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that such an answer would not satisfy those whose focus is the text and whose primary interest is saying something about that text. This volume is most certainly timely and highly pertinent to recent developments within biblical studies. It is a welcome addition to the field for the reasons I have given, but also because it stimulates profound questions about reception history that have yet to be answered.

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Histoire générale du christianisme, I: Des Origins au XV^e siècle. Edited by Jean-Robert Armogathe, Pascal Montaubin and Michel-Yves Perrin; II: *Du XVI^e siècle à nos jours.* Edited by Jean-Robert Armogathe and Yves-Marie Hilaire. (Quadrige Dicos Poche.) Pp. xii+1,533 incl. 15 maps; xiii+1,330 incl. 13 maps. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2010. €69 (paper). 978 2 13 052292 8; 978 2 286 07293 3

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This multi-authored general history of Christianity is meant chiefly for students and the general educated public. Volume i divides the first fifteen centuries of the Christian era between twenty-two longer chapters defined in a fairly conventional manner by chronology, theme and geography; many chapters in turn contain up to four parts by different authors. Volume ii contains fifty-two single-authored chapters, a format that makes space for some more unconventional, tightly focused chapters, such as one on Orthodox missions in Siberia or another biblical interpretation since 1943. The majority of the seventy-three contributors are French, with the *École Pratique des Hautes Études* forming the institutional centre of gravity. At the same time, the authorial team is impressively international; non-French contributors hold academic appointments in fourteen countries on five continents. The geographic coverage of the volume is also global, if a bit less comprehensively so than that of the recent *Cambridge History of Christianity*. The work has both the merits and the faults typical of most histories parcelled out between scores of authors: on the plus side, an authoritative treatment of most subjects; on the minus side, discontinuity from chapter to chapter, and the absence of a strong authorial voice or unifying overall perspective. One further negative must also be mentioned. The project was initially launched in 1991, and it would appear that certain of the chapters were written not long afterwards, for some already seem dated. If the contributions range widely across subjects from the history of religious practice to the history of art and architecture, the history of ideas, both theological and non-theological, probably receives the lion's share of attention. Volume i has a bibliography detailed enough to guide students to further reading on subjects of interest to them. Volume ii does not. Readers of this *JOURNAL* are particularly likely to regret this last editorial decision, for they are most likely to turn to this work themselves or recommend it to their students above its competitors for the chapters of volume ii devoted to unconventional subjects.

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