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ENGLISH SUMMARIES

- E. NORELLI, Before the Canon and the Apocrypha: the origins of the stories of Jesus' birth, RThPh 1994/IV, pp. 305-324.

It is generally assumed that our ancient Christian texts concerning the birth of Jesus are dependent on the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. This article tries to show that one can find traditions of Jesus' being born of a virgin, older than the compilation of canonical gospels, yet already legendary. In particular, they form collections of prophecies from the Old Testament, some parts being authentic while others come from apocryphal books or ad hoc concoctions.

- C. DUQUOC, A critical presentation of the Encyclical *Veritatis Splendor*, RThPh 1994/IV, pp. 325-332.

The questions posed by John-Paul II's encyclical letter, Veritatis Splendor, concerning the relation between faith and ethics, mind and body, conscience and truth, is not leaving people indifferent. Even so, the pertinence of the questions is camouflaged by their authoritative treatment on the one hand, and by argumentation founded on an obsolete theology on the other. The over-simplification resulting from these inadequate approaches risks to dissociate the encyclical from the ethical debate taking place in our society.

- G. HUBER, Observations on the history of the philosophical notion of the absolute, RThPh 1994/IV, pp. 333-344.

This article describes, from the viewpoint of the history of ideas (Begriffsgeschichte), some major stages of development of the idea of the absolute, its Greek antecedents, and its transformations in modern philosophy. In the course of this evolution, five significant elements emerge: the metaphysical nature of intrinsic being (non-relativity), "detachment" (or separateness), "perfection", thereby "divine" being, and the unconditional nature of ethics as such. This dialectally qualified notion of the absolute could be of interest for systematic philosophy.

- P. MULLER, Profiles of Ernesto Grassi, RThPh 1994/IV, pp. 345-352.

Ernesto Grassi, who passed away in December 1991, was known to the writer in successive profiles. First as the director of a pocket edition of a collection for Rowohlt, which attempted to bring prominent current themes within reach of contemporary society by presenting one typical inquiry in each domain. Then as a diversified personality: educated in Italy at the beginning of the century and grappling with the most eminent thinkers – Blondel, Scheler, Jaspers, Heidegger. Then as the advocate of Italian humanism, notably of Vico, whom he presented as the principal protagonist first of Cartesianism but mainly of Marxism. Finally, as the discoverer of a new continent, that of a philosophy at the right level for ordinary people, centred on literary and artistic creation.

H. POLTIER, Pragmatism : a solution to the moral problem of modernity ?, RThPh 1994/IV, pp. 353-359.

*This review essay of Charles Larmore's *Morale et modernité* presents and discusses his intention to defend the idea of a pragmatist and intuitionist theory of morals. Summing up Larmore's thought, it sets out the case for a pragmatist conception of moral truth and the appeal to intuition for discerning the content of moral obligation. It concludes with a critical remark suggesting that pragmatism does not entirely avoid the reproach of relativism.*