

ARIUS REVISITED:  
THE FIRSTBORN OVER ALL CREATION  
(COL 1:15)

Larry R. Helyer\*

In about A.D. 318 Arius, presbyter of Alexandria, became a leading figure in a Christological and trinitarian controversy that rent the Church for most of the fourth century. The controversy was one "which for complexity, intrigue, and bitterness has seldom, if ever, been exceeded in the history of the church."<sup>1</sup>

At the heart of the debate lay Arius' denial of the full deity of Christ and, subsequently, of the Holy Spirit. What emerged was a triadic view of the three Persons in which only the Father was acknowledged as truly God.

Theologically the key to Arius' view lay in his concept of "unbegottenness" as the essential attribute of the Godhead. According to Arius, God is necessarily uncreated, unbegotten and unoriginate, and hence he is absolutely incommunicable and unique. Since Scripture clearly designates the *Logos* as begotten, Arius concluded that the *Logos* cannot be true God. Though predicated as Son of God and even God in Scripture, and though adored by Christians, the *Logos* enjoys this status either by participation in grace or by adoption.<sup>2</sup> In either event the *Logos* is clearly a creature alien and dissimilar in all things from the Father, a perfect creature and immensely above all other created beings, but a creature nevertheless. In response to Origen's view of an eternal generation from the Father, Arius steadfastly asserted "there was when he was not."<sup>3</sup>

In the controversy and debates that swirled around this issue, the Arians relied primarily upon Scriptural texts that seemingly asserted the createdness of Christ. Two of the prominent texts were Prov 8:22 ("The Lord created me [at the] beginning of his ways") and Col 1:15 ("the firstborn of all creation"). It is the purpose of this paper to reexamine the expression *prōtotokos pasēs ktiseōs* in Col 1:15 with a view to understanding its meaning and significance.

In 1938 Edward Cerny could write that "commentators do not agree regarding the meaning of 'firstborn of every creature,' and the expression remains one of the unsolved problems of the New Testament."<sup>4</sup> That the

\*Larry Helyer is associate professor of Biblical literature at Taylor University in Upland, Indiana.

<sup>1</sup>G. W. Bromiley, *Historical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 69.

<sup>2</sup>Athanasius *Oratione* 1.9; 1.6.

<sup>3</sup>*En hote ouk ēn prin gennēthē ouk ēn*. See Athanasius *Depositio Arii* in NPNF, 4. 70.

<sup>4</sup>E. A. Cerny, "Firstborn of Every Creature (Col 1:15)" (dissertation; St. Mary's University, 1938) xvi-xvii. Even earlier E. Norden summarized the state of affairs by simply stating that "dies ist eine

expression still occasions difficulty is acknowledged by Alfred Hockel: "Whoever wants to translate Colossians encounters already in 1:15 a considerable difficulty, namely, that of how he is to render the expression *prōtotos pasēs ktiseōs*."<sup>5</sup>

One difficulty relates to the ambiguity of the individual terms of the immediate context (Col 1:15-20), which may be understood from widely divergent standpoints: the various streams of first-century Judaism on the one hand, and the multifaceted world of Hellenism on the other. To complicate matters there are several *hapax legomena* in the space of but five verses. Another factor that adds to the difficulty relates to the literary genre of the passage in question. Many scholars discern in these verses a composition of hymnic character. This immediately raises the question as to the provenance of the hymn. If one concludes that it is pre-Pauline, to what source may we trace its conceptions and theology? Furthermore, if one decides in favor of a pre-Pauline hymn, what may be said of possible Pauline redaction of the *Urhymnus*? Clearly the exegete is required to render a verdict on this issue before he simply subsumes the theological content of the hymn under the rubric of Pauline theology. But this investigation cannot be carried out in isolation from another vexing problem in Colossian studies—namely, the problem of the *raison d'être* of the epistle, which is generally related to the "Colossian heresy/error."<sup>6</sup> Thus one's interpretation of the hymn will be affected if there are grounds for assuming that the original hymn served as an agreed-upon doctrinal basis by which to critique the false teaching and, especially, if one believes that the *Urhymnus* has been redacted with an eye to the heresy.<sup>7</sup>

It is well beyond the limitations of this paper to explore and defend in any depth the position which I have come to vis-à-vis these exegetical issues. I content myself here with setting forth the presuppositions of this discussion, which I have argued at length elsewhere.<sup>8</sup>

---

von den Exegeten viel umstrittene Stelle" ("Liturgisches im paulinischen Schrifttum. A. Eine liturgische Stelle im Kolosserbriefe," in *Agnostos Theos* [Berlin/Leipzig: Teubner, 1913] 254).

<sup>5</sup>A. Hockel, *Christus Der Erstgeborene* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1965) 21. Especially problematical is the attempt to trace the background of the expression. Cf. the quite different conclusions of Hockel (*Christus* 35-47) and T. W. Buckley, "The Phrase 'Firstborn of Every Creature' (Colossians 1:15) in the Light of Its Jewish and Hellenistic Background" (dissertation; Angelicum University: Rome, 1962) 99-110.

<sup>6</sup>A notable exception is voiced by M. D. Hooker who denies that Paul is combatting false teachers at Colosse—the warnings are such as would be appropriate to Gentile converts in a pagan and Jewish environment ("Were There False Teachers in Colossae?," in *Christ and Spirit in the New Testament* [ed. B. Lindars and S. S. Smalley; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1973] 315-331).

<sup>7</sup>See R. P. Martin, *Colossians: The Church's Lord and the Christian's Liberty* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972) 34-35, for a concise statement of the exegetical issues. We recognize of course that there is a circularity that is necessarily involved in the above study since the text itself must be the starting point for any investigation.

<sup>8</sup>L. R. Helyer, *The Prototokos Title in the New Testament* (dissertation; Fuller Theological Seminary, 1979); "Col 1:15-20: Pre-Pauline or Pauline?," *JETS* 26 (1983) 167-180.

Briefly stated, I hold that Col 1:15-20 is a hymnic composition entirely of Pauline authorship. The primary argument in support of this position is that the theology contained therein is so compatible with and adducible from uncontestedly Pauline thought that the best hypothesis is also the simplest: Paul is the author.

As for the background of the cosmic Christology in the passage, I think this is best explained by viewing its primary source in the central confession of the apostolic Church: *Kyrios Iēsous* (1 Cor 12:3). With the resurrection of Jesus the earliest community of believers confessed the lordship of Jesus in terms of his victory over death and his vindication by God. This was quickly seen, however, to entail nothing short of the position in creation ascribed to the *Kyrios* of the OT. In brief, cosmic Christology was implicit from the beginning of the primitive Church. The *eikōn* and *prōtotokos* predications are secondary—owing to theological reflection upon the role of Christ in *Heilsgeschichte*—but very early and by no means indebted to the Hellenistic Church for their origin, even though we readily concur that *eikōn* especially would have evoked a cluster of ideas already in circulation among Hellenistic Christians whether Gentile or Jewish. In my opinion Paul's use of these predications reflects a convergence of wisdom and second-Adam motifs—motifs that themselves can be most likely traced back to the primitive Jerusalem Church.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore this reflection stems basically from an exegesis of the OT passages dealing with the creation of Adam (Genesis 1) and of the role of God's wisdom in creation (Proverbs 8).<sup>10</sup> The link between these two passages—which is reflected in Sirach, Wisdom of Solomon and later rabbinic texts—was probably already part of the primitive Church's conceptual reservoir and needed only the brilliance of the rabbinically trained Paul to formulate it in its present canonical form. One further comment should be made here: The emphasis in the Christ-hymn upon the powers, the angelic agencies, is most likely circumstantial—that is, it reflects Paul's deliberate purpose to place these beings under Christ's lordship since the false teachers were apparently ascribing too much weight or, perhaps, worship to them.<sup>11</sup> It should be noted, however, that even this feature has OT precedent in a few hymns and poetic passages where the Lord is pictured as the creator and sovereign of the angelic beings (Ps 89:6-7; 103:20-21; 147:2-5; Job 38:7; Isa 34:4 [LXX]).

## I. TEMPORAL PRIORITY OR PRIMACY OF STATUS

Assuming that Paul by his use of *eikōn* and *prōtotokos* in Col 1:15 is setting forth the person of Jesus Christ as the second Adam and his significance

<sup>9</sup>R. Longenecker says that "while they [Christological titles in Colossians] were originally coined in the context of Hellenistic philosophy, there is good reason to believe . . . such terms . . . were early used of Jesus by Jewish Christians as well" ("Some Distinctive Early Christological Motifs," *NTS* 14 [1968] 541).

<sup>10</sup>We call attention to R. B. Y. Scott's suggestion that the *ta panta en autō synestēken* of Col 1:16 is to be linked with the *ʾamōn* of Prov 8:30 ("Wisdom in Creation: The Amon of Proverbs viii. 30," *VT* 10 [1960] 213-223).

<sup>11</sup>On the circumstantial nature of this aspect of the hymn see Longenecker, "Motifs."

for protology (with some assimilation here with OT wisdom), we next inquire into the precise meaning that is to be attached to *prōtotokos*. The *NEB* provides us with the two main possible renderings: In the text it has "his is the primacy over all created things," and in the margin it gives "born before all created things." Thus we must choose between the concepts of primacy of status and temporal priority.

1. *The meaning of pasēs ktiseōs*. As we attempt to decide this issue, however, we need to determine two other exegetical questions that impinge on our interpretation of the phrase *prōtotokos pasēs ktiseōs*. The first relates to the meaning to be assigned to *pasēs ktiseōs*.<sup>12</sup> Do we here have reference to all creation, understood in a collective sense, or ought we to assign a distributive nuance such that the emphasis falls upon each individual created thing or being?

A representative selection of major English versions shows that the *KJV* rendering "the firstborn of every creature," which reflects a distributive nuance, is consistently replaced with a collective sense: "the firstborn of all creation" (*ASV, RSV, NASB, NEB, JB*). Is this justified? Ordinarily, adjectival *pas* used with an anarthrous noun in the singular signifies "every" or "each," emphasizing the individual members of the class denoted by the noun. There are, however, exceptions to this rule that may be due to Hebraic influence.<sup>13</sup> We would argue that in this passage the collective sense is the one intended. In the first place, the cosmic scope of the passage is readily apparent. The sixfold repetition of the substantive *pas* in the sense of "all things" or "the universe" would suggest a similar meaning for *pasēs ktiseōs*. Furthermore if we are correct in our previous investigation of the conceptual background of Col 1:15-17—namely, that its primary indebtedness resides in Genesis 1 and the creation motifs in the wisdom literature—then we are inclined toward the more comprehensive rendering "all creation." Nikolaus Kehl prefers the distributive sense because it appears to him that in v 16 an entirely distinct class of creatures (the angel powers) is conceived of, and thus Paul's intention is to demonstrate that "no creature is to be excluded from his sovereign power."<sup>14</sup> But this does not require a distributive sense for *pasēs ktiseōs* since there are grounds for supposing that Paul has expanded the hymn proper here with an eye to the Colossian error.<sup>15</sup> One should also note that Kehl's preference may well be influenced by his anthropocentric nar-

<sup>12</sup>BAG 636. T. K. Abbott had noted that the distributive sense for Col 1:15 was "the natural rendering" (*Epistle to the Ephesians and to the Colossians* [ICC; Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1897] 212).

<sup>13</sup>N. Turner, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1963), 3. 199-200. Cf. also M. Zerwick, *Biblical Greek Illustrated by Examples* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1963) 61-62.

<sup>14</sup>N. Kehl, *Christushymnus in Kolosserbrief* 88 n. 16 (my translation).

<sup>15</sup>See Martin, *Lord and Liberty* 40.

rowing of the scope of Christ's cosmic work in general.<sup>16</sup> Finally, we would compare our passage to Rom 8:18-23 where we clearly have the inclusion of the inanimate realm in *hē ktisis*. It seems to me best, therefore, to take *pasēs ktiseōs* in the collective sense: "all creation."<sup>17</sup>

2. *The kind of genitive.* Another exegetical decision must be reached with respect to the kind of genitive we are dealing with in *pasēs ktiseōs*. Several possibilities present themselves: (1) It could be a partitive genitive, so that *prōtotokos* would be included in some way in the class of creatures; (2) it could be a genitive of comparison, which would exclude the *prōtotokos* from the same; (3) it could be a genitive of place, defining the sphere of the firstborn's authority; (4) it could be an objective genitive, in which case the action implied in *prōtotokos* terminates on all creation.

It was of course in a partitive sense that the Arians interpreted the phrase, appealing to Prov 8:22.<sup>18</sup> This reduced Christ to the status of a created being. The incorrectness of this view is immediately seen when the *hoti* clause of v 16 and the *pro panta* predication of v 17 are taken into account. There Christ is unambiguously declared to be the preexistent mediator of all creation. As Martin observes: "If the pre-incarnate Lord was the agent of all creation, and pre-existed before everything, it leads to the conclusion that only God can satisfactorily account for Christ's being."<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, full deity is ascribed to Christ by the *eikōn* title (v 15) and the *plērōma* ascription (v 19; cf. 2:9). Finally, W. Michaelis gives as the decisive objection against the partitive genitive view the fact that it would put emphasis on the *-tokos* element, which with the exception of Luke 2:7 is never emphasized in the NT.<sup>20</sup>

Nigel Turner, however, has taken a different approach with the partitive genitive view. He views the passage as dealing with the incarnate Christ who is so closely identified with the family of which he is head that he can be designated as "firstborn." He further connects this to the new-Adam motif in Romans and 1 Corinthians. Thus Christ is an "Archetype of a fresh stage or leap forward in the collective evolution of all the creatures of God, in the onward march towards the goal of achieving what Christ is himself—the 'icon of the invisible God.'"<sup>21</sup> While suggestive, this view could only have validity for the *prōtotokos ek tōn nekrōn* predication inasmuch as vv 15-17 must

<sup>16</sup>Cf. the review of Kehl's book in M. Barth, "Review of *Christushymnus in Kolosserbrief*," *CBQ* 30 (1968) 110.

<sup>17</sup>See Buckley, "Phrase" 9-20, for an extended discussion arguing for a distributive sense.

<sup>18</sup>Arius held that "if the firstborn is of all creation, clearly he is also one of the creatures" (PG, 26. 280 [my translation]). See further Cerny, "Firstborn" 52-68.

<sup>19</sup>Martin, *Lord and Liberty* 45.

<sup>20</sup>*TDNT* 6 (1968) 878.

<sup>21</sup>N. Turner, *Grammatical Insights* 124.

surely refer to the preincarnate Christ. We agree with Michaelis, who rejects all such attempts to relate the passage to the *kainē ktisis*.<sup>22</sup>

Many scholars could be cited in favor of the comparative genitive view. Grillmeier writes concerning our phrase:

It is used to describe the preeminent position of Christ in the whole world (*ta panta*). . . . *Prōtotokos* should not be read as a temporal definition. . . . "First-born" has been chosen because of the *prōtos* and expresses the element of Christ's dignity and Lordship. Christ enjoys absolute primacy over all creatures (comparative genitive).<sup>23</sup>

Argyle also takes the view that we are dealing with a comparative construction but argues that *prōtotokos* must be understood temporally. He says the phrase must be interpreted "born before all creation."<sup>24</sup> In support of this contention he cites a passage from 2 Kgs 19:43 (LXX) where the man of Israel says to the man of Judah *prōtotokos egō ē su* and translates it "I was born before you."<sup>25</sup> Meecham, however, has responded to this and correctly pointed out that the natural rendering of 2 Kgs 19:43 (LXX) is "I am the firstborn rather than you." He also mentions Lightfoot's remark that the connecting of the genitive with the first part of the compound (*prōtos*) alone unduly strains the grammar.<sup>26</sup> Also, as Turner notes, the 2 Kingdoms passage is not really a parallel since *prōtotokos* is not followed by a genitive.<sup>27</sup>

The genitive-of-place interpretation makes good sense in the passage and has precedents in Luke's writings, which reflect a literary style having more points of contact with classical norms (cf. Luke 16:24; 19:4; Acts 19:26).<sup>28</sup> It is difficult to choose between a genitive of place and an objective genitive, but we opt for an objective genitive.<sup>29</sup> This would accord better with the metaphorical usage of *prōtotokos* as developed in the LXX and intertestamental literature and as it was influenced by its equivalency to the OT *bēkôr*. Thus the idea of a

<sup>22</sup>Michaelis, *TDNT* 6, 879 n. 48. See also Hockel, *Christus* 32-33, who applies the title to the preexistent Christ.

<sup>23</sup>A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition: From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)* (London: Mowbray, 1965) 25-26. It seems to me that Grillmeier's explanation of the meaning of the expression actually accords better with an objective genitive.

<sup>24</sup>A. W. Argyle, "Prōtotokos pasēs ktiseōs (Colossians 1:15)," *ExpTim* 66 (1954-55) 62.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>H. G. Meecham, "Colossians 1:15," *ExpTim* 66 (1954-55) 124.

<sup>27</sup>Turner, *Grammatical Insights* 123.

<sup>28</sup>See J. H. Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1976), 4. 57.

<sup>29</sup>Turner points out that "for practical purposes perhaps the only real division among the genitives is that between subjective and objective. . . . The sole question which the translator and exegete need ask is whether the relationship is directed outwards from the noun in the genitive to some other person or from some other person to the noun in the genitive; or, to put it differently, whether or not the action implied by the independent noun is carried out by the noun in the genitive" (*Grammar*, 3. 207). From this perspective we will argue that *pasēs ktiseōs* is an objective genitive—i.e., the rule and sovereignty implicit in *prōtotokos* is exercised over "all creation."

temporal comparison, which *prōtotokos* suggests on the basis of its etymology, has been muted. To the fore is a meaning that accents primacy of position or status.<sup>30</sup> The meaning of *prōtotokos* is, in this context, moving close to the semantic field of *kyrios*. Thus the thrust of the hymn is to assert the unique sovereignty of the firstborn over all creation. Both the *NEB* and *NIV* bring out this meaning in their renderings.

## II. A SUGGESTED TRANSLATION

In attempting to arrive at a precise meaning and translation for *prōtotokos pasēs ktiseōs* we revert back to the opening thanksgiving (vv 12-14) in which the focus falls upon the "beloved son." The thought here is moving in the conceptual field of kingship and sovereignty as well as inheritance. We thus recall Gen 1:28-30 where God virtually installs mankind as king on the earth. This dominion over all the creatures of the earth is also stressed in 2:18 where Adam names the animals. In light of our understanding that Paul is in Col 1:15 presenting Jesus Christ as the second (and greater) Adam, we would not be far off the mark if we followed the lead of Kehl who suggests that we translate the expression "Lord over the creation" or "co-regent over the creation."<sup>31</sup> This brings out well the nuance of sovereignty that inheres in *prōtotokos* and demonstrates its closeness to the *kyrios* conceptual field. It does not, however, stress quite as I should like the idea of inheritance, which seems to be required by the immediate context and the phrase *eis auton* of 1:16.

For the exegetical key that provides the precise translation we turn to a parallel passage, which most likely is also a snatch of a Christ-hymn: Heb 1:1-3.<sup>32</sup> A comparative laying out of the key concepts in the respective passages is instructive:

Col 1:12-20

*tou huiou tēs agapēs autou*

*prōtotokos pasēs ktiseōs*

*ta panta di' autou kai eis auton ektistai*

*eikōn tou theou tou aoratou*

Heb 1:1-3

*en huiō*

*klēronomon pantōn* (1:6)

*di' hou kai epoiēsen tous aiōnas*

*hos ōn apaugasma tēs doxēs kai charaktēr tēs hypostaseōs autou*

<sup>30</sup>Lohse comments: "The point is not a temporal advantage but rather the superiority which is due to him as the agent of creation who is before all creation. As the firstborn he stands over against creation as Lord" (*Colossians* 49).

<sup>31</sup>Kehl, *Christushymnus* 86.

<sup>32</sup>See further L. R. Helyer, "The *Prototokos* Title in Hebrews," *Studia Biblica et Theologica* 6 (1976) 3-28.

*ta panta en autō synestēken*

*pherōn te ta panta tō rhēmati tēs  
dynamēōs autou*

*eite thronoi eite kyriotētes eite archai  
eite exousiai*

*kreittōn genomenos tōn angelōn  
(1:4)*

Even a cursory inspection shows a striking correspondence of concepts and themes. We feel justified in assuming that a common tradition underlies both Christ-hymns. On the basis of the above comparison we suggest that *klēronomon pantōn* of Heb 1:2 is an equivalent expression to *prōtotokos pasēs ktiseōs* and that a good translation would be “heir of all things.” We should note that this does not contradict our earlier insistence that *pasēs ktiseōs* is an objective genitive since implied in the concept of “heir” is sovereignty over that which is his inheritance. Thus one could just as easily translate “heir over all things.”<sup>33</sup> We note also that both passages are unequivocal in asserting that Christ was appointed heir before creation. In Heb 1:2-3 the fact that the Son is “heir of all things” gives rise to the accompanying claim that he was also (note the extension of thought implied in the *kai*) involved in the creation of all that exists (*tous aiōnas*), and since he is “the effulgence of the glory of God and the very stamp of his nature” it follows that he is involved in sustaining the universe “by the word of his power.”<sup>34</sup>

### III. CONCLUSION

We thus conclude that in Col 1:15 the phrase *prōtotokos pasēs ktiseōs* is predicated of the preexistent Christ. Its thrust is to ascribe to him a primacy of status over against all of creation. This status is summarized by saying that he is God’s heir *par excellence*. The heirship is predicated upon his role in creation, preservation and teleology. Behind the predication lies Paul’s theological conception of Christ as the second Adam. While sovereignty is the keynote of the expression and is placed in juxtaposition with creation, one must recall the OT and intertestamental usages that demonstrate overtones of special privilege and affection when the term was used as a title. That this latter nuance is completely lacking in Col 1:15 does not follow at all. Indeed, an OT illustration suffices to guard against such a conclusion. In Gen 22:2 Isaac is styled the “beloved son,” and the ensuing narrative also informs us that it was to him that Abraham gave all that he had since Isaac was his heir (24:36; cf. 25:5). Our point is simply this: It is artificial to say that *eikōn* refers only to Christ’s relationship to the Father and *prōtotokos* only to creation. Since both terms depict Jesus as the second Adam, he is thereby brought into

<sup>33</sup>Bruce observes that “what the title does mean is that Christ, existing as He did before all creation, exercises the privilege of primogeniture as Lord of all creation, the divinely appointed ‘heir of all things’ (Heb 1:2)” (*Ephesians and Colossians* 194).

<sup>34</sup>Longenecker, “Motifs” 541.



relationship with both God the Father and creation.<sup>35</sup> What does not seem to be present in Paul's use of *prōtotokos* is any notion of an "eternal generation" from the Father. This is reading back into the text the dogmatic reflections of later theologians—reflections that are legitimate but not intended by the apostle Paul's diction.<sup>36</sup>

The predication of Christ as firstborn in the NT offers a challenge to Christologies ancient and modern. One cannot help being impressed by the scope of this title. At his incarnation (Luke 2:7) Jesus is designated as Mary's firstborn, an appellative connoting his consecration to God and possibly his rightful claim to the Davidic throne. By his glorious resurrection, in which he was victorious over sin and death, he has become the "firstborn from among the dead" (Col 1:18) and now exercises sovereign sway over his redeemed people as the "firstborn from the dead" (Rev 1:5). As the head of a new, redeemed humanity destined in the eschatological transfiguration to bear the impress of his image, he is the "firstborn among many brothers" (Rom 8:29). But the conception moves not only forward toward consummation but also, in the thought of Paul, backward into the realm of protology (Col 1:17). In Paul's view all creation finds its reference point with respect to the "firstborn over all creation," "the heir of all things" (Col 1:15; Heb 1:2, 6). Indeed, in the eschaton Christ is the integration point for all things (Eph 1:10).<sup>37</sup> A Christology that falls short of this all-encompassing affirmation does not do justice to the Scriptural data.

<sup>35</sup>Cf. Kehl, *Christushymnus* 84.

<sup>36</sup>E.g. Buckley, a Catholic writer, who holds that Paul is here expounding Christ's divinity in terms of an eternal generation ("Phrase" 63, 109). At the other extreme we register J. O. Buswell's contention that "the doctrine of 'the eternal generation' is without scriptural support" (*A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1963], 2. 18). At any rate, as Michaelis has argued and our investigation of the OT and intertestamental literature has confirmed, the *-tokos* element does not receive emphasis in the metaphorical usage of *prōtotokos* ("Die biblische Vorstellung von Christus als dem Erstgeborenen," *ZST* 23 [1954] 146–157).

<sup>37</sup>Cf. K. H. Bartel's fine summary of the *prōtotokos* title in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (ed. C. Brown; Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 1. 669.