

## REVIEWS

THE LETTER AND THE SPIRIT. By R. M. Grant. (S.P.C.K.; 15s.)  
 ALLEGORY AND EVENT: A study of the sources and significance of  
 Origen's interpretation of Scripture. By R. P. C. Hanson. (S.C.M.  
 Press; 35s.)

Professor Grant's book is an attempt to understand allegorical methods of biblical exegesis in the early Church in their relation to Greek allegorizing. His aim is to form a just assessment of the practice of the Alexandrian theologians, Clement and Origen. He traces the classical and Hellenistic notions of inspiration and of allegory through Greek philosophical and rhetorical writers, through Hellenistic Judaism in the person of Philo, and then goes on to consider the traces of allegory to be found in the New Testament, and the use made of allegory by second-century Christian writers, gnostics, Marcion and Montanists. From this survey he concludes that 'at the end of the second century the Church had firmly rejected unhistorical literary criticism, allegorization and "prophetization" of Marcion, Valentinus and Montanus. The Bible was the Church's book, and the Church had come to general agreement that the book was the inspired record of an historical revelation' (p. 85). In his treatment of Clement and, especially, of Origen, Professor Grant seeks to steer a middle course between the extremes of judgment which may be exemplified, on the one hand, in Dean Farrer's (quoted by Grant in his preface) that 'the foundations of Origen's exegetic system are built upon the sand'; and, on the other, in the defence of Origen more recently undertaken by Père de Lubac. Whereas for most Hellenistic allegorizers, Philo among them, the justification of the method rested on the assumption that the world and God's revelation in it are essentially comprehensible to philosophical reason, the 'Christian Platonists of Alexandria make use of Philonic ideas but take history more seriously' (p. 104). Grant treats Origen as the source of diverging insights, all with some part to play in the Church's attempt to understand the Biblical revelation, some not without their dangers of distorting its historical character, but all relevant to a 'continuing conversation' about the relation of history to faith (p. 112).

Dr Hanson's book, a sequel to his study of *Origen's doctrine of tradition*, takes us very much further into the substance of this continuing conversation, and, at least so far as Origen is concerned, brings to it a precision lacking in Grant's more general statements. As the subtitle of his study suggests, the two books overlap not only in their concern with Origen, but also in their discussion of his 'sources'. Even

in this latter respect Hanson's treatment supplements Grant's: the distinction between Rabbinic and Alexandrian (or Philonic) Jewish allegory is here well defended, and the different ways in which these procedures may have affected Christian exegesis are clearly separated.

But much more than Grant's, Hanson's concern is with Origen. In a detailed study of Origen's views about the meanings of Scripture as well as of his actual exegetical procedure, the conclusion is gradually allowed to emerge that 'in one important respect Origen's thought remained outside the Bible and never penetrated within it' (p. 363): though soaked in the biblical text and accepting much of it as historical narrative, Origen sits lightly to the importance of history as the medium of God's revelation. 'He perilously reduces the significance of history, and with history of sacraments and of eschatology' (p. 364). These conclusions seem to me to be firmly established by the evidence marshalled by Dr Hanson; they are not in the least weakened by the extravagant manner in which Dr Hanson sometimes allows himself to state them. (The rhetorical questions on p. 287, for instance, are rhetorical not only in not expecting an answer, but sheer rhetoric which makes an honest answer impossible.) The extent to which Origen's attitude arose from philosophical views is scarcely touched on, though it might have merited some consideration.

A number of minor points scattered among the 'background' studies call for question. Among these might be mentioned the suggestion, based on no more than two isolated scraps of evidence, that 'some sort of observance of the other provisions of the Jewish law besides the moral ones was well rooted in the life of every (*sic*) Christian community' (pp. 297-298). The remark that 'Irenaeus is the first writer to allegorize the New Testament' (p. 112) is literally true (if the definitions of 'allegory' and 'typology' given on p. 7 are accepted; they seem to me to obscure rather than to illuminate some of the main points at issue); but it obliterates the vital difference between Irenaeus's exegesis of the New Testament and the gnostic procedures which he was combating. The latter are, perhaps significantly, not discussed by Dr Hanson, nor does he refer to Carola Barth's study of this topic. Such extrinsic questions aside, Dr Hanson's study will surely stand as a definitive account of Origen's treatment of the Bible.

R. A. MARKUS

THE PEOPLE OF THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS. By J. M. Allegro. (Routledge and Kegan Paul; 30s.)

In many ways this book should fill a long-felt need. It is the story of the Dead Sea Scrolls once more—but this time told in pictures—a welcome change from the long series of rather grim little books in bright covers with which we have been surfeited. Everything even