

Summary

THE PANTHERA CASE. ORIGEN'S DEFENCE OF MARY'S VIRGINAL CONCEPTION IN *CONTRA CELSUM*

One of the ways how pagan philosopher Celsus tries to call into question basic motifs of Christian piety, is his denial of Christ's divine origin. Against the claims of the Gospels that Christ was born of a virgin and conceived through Holy Spirit, Celsus mentions a rather cheap anecdote about a simple countrywoman who ran wild with a Roman soldier called Panthera behind her husband's back. Origen, whose treatise *Contra Celsum* was dedicated to the defence of Christian tradition, used various arguments to refute Celsus' construct of adulterous Mary but many of these were connected to charge itself only loosely, if at all: Origen points out examples of allegedly divine origin of illustrious men in pagan literature, and he also mentions opinions of some ancient zoologists that some animals can conceive without having sexual intercourse. According to Origen, important proofs of the veracity of Christian concept are the Old Testament prophecies about the coming of Christ. Origen's own attitude to the Celsus' charge can only be gleaned from his remarks that it is, in fact, the slander of Celsus itself – calling attention to the fact that Jesus was not born of an ordinary marriage – that testifies to His Divine origin. This formulation brings us to the question whether Origen eventually does not see in Celsus' image of adulterous Mary sort of a scandalous hint to deeper meaning of Jesus' birth, as it was the case with the Christian image of virginal conception seen through the eyes of pagan and Jewish world.

Keywords: Origen; *Contra Celsum*; Mary; virginal conception of Jesus; birth of Jesus

MIROSLAV ŠEDINA, Centrum pro práci s patristickými, středověkými a renesančními texty, Cyrilometodějská teologická fakulta Univerzity Palackého, Univerzitní 22, 771 11 Olomouc, sedina@post.cz.