

In my posts on Christology so far I have argued that different Christians in the early decades of the Christian movement maintained that Jesus had been exalted to a divine status at some point of his existence - at his resurrection, at his baptism, at his birth. I have called this a christology from below, or an "exaltation" christology; it is sometimes called a low christology because it understands Jesus to have started out as a human (down here with us) and to have been raised to a divine status. In this view he was not God from eternity past or a pre-existent being. He was a human being who was taken up to the level of divinity at some point (or, in the case of the Virgin Birth, that he came into existence at a point in time as a person who was partially human partially divine).

But there was another kind of Christology which was also very early - earlier, in fact, than our earliest surviving Christian writer, Paul. This is the view that Jesus was a pre-existent divine being who became a human, did the Father's will on earth, and then was taken back up into heaven whence he had originally come. If the other view is an "exaltation" Christology, I'll call this one an "incarnation" Christology. The term "incarnation" literally means something like "being made flesh." The idea is that a spiritual divine being (however "divine" is understood - more on this later) becomes a human being as a part of the divine plan of salvation. This is a view that can be considered a Christology "from above" (since the divine being comes from heaven to earth in bodily form) and is more commonly thought of as a "high" Christology, since in it Christ starts out up there, way up there, in fact, with God.

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