So far in this series of posts dealing with How Jesus Became God, I have maintained that in the very early years of Christianity, soon after the disciples came to believe in the resurrection, there were two forms of Christology that emerged. And I have discussed only one of these two forms, one that considered Jesus to be a full flesh and blood human being (as he considered himself!), and nothing more than a man, until at some point God exalted him and made him his son, the ruler of all, the messiah, the Lord. I am calling this kind of “low” Christology (low because it stresses that Jesus started out as a human and not divine) a Christology “from below” or an “exaltation” Christology.

I have also argued that this kind of Christology can be found in some of the earliest materials in the New Testament, that in fact it is imbedded in quotations of earlier pre-literary sources found in various writings of the NT. In my previous post I talked about how scholars have isolated some of these pre-literary traditions over the years. Now, in this post, I will give an example. It is Romans 1:3-4.

Romans was the final letter that Paul wrote, possibly around 60 CE or so (1 Thessalonians was his first, around 49 or 50 CE). But even though it is his last letter, it contains a pre-Pauline fragment, that is, a quotation of an earlier source that Paul inherited, in just these verses, chapter 1 verses 3-4. As with his other letters, Paul begins this one (1:1) by introducing himself and saying who he is, before mentioning the “gospel” (which will be the overarching theme of the letter). He then says that the gospel concerns God’s “son” and then he says this about the son:

Who was descended from David according to the flesh and designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead.

I have a particular fondness for this passage. It was the topic of the first PhD term paper I wrote - a thirty-pager, devoted to just these two verses, and in which I could only scratch the surface. Here I will scratch it even less.

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