CHAPTER TWO

HISTORY AND THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST

*The perpetual advent of the Logos*

Following from his conception of the relation of the Logos to the world, Origen considers the presence and function of the Logos in the whole of time ‘not only the future…but also in the past.’ This means that the ‘advent’ of the Logos in the world takes place as long as the world exists, from its beginning to its end:

According to the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ as this was historically related, his advent was in a body, still in a manner of universal event which cast light upon the whole world, when ‘the Logos was made flesh and dwelt among us’. For ‘he was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and he made the world, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not.’ However, it is necessary to know that he was also appearing prior to this, yet not in a body, in each of the saints. And after this visible dwelling, he comes upon us again.

In *commJohn* it is accordingly stated:

Furthermore, [let me refer once more to] the subject concerning the saints who had lived before the corporeal advent of Jesus, and who had something more than the other faithful, so that they had comprehended the mysteries of divinity: it was the Logos of God who had taught them before he became flesh. For he was ceaselessly working, being an imitator of his own Father, of whom he says ‘My Father is working hitherto’.

Those saints ‘were instructed by Christ before he became flesh’, indeed by Christ ‘who was begotten before the Lucifer’. So ‘there is no when’ the Logos was not present in life, either after the epoch of Jesus or before it. In the same work, there is a fragment commenting on John 1, 29 (‘Behold the Lamb of God, which bears and takes away the sin of the world’):

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1 *fiLuc*, 34.
2 John, 1, 14.
3 John, 1, 9–11.
4 *homJer*, 9, 1.
5 John, 1, 17. *commJohn*, 6, IV.
6 Psalm 109, 3. *commJohn*, 6, IV.
7 *commJohn*, 20, XII.
It has been well said [about him], ‘he who bears and takes away the sin’, not >he who bore and took< or, >he who will bear and take away<. For he perpetually (ἀεὶ) carries out the bearing and taking away the sin of those who seek refuge in him. We then assert out of this that he bore, and bears, and will bear, applying the verb ‘to bear’ to each particular time (καθ’ ἐκκαταρκον καρον).\(^{8}\)

The argumentation in Cels runs in the same vein:

Regarding God’s benevolence, he comes down to men not in terms of space, but in terms of his providence (ὄν τοπικός, ἀλλ’ προνοητικός); and the Son of God [was with his disciples] not only during that specific time, but he is always (ἀεὶ) with his disciples, fulfilling his promise ‘Lo, I am with you all the days until the end of the aeon’.\(^{9}\)

What is more, he clears up the real source of Christian faith: this was not established out of human intelligence or sagacity, but it came about as a result of God the Logos’ self-manifestation through his perpetual advent to the world, within history, since the creation of it.

The doctrine authenticated as the word of God and Jesus, being the Son of God, is proven to be such on one both before and after he was incarnated. I affirm in addition that even after his Incarnation he is always (ἀεὶ) found by those people who have very sharp eyes of soul, [and he is found] to be most divine and to have truly come down on to us from God, and to have owed the doctrine about him, or what follows from this doctrine, not to human intelligence, but to God’s self-manifestation (ἀπὸ τής τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπιφανείας), who established Judaism in the first place, and after this Christianity through varied wisdom and various miracles.\(^{10}\)

As a matter of fact, God wants ‘to enable us to become familiar with him through Christ and the perpetual (ἀεὶ) advent of the Logos.’\(^{11}\)

Thus Origen holds the doctrine of the ‘spiritual advent of Christ’ (νοτῇ ἐπιθέμια Χριστοῦ)\(^{12}\) as a perpetual manifestation of God into the world. The ‘presence’ of the Logos then may point to either his ‘spiritual advent’ before his Incarnation, or to the corporeal presence of Christ in the world, or to his presence thereafter, or even to ‘the prominent and glorious’ presence of Christ expected at the consummation of the world.\(^{13}\) This is the ground for an exegesis of a passage of Luke 2, 6 (‘the days were accomplished that she should be delivered’):

Many people think it is superfluous to say, ‘But Elizabeth’s full time came that she should be delivered, and she brought forth a son’. For who is the woman who

\(^{8}\) _frJohn_, XIX.


\(^{10}\) _Cels_, III, 14.

\(^{11}\) _Cels_, IV, 6.

\(^{12}\) _commJohn_, 19, V.

\(^{13}\) _frMatt_, 204; _commMatt_, 16, 22.