὸ αἴτιον - καὶ "Δία" καλεῖν ἔφη τις τοῦτο ὀρθῶς ἔχειν διὰ ταῦτα.

Here two important linguistic and conceptual phenomena of causation language are exhibited. (1) The use of prepositions, and (2) through the pun on διὰ for Zeus the implicit nature that theology plays in causation explanations. In the Platonic corpus considerations about causation run throughout a number of his dialogues. In *Phaedo* Plato's Socrates undertakes a consideration of the nature of causation and explains an object's cause with its form.[20] His search for the ἀληθῶς αἰτίας (true cause)[21] of ἀγαθός (goodness) and κάλος

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[18] Which derives from the adjective αἴτιος which generally means 'responsible.' See R. J. Hankinson, "Explanation and causation," in *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy*. (Edited by Keimpe Algra, Jonathan Barnes, Jaap Mansfeld, and Malcom Schofield; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1999), 480. See also "αἰτία" *LSJ* (Abridged), 22-23.

[19] Plato, *Cratylus*, 413a "…and cause; cause is this, for through which [something] becomes,– and someone told me it is correct to call this 'Zeus' (dia) because of this."

[20] See Plato, *Phaedo*, 96a-101e, 105b-c where he considers Anaxagoras' proposal that mind is the one directing and the cause of everything. "…ὡς ἄρα νοῦς ἐστιν ὁ διακοσμῶν τε καὶ πάντων αἴτιος" in Plato, *Phaedo*, 97c. Further explanation on Anaxagoras' 'mind' can be found in DL 2.6 "… καὶ πρῶτος τῇ ὕλῃ νοῦν ἐπέστησεν (and was the first who set mind above matter) … πάντα χρήματα ἦν ὁμοῦ· εἶτα νοῦς ἐλθὼν αὐτὰ διεκόσμησε ([he says], "All things were together; then came Mind and set them in order.")." See also KR, 372-377; Drozdek, *Greek Philosophers as Theologians*, 85-93 and David N. Sedley, "Platonic Causes." *Phronesis* 43, no. 2 (1998): 114-132. Especially pp. 118-122.

[21] See Plato, *Phaedo*, 98e.

(beauty) concludes with the notion that τῷ καλῷ πάντα τὰ καλὰ γίγνεται καλά.[22] Here

causation is linked with the Platonic doctrine of the forms.[23] This doctrine is that an object in

the γιγνόμενα receives its ontological definition by its connection to a noetic idea in the

unchanging ὄντα, a concept further elaborated in the Republic.[24] The Platonic cause and its

effect are not identical. In Plato's *Philebus* Socrates speaks of a cause, as distinct from other

parts of reality, it is τὸ δὲ ποιοῦν and δημιουργοῦν,[25] these explanations of cause are also

expanded in the work of the δημιουργός in *Timaeus*.


**6.1.5.2 Causation in *Timaeus***

**6.1.5.2.1 The First Section of the Monologue (29d–47e)**

Explanations about causation receive a comprehensive treatment in *Timaeus*. The term

αἰτία and cognates can simply be used to explain a 'reason' for a whole range of

phenomena.[26] But more significantly it tends to occur at the beginning and conclusion of

major sections of the monologue. At the beginning of the monologue the distinction

between ὄντα and γιγνόμενα is made, the latter requiring 'some cause' as an explanation of

its existence.[27] Taylor explains that "Plato here means by 'cause', not an 'antecedent event',

but an agent."[28] In the next sentence Plato's agent is then introduced, the δημιουργός.[29] He

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[22] "…all beautiful things are beautiful by the beautiful." Plato, *Phaedo*, 100d.
[23] Treated in section 5.1.5.3 of thesis.
[24] About god and the good in Plato, *Republic*, 2.379a-c.
[25] Plato, *Philebus*, 26e-27b. See also Plato, *Hippias Major*, 296e-297c.
[26] See Plato, *Timaeus*, 18e, 22e, 33a, 38d, 40b, 44d, 45b, 57c, 58a, 61c, 63e, 65c.
[27] Plato, *Timaeus*, 28a "πᾶν δὲ αὖ τὸ γιγνόμενον ὑπ' αἰτίου τινὸς ἐξ ἀνάγκης γίγνεσθαι: παντὶ γὰρ ἀδύνατον χωρὶς αἰτίου γένεσιν σχεῖν."
[28] See Plato, *Timaeus*, 28a in Taylor, *A Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, 63-64. A similar idea is expressed in Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, 24-25 when he says "This sense of the word corresponds to the notion of a cause imagined as a father who begets his offspring, or as a maker who fashions his product out of his materials"
[29] Who will subsequently be explained as θέος. See Plato, *Timaeus*, 30a. Cornford highlights the similarities between cause and demiurge in *Philebus*, 26e-27b. See also *Sophist*, 265b-c. *Statesman*, 270a.

uses the ὄντα as an ἰδέα (model) to fashion what is γιγνόμενα.[30] The result of this completed

action is the whole heaven or cosmos, as stated earlier.[31] The δημιουργός is then designated

the title "ὁ δ' ἄριστος τῶν αἰτίων."[32]

The use of the plural for *cause* here is significant. While the δημιουργός is the αἰτία *par*

*excellence*; pre-existing matter, which is independent of him is spoken of as συναίτια (an

accessory or auxiliary cause).[33] It is used as a material to complete the κόσμος, what is most

excellent according to the idea.[34] As the first section of *Timaeus'* monologue concludes

causation language again becomes prominent. The audience is reminded that Plato's

cosmogony is not one of *creatio ex nihilo*, but one where *god* takes pre-existing matter in a

chaotic state and fashions it into order, into κόσμος.[35] *Timaeus* explains that many people

mistakenly regard these συναίτια, which are then further defined as fire, water, earth and

air; the visible bodies of γιγνόμενα,[36] as αἴτια τῶν πάντων. *Timaeus'* audience is then

exhorted to pursue αἰτίας πρώτας (first or primary causes [plural]), which are comprehended

by νοῦς and ἐπιστήμη, not those of πῦρ, ὕδωρ, γῆ and ἀὴρ, which are moved by motion of

necessity (κατὰ ἀνάγκης κινούντων γίγνονται). *Timaeus*, here indicates that there are

multiple τὰ τῶν αἰτιῶν γένη (kind(s) of causes).[37]

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[30] Plato, *Timaeus*, 28b.
[31] See section 4.3.5.
[32] Plato, *Timaeus*, 29a "…the greatest of causes"
[33] See Plato, *Timaeus*, 46c-d. Taylor explains the use of accessory or intermediate agents. He refers to this connotation of συμαίτιος in Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 1116 and μεταίτιος in *Agamemnon*, 810; *Choephori*, 100 and 134. See in Taylor, *A Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, 291-92.
[34] Plato, *Timaeus*, 46c "θεὸς ὑπηρετοῦσιν χρῆται τὴν τοῦ ἀρίστου κατὰ τὸ δυνατὸν ἰδέαν ἀποτελῶν"
[35] See Vlastos, *Plato's Universe*, 25. See section 4.3.5.1 of thesis.
[36] Plato, *Timaeus*, 46c "…πῦρ δὲ καὶ ὕδωρ καὶ γῆ καὶ ἀὴρ σώματα πάντα ὁρατὰ γέγονεν"
[37] Those from god and those from another sources. See Plato, *Timaeus*, 46e.

**6.1.5.2.2 The Second Monologue (47e–69a)**

The concept of multiple causes gets explained at the beginning of the second section of

*Timaeus* which is again bookended by causation language. This section concerns ἀνάγκη

(necessity) and its union *with* persuasion *by* νοῦς.  Both νοῦς and ἀνάγκη evoke different

aspects of causation and prepositions associated with them emphasise this nuance. The

κόσμος is crafted (δεδημιουργημένα) through (genitive) intellect and necessity (διὰ νοῦ … δι᾽

ἀνάγκης), it is generated from (genitive) intellect and necessity (ἡ τοῦδε τοῦ κόσμου γένεσις ἐξ

ἀνάγκης τε καὶ νοῦ συστάσεως ἐγεννήθη).[38] *Timaeus* here introduces a spurious cause, called

the πλανωμένη αἰτία (wandering/straying/errant cause) suggesting a degree of aimlessness

or arbitrariness associated with reality and ἀνάγκη prior to the Demiurge's crafting through

intellect.[39] This second section concludes with the last noteworthy usage of causation

language in *Timaeus*, a restatement of two kinds of causes. They are here clearly named as

necessary and the divine.[40] In *Timaeus*, causation language indicates (1) a precedent for

using διά to express causation; (2) a strong link between theology and causation, indicating

Plato's craftsman god as good and both the essential and the ultimate cause,[41] and (3) a

multiplicity of causes, in two generic categories.


**6.1.5.3 Aristotelian Causation**

Plato's student Aristotle (384-322 BCE), fond of both categories and causation language,

develops these concepts further. Causation (αἴτια) along with ἀρχαί and στοιχεῖα are his

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[38] Plato, *Timaeus*, 47e-48a.
[39] See Johansen, *Plato's Natural Philosophy*, 92-95.
[40] Plato, *Timaeus*, 69a "…διὸ δὴ χρὴ δύ᾽ αἰτίας εἴδη διορίζεσθαι, τὸ μὲν ἀναγκαῖον, τὸ δὲ θεῖον" Here, Taylor observes, there is not an ultimate dualism between god and necessity, but rather a priority is given to the divine which is expressed as intellect. See Taylor, *A Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, 491-92.
[41] Johansen makes a strong case that through Plato's 'good' a strong teleology (final cause) runs throughout causation language of *Timaeus*.  See Johansen, *Plato's Natural Philosophy*, 6, 68, 69-91.

fundamental concepts for understanding φύσις.[42] In particular ἀρχαί and αἴτια play a foundational role in ascertaining wisdom.[43] In *Physics* and *Metaphysics* Δ he sets out a fourfold schema to categorise causation.[44] These are as follows: (1) ὕλη a material cause, referring to its composition; (2) εἶδος a formal cause, defining what it is; (3) κινοῦν / κίνησις an efficient/essential or motive cause, explaining it's origin; and (4) τέλος a final cause, explaining its purpose.[45] Aristotle also appears to deal with Plato's 'wandering cause' in his consideration of 'accidental' causes such as τύχη (chance) and αὐτόματον (spontaneity).[46] In Aristotle's mind, the pre-Socratics were primarily concerned with a material cause as the sole explanation of reality.[47] Plato has two causes, the material and the essential.[48] Aristotle implies that Plato may also implicitly suggest a final cause through the good.[49]

### 6.1.5.4 Stoic Causation

The Stoics and Epicureans tended to reduce the scope of causation language. The former being both influential and interlocutors for Philo and early Christianity. For the Stoics,

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[42] Aristotle, *Physics*, 1.1 (184a).

[43] See Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1.1, 982a "ἡ σοφία περί τινας ἀρχὰς καὶ αἰτίας ἐστὶν ἐπιστήμη"; 1.2, 982b "δεῖ γὰρ ταύτην τῶν πρώτων ἀρχῶν καὶ αἰτιῶν εἶναι θεωρητικήν"; 1.3, 983a "ἐπεὶ δὲ φανερὸν ὅτι τῶν ἐξ ἀρχῆς αἰτίων δεῖ λαβεῖν ἐπιστήμην"; 1.4, 984b "πάντα γὰρ τὰ αἴτια ἀρχαί" Explained in Alejandro G. Vigo, *First Philosophy.* The Bloomsbury Companion to Aristotle. (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 148; Mary L. Gill, "Chapter 18 - First Philosophy in Aristotle," in *A Companion to Ancient Philosophy [Online]*. Edited by Mary L. Gill and Pierre Pellegrin. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2006.

[44] See Aristotle, *Physics*, 2.3-8, 194b-199b; *Metaphysics*, Δ 5.2, 1013a-b. Although he sightly changes his terms throughout his works, he is adamant about its fourfold nature.

[45] Explained in Copleston, *History of Philosophy Volume 1*, 288-90; Terence H., Irwin, *A History of Western Philosophy: 1 Classical Thought.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 126-128; Peter Adamson, *Classical Philosophy: A History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps, Volume 1.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 236-242.

[46] Aristotle, *Physics*, 2.4, 195b-196b. Brief explanation in Johansen, *Plato's Natural Philosophy*, 77.

[47] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Α 1.3,983a-984b.

[48] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Α 1.6,988a.

[49] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Α 1.7,988b. See explanation in Copleston, *History of Philosophy Volume 1*, 290. On the influence of Timaeus on Aristotle's φύσις and causation see David J. Furley, "What Kind of Cause is Aristotle's Final Cause?," in *Rationality in Greek Thought*. (Edited by Michael Frede and Gisela Striker. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996) 62-63.

*Timaeus* was an influential book.[50] Their physics and theology were a pantheistic

conflation.[51] God, nature and matter were simply different names for the one corporeal

substance. This substance was expressed by Zeno as the πῦρ τεχνικόν (creative fire),[52] two

generations later redefined by Chrysippus as the cosmic principle, the πνεῦμα.[53] DL gives a

helpful overview of Stoicism's two-fold cosmology. One is active (ποιοῦν), the other passive

(πάσχου):[54]

> δοκεῖ δ' αὐτοῖς <u>ἀρχὰς εἶναι τῶν ὅλων δύο</u>, τὸ <u>ποιοῦν</u> καὶ τὸ <u>πάσχον</u>. τὸ μὲν οὖν πάσχον εἶναι τὴν ἄποιον οὐσίαν, τὴν ὕλην, τὸ δὲ ποιοῦν τὸν ἐν αὐτῇ λόγον, τὸν θεόν· τοῦτον γὰρ ἀΐδιον ὄντα διὰ πάσης αὐτῆς δημιουργεῖν ἕκαστα.

The passive is described as ὕλη (matter), which are substances without quality (εἶναι τὴν

ἄποιον οὐσίαν); the active is ἐν αὐτῇ λόγον reason in substance, which is given the term θέος,

and described as eternal and a craftsman. It appears that the active came to be expressed in

causation language.[55] In DL 7:135-136 God is considered (one) and understood as intellect,

fate and Zeus. God is the intelligent πνεῦμα pervading the whole of substance.[56] This

pantheistic conflation of theology and cosmology is typified in the later Stoic Marcus

Aurelius' (pantheistic) praise of nature where he proclaims through the use of prepositions

ὦ φύσις· ἐκ σοῦ πάντα, ἐν σοὶ πάντα, εἰς σὲ πάντα.[57]

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[50] See a thorough treatment of this in Reydams-Schils, *Demiurge and Providence*, 41-133; *The Academy, The Stoics and Cicero of Plato's Timaeus*, 29-58.

[51] Helpful overviews of this can be found in Michael J. White, "Stoic Natural Philosophy (Physics and Cosmology)," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*. Edited by Brad Inwood. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 124-152, especially 133-39; Keimpe Algra, "Stoic Theology," in *The Cambridge Companion to The Stoics*. Edited by Brad Inwood. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 153-178, especially 165-170.

[52] *SVF* 1.135-8, 151 (Zeno); 521, 523 (Cleanthes).

[53] Michael Lapidge, "Stoic Cosmology and Roman Literature, First to Third Centuries A.D." *ANRW* II.36.3 (1989): 1383.

[54] See DL 7.134 "They hold that there are two principles in the universe, the active principle and the passive. The passive principle, then, is a substance without quality, i.e. matter, whereas the active is the reason inherent in this substance, that is God. For he is everlasting and is the artificer of each several thing throughout the whole extent of matter."

[55] See Philo, *Opif*. 8; Seneca, *Epistles*, 65.2.

[56] See Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*, 1.37-ff. (SVF 154).

[57] Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, 4.23.

### 6.1.6 Similarities with Philo's Corpus

### 6.1.6.1 Philo, Cause, Theology and Prepositions

Philo uses αἰτία to explain the consequence of actions[58] and on occasions a potential

wandering cause like σάρξ (flesh).[59] But the most significant use of Philo's causation

language is in relation to his theology. Philo describes God as αἴτιον (cause);[60] and with the

articular genitive τοῦ αἰτίου;[61] and as the best, eldest and one cause.[62] Like Plato's

δημιουργός as maker and father,[63] Philo's God is both cause and father,[64] cause and maker.[65]

Philo also oscillates between describing God as the cause of all[66] and the cause of the

good,[67] sometimes merging the two.[68]

The pertinent causation questions in relation to Colossians 1:16e are (1) *how* does God

create the πάντα and (2) how does he use prepositions to explain this? Philo, like Plato, only

sparingly uses the phrase εἰς αὐτόν and not in conjunction with διά. Of the 13 occurrences of

εἰς αὐτόν in the Philonic corpus,[69] none of these occasions expresses philosophical causation.

Philo's causation language, though, identifies God often as cause, and delineates between

God and the ὄργανον (instrument) which he uses. This instrument is often, although not

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[58] Philo, *Post*. 153; *Deus* 98; *Plant*. 60, 147-148.
[59] Philo, *Gig*. 29. "<u>αἴτιον</u> δὲ τῆς ἀνεπιστημοσύνης μέγιστον ἡ σὰρξ καὶ ἡ πρὸς σάρκα οἰκείωσις" (And the greatest cause of our ignorance is the flesh, and our inseparable connection with the flesh).
[60] Philo, *Cher*. 125; *Post*. 14; *Plant*. 27, 33, 35, 139; *Ebr*. 107; *Her*. 289; *Mut*. 46, 221.
[61] Philo, *Leg*. 3.73, 97, 215; *Cher*. 28-29, 46, 48, 90; *Sac*. 8, 98; *Det*. 58; *Post*. 19; *Deus* 53, 60, 105; *Plant*. 20, 93; *Her*. 22; *Fug*. 137; *Somn*. 1.92.
[62] See "ἄριστος" Plant 64; "πρέσβυς" *Conf*. 124; *Somn*. 1:190 *Spec*. 1.31; 2.5; *Virt*. 34; "ἓν" *Decal*. 155 *Virt*. 216.
[63] Plato, Timaeus, 28c "ποιητὴν καὶ πατέρα τοῦδε τοῦ παντός"
[64] Philo, *Ebr*. 61 "...ἀλλ᾽ ἐκ τοῦ πάντων αἰτίου καὶ πατρός"
[65] Philo, *Her*. 289 "...καὶ πεποιηκὸς αἴτιον"
[66] Philo, *Leg*. 3.29, 35, 73, 97, 206; *Cher*. 87; *Fug*. 141; *Somn*. 1.161; *Spec*. 2.7; *Vir*. 34.
[67] Philo, *Agr*. 129; *Conf*. 180; *Congr*. 171; *Mut* 155; *Decal*. 176 *Spec*. 1.23.
[68] Philo, *Leg*. 3.73; *Deus* 87; *Agr*. 173 .
[69] Philo, *Opif*. 144; *Leg*. 3.39; *Plant*. 135; *Fug*. 118; *Somn* 1:103; *Mos*. 1:196; *Spec*. 2.187; *Contempl*. 77; *Aet*. 21, 78; *Legat*. 96, 165, 334.

always referred to in the genitive with the διά prepositional phrase, and when used is identified with Philo's λόγος. This is part of a wider study into 'prepositional metaphysics' which this thesis will now explain.

### 6.1.6.2 Prepositional Metaphysics

### 6.1.6.2.1 Introduction

Prepositional Metaphysics is the use of a formulaic expression of an article, preposition, then a case particular relative pronoun, personal pronoun or noun to express causation.[70] The use of prepositions and prepositional phrases, although present in Classical Greek,[71] became a more prominent feature of Greek in the Hellenistic period with an increased emphasis of them to express aspects of causation.[72] By the time of Neo-Platonism, there appears to be a commonly understood use of six prepositional phrases to express causation, theology and cosmogony.[73]

An important first century CE source on philosophical causation can be found in Seneca's 65th Epistle. Seneca (4 BCE-65 CE),[74] a Stoic writing in Latin, asserts a typical Stoic position

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[70] The term itself seems to have been coined by M. Wilhelm Theiler, *Die Vorbereitung des Neuplatonismus.* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1930), 17-34. See heading on p.33 "*Metaphysik der Präpositionen*"

[71] See Plato, *Cratylus*, 413a; *Timaeus*, 48a and in particular Aristotle's use of the article + preposition + relative pronoun construction τὸ ἐξ οὗ to explain material causation. See Aristotle, *Physics*, 2.3, 194b; *Metaphysics*, Δ 5.2,1013a-b.

[72] The origin of preposition metaphysics does not concern this thesis. Sterling give a concise account of potential origins. See *Prepositional Metaphysics*, 230-231. The three likely contenders are Posidonius, Antiochus of Ascalon or Eudorus. On the increased use of prepositions in Hellenistic Greek see James H. Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek - Volume 3: Syntax.* (Edited by Nigel Turner: London: T&T Clark, 1963), 249-67; Robertson, *Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 558, 566-567; Harris, *Prepositions and Theology NIDNT*, 3.1172-1179; Wallace, *Greek Grammar – Beyond the Basics*, 20, 356-57.

[73] They were articulated as follows in Proclus' commentary on *Timaeus*: (1) τὸ ὑφ' οὗ The agent δημιουγός or θέος; (2) τὸ δι'οὗ Instrument ὄργανον; (3) τὸ ἐξ οὗ Material ὕλη; (4) τὸ καθ' ὅ Form ὑπόδειγμα; (5) τὸ δι'ὅ Purpose τέλος; (6) τὸ ἐν ᾧ Time and or place χρόνος ἢ τόπος. See Proclus, *Timaeus 2* (Diehl 1.357.12-23); See also Basil, *De Spititu Sancto*, 5.

[74] See an overview of Seneca's life and writing in Fantham et. al., *Lucius Annaeus Seneca (2)* in OCD[4], 92-95

that *causa* (cause) is that which moulds matter.[75] In this epistle, alongside his preferred (Stoic) view, he mentions the views of Peripatetics (the school of Aristotle) who hold to the fourfold schema of causation[76] and the Academics (Platonist) of that time, who have added a fifth cause to the four peripatetic ones. This additional cause is that of the *idea*.[77]

### 6.1.6.2.2 Philo's *Cherubim* 125-127

Sterling suggests that the earliest Middle Platonic example that displays something like this fivefold prepositional metaphysic is displayed in Philo.[78] The most overt and elaborate example is found in *Cherubim* 125-127. This passage has received a thorough treatment in many Platonic and Philonic studies,[79] In *Cherubim* 125 Philo explains that ὁ θεὸς αἴτιον, <u>οὐκ</u> ὄργανον (God is the cause and <u>not</u> the instrument); all things becoming 'became' from the cause through the instrument.[80] He then goes on to say that here must be a coming together (συνελθεῖν) of many things, one which Philo then demarcates by four article-preposition-relative pronoun phrases: (1) τὸ ὑφ᾽ οὗ, τὸ αἴτιον by whom, the (efficient)

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[75] See Seneca, *Epistle*, 65.2 "…*id est ratio, materiam format et quocumque vult versat, ex illa varia opera producit."* (…by which we mean reason, moulds matter and turns it in whatever direction it will, producing thereby various concrete results).

[76] Based on Aristotle, *Physics*, 2.3-7, 194b-198b. Although Seneca suggest that the fourth cause may have been an afterthought. See Seneca, *Epistle*, 65.4-6; Sterling, *Prepositional Metaphysics*, 224.

[77] Seneca Epistle 65.7 - This is something that comes from within the mind of God. These ideas are: "Haec exemplaria rerum omnium deus intra se habet numerosque universorum, quae agenda sunt, et modos mente conplexus est; plenus his figuris est, quas Plato ideas appellat, inmortales, inmutabiles, infatigabiles." "[the] patterns of all things… his mind comprehends the harmonies and the measures of the whole totality of things which are to be carried out; he is filled with these shapes …. the 'ideas,'—imperishable, unchangeable, not subject to decay." Further explaned in Stephen Gersh, *Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism: The Latin Tradition, Volume 1.* Publications in medieval studies Issue 23/1 (Edited by Philip S. Moore, Joseph N. Garvin, and A. L. Gabriel: Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press 1986), 168-179.

[78] Sterling, *Prepositional Metaphysics*, 227.

[79] See Theiler, *Die Vorbereitung des Neuplatonismus*, 28-31; Wolfson, *Philo: foundations of religious philosophy*, 261-82; Dillon, *The Middle Platonists,* 160-161; Tobin, *The Creation of Man*, 65-75; Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and The* Timaeus *of Plato*, 171-174; Sterling, *Prepositional Metaphysics*, 226-229; Cox, *By the same word*, 49-57; Anderson, *Philo of Alexandria's Views of the Physical World*, 76-78.

[80] τὸ δὲ γινόμενον <u>δι᾽ ὀργάνου</u> μὲν ὑπὸ δὲ αἰτίου <u>πάντως γίνεται</u>.

cause; (2) τὸ ἐξ οὗ, ἐξ οὗ δὲ ἡ ὕλη from what material (cause); (3) τὸ δι᾽ οὗ, δι᾽ οὗ δὲ τὸ

ἐργαλεῖον by means of what, the instrument; (4) ὃ δὲ ἡ αἰτία why, (final) cause.

*Cherubim* 126 then explains this by giving an analogy of the formation of a house (οἰκία) or

city (πόλις). They are (1) the builder (δημιουργός), (2) materials (τί δὲ λίθοι καὶ ξύλα) and (3)

the tools/instrument (ὄργανα). He then connects these with *Cherubim* 125 by stating that

the δημιουργός is τὸ αἴτιον; τί δὲ λίθοι καὶ ξύλα are ἡ ὕλη; ὄργανα is the means of

composition. Then the purpose is stated, one of shelter and protection. *Cherubim* 127 then

explains the analogy. The house or city is the κόσμος. God is the cause from which (ὑφ᾽ οὗ) it

has become (γέγονεν). The material (ὕλη) used are the four elements from which (ἐξ ὧν) it

has been composed or blended (συνεκράθη). The instrument is the word of God (ὄργανον δὲ

λόγον θεοῦ) through which (δι᾽ οὗ) it has been composed or blended (κατεσκευάσθη). Finally,

the τὸ δι᾽ ὅ (why) the final cause is to display the goodness of the 'builder' (ἀγαθότητα τοῦ

δημιουργοῦ).

**6.1.6.2.3 Conclusion**

What is seen in *Cherubim* 125-127 is a thorough and sophisticated example of causation

through the use of prepositional phrases. The λόγος is ascribed through a δία prepositional

phrase as the instrumental cause *through* which God has constructed the sensible reality.

Examples of this can also be found in *Leg.* 3.96;[81] *Mig.* 6;[82] *Spec.* 1:81;[83] *Prov.* 1.23 [84] and *QG*

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[81] σκιὰ θεοῦ δὲ <u>ὁ λόγος</u> αὐτοῦ ἐστιν, ᾧ καθάπερ <u>ὀργάνῳ</u> προσχρησάμενος <u>ἐκοσμοποίει</u>.
[82] τίς ἂν οὖν εἴη πλὴν <u>ὁ λόγος</u> ὁ πρεσβύτερος τῶν γένεσιν εἰληφότων... καὶ ὅτε <u>ἐκοσμοπλάστει</u> χρησάμενος <u>ὀργάνῳ</u> τούτῳ πρὸς τὴν ἀνυπαίτιον τῶν ἀποτελουμένων σύστασιν.
[83] <u>λόγος</u> δ᾽ ἐστὶν εἰκὼν θεοῦ, <u>δι᾽ οὗ</u> σύμπας ὁ κόσμος <u>ἐδημιουργεῖτο</u>.
[84] By whom: God. Out of which: matter. Through who: the instrument. The instrument is the Logos of God. And towards what was it made: the model. See Runia' translation contra to Aucher's in Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and The* Timaeus *of Plato*, 173.

1.58 (Greek Fragment),[85] In *Opif*. 16-25, a similar use of causation through prepositions is used, with the main difference being that instead of the λόγος mentioned as instrument, the νοητὸς κόσμος is used in its place.

### 6.1.7 Prepositional Metaphysics and Colossians 1:16e

To what degree did Early Christians know of this philosophical device? Can they be found in New Testament texts? The answer is yes on both occasions. Sterling's article examines the places in the NT where prepositional metaphysics is used to refer to God and Christ.[86] His conclusion is that when referring to God[87] NT texts seem to adopt a Stoic use where ἐξ αὐτοῦ, δι᾽ αὐτοῦ and εἰς αὐτόν all denote one, ultimate cause, God.[88] When referring to Christ,[89] Sterling argues that NT authors appear to use prepositional phrases in a way similar to Middle Platonist, where Christ is may be thought of as the instrument.[90]

In light of Sterling's argument, it is "difficult not to think of a Middle Platonic background"[91] for the Christ in Colossians 1:16e. That is the preposition, δι' αὐτοῦ is best understood in an instrumental way, referring to Christ as the instrument through which God creates πάντα. But by the inclusion of the εἰς αὐτόν Colossians' Christ is doing more than Philo's logos. Plato and Philo offer no insight on a lexicographical basis for the causation usage of εἰς αὐτόν. But looking further afield to Stoicism, one might associate the phrase with a final cause. Plato's

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[85] τὸ μὲν <u>ἐκ ὡς ἐξ ὑλῆς</u>, <u>τὸ δὲ ὑπὸ ὡς αἰτίου</u>, τὸ δὲ <u>διὰ ὡς ὀργάνου</u>.
[86] See God in Rom 11:36; 1 Cor 8:6a; Heb 2:10. Christ in John 1:3, 10; 1 Cor 8:6b; Col 1:15-20; Heb 1:2
[87] Rom 11:36; 1 Cor 8:6a; Heb 2:10.
[88] See Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, 4.23. Quoted in 6.1.5.3. See also Norden, *Agnostos Theos*, 240-250; Stettler, *Der Kolosserhymnus*, 154
[89] 1 Cor 8:6b; Col 1:15-20; Heb 1:2; John 1:3, 10.
[90] Sterling, *Prepositional Metaphysics*, 233-238.
[91] Sterling, *Prepositional Metaphysics*, 233.

use of the good ascribes teleological causation to God. Philo also ascribed the final cause to

God.  There appears to be a Middle Platonic influence of prepositional metaphysics, as

demonstrated in Philo to ascribe instrumentality to Christ. But what is striking about

Colossians 1:16e is not only is instrumentality ascribed to Christ but also the final cause, a

very important and distinctive theological development.[92] The teaching about Christ as the

goal of Creation finds no parallel in Jewish Wisdom literature or the rest of the extant Jewish

materials for that matter. [93] Indeed "No Jewish thinker ever rose to these heights in daring

to predict that Wisdom was the ultimate goal of all creation"[94] as is suggested in Colossians

1:16e. This is an example where the author uses (Middle) Platonic concepts, in this

prepositional causation language, but has adapted them to suit his own ideas and interests.

Indeed the author is working towards his own synthesis.


**6.1.8 Insights gained into Colossians Christology from Distinctive Language and Comparisons with *Timaeus* and Philo's Corpus**

Through the study of Prepositional Metaphysics Christ is portrayed in a number of ways that

are similar, augmented and different from Philo. The author is *similar* to Philo and the

Middle Platonist in the development of an intermediate doctrine who takes up the role of

creator, *par excellence*, of a transcendent God. He has *augmented* the role of this

intermediary as the instrument away from a principle or abstraction and attributed it to an

actual person rather than a personification or noetic location. The author has taken a

*different* approach to that of Philo in placing his intermediary prominently in γιγνόμενα, by

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[92] See Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 153; Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, 51-52; O'Brien, *Colossians-Philemon*, 47; Harris, *Prepositions and Theology NIDNT*, 3.1186; *Colossians & Philemon*, 46.
[93] O'Brien, *Colossians-Philemon*, 47.
[94] Martin, *Colossians and Philemon*, 58.

claiming that he be known and identified in the person of Jesus Christ.[95]  Where Philo is

clear to draw distinctions between the role of the intermediate logos and the transcendent

God, Colossians uses both with reference to Christ, blurring the role between God and

intermediary, where Philo seeks to make distinct. Both Plato and Philo link causation to God

in quite resolute terms. Philo expresses a metaphysics of prepositions in his theology and

causation that incorporates God's λόγος as the instrument of building the universe. This

expresses a similar idea to Colossians' usage, but Colossians goes further by expressing not

only instrumentality but also final or teleological causation to Christ, which Plato and Philo

reserve for God.

## 6.2 Colossians 1:17

### 6.2.1 Syntactical Analysis and Usage in Colossians

### 6.2.1.1 Colossians 1:17a καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν πρὸ πάντων

The final verse for investigation in this study begins with a continuative conjunction καὶ

which links it to the preceding content. Here again, Christ's relationship with τὰ πάντα is the

focus of this verse. The pronoun αὐτός is now used in the nominative (to be repeated in

verse 18) and followed by the ἐστιν giving it an emphatic feel.[96] The issue of whether ἐστιν

requires an accent, making it ἔστιν, giving the meaning of 'he exists' rather than 'he is' has

been a point of conjecture in Colossian scholarship. Lightfoot and Lohse consider the

accented ἔστιν to be a better reading of the Christological significance of Colossians 1:17a in

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[95] See Balabanski, *Hellenistic Cosmology and the Letter to the Colossians*, 103. Although she suggests this represents more of a Stoic understanding of Timaean cosmology.
[96] See Schweizer, *The Letter to the Colossians*, 71; Wilson, *Colossians and Philemon*, 143; Pao, *Colossians & Philemon*, 98.

light of Jesus' ἐγὼ εἰμί self-expression in John 8:58 and Basil's explanation of Colossians 1:17 as ἐγένετο rather than ἐστιν.[97] Others, in light of the lack of manuscript evidence, prefer the ἐστιν rendering.[98]

This is followed by the phrase πρὸ πάντων which serves to elaborate Christ's supremacy over τὰ πάντα.[99] This is the only occurrence of πρό in Colossians, a preposition which attracts a genitive.[100] Colossians 1:17a seeks to link back to Colossians 1:15b where the idea of priority and supremacy were first introduced, this concept is further expanded here. The anarthrous genitive πάντων would best be understood to refer to the πάσης κτίσεως of 15b and πάντα of Colossians 1:16a, e and 17b.

### 6.2.1.2 Colossians 1:17b καὶ τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν

In Colossians 1:17b, the prepositional phrase ἐν αὐτῷ used in 16a is again repeated to describe Christ's relationship with τὰ πάντα. The dative ἐν αὐτῷ along with δι' αὐτοῦ and the εἰς αὐτὸν reoccur in the second *strophe* of the hymn in Colossians 1:19-20 in the same order. Colossians has in total eight occurrences of this prepositional phrase,[101] there are also slight variations of it expressed as ἐν Χριστῷ and ἐν ᾧ in Colossians 1:2, 14, 28; 2:3.[102] It may be used to express Christ's relationship to τὰ πάντα, or aspects of it,[103] God's fullness in

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[97] Basil, *Against Eunomius*, 4 (PG 29, 701). See Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 153; Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, 752

[98] See Pao, *Colossians & Philemon*, 98.

[99] Pao, *Colossians & Philemon*, 98.

[100] James Morwood, *Oxford Grammar of Classical Greek* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 58; Wallace, *Greek Grammar – Beyond the Basics*, 379.

[101] Col 1:16, 17, 19; 2:6, 7, 9, 10, 15.

[102] See Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 50. See also Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, 10

[103] Col 1:16a, e, 17b. Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ*, 264-65, 330. One may also potentially consider Col 2:10, 15 in this category.

Christ[104] and the believer's life in Christ.[105] Here it is used to explain Christ's relationship to

reality (τὰ πάντα).

Verse 17 concludes with the third occurrence of a verb to describe the formation of τὰ

πάντα. This time συνίστημι is used instead of the κτίζω in 16a, and e, but continues to use

the perfect of 16e. The noticeable difference is the use of the active voice, rather than the

passive. This is the only occurrence of συνίστημι in Colossians.


## 6.2.2 Lexicographical Investigation of Similarities, Differences and Distinctiveness within the *Corpus Paulinum* and Biblical Literature

### 6.2.2.1 Πρό

BAGD offers three basic usages for πρό: (1) spatial (in front of); (2) temporal (before) and (3)

priority (rank).[106] In the *corpus Paulinum* the preposition πρό occurs on 11 other

occasions,[107] it is the third least used preposition in the NT.[108] It commonly refers to the

temporal priority of an event.[109] When referring to God, his plan and his 'predestination' of

the saints, the phrase πρὸ τῶν αἰώνων may confer an atemporal connotation, prior to the

measurement of time.[110] The other occasions in the *corpus Paulinum* where πρό refers to

Christ are in Ephesians 1:4 and 2 Timothy 1:9 where God's plan in Christ was known prior to

the ages and the foundation of the cosmos, a concept conveyed about Christ in 1 Peter 1:20;

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[104] Col 1:19; 2:9.
[105] Col 2:6-7; 11-12 (1:2, 14, 28; 2:3).
[106] *BDAG*, 701.
[107] Pauline letters – Rom 16:7; 1 Cor 2:7; 4:5; 2 Cor 12:2; Gal 1:17; 2:12; 3:23. Deutero-Pauline [Col 1:17]; Eph 1:4. Pastorals - 2 Tim 1:9; 4:21; Titus 1:2.
[108] Wallace, *Greek Grammar – Beyond the Basics*, 357. He states the following: ἀνά (13 occasions); ἀντί (22 occasions); πρό (47 occasions); σύν (128 occasions) etc...
[109] Rom 16:7; 1 Cor 4:6; 2 Cor 12:2; Gal 1:17; 3:23; 2 Tim 4:21.
[110] 1 Cor 2:7; Eph 1:4; Titus 1:2.

John 17:5 and 24. The distinctive use of πρό is that it is the first occasion where it is used to refer to Christ. Here it expresses his priority to τὰ πάντα. Colossians 1:15b and 17a clearly express the priority of Christ, the nature of this priority is one that needs further exploration.[111]

### 6.2.2.2 Ἐν αὐτῷ

The prepositional phrase ἐν αὐτῷ occurs 32 times in the *corpus Paulinum*.[112] The eight occurrences in the Pauline letters tend to speak about the believer's new existence in Christ. Emphasis is given to the salvific work of Christ as the outworking and basis for God's plan, with the receiving of God's δικαιοσύνη by the believer.[113] In this sense it is part of the wider Pauline discourse about the meaning ἐν Χριστῷ,[114] which Schweitzer argued was "…the prime enigma of the Pauline Gospel: once grasped it gives the clue to the whole"[115] For Schweitzer it is the *'Hauptkrater'* (the main/head crater) of the doctrine of redemption.[116]

Colossians has the most ἐν αὐτῷ occurrences of any single work in the *corpus Paulinum* with eight, followed closely by Ephesians. Ephesians' ἐν αὐτῷ statements tend to emphasise the significance of Christ's work and God's plan in the formation of a new people and the new

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[111] Potentially having a temporal and/or importance/priority of status nuance to the meaning. See Murray J. Harris, *Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament: An Essential Reference Resource for Exegesis.* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 187; Campbell, *Colossians and Philemon*, 13.

[112] Rom 1:17; 1 Cor 1:5; 2:11; 2 Cor 1:19, 20; 5:21; 13:4; Phil 3:9; Col 1:16, 17, 19; 2:6, 7, 9, 10, 15; Eph 1:4, 9 10; 2:15, 16; 4:21; 6:20; 2 Thess 1:12.

[113] See especially Rom 1:17; 2 Cor 5:21; Phil 3:9.

[114] A helpful overview of this and associated phrases in Pauline studies can be found in A. J. M. Wedderburn, "Some Observations on Paul's Use of the Phrases 'In Christ' and 'With Christ'." *JSNT* 25, no. 1 (1985): 83-97, especially 85-86; Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ*, 31-64.

[115] Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle.* (Translated by William Montgomery. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1931), 3. The last English phrase does not appear in the German "*Dieses Sein in Christo ist das große Rätsel der Lehre Pauli.*" See Albert Schweitzer, *Die Mystik des Apostels Paulus,* 3.

[116] Of which he famously subordinates 'righteousness by faith' as a '*Nebenkrater*' a subsidiary crater. See Albert Schweitzer, *Die Mystik des Apostels Paulus,* 220.

existence of the believer. The Ephesians are also reminded that their election is into this plan of holy and blameless living πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου (before the foundation of the world) and that this message has been made known in Christ. The statements in Ephesians, like the Pauline letters, focus attention on the new existence of the believer. The exception to this is in Ephesians 1:10 where God's plan in Christ related to the τὰ πάντα which like Colossians 1:16b is demarcated into the heavens (plural) and the earth, where a clear eschatological emphasis is intended.[117]

### 6.2.2.3 Συνίστημι

The verb συνίστημι carries various shades of meaning. In the Pauline letters it can have a sense of commendation, especially in 2 Corinthians,[118] or demonstration.[119] These connotations offer little insight into Colossians 1:17, rather a cosmological "sense of existence and coherence"[120] seem to be the case. This sense of the meaning is not found in the *corpus Paulinum*, but can be found in 2 Peter 3:5 where the heavens and the earth were created and the elements were formed.[121] This gives the verb a potential Stoic connotation of 'cosmos coherence' as suggested by Balabanski,[122] and denotes a semantic similarity that typically links this verb with the Jewish Wisdom tradition, especially with the verb συνέχω.[123] This tradition was inspired by Proverbs 8:22-31, which suggests the pre-existence of

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[117] Eph 1:10 εἰς οἰκονομίαν τοῦ πληρώματος τῶν καιρῶν, ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι <u>τὰ πάντα</u> ἐν <u>τῷ Χριστῷ</u>, τὰ ἐπὶ τοῖς <u>οὐρανοῖς</u> καὶ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς <u>γῆς</u> <u>ἐν αὐτῷ</u>.
[118] Rom 16:1; 2 Cor 3:1; 4:2; 5:12; 6:4 10:12, 18; 12:11. See explanation in BDF § 93; Kasch, "συνίστημι," TDNT 7.897-98; Dunn, *Romans 9-16,* 886; Pao, *Colossians & Philemon*, 98.
[119] Rom 3:5; 2 Cor 7:11; Gal 2:18.
[120] Se BDAG, 973; Pao, *Colossians & Philemon*, 98; Stettler, Christian *Der Kolosserhymnus*, 159
[121] See Kasch, συνίστημι, 897; Behr, *Colossians 1:13-20: A Chiastic Reading*, 259; Pao, *Colossians & Philemon*, 98. Donald Senior, *1 Peter, Jude and 2 Peter.* SP vol. 15 (Edited by Daniel J. Harrington. Minneapolis: Liturgical Press, 2008), 286-87.
[122] Balabanski, *Critiquing Anthropocentric Cosmology*, 156.
[123] Common verses mentioned are Wisdom 1:7; Sir 1:4; 43:26; and Heb 1:3. See Wilson, *Colossians and Philemon*, 144.

Wisdom (σοφία / חָכְמוֹת).[124] A text which Beatham argues is echoed in Colossians 1:15-20.[125]

The LXX of this text uses πρό six times to translate 5 different Hebrew expressions of the

priority of wisdom.[126]

### 6.2.3 Summary of Distinctive Language

Colossians 1:17 has a distinctive use of πρό, it is the first occasion in the *corpus Paulinum*

where it is used to refer to Christ. His priority to τὰ πάντα complements this strophe's

expression of Christ's role as creator and crafter that precedes in Colossians 1:16a, e and

follows in 17b. The verb συνίστημι is used in a unique fashion within the *corpus Paulinum* to

speak of reality's formation.

### 6.2.4 Emerging Issues for Further Analysis

The distinctive language requires the following interpretative issues to be explored: (1) a

potential metaphysical understanding of ἐστιν; (2) The meaning of ἐν αὐτῷ; (3) the intended

nuance of πρό; and (4) how to understand the verb συνίστημι. This thesis will now look to

*Timaeus* and Philo for greater insight.

### 6.2.5 Similarities with *Timaeus* and Platonic Texts

### 6.2.5.1 Ἐν αὐτῷ and Ἐστιν

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[124] See Roland E. Murphy, *Proverbs.* WBC: Vol. 22, (Edited by John D.W. Watts; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 55.

[125] See Beetham, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letter of Paul to the Colossians*, 113-41; Dunn, *Christology in the Marking*, 187-194.

[126] LXX Proverbs 8:23-25 "πρὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος ἐθεμελίωσέν με ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸ τοῦ τὴν γῆν ποιῆσαι καὶ πρὸ τοῦ τὰς ἀβύσσους ποιῆσαι πρὸ τοῦ προελθεῖν τὰς πηγὰς τῶν ὑδάτων πρὸ τοῦ ὄρη ἑδρασθῆναι πρὸ δὲ πάντων βουνῶν γεννᾷ με." Notice the compound words in the Hebrew (a preposition plus a noun or participle) בְּאֵין, מִקַּדְמֵי מֵעוֹלָם, בְּטֶרֶם and לִפְנֵי

In the Platonic corpus the phrase ἐν αὐτῷ appears to be used incidentally and usually means something like 'in it,'[127] or referring to virtue or vice 'with in' different groups of leaders.[128] Interestingly, in the *Republic* and *Timaeus*, it is on occasion associated with conceptual ideas and crafting verbs about cosmos or ψύχη (soul) construction.[129] This may explain the phrase's use in Colossians 1:16a and in the context of Colossians 1:16-e-17b. Moving to ἐστιν Campbell in his commentary on Colossians refers to a very interesting study by James T. Hooker on the use of the imperfect in Ancient Greek. In Hooker's study, he offers a number of examples from Homer (c. 7th century BCE) down to Musaeus' Hero and Leander (5-6th Century CE) where the imperfect of εἶναι may be "describing what appears to be a present state of affairs."[130] Many of these examples outside of Plato and Aristotle are from poetic or dramatic texts. From the Platonic dialogues he demonstrates that a "so-called philosophical imperfect" of ἦν (often accompanied by ἄρα) has a connotation not of a certain *time*, but of a certain *quality* of existence, not a truth obtained in the past, but one that always obtains outside of time.[131] The examples he gives are *Meno* 97b-c and *Timaeus* 51c. Both texts speak about epistemological issues comparing δόξα ἀληθὴς (true opinion) and the senses with true reason (ἀληθοῦς λόγου) and ἐπιστήμη (understanding) which are not bound by time.[132] This metaphysical understanding of the imperfect is not exactly the same as the ἐστιν demonstrated in Colossians, but may lean towards suggesting that in Colossians 1:17

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[127] See Plato, *Stateman*, 273c; *Republic*, 1.347c; 7.524e, 526c, 530a; 8.545d, 551e, 561e; *Timaeus* 24c 56d, 88a

[128] See Plato, *Republic*, 8.554b, 560a,c 574a,d, 575a, 590b,e

[129] See Plato, *Republic*, 7.530a "νομιεῖν μὲν ὡς οἷόν τε κάλλιστα τὰ τοιαῦτα ἔργα συστήσασθαι, οὕτω συνεστάναι τῷ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ δημιουργῷ αὐτόν τε καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ." Referenced in Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon,* 52. See also *Timaeus*, 69c, 71b, 73c.

[130] James T. Hooker, "Some Uses of the Greek Imperfect," in *Historical Philology: Greek, Latin, and Romance: Papers in Honor of Osward Szemerényi II. Current Issues in Linguistic Theory* Vol. 87 (Edited by Bela Brogyanyi and Reiner Lipp; Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1992), 47.

[131] Hooker, *Some Uses of the Greek Imperfect*, 58.

[132] See further explanations in Taylor, *A Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, 336-37; Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, 190-91.

an ἔστιν rather than ἐστιν is inferred. This may aid in the meaning of the rest of the verse, especially the nuance for πρό.

### 6.2.5.2 Πρό

Plato's infrequent use of πρό in *Timaeus* can denote a temporal connotation,[133] and when part of the phrase τὰ πρὸ τούτου describes causation,[134] where an object's temporal priority has an effect on how another object comes to be.[135] However, it is, as Wolfson has identified, the use of πρότερος in *Timaeus* 34c to describe the soul's (ψύχη) priority to the body (σῶμα) that gives potential insight into Colossian's use of πρό.[136] The body exists in time, the soul's origin is out of time, therefore, even though the priority of the platonic soul to the body may be temporal, it is rather a 'non', 'extra' or 'atemporal' metaphysical priority that is intended in a Platonic sense. This microcosmic analogy of the human soul is equally true in macrocosm with the whole γιγνόμενα. This ordering of γιγνόμενα is explained as a moving image, moving to the unity of the number of eternity.[137] Time (χρόνος) in *Timaeus* is not a measurement abstracted and independent from κόσμος formation, but in fact χρόνος and κόσμος, are inseparable,[138] in fact, there was no time before the world was created.[139] Wolfson goes on in his explanation to highlight the variety of meanings of πρότερος outlined in Aristotle, suggesting the fourth connotation, a 'priority of nature'[140] best describes a

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[133] Plato, *Timaeus*, 48b.
[134] Plato, *Timaeus*, 44c, 48b, 53b, 84b.
[135] This is hinted at, but not fully expressed in Taylor, *A Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, 598.
[136] Plato, Timaeus, 34c "ὁ δὲ καὶ γενέσει καὶ ἀρετῇ <u>προτέραν</u> καὶ πρεσβυτέραν ψυχὴν σώματος…" See Wolfson, *Philo: foundations of religious philosophy*, 214-215.
[137] Plato, *Timaeus*, 37d "…εἰκὼ δ' ἐπενόει κινητόν τινα αἰῶνος ποιῆσαι, καὶ διακοσμῶν ἅμα οὐρανὸν ποιεῖ μένοντος αἰῶνος ἐν ἑνὶ κατ' ἀριθμὸν ἰοῦσαν αἰώνιον εἰκόνα". This idea is also expressed in *Timaeus*, 30b-c.
[138] Treated at length in Plato, Timaeus, 37e-40b, 69b. See Johansen, *Plato's Natural Philosophy*, 75, 87.
[139] See Johansen, *Plato's Natural Philosophy*, 87. Citing Simplicius *De Caelo* (77) 105:1.
[140] Aristotle, *Catrgories*, 12, 14b "…τὸ βέλτιον καὶ τὸ τιμιώτερον <u>πρότερον</u> εἶναι τῇ φύσει δοκεῖ" (Aristotle's 'least' proper usage of the term). Similar concept found in *Nicomachean Ethics*, 7.6, 1141b.

Platonic understanding of priority, one that is 'metaphysical' rather than 'chronological' and intertwined with causation.

### 6.2.5.2 Συνίστημι

In the wider platonic corpus the occasional use of συνίστημι refers to the *composition* of a speech like a ζῷον[141] and the *construction* of the state as a representation of the finest and best life.[142] In the *Republic* the astronomer upon viewing the motion of the stars will view their orderliness and seem/believe (νομιεῖν) that the 'craftsman of the heavens' has *constructed* them and arranged them in a most beautiful and arranged work.[143]

Plato's use of the term συνίστημι has a heightened occurrence in *Timaeus*. It carries on the sentiment in the *Republic* of the crafting work of the δημιουργός. It is often associated with his construction or framing of the four elements, [144] the 'visible and tangible heaven.'[145] The usage of συνίστημι also speaks of γιγνόμενα as a ζῷον that is contained,[146] being held together,[147] and as a frame.[148] The pertinent point to highlight here is the one who is doing this work. It is the work of god, the δημιουργός. In fact, an overlooked title given to the δημιουργός in *Timaeus* is ὁ συνιστὰς συνέστησεν (the one who frames).[149] The δημιουργός is

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[141] Plato, *Phaedrus*, 264c; *Sophist*, 262c.
[142] Plato, Laws, Z 7.817b "ἡ πολιτεία <u>συνέστηκε</u> μιμησις τοῦ καλλίστου καὶ ἀριστου βίου."
[143] See Plato, *Republic*, 530a "νομιεῖν μὲν ὡς οἷόν τε κάλλιστα τὰ τοιαῦτα ἔργα συστήσασθαι, οὕτω <u>συνεστάναι</u> τῷ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ δημιουργῷ αὐτόν τε καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ." Note also the close proximity of the propositional phrase ἐν αὐτῷ.
[144] Plato, *Timaeus*, 61a. This a very similar usage to that of 2 Pet 3:5.
[145] "οὐρανὸν ὁρατὸν καὶ ἁπτόν" Plato, *Timaeus*, 32c. See also Plato, *Timaeus*, 30d, 35a, 45c, 56b, 69c, 78c
[146] Plato, *Timaeus*, 31a. "...πάνθ' ὅσα αὐτοῦ κατὰ φύσιν συγγενῆ ζῷα ἐντὸς ἔχον ἑαυτοῦ, <u>συνέστησε</u>."
[147] Plato, *Timaeus*, 78e. "...ἔωσπερ ἂν τὸ θνητὸν <u>συνεστήκῃ</u> ζῷον."
[148] Plato, *Timaeus*, 81b. It is also used in the framing nature of triangles in Plato's cosmology. See Plato, *Timaeus*, 53c, 54c.
[149] See Plato, *Timaeus*, 29e, "λέγωμεν δὴ δι' ἥντινα αἰτίαν γένεσιν καὶ τὸ πᾶν τόδε <u>ὁ συνιστὰς συνέστησεν</u>." See also 30c.

good and so is his construction.[150] His construction of τὸ πᾶν is a process of moulding

intelligence into the soul, and soul into the body. [151] The passage just cited (29e-30c)

indicated the connection between God, his crafting endeavours, his priority and causation.

The very ideas that have been expressed in this study of Colossians 1:16a, e, 17a-b. The

author may, implicitly or explicitly, have in mind the idea and concept of συνίστημι

presented in *Timaeus* in the formation of this part of the hymn.

### 6.2.6 Similarities with Philo's Corpus

### 6.2.6.1 Πρό

Philo uses πρό language in many instances similar to *Timaeus*. Within the αἰσθητὸς κόσμος

Philo uses πρό to speak of temporal priority.[152]  He uses it in phrases to speak of past

time.[153] Philo also uses πρό in a spatial way to infer an object being 'in front.' This usage is

often (but not always) found in Philo's allegorical commentary works when he is loosely

citing the Jewish scriptures.[154]


Philo also uses the word extensively to speak about a priority or superiority in rank. In this

case, it is often framed in the negative when humanity places priority in vice over virtue or

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[150] Plato, *Timaeus*, 29e.

[151] Philo, *Timaeus*, 30b "…διὰ δὴ τὸν λογισμὸν τόνδε νοῦν μὲν ἐν ψυχῇ, ψυχὴν δ᾽ ἐν σώματι συνιστὰς τὸ πᾶν συνετεκταίνετο, ὅπως ὅτι κάλλιστον εἴη κατὰ φύσιν ἄριστόν τε ἔργον ἀπειργασμένος"

[152] See Philo *Opif*. 129, 143; *Leg*. 1.21, 24; 2.2, 11, 13; *Leg*. 3.85, 146; *Cher*. 28, 120, *Sac*. 12, Post. 59, 60, 89, *Deus* 58, 131, 174; *Agr*. 167; *Sob*. 8; *Her*. 251, 310; *Somn*. 1.81, 92, 101, 112; *Somn*. 2.84; *Abr*. 46, *Ios*. 16, 187, 222; *Mos*. 1.16, 205, 207, 259; 2:258; *Dec* 124, 171; *Spec* 3.152; 4.10; *Virt*. 145; *Flacc*. 8; *Legat*. 141

[153] πρὸ καιρου Philo, *Somn*. 1.95; *Mos*. 1.46, 321, 328; *Virt*. 149, 157; some phrases occurring mainly in his historical works πρὸ πολλοῦ Philo, *Prob*. 118 *Flacc*. 92; *Legat*. 63; *Prov*. 2.24 [Greek frag.]. πρὸ ὀλίγων Philo, *Flacc*. 152; *Legat*. 141, 179; πρὸ τοῦ μοιριδίου Philo, *Legat*. 107; and πρὸ μικροῦ Philo, *Deus* 1:174; *Mut*. 1:177; *Somn*. 1:166; *Abr*. 1:242; *Ios*. 1:16, 187; *Mos*. 1:191, 259; 2:172, 271; *Praem*. 1:124, 146, 165, 168, 170, 171; *Contempl*. 1:7, 44, 52, 81; *Flacc*. 1:18, 62, 126, 147, 163; *Legat*. 1:14, 15, 56, 67, 96, 244, 285, 327, 337; QG 4:131 [Greek frag.]. Also Such as preceding works of his Philo, *Ebr*. 1; *Her*. 1; *Somn*. 1.1.

[154] Philo, *Leg*. 3.77 [Gen 6:8]; *Sac*. 67 [Ex 16:6], *Post*. 67 [Numb 26.16]; *Deus* 50 [Deut 30:15]; 102, *Mig*. 174 [Ex 23:20]; *Fug*. 58 [Deut 30:20]; *Somn*. 2.221 [Ex 17.6]; 234; *Ios*. 221; *Mos*. 2.154

in incorrect/lesser avenue of inquiry/understanding such as opinion before truth, sophistry rather than wisdom or the senses over intellect.[155]

The most significant use of πρό by Philo pertinent to Colossians 1:17 is where he attributes a Platonic metaphysical priority of nature to God through the use of πρό. All things come from God, he finds everything he needs within himself.[156] He is superior to all,[157] he is outside of all things,[158] including time,[159] totally sufficient.[160] He is prior to both word and place.[161] Philo's theology is best summed up in *Mut.* 27 as stated in 4.1.6.3 of this thesis. Indeed for Philo, God is ὢν ὁ πρὸ τῶν ὅλων θεὸς.[162] Priority language is used to explain cause and effect. God causes his λόγος, the λόγος *is* and *causes* the νοητὸς κόσμος which in turn is the idea and cause for the αἰσθητός κόσμος. Wolfson explains:[163]

> so the relation of God to the Logos is described by the term "prior," that is to say, a relation of cause to effect; the relation of the Logos to the intelligible world is described by the term "place" in the same sense as soul or mind is said to be the place of forms, that is, in the sense of their being identical, and the relation of the intelligible world to the ideas is described as that of a whole to the parts of which it is composed (συνεστώς).

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[155] See Philo *Opif.* 45, 140; Leg 2.56; Cher. 6, *Sac.* 44, *Det.* 37; *Post* 32; 38; *Gig.* 35; *Deus* 50, 182, *Agr.* 43, 48, 171; *Ebr.* 34, 42, 167; *Sob.* 14; *Conf.* 15, 109, 140, 159, *Mig.* 76, *Cong.* 49, Fug. 3; *Mut.* 97, 161; *Somn.* 1.77; 2.9, 70 106 [Joseph positive]; *Abr.* 178, 221; *Ios.* 59, *Mos.* 2.194, 214, 227; *Dec.* 1, *Spec.* 1.54,; *Spec.* 2.255, 3.180: *Virt.* 7; *Praem.* 8, 12, 33; *Flacc.* 2

[156] Philo, *Deus* 58. "…τὸ δὲ αἰσθητὸν φῶς γενητόν, ἑώρα δὲ ὁ θεὸς καὶ πρὸ γενέσεως φωτὶ χρώμενος ἑαυτῷ."

[157] An allegorical explanation of LXX Exodus 17:6 "ὅδε ἐγὼ ἕστηκα πρὸ τοῦ σὲ". See Philo, *Conf*, 138. "ὧδε στὰς ἐγὼ πρὸ τοῦ σέ. δείκνυσθαι καὶ καταλαμβάνεσθαι δοκῶν, πρὸ πάσης δείξεως καὶ φαντασίας ὑπερβαλὼν τὰ γεγονότα."

[158] Philo, *Mig*, 183 Again an allegorical explanation of LXX Exodus 17:6 "ὅδε ἐγὼ" "ὧδε ἐγώ," ἄδεικτος ὡς ἂν δεικνύμενος, ἀόρατος ὡς ἂν ὁρατὸς ὤν, "πρὸ τοῦ σέ"· πρὸ γὰρ παντὸς τοῦ γενητοῦ, ἔξω βαίνων ἐκείνου καὶ μηδενὶ τῶν μετ' αὐτὸν ἐμφερόμενος."

[159] Philo, *Mut.* 12

[160] Philo, *Mut.* 27, 46

[161] Philo, *Somn.* 1.65, 117. See Wolfson, *Philo: foundations of religious philosophy*, 247

[162] Philo, *Somn.* 1.70

[163] See Wolfson, *Philo: foundations of religious philosophy*, 251.

He then goes on to explain that God is the necessary and most generic thing, second is the

λόγος (the most necessary of things created).[164] The λόγος then is above the sensible

cosmos, eldest and most generic.[165] The λόγος then functions as the intellect does to the

body, keeping it together.[166]

In Philo's mind, there is an 'atemporal' past prior to the sun taking up its role as the

imitation of eternity, the beginning of time.[167]  This is displayed in Philo's νοητὸς κόσμος

being God's idea for the αἰσθητός κόσμος.[168] In the Genesis 1:1-2:4 creation account the sun,

moon and stars, the governors of time, are only made on the fourth day, Philo sees here

complementary ideas in Plato that the κόσμος is prior to χρόνος (time).[169] Philo's

understanding of time, in relation to the κόσμος and God is best explained in *Deus* 31:[170]

> δημιουργὸς δὲ καὶ χρόνου θεός· καὶ γὰρ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ πατὴρ πατὴρ δὲ χρόνου κόσμος τὴν κίνησιν αὐτοῦ γένεσιν ἀποφήνας ἐκείνου· ὥστε υἱωνοῦ τάξιν ἔχειν πρὸς θεὸν τὸν χρόνον. ὁ μὲν γὰρ κόσμος οὗτος νεώτερος υἱὸς θεοῦ, ἅτε αἰσθητὸς ὤν· τὸν γὰρ πρεσβύτερον οὐδένα εἶπε νοητὸς δ᾽ ἐκεῖνος πρεσβείων ἀξιώσας παρ᾽ ἑαυτῷ καταμένειν διενοήθη.

Here Philo's transcendent theology is again expressed. God is beyond and outside of time.

### 6.2.6.2 Συνίστημι

This brings this study to Philo's use of συνίστημι. A common association of this verb is made

with the verb συνέχω of Wisdom 1:7 and the wider Jewish wisdom tradition. It is usually

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[164] See Philo, *Leg.* 2:86; QG frag 2.62

[165] See Philo, *Leg.* 3:175 "…καὶ ὁ λόγος δὲ τοῦ θεοῦ ὑπεράνω παντός ἐστι τοῦ κόσμου καὶ <u>πρεσβύτατος</u> καὶ <u>γενικώτατος</u> τῶν ὅσα γέγονε."

[166] See Philo, Leg. 1.23. See explanation in Wolfson, *Philo: foundations of religious philosophy*, 251-252.

[167] See Philo, *Her.* 165-166

[168] See Philo, *Opif.* 33

[169] Philo, *Opif.* 26 "χρόνος γὰρ οὐκ ἦν πρὸ κόσμου."; *Leg.* 1.2 "ὥστε χρόνον ἀνομολογεῖσθαι νεώτερον κόσμου." See Runia, *On the Creation of the Cosmos*, 158.

[170] "<u>But God is the creator of time also</u>; for he is the father of its father, and the father of time is the world, which made its own mother the creation of time, so that time stands towards God in the relation of a grandson; for this world is a younger son of God, inasmuch as it is perceptible by the outward sense; for the only son he speaks of as older than the world, is idea, and this is not perceptible by the intellect; but having thought the other worthy of the rights of primogeniture, he has decided that it shall remain with him"

associated with Philo's Logos which holds the world together.[171] These texts often combine ideas to speak about σοφία, λόγος and some kind of world construction with the Lord filling his work.[172]

When referring to the verb συνίστημι in Colossians 1:17 most connections with Philo only reference *Her.*281. Here mention is made of the γῆν, ὕδωρ, ἀέρα, and πῦρ this time mentioned as τὰς τέτταρας ἀρχάς τε καὶ δυνάμεις the components of the κόσμος.[173] Here a similar connotation to between in Colossians 1:17b and 2 Peter 3:5 is evident. This connection provides an initial helpful start for understanding the verb's use in Philo and Colossians. This demonstrates again that Colossians' distinctive language has a strong connection with the τὸ πᾶν language of *Timaeus* as a realm constructed by God and an ordering of the four elements.  He uses it to speak of the composition of a thing comprising of multiple parts, such as elements of knowledge;[174] geometry, numbers and triangles;[175] goodness;[176] humanity,[177]  in particular, his soul;[178] the state[179] and most predominantly the elements of the κόσμος.[180]  Most importantly, like *Timaeus*' δημιουργός, the verb συνίστημι in Philo refers to the action of God in κόσμος construction, not the Logos. Philo explains how

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[171] Common references that commentators link to Philo are Fug, 112 and Her. 188. See Winston, David, *The Wisdom of Solomon: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary.* AB Vol 43. (Garden City: Doubleday, 1979), 104; Schenck, *A Brief Guide to Philo*, 79, 93

[172] See further comment in Skehan and Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 491. Key supplementary texts usually cited to support this connect arise from Sirach 24:1-33; 42:1-43:33; Wisdom 1:7; 7:15-8:1; 9:1-6.

[173] Philo, *Her*. 281 "τινὲς δὲ πατέρας ὑπετόπασαν εἰρῆσθαι τὰς <u>τέτταρας ἀρχάς τε καὶ δυνάμεις</u>, ἐξ ὧν <u>συνέστηκεν ὁ κόσμος</u>, <u>γῆν ὕδωρ ἀέρα καὶ πῦρ</u>· εἰς γὰρ ταύτας ἕκαστον τῶν γενομένων φασὶν ἀναλύεσθαι δεόντως."
Some, again, have fancied that by "fathers," are here meant the <u>four principles and powers</u> of which the <u>world is composed- the earth</u>, the <u>water, the air, and the fire</u>; for they say, that all created things are very properly dissolved into these elements.

[174] Philo, *Mut*. 257; *Somn*. 1.205.

[175] Philo, *Opif*. 95, 97 *Spec*. 2.117, 149; *QG*. 3:61.

[176] Philo, *Leg*. 1.55.

[177] Philo, *Mut*. 256. His body  and soul *Dec*. 33

[178] Philo, *Sac*. 126; *Spec*. 1.201.

[179] Philo. *Post*. 52.

[180] Philo, *Her*. 311. Mentioned in Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, 52.

God, referred to as πατὴρ... καὶ δημιουργὸς[181] goes about 'crafting' the cosmos

(δημιουργηθῆναι φησι τὸν κόσμον).[182] He alludes to his 'day one', the νοητὸς κόσμος. God, in

order to fashion something καλός[183] needs a good model to craft a good 'object', he uses an

archetypal idea from the intellect to craft this object, this visible cosmos.[184] The visible being

the younger (νεώτερον). The noetic world is composed of ideas (ἐκ τῶν ἰδεῶν συνεστῶτα). In

Philo it is God, not the λόγος doing the συνίστημι.


### 6.2.7 Insights gained into Colossians Christology from Distinctive Language and Comparisons with *Timaeus* and Philo's Corpus

Colossians 1:17 seeks to elaborate, reaffirm and provide a fitting conclusion to the first half

of the hymn.[185] Verse 17 builds on the theological language associated with Christ in

Colossians 1:16e while also seeking to reiterate Christ's priority to all things in 15b. Πρό and

συνίστημι, infrequent terms in the NT, are used in innovative ways in Colossians within the

*corpus Paulinum*. In Plato and Philo both πρό and συνίστημι have strong resonances with

causation and theology. Πρό, while denoting priority in a temporal manner, may better

explain a god who is outside of time. This nuance is strengthened by attaching an

ontological reading to ἔστιν similar to the philosophical imperfect ἦν implied in some

Platonic texts. Time being only a paradigm concerning γιγνόμενα. This first *strophe*

concludes with perhaps the most striking observation of this thesis' examination into

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[181] Philo, *Opif*. 10.
[182] Philo, *Opif*. 13.
[183] A double echo to both Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31 and *Timaeus* 30c.
[184] Philo, *Opif*. 16 προλαβὼν γὰρ ὁ θεὸς ἅτε θεὸς ὅτι μίμημα καλὸν οὐκ ἄν ποτε γένοιτο δίχα καλοῦ παραδείγματος οὐδέ τι τῶν αἰσθητῶν ἀνυπαίτιον, ὃ μὴ πρὸς ἀρχέτυπον καὶ νοητὴν ἰδέαν ἀπεικονίσθη, βουληθεὶς τὸν ὁρατὸν κόσμον τουτονὶ δημιουργῆσαι προεξετύπου τὸν νοητόν, ἵνα χρώμενος ἀσωμάτῳ καὶ θεοειδεστάτῳ παραδείγματι τὸν σωματικὸν ἀπεργάσηται, πρεσβυτέρου νεώτερον ἀπεικόνισμα, τοσαῦτα περιέξοντα αἰσθητὰ γένη ὅσαπερ ἐν ἐκείνῳ νοητά."
[185] See See Kasch, συνίστημι, 897; Rao, *Colossians & Philemon*, 98.

Colossians' distinctive language, that of associating Christ with the verb συνίστημι.  Many commentators on this point mistakenly look to the Jewish wisdom tradition and the use of the verb συνέχω, rather than examining the use of συνίστημι in Plato and Philo.  Upon further examination, συνίστημι language is used to describe the 'technological' activity of the δημιουργός for Plato and God for Philo. Colossians is similar in his use of the term, but has used it to speak about Christ, including Christ in his theology.

**6.3 Summary**

Colossians 1:16e-17 develops the ideas of transcendence, supremacy and causation that were introduced in Colossians 1:15-16a. Where Philo is clear to draw distinctions between the role of the intermediate logos and the transcendent God, Colossians uses theological concepts with reference to Christ, blurring the role between God and intermediate where Philo seeks to make distinct. The author uses platonic language and concepts but does not feel constrained by them or obligated to conform to them. Rather, these ideas serve his own purposes of overtly incorporating his Christology into the Jewish monotheism that undergirds his theology.

# CONCLUSION: SUMMARY OF INSIGHTS GAINED AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER EXAMINATION

This thesis has been an exploration and examination of the distinctive language and theological nuance of Colossians, in particular, the cosmic Christology of Colossians 1:15-17.

Part one of the thesis began by stating assumptions associated with studying Colossians in chapter one. Chapter two gave an overview of 19th and 20th century scholarly discussion of distinctive language and theology in Colossians before focussing attention on the cosmic Christology of the Colossians hymn. The first *strophe*, verses 15-17, was selected as a suitable candidate because of its clear and distinctive emphasis on Christology and cosmic expressions. After noting issues to do with the hymn's form, language, theology and structure the chapter continued with a review of the hymn's connection with the philosophical tradition in scholarly discussions. The chapter concluded by affirming the suggestions of Sterling, Forbes, van Kooten, Cox and Balabanski of identifying Middle Platonism as providing insight for the hymn's language and theology; and that of Eltester, Chadwick, Sandmel and Runia for that of Philo of Alexandria in particular. Chapter three concluded part one of the thesis with an outline of Middle Platonism's historical context, key concepts and persons. Middle Platonism was defined as a dogmatic and scholastic movement with an exegetical approach to Platonic texts, in particular, that of *Timaeus*. The inclusion of Plato's *Timaeus* was identified as imperative for adding veracity to an understanding of Middle Platonism, and the movement's potential insight into Colossians' distinctive language. The Middle Platonic exposition of scripture associated with Philo of Alexandria was identified as most beneficial for providing insight into Colossians' distinctive

language because of their close proximity of date and their shared interest in Jewish theological concepts.

The method proposed for examining the distinctive language of Colossians 1:15-17 was an analysis of the text's syntactical constructions and a demonstration of its distinctiveness within the *corpus Paulinum*. These distinctives were compared with Platonic texts, especially the *Timaeus* and the Philonic corpus with a summary of insights gained explained at the end of each section. This thesis has sought to advance the assertions of the scholars noted in 2.4.2.2 and 2.4.2.3 by including and incorporating not only a thorough treatment of Philonic texts and relevant scholarship but also an inclusion of *Timaeus* and the scholarly discussions about its influence and relevance in the early-to-mid first century CE. This procedure was carried out in part two of the thesis.

**Insights Gained in Part Two**

Part two of the thesis has demonstrated that Colossians 1:15-17 has highly distinctive language within *corpus Paulinum*. This distinctive language occurred through both word selection and theological nuance. When Colossians 1:15-17 was found to be distinct within *corpus Paulinum*, the proposed method of finding lexicographical and conceptual similarities with *Timaeus* (and other Platonic texts) and Philo's Middle Platonic exposition of scripture has demonstrated a number of similarities and further confirmed the value in applying such an approach. This method has demonstrated in Colossians 1:15-17 that one finds Middle Platonic concepts of a transcendent theology, [Christ as the] chief intermediary agent, expressions of the bifurcation of reality and theological causation. Interestingly, throughout the thesis Colossians 1:15-17 has also displayed conceptual and lexicographical similarities

159

with 1 Corinthians 8:5-6, portions of Hebrews and the Johannine literature (especially the prologue, John 1:1-18) which also have been noted for their possible connection with Middle Platonism.[1] Much of the language expressed in Colossians 1:15-17 is (re)used in Ephesians. Where Colossians asserts cosmological and creation formation inferences associated with Christ, Ephesians has re-expressed these in an eschatological manner in light of Christ resurrection and glorification.

This thesis does not argue that the author belonged to a Middle Platonic school, nor that the supposed 'Colossian error' was Middle Platonic phenomena. Rather, like Philo, the author [of Colossians] was not deliberately trying to reconcile his theology and cosmology with Platonic concepts, but rather discerns fundamental Platonic assumptions within his theology and cosmology itself.[2] A Middle Platonic influence for Colossians, need not concede or indicate an abandoning, corruption or compromise of the Christian gospel, but rather offers an avenue of faithful expression for his intended audience. It is not known, nor argued, if the author knew *Timaeus* or Philo's works. The author never quotes Plato, Philo or for that matter the Jewish scriptures. The author, like Philo, is deeply influenced by Jewish ideas, albeit through the prism of the early Christian kerygma as expressed in the Pauline tradition. Equally the author appears to be, in the words of Forbes, "a thoughtful Graeco-Roman philosophical amateur, not searching for toeholds in the world-view of his audience, but [potentially] a product of decades of intelligent engagement with Hellenistic Judaism

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[1] Often noted in sections 2.4.2.2 and 2.4.2.3
[2] Adapted from Runia's views on Philo in Runia, *Was Philo a Middle Platonist*, 128

and Graeco-Roman culture, [and] is here working towards his own synthesis."[3] The centre-piece of his 'synthesis' is his cosmic Christology.

Chapter 4 examined Christ's relationship with both God and creation in Colossians 1:15-16a. God was expressed in transcendent terms, a feature of Middle Platonist theology. Christ as εἰκών and πρωτότοκος were explained as the transcendent God's chief intermediary similar to Philo's λόγος who is also expressed as εἰκών and πρωτόγονος among other titles. Christ is expressed as firstborn and supreme over creation and is identified in the creation formation process of τὰ πάντα, pioneering ideas in the *corpus Paulinum*. Chapter 5 explored the cosmology expressed in Colossians 1:16b-d. The intended purpose appears not to be to present a detailed cosmology but to elaborate on the implications of Christ's supremacy and creative work. The hymn here uses an amalgam of Jewish and Platonic pairings to express a bifurcation of reality in Colossians 1:16b-c and the fourfold nature of things becoming, with a heavy civic and political tone in 16d. Where Colossians 1:15-16a shows close similarities with Philo's logos doctrine, the cosmological expressions of Colossians 1:16b-d begin to elevate Christ above what Philo would ascribe to the λόγος as also being beyond or above reality not just the chief part of it. The concept of the supremacy of Christ was developed further in chapter 6 with an examination of causation and theology in Colossians 1:16e-17. Here both instrumental and final causation are ascribed to Christ along with his metaphysical priority and framing qualities, expressions reserved in Plato and Philo for God. Where Philo is clear to draw distinctions between the role of the intermediate logos and the transcendent God, Colossians uses theological concepts with reference to Christ, blurring the role between God and intermediate where Philo seeks to make it distinct. The author

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[3] Adapted from Forbes, "Pauline Demonology and/or Cosmology, 72

uses Platonic language and concepts seen in Philo but does not feel constrained by them or obligated to conform to them. Rather, these ideas serve his own purposes of overtly incorporating his Christology into the Jewish monotheism that undergirds his theology.

**Implications for Further Examination**

Colossians' language, as examined in Colossians 1:15-17, is distinctive within the *corpus Paulinum*. Insight may be gained into these distictives by considering both the language and the conceptual nuance with the Middle Platonic exposition of scripture associated with Philo of Alexandria. This method was one of identifying the syntax and uses in Colossians, demonstrating its lexicographical and theological distinctives and then examining them in light of Platonic texts such as *Timaeus*. This method may add significant understanding for Colossians 1:18-20, the second strophe of the hymn, where platonic ideas continue to abound. These are: concepts of κεφαλή and σῶμα; Christ expressed as ἀρχή; the continued use priority language with πρωτεύων of verse 18 and prepositional phrase used to explain God's τὸ πλήρωμα in Christ and his reconciliation of all things in verses 19-20.

This approach may also produce beneficial insights for the wider text of Colossians, such as the meaning of φιλοσοφία and τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου in Colossians 2:8; a metaphysical and cosmological understanding of the use of ἐν αὐτῷ and ἐν Χριστῷ concepts; the reoccurrence of the pair ἀρχαί and ἐξουσίαι in Colossians 2:10, 15; head and body conceptual language throughout the letter; *Geisterwelt*/angelic language with civic/political implications (2:10-19); spatial and cosmological expressions of heaven(s)/earth above/below (1:5-6, 23; 2:20-3:5; 4:1); and finally the author's approach to other 'so-called' gods, idolatry and ethical

implications (Colossians 2:13-3:17). The pursuit of ethics and virtue being a noted feature of Hellenistic Philosophy. Colossians 1:15-17 represents an example of distinct language in the *corpus Paulinum*. The Middle Platonic exposition of scripture associated with Philo of Alexandria provides beneficial insight for understanding this text and the method demonstrated in this thesis offers a helpful structure for understanding the theological nuance of the wider text of Colossians.

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