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Spatial Word Pairs in John 8:23 and the Question of Docetism

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In one of his Shafer Lectures in 1966, E. Käsemann concluded that John's Christology of glory is "naïvely docetic."[1] For him, the gospel's emphasis on the "other-worldly" nature of Jesus makes understanding the latter's incarnation difficult.[2] He thus could not but ask:

> In what sense is he [Jesus] flesh, who walks on the water and through closed doors.… He cannot be deceived by [human persons], because he knows their innermost thoughts even before they speak. He debates with them *from the vantage point of the infinite difference between heaven and earth*.…[3]

[1]"One can hardly fail to recognize the danger of his christology of glory, namely, the danger of docetism. It is present in a still naïve, unreflected form and it has not yet been recognized by the Evangelist or his community" (E. Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus: A Study of the Gospel of John in the Light of Chapter 17*, trans. G. Krodel [London: S.C.M. Press, 1968], 26). According to Käsemann, John "use[s] the earthly life of Jesus merely as a backdrop for the Son of God proceeding through the world of man [*sic*] and as the scene of the inbreaking of the heavenly glory" (Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus*, 13). The work was originally written in German as *Jesu letzter Wille nach Johannes 17* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1966).

[2]Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus*, 9.

[3]Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus*, 9 [emphasis added]. Käsemann concludes that John, in his search for an answer to the question "Who is Jesus?", "was

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Käsemann's provocative conclusions have drawn criticism from various corners in the midst of some acknowledgment for his theological insights.[4] S. Smalley, for one, has rightly perceived some claims about Jesus in the Gospel to be liable to a docetic interpretation but only if they are taken in and of themselves.[5] He points out, contrary to Käsemann, that when these are interpreted in context, "the total effect can scarcely be regarded as one of 'divinity without humanity'."[6] It is not our intention in this article, however, to engage in a critical

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able to give an answer only in the form of a naïve docetism" (Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus,* 26).

[4]See the extensive critique, for instance, of M. Thompson in *The Humanity of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* ([Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1988], 1–6). Thompson puts into question Käsemann's presuppositions, exegetical conclusions, and method of focusing his analysis on chapter 17 (Thompson, *The Humanity of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel*, 6). See also L. Johnson (*The Writings of the New Testament* [London: SCM, 1986], 475) who calls John's portrayal of Jesus to be "in many ways the most human." He argues that the "other-worldly" depiction of Jesus is a result of the Gospel's theological and literary expression (Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament*, 475). R. Brown (*The Community of the Beloved Disciple: The Life, Loves, and Hates of an Individual Church in New Testament Times* [Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1979], 116), meanwhile, considers Käsemann's "naively docetic" description of the Gospel to be anachronistic.

[5]S. Smalley, *John: Evangelist & Interpreter* 2nd ed. (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998), 60.

[6]Smalley, *John: Evangelist & Interpreter*, 60–61. U. Schnelle (*Antidocetic Christology in the Gospel of John: An Investigation of the Place of the Fourth Gospel in the Johannine School*, trans. L. Maloney [Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1992], 228) argues that John's unique portrait of Christ demonstrates the Gospel's antidocetic tendency, "a reaction to docetic christology" that is present in 1 John. He is asserting, with this position, that 1 John was written prior to the rest of the gospel. P. Anderson ("From One Dialogue to Another: Johannine Polyvalence from Origins to Receptions," in T. Thatcher & S. Moore, eds., *Anatomies of Narrative Criticism: The Past, Present, and Futures of the Fourth Gospel as Literature*, SBLRBS 55 [Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008], 102) suggests that John presents Jesus to be both stoic and pathetic, and that "to ignore either side of these polarities is to distort the character of the dynamic tension intrinsic to John's distinctive flesh-and-glory Christology."

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discussion with Käsemann on the issue of John's seemingly naïve docetism; rather, our focus is to investigate if John's use of binary cosmological language (i.e., ἄνω - κάτω and οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου - ἐκ τούτου τοῦ κόσμου) has the potential to contribute to a docetic interpretation of the Gospel. We shall do this by exploring the binary cosmological language in John 8:23 according to the following steps: first, through a comparison with OT (LXX) cosmological language; second, through a narrative-critical analysis of its larger and immediate contexts; and third, through rhetorical criticism using the insights of spatial point-of-view analysis. Before that, however, we shall first give an overview of docetism and then briefly survey some scholarly contentions for an inherent docetism in John.[7]

1. A Quick Look at the Heresy Called Docetism

Docetism[8] is broadly defined as "the assertion that Christ's human body was a phantasm, and that his sufferings and death were mere appearance."[9] Two separate but interrelated questions regarding two aspects of Jesus Christ's humanity are thus posed: "Was he really

[7]Our focus, amid a seeming consensus of anti-docetic elements in 1 John, will be on the Gospel of John and not on the Johannine literature as a whole. For convenience, we are using "John" to refer to both the Fourth Gospel and the evangelist who wrote it.

[8]Discussions of docetism are sometimes co-related with gnosticism. According to N. Brox ("'Doketismus'—Eine Problemanzeige," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 95:3 [1984]: 313), however, the two phenomena are separate and not to be compared: "Andere gnostische Christologien sind einfach de facto auf einem anderen Weg als dem Doketismus. Gnostische Christologie und Doketismus sind jedenfalls nicht in jedem Fall gleichzusetzen." See also the discussion of D. Streett in *They Went Out from Us: The Identity of the Opponents in First John* (Göttingen: Walter de Gruyter, 2011), 25–50.

[9]Cf. "Docetism," in H. Bettenson & C. Maunder, eds., *Documents of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 37. G. Stroumsa ("Christ's Laughter: Docetic Origins Reconsidered," *JECS* 12:3 [Fall 2004]: 267–268), however, claims that docetism has not been given a convincing definition so far.

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incarnated?" and "If he was, did he really suffer and die on the cross?"[10] Affirmative answers to these questions assert Jesus's human nature, yet reconciling Jesus's humanity with divinity was problematic for some early Christians, hence their attempts to separate the earthly Jesus from the Son of God who comes from above. This in turn gave birth to a conglomeration of belief systems which have been broadly described as docetic.[11]

G. Strecker clusters the various docetic belief systems into three categories: first is the view attributed to Basilides, which held that it was another person (e.g., Simon of Cyrene) who was crucified and not Jesus Christ; second is the belief system found in the work of Cerinthus, which affirmed that the Christ departed from Jesus before the passion so that it was only the human Jesus who suffered and died;[12] and third, lastly, is the belief system propagated by Marcion, Saturninus, and Cerdo, among others, that expounded the pneumatic nature of Christ which makes him impassible,[13] and hence Jesus Christ is said to have only "appeared to suffer."[14] We can therefore deduce

[10]Cf. Stroumsa, "Christ's Laughter," 268. See also W. Löhr ("Docetism," in H. Betz et al., eds., *Religion Past & Present*, Encyclopedia of Theology and Religion [Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2008], 122–123) who counts dualism (i.e., the devaluing of creation or the material) as one of the major motifs of docetism.

[11]G. Strecker, in H. Attridge, ed., *The Johannine Letters: A Commentary on 1, 2, and 3 John*, Hermeneia, trans. L. Maloney (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1996), 71. The original German version of this book is *Die Johannesbriefe*, Kritish-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament 14 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989).

[12]Strecker adds, in this category, a kind of adoptionist Christology where the Spirit is said to have entered upon Jesus during his baptism while Jesus's two natures remained separate (Strecker, *The Johannine Letters*, 71).

[13]This category is also called Monophysite docetism (cf. Streett, *They Went Out from Us*, 38–39).

[14]Strecker, *The Johannine Letters*, 72–75.

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from these categories that docetism encompasses varied belief systems that are reflective of initial attempts at Christology.[15]

Having briefly described docetism, we shall quickly go through some scholars who interpret Johannine Christology along the lines of such.

2. Inherent Docetism in John? Some Assertions

It should be noted that Käsemann was not the first to perceive an apparent problem in John's unique portrayal of Jesus. He acknowledged that his ideas ran along the same line as those of F. C. Baur,[16] G. P. Wetter,[17] and E. Hirsch,[18] who perceived some

[15]Stroumsa ("Christ's Laughter," 69) opines that docetism is neither a clearly definable sect nor a doctrine but a "theological option that shows up in a wide variety of early Christian texts." According to A. McGrath (*Heresy: A History of Defending the Truth* [New York: HarperOne, 2009], 103), many of those whom the Church Fathers considered to be heretics were individuals who actually "undertook their theological quests out of a genuine concern to ensure that the Christian faith was represented and articulated in the most authentic and robust forms"; what made them "heretics" was their persistence in their theological propositions (and refusal to concede) even when these were found to be inadequate.

[16]For F. Baur (*Vorlesungen über neutestamentliche Theologie*, Bibliothek theologischer Klassiker 46 [Gotha: Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1892], 175–176), John's use of σὰρξ ἐγένετο instead of ἄνθρωπος ἐγένετο in 1:14 signifies that the λόγος assumed only the body of a human person along with its natural weaknesses and finiteness. It was not the full reality of being human which is signified by ἄνθρωπος ἐγένετο (Baur, *Vorlesungen über neutestamentliche Theologie*, 175–176).

[17]G. Wetter (*Der Sohn Gottes: Eine Untersuchung über den Charakter und die Tendenz des Johannes-Evangeliums*, Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments 26 [Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1916], 154–155) sees John's portrayal of Jesus to be a reflection of the gospel's purpose, i.e., to prove that Jesus is indeed the Son of God, the Redeemer; hence, he could not but present Jesus as a being with supernatural powers and one who has no human weaknesses.

[18]E. Hirsch (*Das Vierte Evangelium: In seiner ursprünglichen Gestalt verdeutscht und erklärt* [Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr/Paul Siebeck, 1936], 80–81) also believes that the gospel's mythic treatment of Jesus as someone who can walk on the sea and

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elements in John to be docetic or as having a tinge of docetism. K. B. Larsen, on the other hand, located the problem in John's narrative style. Analyzing the portrayal of the Johannine Jesus using Greimas's "semio-narrative approach," he maintains that the cognitive overshadows the pragmatic aspect in narratology by situating Jesus's Christological moment ἐν ἀρχῇ (Jn. 1:1).[19] Jesus thus becomes "the omniscient subject of cognition," i.e., the omniscient protagonist with a *messianisches Selbstbewusstsein.*[20] Noting the many verbs of cognition that are used therein, Larsen posits that the Gospel's main focus is the cognitive dimension (which is also clearly enunciated in the Gospel's purpose in Jn. 20:31), not the pragmatic one, and that the evangelist only used the latter to be at the service of the former.[21]

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engage in curious conversations with the Samaritan woman and with Nicodemus, among others, has influenced the gospel's overall portrait of him. For W. Wrede (*Charakter und Tendenz des Johannesevangeliums*, Sammlung gemeinverständlicher Vorträge und Schriften aus dem Gebiet der Theologie und Religionsgeschichte 37 [Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr/Paul Siebeck, 1933], 38), the overall portrayal of Jesus in John does not create a convincing picture of a human being even though John portrays him with some human traits: "Man kann ihrer schliesslich sogar eine ganze Anzahl zusammenaddieren, wenn man sich bemüht.… Aber man fühlt nur zu deutlich, dass das alles dennoch das Bild eines Menschen nicht schafft" (Wrede, *Charakter und Tendenz des Johannesevangeliums*, 38). Nevertheless, Wrede affirms the historical person of Jesus whom the evangelist portrays as a divine being on earth yet whose humanity is merely transparent in order for the divine light to shine through in this world (Wrede, *Charakter und Tendenz des Johannesevangeliums*, 39). M. Thompson provides in her dissertation (*The Humanity of Jesus in the Gospel of John* [Durham, NC: Duke University, 1985], 17–23) a concise summary of the above authors' ideas and their view of Johannine Christology which intersects with Käsemann's proposition on John's seemingly naive docetism.

[19]K. Larsen, "Narrative Docetism: Christology and Storytelling in the Gospel of John," in R. Bauckham & C. Mosser, eds., *The Gospel of John and Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2008), 350.

[20]Larsen, "Narrative Docetism," 351.

[21]Larsen, "Narrative Docetism," 349, 353.

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Thus, instead of Käsemann's "naïve" docetism, Larsen suggests that what is present in John is a "narrative" docetism.[22]

Larsen's proposition is an interesting one indeed, yet it does not answer the question of whether or not John's Christology is docetic. Nevertheless, his proposal, if correct, spurs us on to ask: "Why would the evangelist choose a 'docetic narrative style'? Was docetism in the consciousness of the evangelist at all?" We shall return to this question in our exploration of 8:23.[23]

3. Analysis of John 8:23 and Its Binary Cosmological Language

Having briefly laid out the various scholarly positions on the problem of an alleged docetism in John, we shall now explore if the evangelist's presentation of Jesus as being "not of this world" and as coming from "above" does exhibit a docetic *Tendenz*. Is the Johannine Jesus a divine being from above who appeared on earth below disguised and hiding in lowliness, as Käsemann puts it?[24]

As cited in the introduction, one reason Käsemann uses to support his "naïve docetism" claim is that John depicts Jesus as someone who parries with his interlocutors "from the vantage point of the infinite difference between heaven and earth."[25] A concrete example of this is Jesus's discussion with the Ἰουδαῖοι in 8:23:

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[22]Larsen, "Narrative Docetism," 354. Larsen is quick to point out that one should not understand his use of the phrase "narrative docetism" to be "a religio-historical placing of the Gospel of John, nor … a theological assessment of its relation to later orthodox Christology" (Larsen, "Narrative Docetism," 354).

[23]All unmarked Bible verses are from the Gospel of John.

[24]"[Do] not those features of his lowliness rather represent the absolute minimum of the costume designed for the one who dwelt for a little while among men, appearing to be one of them, yet without himself being subjected to earthly conditions" (Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus*, 12)?

[25]Cf. footnote 3 above.

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καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς·
A ὑμεῖς ἐκ τῶν κάτω ἐστέ,
B ἐγὼ ἐκ τῶν ἄνω εἰμί·
A1 ὑμεῖς ἐκ τούτου τοῦ κόσμου ἐστέ,
B1 ἐγὼ οὐκ εἰμὶ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου. (Jn 8:23 BNT)[26]

In this verse, we have four clauses in an A-B-A1-B1 pattern with four spatial descriptions: ἐκ τῶν κάτω (A), ἐκ τῶν ἄνω (B), ἐκ τούτου τοῦ κόσμου (A1), and οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου (B1). We immediately notice the strict correspondence in the structure of the verse (i.e., pronoun subject - adverbial phrase - verb)[27] where we see a synthetic[28] antithetical parallelism, what G. Van Belle might regard as repetition, variation, and amplification[29] and which could signal an

[26]The Greek text is based on K. Aland et. al., eds., *Novum Testamentum Graece* (BNT) 28th ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2001). Unless otherwise indicated, all Biblical references in English are taken from the *New Revised Standard Version* (New York: Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America, 1989).

[27]Except for B1 where εἰμὶ comes between οὐκ and ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου.

[28]Our classification of "synthetic" parallelism (in contrast to synonymous) is based on the distinctions identified by R. Kaplan ("Cultural Thought Patterns in Inter-Cultural Education," in T. Silva & P. Matsuda, eds., *Landmark Essays on ESL Writing* [New York/Abingdon, OX: Routledge, 2011], 15) who defines synonymous parallelism as "the balancing of the thought and phrasing of the first part of a statement or idea by the second part" and synthetic parallelism as "the completion of the idea or thought of the first part in the second part." We thus do not consider οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου and ἐκ τούτου τοῦ κόσμου to be mere synonymous repetitions of ἄνω and κάτω, respectively. The spatial categories ἄνω and κάτω refer to bipartite cosmological categories similar to those found in the LXX that express ontological realities without necessarily containing any value judgement. By complementing these with οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου and ἐκ τούτου τοῦ κόσμου, John seems to direct the reader's attention to the κόσμος and to his description of it, and, in the process, differentiates Jesus from the characteristics that are inherent in "this κόσμος."

[29]In his detailed analysis of Johannine literary style characteristics, G. Van Belle ("Theory of Repetitions and Variations in the Fourth Gospel: A Neglected Field of Research?," in G. Van Belle, M. Labahn, & P. Maritz, eds., *Repetitions and Variations in the Fourth Gospel: Style, Text, Interpretation*, BETL 223 [Leuven/Paris/

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intentional attempt to draw the reader's attention to the content of the parallel.[30] A has an antithetic parallel in B as does A1 with B1 while the spatial categories in AB are synthetically paralleled in A1B1;[31] indeed, the repetition of the antithetic parallel AB in A1B1 could not be more emphatic. It thus behooves us to ask, "What does John want to put across to his readers or hearers in this verse?"[32] We shall proceed, therefore, with an analysis of 8:23 below.

Walpole, MA: Peeters, 2009], 21) has rightly perceived the fourth evangelist to be "an expert in repetition and variation." Citing the works of P. Chang (*Repetitions and Variations in the Gospel of John* [Strasbourg: 1975]), T. Popp (*Grammatik des Geistes: Literarische Kunst und theologische Konzeption in Johannes 3 und 6*, ABG 3 [Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2001]), and C. Black ("'The Words That You Gave to Me I Have Given to Them': The Grandeur of Johannine Rhetoric," in R. Culpepper & C. Black, eds., *Exploring the Gospel of John: In Honor of D. Moody Smith* [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996], 220–239), Van Belle agrees that Johannine repetition is not limited simply to verbatim repetition but also includes "variation" along with its consequent effect of "amplification" ("Theory of Repetitions and Variations," 23–27).

[30]Cf. Van Belle ("Theory of Repetitions and Variations," 30) who identified the following seven functions of repetition in John:

> 1) to highlight or draw attention; 2) to establish or fix in the mind of the implied reader;… 3) to emphasize the importance of something; 4) to create expectations, increasing predictability and assent (anticipation); 5) to cause review and reassessment (retrospection); 6) to unify disparate elements; [and] 7) to build patterns of association or contrasts.

[31]By synthetic parallelism we mean that ἐκ τούτου τοῦ κόσμου and οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου enhance or concretize the meanings of κάτω and ἄνω, respectively. This means that κάτω and ἄνω now take on the semantic nuances which John correlates with "from this κόσμος" and "not from this κόσμος" (cf. footnote 27).

[32]8:23 as we mentioned earlier is not a cosmological statement. Nonetheless, even though ἐκ τῶν ἄνω - ἐκ τῶν κάτω are used antithetically in 8:23, it is undeniable that John has a wholistic conceptualization of the world when he introduces in the Prologue that "all things came into being through him [the Logos]" (1:3).

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3a. ἄνω - κάτω / οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου - ἐκ τούτου τοῦ κόσμου and the Septuagint

We note at the outset that the verse is not a cosmological statement despite the use of κόσμος in 8:23. It is probable, however, that John's use of cosmological language reflects an implicit *Weltbild* that can be traced back to Judaism. Indeed, while there has been a long-standing debate on the origin of and influences on John, the gospel's undeniable Jewish and OT heritage has come to the attention of scholars with the discoveries at Qumran.[33] With this as our point of departure and following the contention of O. Böcher[34] and E. Ladd,[35] it is probable that John's binary cosmological language can be attributed to the gospel's Jewish origins.[36]

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[33]Cf. M. Menken, "Observations on the Significance of the Old Testament in the Fourth Gospel," in G. Van Belle, J. van der Watt, & P. Maritz, eds., *Theology and Christology in the Fourth Gospel*, BETL 184 (Leuven: Leuven University Press & Peeters, 2005), 155–175; C. Westermann, *The Gospel of John in the Light of the Old Testament*, trans. S. Schatzmann (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998); and M. Hengel, "The Old Testament in the Fourth Gospel," *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 12:1 (1990): 23–34. In the words of R. Schnackenburg (*The Gospel According to St. John* Vol. 1, trans. K. Smyth [New York: Crossroad, 1990], 124), "many thoughts and images of the O.T., mostly taken further in theological meditation and development, come together in John and are made to serve Johannine theology. This Gospel would be unthinkable without the O.T. basis which supports it." See also S. Smalley, *John: Evangelist and Interpreter* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1978), 112, and the survey of R. Brown in *The Gospel According to John (i-xii)* Vol. 1, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), LII–LXVI. We acknowledge that our position neither denies that the Judaism of that time was influenced by Hellenism nor that there could be influences on the Gospel other than Judaism.

[34]O. Böcher, *Der johanneische Dualismus im Zusammenhang des nachbiblischen Judentums* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1965), 26.

[35]G. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 261.

[36]Cf. C. Barrett (*The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, 2nd ed. [London: SPCK, 1978], 341) who attributes John's use of ἄνω and κάτω to Judaism rather than to Hellenism.

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Having presupposed such, is it possible then that what we perceive as Johannine dual cosmological language is actually John's appropriation of the OT *Weltbild* to serve some purpose (cf. 20:31)?

Before we answer this question, let us look at the essence of OT cosmology. J. Pennington, in his analysis of such, countered the claim of tripartite OT cosmology (heaven—earth and sea—Sheol/underworld) espoused by L. Stadelmann[37] and J. E. Wright,[38] among others, and seems to have argued convincingly that the absence of a clearly defined third category in the OT points not to a tripartite cosmology but to a bipartite one, although such is expressed in various ways using "embellishments."[39] Finding support from OT texts (e.g., Ps. 148) and the studies of D. Tsumura[40] and O. Keel,[41] he considered the

[37]L. Stadelmann, *The Hebrew Conception of the World: A Philological and Literary Study*, AnBib 39 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1970), 9–10, 177.

[38]J. Wright, *The Early History of Heaven* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 53–54.

[39]J. Pennington, "Dualism in Old Testament Cosmology: *Weltbild* and *Weltanschauung*," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 18:2 (2004): 266. Pennington cites Isa. 7:11 where Sheol is used as a substitute for earth, manifesting what he calls a semantic overlap (Pennington, "Dualism in Old Testament Cosmology," 266). Böcher (*Der johanneische Dualismus*, 23) also advocates for a bipartite OT cosmology:

> Wenn man also von drei Teilen der alttestamentlichen Welt sprechen wollte, so sind dies—von oben nach unten—nicht Himmel, Erde und Unterwelt, sondern allenfalls Himmel, Erde und Ozean (Ex 20,11). Der Ozean freilich, auf dem die Erde gleichsam schwimmend gedacht ist, erhält nirgends selbständige theologische Relevanz. Im wesentlichen ist das Weltbild des at schon in vorexilischer Zeit zweiteilig.

[40]Cf. D. Tsumura, "A 'Hyponymous' Word Pair: 'Rṣ and Thm(t) in Hebrew and Ugaritic," *Biblica* 69:2 (1988): 258–269. See also D. Tsumura, *The Earth and the Waters in Genesis 1 and 2: A Linguistic Investigation*, JSOTSup 83 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 72–77.

[41]Cf. O. Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms*, trans. T. Hallett (New York: Seabury, 1978).

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underworld (Sheol) to be in a hyponymic relationship with the earth (similar to the seas and the depths of the ocean) such that the OT biblical view of the world (*Weltbild*) can be described as basically dualistic in two interrelated senses: 1) heaven is the dwelling place of God while the earth and the netherworld are for human beings, and 2) heaven and earth, although separate, are God's creation.[42] Pennington also opined, with the support of various texts, that this dualistic cosmological language does not have just one function, i.e., it could express either an antithesis[43] in some instances or a merismus[44] in others.[45]

The LXX, unlike John, does not use the binary pair ἐκ τούτου τοῦ κόσμου and οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου. The use of ἄνω in reference to heaven and κάτω in reference to the earth, however, is attested to in many texts (e.g., Ex. 20:4; Deut. 4:39; 5:8; 1 Kgs. 8:23; Isa. 8:21–22).[46] Noteworthy, too, is the LXX's concomitant

[42]Pennington ("Dualism in Old Testament Cosmology," 266).

[43]Cf. Ps. 102:19; 115:16; Eccl. 5:2.

[44]Cf. Gen. 1:1; 14:22; Lev. 26:19. Other authors who uphold that a bipartite OT cosmology reflects a merismus which expresses the totality of creation include M. Deroche ("Isaiah XLV 7 and the Creation of Chaos?", *VT* 42:1 [1992]: 19–21) and G. Wenham (*Genesis 1–15*, WBC [Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987], 15).

[45]Pennington, "Dualism in Old Testament Cosmology," 271–272. Pennington finds support for his views on the phenomena of merismus and antithesis in OT cosmology from the two works of J. Krašovec: *Der Merismus im Biblisch-Hebräischen und Nordwestsemitischen*, BibOr 33 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1977) and *Antithetic Structure in Biblical Hebrew Poetry*, VTSup 35 (Leiden: Brill, 1984). He observes that the OT use of the heaven-earth dualistic word pair conveys both a *Weltbild* and a *Weltanschauung* which are inherently related. He explains that

> when heaven is used with its "direct meaning" of the astral and atmospheric world, "heaven and earth" refers to the *Weltbild*, the physical cosmology of the world. Conversely, when heaven is used in its "symbolic" sense of the place of God's dwelling, "heaven and earth" refers to the *Weltanschauung*, or what we may term its "ontological cosmology." (Pennington, "Dualism in Old Testament Cosmology," 274–275)

[46]All OT texts cited are from the LXX. We are using *Vetus Testamentum Graecum: Auctoritate Academiae Scientiarum Gottingensis editum* (1931–) for the LXX texts and

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use of κάτω with ἄνω along with their respective parallels γῆ and οὐρανός and antithetical use of κάτω / γῆ with ἄνω / οὐρανός. This reflects the semantic relationship of ἄνω with οὐρανός and κάτω with γῆ. The use of κόσμος in reference to elements that are in the οὐρανός (cf. e.g., Deut. 4:19; 17:3; Sir. 43:9; Isa. 13:10; 24:21) is worth mentioning as well. The LXX makes it clear, moreover, that οὐρανός is the dwelling place of God (1 Kgs. 8:30; 2 Chr. 6:21; 2 Macc. 3:39) and that γῆ is for humans (Ps. 115:16) while also emphasizing that the Lord is ὁ θεός of both heaven and earth (Deut. 4:39; 10:14; Jos. 2:11; Ps. 89:11; 113:11; cf. Ps. 139:8). In this last usage, κάτω and ἄνω are used to express a bipartite cosmology and to signify in a merismatic sense God's lordship of all creation, inclusive of the space above and the space below and all that they contain.[47] We thus see the use of binary language in the above texts as expressing an OT bipartite *Weltbild* while pointing at the same time to a *Weltanschauung* of God's lordship over all.

Going back to John 8:23, we recall its use of the spatial categories ἄνω / οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου and κάτω / ἐκ τούτου τοῦ κόσμου which shows the following similarities when compared to that of the LXX: first, ἄνω and κάτω are juxtaposed to each other with regard to the surface structure; second, ἄνω refers to the dwelling place of the divine while κάτω to that of humans; and third, both are used as antithetical geographical markers, i.e., showing the separation of one from the other. Yet there are also noticeable differences nonetheless. First, the use of ἄνω and κάτω in 8:23 has, in contrast to the LXX, no explicit reference to God's creation. Second and in line with the first, John uses ἄνω and κάτω not in a merismatic sense to refer to the whole of creation[48] but in an antithetical geographical sense that

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A. Pietersma & B. Wright, eds., *A New English Translation of the Septuagint* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) for the English translation unless indicated otherwise.

[47]Cf. Wright, *The Early History of Heaven*, 53.

[48]Although John's use of κάτω and ἄνω in 8:23 does not reflect a merismus, he nonetheless continues the OT idea of God's lordship of all creation when

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highlights the difference in location of two beings—Jesus and the Ἰουδαῖοι. Third, whereas the LXX generally considers ἄνω to be the dwelling place of God and κάτω as that of humans, 8:23 specifically locates Jesus's origin in the ἄνω (hence implying his divinity) and that of the Ἰουδαῖοι in the κάτω. The antithetical positioning of ἄνω with κάτω and Jesus's explicit statement that he comes from ἄνω while the Ἰουδαῖοι belong to the κάτω thus reflect a seemingly antithetical relationship between Jesus and the Ἰουδαῖοι. Fourth and last, John uses οὐρανός to refer to the dwelling place (or place of origin) of the Spirit (1:32), angelic beings (1:52), Jesus, the living bread (6:51), and of God (12:28) yet he curiously does not use it in a parallel construction in opposition to κόσμος; rather, he uses οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου as the antithesis of ἐκ τούτου τοῦ κόσμου.

It may be safe, then, given these observations, to conclude that John follows the OT (LXX)[49] in using the binary pair ἄνω and κάτω while at the same time incorporating his own innovations. John varies and amplifies the LXX's cosmological use of the pair by using the parallel οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου and ἐκ τούτου τοῦ κόσμου so that ἄνω and κάτω take on additional nuances other than being purely cosmological markers. The explicit addition of the pronouns ἐγώ and ὑμεῖς to ἄνω and κάτω, respectively, signals that these spatial markers are now to be interpreted vis-à-vis these personas and what they stand for.[50] In a language where the predicate often comes first,[51] the foregrounding of the subjects ὑμεῖς and ἐγώ followed by their respective spatial references shows that the emphasis of the verse is on the identity of the two juxtaposed subjects along with their places of origin. Jesus, who persistently claims to be one

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he announces in the Prologue that all things came into being through the λόγος and that without him not one thing came into being (1:3).

[49]Cf. footnote 35 above.

[50]This will be discussed further in the next section.

[51]Cf. A. Robertson (*A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, 3rd ed. [London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1919], 417) who reasons that the "predicate first" structure occurs because the emphasis of the sentence usually lies in the predicate.

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with the Father (8:38, 42), to be the Son who was sent by Him (6:38; 10:36), claims the same abode as that of God in 8:23. It only follows that they would have the same geographical origin—the place above, not the κόσμος below—given that Jesus claims oneness of identity with the Father.[52] The emphasis on coming from the ἄνω, therefore, strengthens the authentication of Jesus's identity as the Son of the Father. For just as the OT God is believed to be present both in the heavens and on the earth (cf. Ps. 139:7–8),[53] this claim does not negate Jesus's physical presence in the world below. Moreover, it is probable that John's use of binary cosmological language (κάτω / ἐκ τούτου τοῦ κόσμου and ἄνω / οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου in Jn. 8:23) and Jesus's call to belief in 8:24 are, when read in the light of 3:16 and 20:31, a part of John's literary style to reflect the gospel's *Weltanschauung*, a worldview that continues the OT theme of a faithful God who loves and saves his people below (cf. e.g., Ps. 56:11; 144:18–20; Isa. 41:17; Jer. 29:11–13). Jesus, in other words, the One sent by the Father about whom 1:14 says ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο, continues the work of the Father in the world below (4:34; 9:4; 17:4) amid his being οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου.

Having looked thus into the possible background of the cosmological language in 8:23, we shall now consider the text in its larger and immediate contexts.

3b. John 8:23 in Its Larger and Immediate Contexts

John 8:23 is situated within the immediate context of Jesus's conversation with the Ἰουδαῖοι (8:21–30), a pericope that is preceded by Jesus's tussle with the Φαρισαῖοι (8:12–20) regarding the validity of his claim to be the light of the world and which ends with an ominous reference to Jesus's arrest when his hour comes. It is followed by a dispute with the Ἰουδαῖοι (8:31–59) concerning issues of descent and

[52]That one's identity is connected to one's father and the latter's geographical origin is clearly demonstrated in 1:45 where Jesus is described as the son of Joseph who comes from Nazareth.

[53]This a merismatic use of heaven and Hades which signifies God's presence in all places.

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which results in name-calling (cf. 8:44, 48) and, finally, their intent to throw stones at Jesus (8:59). The larger context (8:12–59), in a nutshell, contains three accounts of Jesus's encounter with groups of people—identified as the Φαρισαῖοι (8:12–20), Ἰουδαῖοι (8:21–30), and Ἰουδαῖοι—who had (initially) believed in him (8:31–59) and whose discussions center on the question of Jesus's identity.[54]

The unity, continuity, and progression of the narrative can be seen in the various themes that run throughout these three encounters. First, the theme of Jesus's origin is present in vv. 14, 21–23, and 42—he claims knowledge of his whence and whither in v. 14, describes his origin and destination in terms of spatial categories in vv. 21–23, and finally names his origin as from God in v. 42. Second, Jesus's oneness with the Father is expressed in vv. 19, 29, 42, and 55. Third, Jesus consistently claims to have been sent by the Father (vv. 16, 18, 26, and 42). Fourth, all three interlocutors are faced with the dilemma of neither knowing Jesus's identity (vv. 19, 25, and 53) nor understanding his words (vv. 19, 22, 27, and 43). Fifth, Jesus promises life (light) to those who believe in him (vv. 12, 24, and 51). Sixth and last, the theme of Jesus's invitation to faith in him is present in all three units (vv. 12, 24, and 46; cf. 30) with his proclamations as warrants. These six themes have Jesus's identity as an overarching concept—i.e., his proclamation of who he is as the light (v. 12), the one from above (v. 23) who is greater than Abraham (vv. 53 and 58), the Son of the Father whose identity will be fully revealed when he is lifted up (v. 28)—along with the consequences for those who accept or refuse such a proclamation.

How does 8:23 fit into this larger context? Jesus's dialogue partners in 8:21 are the Ἰουδαῖοι, and he announces his departure to where they cannot follow. It is curious, then, that instead of being worried by Jesus's weighty pronouncement that they will die in their sins, the Ἰουδαῖοι focus on Jesus's "going away" and wonder if he will kill

[54]We are subdividing 8:12–59 into the following sub-units: 1) 8:12–20; 2) 8:21–30; and 3) 8:31–59 based on narrative markers, e.g., Jesus's interactions with three different groups of interlocutors, the narrator's concluding statement after each interaction, and thematic coherence. Cf. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 1: 202.

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himself.[55] Jesus's restatement of ἐν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ ὑμῶν ἀποθανεῖσθε in 8:21 and twice in 8:24 (with the plural ἁμαρτίαι) regarding the impending predicament of the Ἰουδαῖοι should they remain in their unbelief, however, brings the focus of the conversation back to their plight. Instead of giving a response to the question μήτι ἀποκτενεῖ ἑαυτόν (8:22), Jesus gives a parallel statement about his place of origin (ἐκ τῶν ἄνω, οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου) and contrasts this with that of the Ἰουδαῖοι who are ἐκ τῶν κάτω, ἐκ τούτου τοῦ κόσμου (8:23). Jesus thus gives them the reason why they cannot go to where he will be going (cf. 8:22)—they come from two distinct places. He also seems to be telling them, moreover, to worry about themselves and not him. Indeed, why should they worry about him when he is from above, i.e., divine, and his death is but his glorification (8:28)? They ought instead to be concerned about themselves because they are from below, from this world, a place John characterizes as a place of sin (1:29) and death (cf. 4:47). Nevertheless, the Ἰουδαῖοι shall have a way out of their impending predicament should they believe in Jesus (8:24) even though they each come from distinct places.

The word pair ἄνω and κάτω and its parallel highlight the separation and distance of one space and its inhabitants from the other. John, however, was able to emphasize, through the separation and distance engendered by the cosmological language, that those from the κάτω need salvation from someone who comes from the ἄνω. The parallel spatial antithetic language in 8:23 functions to reinforce Jesus's proclamation of his identity while persuasively creating at the same time the paramount need to believe in him, for only in doing so will those from the κάτω be able to go to where Jesus is going (cf. 14:2) and not die in their sins (8:24; cf. 5:24; 8:51–52). We can thus say that the bipartite cosmological language in 8:23 is, along with having an explicit Christological affirmation (i.e., the whence and whither of Jesus), at the service of the Gospel's soteriological

[55]See 7:34–36 for a similar pronouncement which also resulted in a misunderstanding.

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proclamation.[56] Indeed, the gospel's explicit purpose statement in 20:31 clearly supports the emphasis on Jesus's salvific mission. John has to emphasize the other-worldly origin of Jesus for only the One who is from the Father can save those who are from below.[57] To raise the issue of docetism vis-à-vis John's binary cosmological language in this context, then, would fail to ask the appropriate question.

Having thus examined its larger and immediate contexts, we will now identify other literary markers that will further aid our understanding of 8:23.

3c. Spatial Plane Point-of-View Analysis of John 8:23

G. Yamasaki maintains that the narrator of a biblical narrative uses some subtle strategies to put her evaluative stance across to the audience[58] and, in the process, influence the reader to sympathize with it.[59] M. Sternberg identifies fifteen such persuasion strategies, and from these Yamasaki considers point-of-view manipulation to be "perhaps a narrator's most powerful and most versatile tool for impacting an audience's evaluation of characters in a story."[60] Building

[56]F. Moloney ("The Johannine Son of Man," *BTB* 6:2–3 [1976]: 184) has rightly perceived 8:21–30 to be a last-ditch effort from Jesus to invite an unbelieving audience to believe in him.

[57]M. Hengel ("Christological Titles in Early Christianity," in *Studies in Early Christology* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995], 366–367) is right to claim that John's emphasis on the divinity of Jesus beginning from the Prologue (Jn. 1:1) until the end of the gospel (Jn. 20:28), together with Jesus's self-declaration in the middle (Jn. 10:30), reveals that the goal of the entire gospel is "personal faith and its confession" (cf. 20:31).

[58]We are using the word "audience" to encompass both reader and hearer.

[59]G. Yamasaki, *Perspective Criticism: Point of View and Evaluative Guidance in Biblical Narrative* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2012), 6.

[60]Yamasaki, *Perspective Criticism*, 7. The fourteen remaining strategies which M. Sternberg (*The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading*, Indiana Literary Biblical Series [Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985],

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on P. Lubbock's description,[61] Yamasaki compares the narrator who uses spatial plane point-of-view strategy to a tour guide who spatially positions the audience at certain vantage points in the story (e.g., in relation to a particular character) and, in so doing, creates either a bond or distance between the audience and the character.[62] The narrator uses techniques such as having the reader follow a character closely,[63] giving syntactic prominence to a character,[64] or providing significant details.[65]

In the previous section, we identified themes running through 8:12–59 that focus on the identity of Jesus. Of the ten verses comprising 8:21–30, ἐγώ in reference to Jesus as subject is used ten times and twice

475–481) identified are: 1) an agent or action described through a series of epithets; 2) use of a single epithet; 3) use of loaded language; 4) explicit judgment between narrator and characters being left ambiguous; 5) delegating judgment to the characters; 6) judgment through nonverbal (drastic) acts; 7) foregrounding plot elements for judgment; 8) repetition of information; 9) inside view of characters; 10) order of presentation; 11) displacement of the normal order of presentation; 12) analogical patterning; 13) recurrence of key words; and 14) neutral or pseudo-objective narration.

[61]P. Lubbock (*The Craft of Fiction* [London: Jonathan Cape, 1921], 251) defines point of view as "the relation in which the narrator stands to the story."

[62]Yamasaki, *Perspective Criticism*, 10, 18. The creation of this impact depends on whether the former is being led to merge with the latter or if the audience is being "held at arm's length" from the character so that he or she is but an observer in the goings on in the narrative (Yamasaki, *Perspective Criticism*, 10).

[63]Yamasaki, *Perspective Criticism*, 19. In this strategy, the very close positioning of the reader to the character enables the former to see or experience the situation in the same way the character does (Yamasaki, *Perspective Criticism*, 19). Yamasaki cites the four gospels' portrayal of Jesus as clearly utilizing this strategy (*Perspective Criticism*, 21).

[64]Adapting the insights of S. Kuno (*Functional Syntax: Anaphora, Discourse and Empathy* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987]) to biblical studies, Yamasaki opines that the reader develops empathy with the character who is the subject of the clause, i.e., the character that is usually in the first noun phrase (*Perspective Criticism*, 25–26).

[65]Yamasaki, *Perspective Criticism*, 28–30.

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in the expression ἐγώ εἰμι (8:26, 28).[66] There are only two verses where the Ἰουδαῖοι speak (the misunderstanding in 8:22 and the question in 8:25), leaving the rest for Jesus's self-proclamations (8:21, 23, 24, 26, 28, and 29).[67] The use of the title ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου (8:28) and the claim to have been sent by the Father (8:26, 29), meanwhile, provide more details on the identity of Jesus alongside his earlier claim to have come from above and not from this world.

Given all these narrative markers, the narrator is clearly making Jesus the point-of-view character, thereby leading the reader to follow him more closely and listen to him as he parries with the Ἰουδαῖοι. Upon hearing Jesus's solemn and definitive proclamations coupled with the assurance of deliverance from death (8:24) vis-à-vis the ignorance and lack of knowledge of the Ἰουδαῖοι (8:19, 22, and 25), the reader is moved to empathize with him, make a stand for him, and aspire for that place above where he comes from. R. Bultmann is right, therefore, to argue for the presence of *Entscheidungsdualismus* in John.[68] This, however, is not just a choice between two things that possess equal weight. The descriptions of the world below (darkness, death, etc.) already militate against it in favor of the world of Jesus above. The binary cosmological statement in 8:23 has a two-fold rhetorical function: it bespeaks the identity of Jesus (cf. σὺ τίς εἶ in Jn. 8:25) and what this identity entails for those who are from below (cf. 8:24). John employs OT cosmological language to present the identity of Jesus as a divine being, an identity that is inseparable from his soteriological function.

Does this narrative style make John docetic? A negative answer is perhaps best captured in the words of G. O' Day when she wrote that

[66]Conversely, the expression ἐγώ οὐκ εἰμι is also used in reference to Jesus (cf. 8:23).

[67]John 8 vv. 27 and 30 are parentheses.

[68]Cf. R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* Vol. 1, trans. K. Grobel (London: SCM, 1965), 21.

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"any studies of Johannine revelation that ignore the form, style, and mode of Johannine revelatory language will always miss the mark."[69]

4. Excursus

While word order may be deemed of little significance in a language that uses case-endings, J. Heimerdinger argues that the author who may be free from grammatical concerns still faces semantic and pragmatic constraints such that he cannot just move words around as he or she pleases.[70] These constraints are due to both the functions that words are supposed to play in a sentence and the purpose of the sentence where these words occur.[71] In short, whatever function the author intends the words or sentence to have in the narrative influences the ordering of words.[72]

John 8:23 presents two different word orders for the prepositional phrase involving κόσμος: ἐκ τούτου τοῦ κόσμου (A1) and ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου (B1), with the demonstrative οὗτος functioning as an adjective that modifies κόσμος. These phrases complement the verb to which they are respectively attached: where the subject is ὑμεῖς (the Ἰουδαῖοι), οὗτος is pre-positioned and is closer to the subject; where the subject is ἐγώ (Jesus), οὗτος is post-positioned to κόσμος and is

[69]G. O'Day, "Narrative Mode and Theological Claim: A Study in the Fourth Gospel," *JBL* 105:4 (1986): 662.

[70]J. Heimerdinger, "Word Order in Koine Greek: Using a Text-Critical Approach to Study Word Order Patterns in the Greek Text of Acts," *Filologia Neotestamentaria* 9 (1996): 140.

[71]Heimerdinger, "Word Order in Koine Greek," 140.

[72]According to Sternberg (*The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 1), "biblical narrative is oriented to an addressee and regulated by a purpose or a set of purposes involving the addressee. Hence our primary business as readers is to make purposive sense of it, so as to explain the *what's* and the *how's* in terms of the *why's* of communication."

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farther from the subject. What immediately follows the subject ἐγώ, moreover, is the negating adverb οὐκ.

ὑμεῖς ἐκ τούτου τοῦ κόσμου ἐστέ,
ἐγὼ οὐκ εἰμὶ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου.

We mentioned earlier that the foregrounding of the subjects in the two clauses signals the importance of the prepositional phrases in the narrative. When ὑμεῖς (the Jews) is the subject, the demonstrative adjective (οὗτος) is positioned before the noun it modifies (κόσμος). This is significant because in Koine Greek the demonstrative adjective is usually placed after the noun it modifies.[73] This "front-shifting" of the demonstrative adjective in ἐκ τούτου τοῦ κόσμου thus highlights "*this* world" to be the world of the addressees.[74] The proximity οὗτος to ὑμεῖς emphasizes the relationship of the Jews with "*this* world" and not just with any other world.[75] Conversely, when ἐγώ (Jesus) is the subject, the demonstrative adjective (οὗτος) is positioned after the noun (κόσμος) at the very end of the clause! The negation with οὐκ as well as the distancing of οὗτος from ἐγώ widely dissociates Jesus from "*this* world;"[76] he comes from another κόσμος (cf. Jn. 17:14).

[73]N. Turner, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* Vol. III, Syntax (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1963), 193. While Turner attributes the postposition to Hebrew influence, Heimerdinger ("Word Order in Koine Greek," 142) opines that attributing word order to foreign influence is problematic since languages vary in their word order patterns and authors face constraints (e.g., the emphasis they want to express through the words which reflects their intention) in the ordering of words. Without discounting the influence of foreign languages on Koine, Heimerdinger pleads for caution in positing Semitic influence on Koine word order ("Word Order in Koine Greek," 142). Nevertheless, she accepts with certainty the Semitic influence on Koine noun phrase word order, i.e., noun-adjective ("Word Order in Koine Greek," 143).

[74]Cf. Heimerdinger, "Word Order in Koine Greek," 144.

[75]Cf. Heimerdinger ("Word Order in Koine Greek," 167) where she explains the emphatic value of the demonstrative pronoun when it precedes the noun.

[76]Cf. T. Givón (*Syntax: An Introduction* Vol. 1 [Amsterdam/Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins, 2001], 370) who claims that negative assertions are "equally *strong assertions*, i.e. used in psychological context of high certainty and high evidential

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Indeed, the variation in the positioning of οὗτος in 8:23 further attests to John's literary finesse in putting across the identity of Jesus vis-à-vis that of the people in this world.

5. Conclusion

In this article, we looked at the binary cosmological language in John 8:23 (ἄνω - κάτω and its parallel οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου - ἐκ τούτου τοῦ κόσμου) and examined it in relation to Käsemann's claim that this gospel contains naively docetic elements. Our exploration revealed that John's use of this parallel binary language in 8:23 reflects not only his OT (LXX) heritage but also his literary prowess. Contextual and rhetorical analyses of 8:23 reveal how this binary language is used at the service of the gospel's Christological and soteriological proclamation. With the antithesis engendered by these binary pairs, John was able to emphasize the identity of Jesus as the One sent by the Father while making those from below realize, at the same time, their true identity and concommitant need for the salvation that will be effected only by the One who comes from above. It is perhaps sound to conclude, then, with these results, that the binary cosmological language in 8:23 is part and parcel of John's revelatory scheme. A docetic interpretation of this binary language thus reflects a fragmented reading of the gospel which does not give due consideration to John's narrative style and purpose. The evangelist has to present Jesus as a divine being who comes from above, one who is οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου, in order to establish the ground for his salvific proclamation which only a fully incarnated divine being can accomplish.[77] John could not have done it any other way.

support." He further adds that negative assertions are "typically made on the tacit assumption that the hearer either has heard about, believes in, is likely to take for granted, or is at least familiar with the corresponding affirmative" (Givón, *Syntax,* 371).

[77]Cf. Schnelle, *Antidocetic Christology*, 229.

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