PART B

POLITICO-RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVES:
A CRITICAL REAPPRAISAL OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT,
AND THE NEW APPROACH OF THE ‘POLITICAL
SCIENCE OF RELIGION’
CHAPTER FOUR

POLITICS AND RELIGION IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT: HOBBES, SPINOZA, LOCKE AND ROUSSEAU

Claus-E. Bärsch

1. INTRODUCTION

The over-arching topic of the chapters in Part B is the good and happy life of men in the societal-political order, created by man himself. Purpose of the first two chapters in it, is clarification of the Enlightenment. Their subject matter is not Enlightenment in itself and for itself, not the entire Enlightenment, not the Zeitgeist (spirit of the times), not the prevailing mentality throughout the societal classes, not the complete philosophy of Enlightenment, neither its historical reality, but merely Enlightenment as a paradigm of the political. For the referring to Enlightenment – after a long time’s sleep – serves the function of a value and criterion, especially in public and private debates about political-religious problems and conflicts. Enlightenment is regarded as something positive. What is good and true, finds itself represented in Enlightenment. However, does Enlightenment deserve to be an argument just by mentioning it? The avowal to Enlightenment has become commonplace, up to its depravation as a ritual in a talk show – replacing the ‘Amen’ at church.

Many have got fixed ideas about Enlightenment’s contents. Rarely explicitly perceptible, it is prevailingly claimed though, in journals and public as well as private debates, that Enlightenment means roughly the following: Priority of reason to belief and herewith rejection of all religions, especially the Christian creed; Freeing man from the ties of religion; Freeing citizens’ religion from the authority of state power and ruling; Tolerance between religions and denominations; Fundamental rights and rule of law guaranteeing someone being religious; Religion is considered to be a private matter; The separation

---

1 See for instance in this volume, Chapter X, The Enlightenment in Contemporary Cultural Debate, by Paul Cliteur and Geoff Gordon.