

Do I mean, then, that Ms. Wood's novel is a fiasco? By no means. But it would have been better had the author not made the reader so constantly and bluntly aware of the symbolism and history. Perhaps there are other readers who will welcome the aid that this emphasis offers. If so, then Ms. Wood has accomplished her task better than I have judged.

In spite of my objection to the structure of the book, I find *The Jawbone of an Ass* an interesting novel. For a first novel it is a remarkably ambitious effort. What pleases me most, however, is not the novel itself, but what it is leading to, for Ms. Wood excitedly claims that writing it taught her a great deal about technique and that in her forthcoming sequels (*The Jawbone of an Ass* is really volume one of a tetralogy) she has narrowed her scope a great deal and focused more intensely on characterization and events. It seems to me that that approach can only make for a more thoroughly successful product next time.

## Modern Biblical Scholarship

LESLIE NO'EL SWANEY

*The Cambridge History of the Bible*. Vol. I: *From the Beginnings to Jerome*. Edited by P. R. Ackroyd and C. F. Evans. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970. 649 pp. \$14.50.

With the publication of this volume, the three-part *Cambridge History of the Bible* is now complete. That this volume, the first in the chronological sequence, should be the final number published is a testimony both to the importance and to the complexity of this crucial initial phase in the formation and delimitation of Holy Scripture.

The eighteen articles which make up this work provide ample evidence of the vitality of biblical scholarship in Great Britain — only two contributors, Shemaryahu Talmon of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and R. M. Grant of the University of Chicago, are from non-British schools. The depth of scholarly investigation is enhanced by the wide latitude used in defining the topic. The five sections of the volume — Language and Script, Books in the Ancient World, The Old Testament, The New Testament, and the Bible in the Early Church — cover such diverse topics as the development of Hebrew script and the use of the Bible in the liturgy of the early church. Its breadth makes this work far more than merely a study in textual problems. Indeed, it provides a unique insight into the history of the Jewish and Christian religions in late antiquity.

Written primarily for the scholar, these articles should provide a sound starting point for much future investigation. The articles by Talmon, "The Old Testament Text," and Evans, "The New Testament in the Making," are especially useful for their surveys of the scholarly controversies and trends in these areas. The contribution of J. N. Birdsall, "The New Testament Text," provides an interesting example of the use of codicology and rational criticism as tools of biblical scholarship. Throughout the volume, authors continuously point to areas where either exploratory work or fresh rethinking is needed.

While the tone of the volume betrays its character as a basic reference work



directed at an audience of biblical scholars, there are several portions of the work which should be of considerable interest to anyone concerned about the basic sources of his faith. The study by C. H. Roberts, "Books in the Greco-Roman World and the New Testament," offers a stimulating analysis of the importance of the written word in the early church and of the different manners in which Christians, Jews, and gentiles reacted to the concept of a holy writ. The articles by G. W. Anderson, "Canonical and Non-Canonical," and Grant, "The New Testament Canon," contain important and lucid discussions on the process of the formation of the concept of canonical writings and of the definition of the contents of such collections. Ackroyd, "The Old Testament in the Making," presents a clear analysis of the role of various historical and theological crises in the evolution of the Old Testament. R. P. C. Hanson, "Biblical Exegesis in the Early Church," points out the importance of heretical groups, especially the Gnostics, in the development of Christian attitudes toward and uses of Holy Scripture. Throughout many of the articles runs an emphasis on the diversity of the early church in several spheres — oral and written traditions, textual traditions, local and national cultures, and approaches to biblical interpretation. Perhaps this emphasis may serve as a balance to current trends toward biblical fundamentalism and unitarian ecumenism.

The sections dealing with exegetical principles and practices, while of considerable interest, seem more an appendix than an integral part of the work. However, they do serve to indicate the need for more work in this rich and crucial field.

Taken as a whole, this volume is more valuable as an encyclopedic summary of current problems, new research methods, and present states of knowledge than as a source of new interpretations or fresh insights. Its value is enhanced by twenty-five well-selected plates and by extremely useful indices of scriptural and patristic literature. The most disappointing aspect of the work is its bibliography, which is far too brief for a major reference work. Despite its limitations, this volume should be of value to the expert, should serve as an introduction to the student, and should be of interest to the concerned and intelligent Christian.