

THE SUPREMACY OF GOD'S SON: Colossians 1.15-20

In the Greek:

In a Literal Translation:

1.15-1.20	<p><u>ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν</u> <u>τοῦ θεοῦ</u> <u>τοῦ ἀοράτου,</u> <u>πρωτότοκος</u> <u>πάσης</u> <u>κτίσεως,</u> <u>ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα</u> <u>ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς</u> <u>καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς,</u> <u>τὰ ὀρατὰ καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα,</u> <u>εἴτε θρόνοι εἴτε κυριότητες</u> <u>εἴτε ἀρχαὶ εἴτε ἐξουσίαι·</u> <u>τὰ πάντα</u> <u>δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν</u> <u>ἔκτισται,</u></p> <p><u>καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν πρὸ πάντων</u> <u>καὶ τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν.</u></p> <p><u>καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ σώματος</u> <u>τῆς ἐκκλησίας·</u></p> <p><u>ὅς ἐστιν</u> <u>ἀρχή,</u> <u>πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν,</u> <u>ἵνα γένηται ἐν πᾶσιν</u> <u>αὐτὸς πρωτεύων,</u> <u>ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ</u> <u>εὐδόκησεν</u> <u>πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα κατοικῆσαι</u> <u>καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ</u> <u>ἀποκαταλλάξαι τὰ πάντα</u> <u>εἰς αὐτόν,</u> <u>εἰρηνοποιήσας</u> <u>διὰ τοῦ αἵματος</u> <u>τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ,</u> <u>εἴτε τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς</u> <u>εἴτε τὰ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.</u></p>	A	<p><u>He(Who) is</u> an image of God the invisible <u>firstborn</u> of all creation <u>because in him</u> were created all things <u>in the heavens</u> <u>and on the earth</u> the visible and the invisible <u>whether thrones or lordships</u> <u>or rulers or authorities</u> <u>all things</u> <u>through him</u> and <u>to him</u> were created.</p> <hr/> <p><u>And he is</u> before all things and all things in him consisted.</p> <hr/> <p><u>And he is</u> the head of the body the church.</p> <hr/> <p><u>He(Who) is</u> a beginning <u>firstborn</u> from the dead that he may be in all things he 'first'/pre-eminent <u>because in him</u> was well pleased all the fullness to dwell and <u>through him</u> to reconcile <u>all things</u> <u>to him</u> making peace through the blood of the cross of him <u>whether the things on the earth</u> <u>or the things in the heavens.</u></p>
		B	
		B'	
		A'	

'Most would agree that the original hymn was constructed in two strophes, 1.15-18a, 18b-20,' James DG Dunn (*Christology in the Making*, SCM Press, 1980, p.188).

But given the above, this passage has the appearance of a chiasm: **ABB'A'**, 1.15-16/17/18a/18b-20. It has been created with repeating uses of opening phrases and other key words. The common writing style **abb'** is also evident in the parts, adding to the symmetry. Knowing the form (or structure) of the revelation lends clarity to our reading of it.

This passage completes 1.3-20, the opening teaching of the letter. The parts 1.3-8, 9-14 and 15-20 are in an **ABB'** relationship. Vv.15-20 clearly connect the work of God's 'Son' in creation with His work in the redemption of creation, 'the beginning' with 'a new beginning'. The central, two (parallel) summary statements (**B** and **B'**) point to this; they hold the whole presentation together.