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978-0-521-89825-6 - Liberal Values: Benjamin Constant and the Politics of Religion

Helena Rosenblatt

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LIBERAL VALUES

Benjamin Constant and the Politics of Religion

In *Liberal Values*, Professor Rosenblatt presents a study of Benjamin Constant's intellectual development into a founding father of modern liberalism, through a careful analysis of his evolving views on religion. Constant's life spanned the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, Napoleon's rise and rule, and the Bourbon Restoration. Rosenblatt analyses Constant's key role in many of this era's heated debates over the role of religion in politics, and in doing so, exposes and addresses many misconceptions that have long reigned about Constant and his period. In particular, Rosenblatt sheds light on Constant's major, yet much-neglected work, *De la religion*. Given that the role of religion is, once again, center-stage in our political, philosophical and historical arenas, *Liberal Values* constitutes a major and timely revision of our understanding of the origins of modern liberalism.

HELENA ROSENBLATT is Professor of History at Hunter College and The Graduate Center of The City University of New York.

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

To Marvin, Eric and Annika

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	page x
<i>Note on translations</i>	xii
<i>List of abbreviations</i>	xiii
Introduction	1
1 Constant’s education: the French, Scottish, and German Enlightenment	6
2 The crucible of the Directory years	37
3 Napoleon, or battling “the new Cyrus”	76
4 Constant becomes Constant: from the <i>Principles of Politics</i> (1806) to <i>The Spirit of Conquest and Usurpation</i> (1814)	122
5 Politics and religion during the Restoration (1814–1824)	155
6 “The Protestant Bossuet”: <i>De la religion</i> in political context (1824–1830)	192
7 Constant’s legacy	234
<i>Select bibliography</i>	249
<i>Index</i>	266

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Acknowledgements*

Although it is hard to believe, I began thinking about this book almost ten years ago. The idea to work on Benjamin Constant came originally from Larry Dickey, who also offered invaluable guidance and encouragement along the way. I will always be grateful for his intellectual generosity and scholarly example.

It was fortuitous that, about nine years ago, I contacted Professor William Harris of Columbia University, to ask him for some professional advice. I would like to thank him not only for so graciously responding, but for informing me about the opportunities that a fellowship at the National Humanities Center might provide, and for encouraging me to apply. My year in North Carolina was absolutely crucial to this book and to my academic career. I am grateful to the Center's extraordinary staff, and also to the fellows of 2000–1, who made it an ideal environment in which to work. In particular, I would like to thank Carla Hesse, Tom Laqueur, Jeremy Popkin, Timothy Tackett and Helen Chenut for the many kindnesses they extended to me that year, and for all our wonderful discussions. My stay in North Carolina was greatly enhanced by the presence of Steven Vincent and Tony Lavopa, who have since become dear friends.

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Acknowledgements*

xi

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[More information](#)

Note on translations

Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are the author's own.

Abbreviations

ABC	<i>Annales Benjamin Constant</i> , 1980–, Lausanne: Institut Benjamin Constant
B&R	B. Constant and R. de Constant, <i>Correspondance</i> , 1786–1830, ed. A. and S. Roulin (Paris, 1955)
C&Ch	B. Constant and I. de Charrière, <i>Correspondance</i> , 1787–1895, ed. J.-D. Candaux (Paris, 1997)
DA	G. de Staël, <i>De l'Allemagne</i> , ed. S. Balayé (Paris, 1968)
DLR	B. Constant, <i>De la religion considérée dans sa source, ses formes et ses développements</i> , ed. T. Todorov and E. Hofmann (Arles, 1999)
Jl	B. Constant, <i>Journaux intimes</i> (1804–1807), in OCBC, série I, <i>Oeuvres</i> , vol. VI or <i>Journal intime</i> (1811–1816), in OCBC, série I, <i>Oeuvres</i> , vol. VII
KK	G. de Staël, Ch. de Villers, B. Constant, <i>Correspondance</i> , ed. K. Kloocke <i>et al.</i> (Frankfurt am Main, 1993)
OCBC	B. Constant, <i>Oeuvres complètes</i> , ed. P. Delbouille, K. Kloocke <i>et al.</i> (Tübingen, 1993–)
PB	“Lettres de Benjamin Constant à Prosper de Barante,” <i>Revue des Deux Mondes</i> , vol. XXXIV (1906)
PoP 1806	B. Constant, <i>Principles of Politics Applicable to All Governments</i> , ed. E. Hofmann, trans. D. O’Keeffe (Indianapolis, 2003)
PoP 1815	B. Constant, <i>Principles of Politics Applicable to All Representative Governments</i> , in PW
PhM	<i>Philosophical Miscellanies translated from the French of Cousin, Jouffroy, and B. Constant</i> , ed. G. Ripley (Boston, 1838)
PW	B. Constant, <i>Political Writings</i> , ed. B.-M. Fontana (Cambridge, 1993)
SCU	B. Constant, <i>The Spirit of Conquest and Usurpation and their Relation to European Civilization</i> , in PW