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ENGLISH SUMMARIES

F. VOUGA, The appeal of primitive Christianity in Antiquity, RThPh 1998/III, p. 257-268.

The intellectual elite of the Roman world, literary and philosophical, largely underestimated the significance of nascent Christianity. For them it was a form of religious irrationality of which the intellectual dignity as well as the chances of survival could only be limited. They thus pointed out the very novelty of Christianity and the key to its historical success : the discovery of the individual as a subject in the first person and, in its name, the questioning of abstract definitions as criteria of truth.

A.C.M. ROOTHAAN, Does Spinoza fall under the province of natural theology?, RThPh 1998/III, p. 269-283.

In studies of Spinoza, one central question is how to reconcile his rejection of a personal God, in philosophical terms in his Ethics, with his description, in Tractatus Theologico-Politicus, of God who forgives the remorseful. This question will be treated here as the dilemma between the God of philosophy and the God of the Bible. The common view, that Spinoza opted unequivocally for the God of the philosophers, will be challenged by reading his works as an answer to the fragmentation of the world in modernity. An answer, however, which does not overcome fragmentation.

N. CAMPAGNA, Politics and religion in Benjamin Constant, RThPh 1998/III, p. 285-300.

Certain authors, notably Stephen Homes, pretend that religion plays no political role in the liberalism of Benjamin Constant. The aim of this article is to show that these authors are mistaken and that Constant does give a political role to religion. My theory is that in the eyes of Constant, religion is an important guarantee of the liberal character of society. It is through religion that, amongst other things, the atomization of society can be avoided, and society not be abandoned to the ambitions of any despot.

D. BRÜHLMEIER, On the commercial spirit and free trade in Montesquieu and Adam Smith, RThPh 1998/III, p. 301-314.

In his famous The Wealth of Nations, 1776, and in earlier Lectures on Justice (1762-1764), Adam Smith developed an economic and sociological theory of commerce and free trade. Montesquieu preceded him with his thoughts on «l'esprit de commerce» in Esprit des lois. The opinions of both are qualified, concerning the conditions necessary as well as the political precautions to be taken in instituting free trade. They deduce that a practicable and liberal moral corrective will be necessary.