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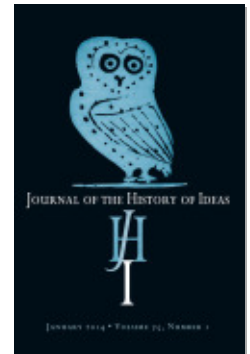
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*The Determination of Man: Johann Joachim Spalding and the Protestant Enlightenment*¹

Michael Printy

I. INTRODUCTION

“In the short time that I have on this world,” wrote Johann Joachim Spalding in 1748, “I see that I can live according to entirely different principles, whose value and consequences cannot be reconciled to one another.”² With these words, an obscure Lutheran pastor opened a remarkable little book that would remain in demand and be reprinted for almost fifty years. At once a philosophical and religious meditation about the senses, the spirit, the nature of creation, and the immortality of the soul, Spalding’s *Betrachtung über die Bestimmung des Menschen* would be rapidly followed by several new editions with expansions and supplements. By the eleventh edition of 1794, the book had expanded in length almost tenfold. It was translated into French (several times) and Latin, and appeared in pirated editions. One of the most widely-read books in eighteenth-century Ger-

¹ For commenting on earlier drafts of this article I would like to thank Thomas A. Brady, Jr., Thomas Kaufmann, Darrin McMahon, Katherine Kuenzli, Ruedi Kuenzli, and the *Journal*’s two anonymous readers. Earlier versions were presented at the Göttingen Early Modern History Colloquium and the Fourth International Conference on the Jewish Enlightenment in Frankfurt (2011). Support for this essay was provided by the ACLS, the NEH, and the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation.

² Johann Joachim Spalding, *Die Bestimmung des Menschen*, eds. Albrecht Beutel, Daniela Kirschkowski, and Dennis Prause (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 42. Information on editions and publishing history referred to in this article is from Beutel’s editorial introduction to this volume. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.

many, it set off a notable debate between Moses Mendelssohn and Thomas Abbt about skepticism and natural religion, and it also shaped the German discussion of philosophical anthropology down to Kant's *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*.³ Spalding's book was current enough to be elliptically lampooned by Goethe and Schiller in 1797, while the cultural relevance of his book was more positively attested by Johann Gottlieb Fichte's *Bestimmung des Menschen* (1800). Spalding's search for the "determination of man" became, in the words of Norbert Hinske, a "standard formulation" of the German Enlightenment after 1748.⁴ Likewise, Spalding's importance for German "popular philosophy," and even the rise of Kantianism, has been noted by historians of philosophy.⁵

But for all the influence in philosophical discussions, Spalding was first and foremost a Lutheran pastor, and subsequent to the first edition of *Bestimmung des Menschen* he published widely-read books on religion, the clergy, and devotion. Especially renowned for his sermons, in which some of the same themes and language of *Bestimmung* appear, Spalding also translated Shaftesbury as well as English refutations of Deism.⁶ Most importantly, as a member of the Prussian Upper Consistory from 1764 to 1788, Spalding played a key role in the spread of "Enlightenment Theology" in Prussia, thereby influencing the course of "neology" across the German lands.⁷ Spalding's *Bestimmung des Menschen*, for all its many additions and changes from 1748 to 1794, nonetheless retained its core message throughout, while the book accompanied the career of its author and secured his popularity for more than fifty years.

³ Jonathan Zammito, *Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

⁴ See Stefan Lorenz, "Skeptizismus und natürliche Religion. Thomas Abbt und Moses Mendelssohn in ihrer Debatte über Johann Joachim Spaldings *Bestimmung des Menschen*"; and Norbert Hinske, "Das stillschweigende Gespräch: Prinzipien der Anthropologie und Geschichtsphilosophie bei Mendelssohn und Kant," in *Moses Mendelssohn und die Kreise seiner Wirksamkeit*, ed. Michael Albrecht, Eva J. Engel and Norbert Hinske (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1994), 113–33 and 135–56; citation, 141.

⁵ George di Giovanni, *Freedom and Religion in Kant and His Immediate Successors: The Vocation of Humankind, 1774–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Reinhard Brandt, *Die Bestimmung des Menschen bei Kant* (Hamburg: Meiner, 2007).

⁶ See Johann Joachim Spalding, *Predigten* (1765, 1768, 1775), ed. Christian Weidemann (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 1–2.

⁷ A brief synopsis of Spalding's career is offered by Beutel's introduction to the critical edition (see note 1 above) and by Joseph Schollmeier, *Johann Joachim Spalding. Ein Beitrag zur Theologie der Aufklärung* (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1967), 13–38. On the problematic term "neology," see Albrecht Beutel, *Aufklärung in Deutschland* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 248–49. In this essay, however, I use the term "Enlightenment theology" instead of neology.

Spalding belongs to a cohort of Enlightenment authors who responded to deism and anti-religious radicalism, but his significance lies not in new arguments as such, but in the way he sought to re-orient Protestant piety to respond simultaneously to the rise of unbelief on the one hand and the limits of orthodoxy and Pietism on the other. His *Bestimmung des Menschen* eschewed the formal academic language of theological apology, but nonetheless offered a defense of the possibility of revealed religion and the immortality of the soul. While the basic ideas of *Bestimmung* derived from a familiar Wolffian arsenal that saw reason and revelation as compatible, the language and genre in which he presented them were fundamentally new, which explains the book's initial success as well as its longevity. The language of Spalding's defense of Christianity differed profoundly from both Orthodox theology and from prevailing philosophical defenses of revelation to such a degree that it shaped the larger agenda of the German Enlightenment. In unleashing a set of discussions about the purpose of "man" that went far beyond its apologetical and devotional intentions, Spalding's *Bestimmung des Menschen* assisted in the conflation of theology and philosophy that characterized modern German Protestant culture. Thus it offers a window into the remarkable transformation of German Protestantism in the second half of the eighteenth century.

In Spalding's text, three elements of this transformation come together. First, it provided a subjective defense of the possibility of revealed religion, moving beyond the Wolffian *and* Lutheran Orthodox reliance on proofs of reason and Scripture. Second, the success of Spalding's text among the reading public signaled the rise of a new period in German literary culture, in which a broad Protestant middle class formed a key part of the public sphere. While religious books declined relative to other genres, they nonetheless continued to command a very large readership.⁸ The final element that comes to the fore in Spalding's *Bestimmung* is a conflation of philosophical and theological argumentation that was key to German "popular philosophy," and which played an important part in the formation of German philosophy's later claim to be the successor to Protestantism. Together, these three elements shed light on the recasting of German Protestantism in

⁸ See especially Andreas Urs Sommer, "Neologische Geschichtsphilosophie. Johann Friedrich Jerusalem's *Betrachtungen über die vornehmsten Wahrheiten der Religion*," *Zeitschrift für neuere Theologiegeschichte* 9 (2002): 172, where he comments on Albert Ward's famous study *Book Production, Fiction, and the German Reading Public, 1740–1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974). While religious themes declined as a *percentage* of published titles (based on book-fair catalogues), there was almost no decline in *absolute* terms.

the eighteenth century. This Protestant Enlightenment laid the foundation for a modern German culture that privileged its Protestant heritage even while it distanced itself from the doctrinal and confessional particulars of its sixteenth- and seventeenth-century past.⁹ Revisiting Spalding's text enables us to see how this culture of modern German Protestantism emerged.

II. NEW APOLOGIES: SPALDING, DEISM, AND NATURAL RELIGION

Linking the ideas of Christian Wolff and the moral-sense philosophy of the third Earl of Shaftesbury, Spalding offered an apology for Christianity suffused with the language of subjectivism. From the outset, the reader of *Die Bestimmung des Menschen* encounters a moral soliloquy in a style reaching back to Descartes's *Meditations* and becomes privy to the first-person reflections of an individual casting about for firm ground for behavior. "Because I indisputably have the ability to choose" by which maxims I should live, Spalding writes, "I should not act blindly, but instead try to figure out beforehand which way is the most secure according to the best of my abilities. . . . It is therefore certainly worth the effort to know why I exist and what, according to reason [*vernünftiger Weise*], I should become."¹⁰ The remainder of the book recounts the stages of the speaker's journey in search of the best maxims by which to live. He considers, in succession, the senses, the pleasures of the mind, virtue, religion, and finally, immortality. Unlike a Wolffian treatise's listing of arguments and evidence, these stages are not presented didactically; instead in the interior monologue the speaker comes to realize the inadequacy of one position before moving on to the next.

At first he seeks guidance from the pleasures of the senses: "The drive toward pleasure, which lies so deep in my soul, seems to justify giving

⁹ The classic treatment which sought to locate this transition in the Enlightenment is Ernst Troeltsch, *Protestantisches Christentum und Kirche in der Neuzeit* (1906/1909/1922), ed. V. Drehsen with C. Albrecht, *Ernst Troeltsch Kritische Gesamtausgabe* 7 (Berlin, 2004). Troeltsch's arguments are implicit in the still standard account of Enlightenment theology (or neology), Karl Aner, *Die Theologie der Lessingzeit* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1929). For the marginalization of the Catholic past from this story see Michael Printy, *Enlightenment and the Creation of German Catholicism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

¹⁰ Spalding, *Bestimmung*, 42–44.

myself over to this genre of desire.”¹¹ But the spectacle of others who relentlessly followed their desires is sobering, and the speaker resolves to satisfy his senses in such a way as to avoid the pitfalls of this lifestyle. The refined path of the Epicureans seems to offer brighter prospects: although the intensity of pleasure is somewhat diminished, he can exercise his faculty of reason. Satisfied, he declares: “My life slips away as a gentle stream amidst flowers. Thus an orderly voluptuousness would seem to be that which nature intends for man.” This state of satisfaction lasts for a while, but soon doubt creeps in. The soul is not entirely satisfied by the usual pleasures, and it becomes aware that “satisfaction of an entirely different kind” is needed.¹² When he looks inward beyond the obfuscation of his senses, he discovers that he can improve his memory, his ideas, and his wit. He discovers that he is pleased that he can continually improve his mind.¹³

From these brief reflections about self-improvement, Spalding’s narrator discovers society, and from society, virtue. He realizes that there is something beyond the intellectual pleasures of beauty and harmony. To his astonishment, the speaker recognizes within himself drives and sensations that have nothing to do with sensual pleasure or his own advantage. “Whence comes this delight at the good quality of other creatures?” he asks. He sees that this pleasure must have a wholly different source than that of sensual pleasure. Upon further reflection, he realizes that these sensations of good and order are “not purely creations of his own will, and cannot be destroyed by an act of will: they are independent drives of the soul.”¹⁴

At first Spalding’s narrator worries that he is seeking to satisfy this moral sense out of selfishness, but slowly he learns to see that there is a real difference between the upstanding and the useful. An action may be considered reasonable and clever when it is to my advantage, he says, but can only be considered noble and good when it is intended for the good of others. “Therefore,” he concludes, “this tendency within me serves as a source of my actions, and is essentially different from self-love and yet nonetheless belongs to my nature.”¹⁵ Sometimes, he finds, this principle “overwhelms” his entire soul and proves itself stronger than his desire for physical pleasure. Nonetheless, even if he cannot deny his moral sense, he can no less ignore the countervailing sensual desires that sometimes stand

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 46.

¹² *Ibid.*, 54–56.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 62.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 78–80.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 96.

in conflict with it. He realizes that while he wants to follow his desire and his own advantage, he cannot see his entire worth in such pursuits. He thus wishes to encourage these higher feelings, and to assure that the “tendency toward the good, which is planted in me, will always be strengthened and satisfied.” He will give himself over to the pleasant feelings he experiences upon doing good deeds. To do so is to follow “the lawgiver in me.” The speaker vows to see his own worth and happiness [*Glückseligkeit*] in the constant attention to these higher truths, untouched by the passions and selfishness, convinced that this is his purpose in life.¹⁶

Spalding’s speaker begins to see order and beauty everywhere in the world, and eventually proclaims, “I lose myself with desire in the contemplation of this general beauty of which I am a part, and which I cannot corrupt.”¹⁷ From these considerations of the greater harmony of the world and his place in it, Spalding then addresses religion. The lofty thoughts as recounted in the previous section lead the speaker to wonder if there is not some greater being who has given all things their existence, power, and beauty. “With a delightful shudder” [*mit einem entzückenden Schauder*], he senses this higher being at work in him and is moved to admiration and praise.¹⁸ At the same time, he senses how infinitely small he is with respect to this greater power, and is convinced that it is his purpose to come closer to it. This greater being, he realizes, is the source of the law he finds within himself as well as his sense of good and evil. He comes to think that this greater being who created the world also watches over him and is content, but he also proclaims that “in this world everything is a riddle to me.” There remains a great doubt about the justice of the world. The speaker sees the virtuous punished by the world, sees that death brings a rapid and violent end without recompense to the good. Could it be, he asks, that “innocence and justice will be damned? that virtue must sigh under hunger and nakedness?”¹⁹

“No!” comes the resounding answer. “It is not possible, that the world will be ruled in the future as it was in the past.” Spalding’s belief in the harmony and justice he has observed in the world leads him to conclude that there must necessarily be a continuation of life after death. Thus he introduces the final section on “Immortality,” bringing the moral and intellectual journey of the soliloquist past natural religion into a belief in the

¹⁶ Ibid., 106–12.

¹⁷ Ibid., 128.

¹⁸ Ibid., 134.

¹⁹ Ibid., 164–68.

immortality of the soul. “There must be a time when each person receives his due,” he proclaims, and he finds within himself a facility to develop “into eternity.”²⁰ The speaker perceives the unity of the self, in that the “I” who perceives color and sound is the same “I” who reflects upon the world and exists in thought. This realization leads him to conclude that the body is a tool of the self, and that the self will not be scattered at death but will continue. This realization gives him a great sense of value: “I am therefore created for another life. The present time is only the beginning of my existence. It is my first childhood, in which I am being brought up for eternity.” But this belief in a future life does not mean one should abandon this life for the next. Rather, they are to be seen as a unity and the speaker pledges “never to forget that righteousness and an orderly soul are the same thing and have the same value in both this world and the next.”²¹ He concludes with the proclamation that “through my nature and from my creator [I am] called to be righteous and to be happy in righteousness.”²²

Spalding’s *Bestimmung des Menschen* was an unexpected success: at first only printed for a limited circle in 1748, it reached a third edition by 1749, to which he added an important supplement to respond to the suspicion that the spiritual journey recounted in the first version of the work made no mention of, and left little room for, revelation and Christianity. He argues first that Christianity and natural religion share the same principles, and that these were taught with astounding clarity by Jesus. He asserts that “there would be no natural religion in the world if there had not been a revealed one.” He finds it rare—despite the process just presented in the main text—for sensual creatures to easily come to natural religion. Natural religion, he continues, “is best acknowledged and taught where the light of the Gospel has enlightened men’s spirits.” Even if there were such a case, he proceeds, where people independently came up with a system of natural religion, it is inconceivable that it would spread very far in a society otherwise ignorant of revealed religion. Finally, he argues that the doctrines of Christianity contain the “greatest and final purpose of all religion,” namely the improvement of the species. Revelation differs from natural religion in offering “new proofs” as well as new causes for encouragement to embrace the path of improvement.²³ Given Christianity’s obvious advantages, Spalding cannot understand how those who profess their commitment to natu-

²⁰ Ibid., 168–70.

²¹ Ibid., 180–84.

²² Ibid., 192.

²³ Ibid., 202–4.

ral religion can expend so much effort in attacking it. He challenges the devotees of natural religion to fully follow its tenets and then try to slander Christianity “if they can.”²⁴

On the basis of this text alone, the nature of Spalding’s Christianity would hardly be characterized as robust. It has even been labeled a type of neo-Stoicism in vaguely Christian garb.²⁵ But the rest of Spalding’s career and written work argues against this interpretation, given the many volumes of sermons he published, along with other works on the value of “feelings” in Christianity and on the office of the preacher. Moreover, he served many years in Prussia’s Upper Consistory.²⁶ He certainly saw himself as a Christian in an era when many intellectuals chose other paths. That Spalding’s arguments for the truth of Christianity would hardly seem convincing to the atheist or deist is beside the point. His book did not offer any arguments or evidence not already in circulation. Nor did he completely spurn the tradition of rational apology. In 1756, for example, he translated Joseph Butler’s *Analogy of Religion*, which sought to establish the most “probable” case for divine governance of the world based on an observation of nature and society.²⁷

In its merging of Leibnizian-Wolffian ideas about the harmony of the universe with a tone and attitude adapted from Shaftesbury, however, Spalding’s *Bestimmung* put forward a vision of Protestant piety that was fully modern and compatible with reason. At the same time, he engaged with a sentimental turn in philosophy and literature that valued the emotions and the senses. He took from Wolffianism a notion of Protestantism that was less bound by dogma and that emphasized reason and the faculty of understanding. However, he moved beyond institutional theology and philosophy’s rigorous academic style that could seem dry and unappealing to non-specialists. Spalding thus inaugurated a new era in Protestant apologetics, revitalizing a genre that seemed to have run its course by mid-century.

By the time Spalding published the first edition of *Die Bestimmung des Menschen*, Protestant intellectuals had already spent decades striving to turn back a tide of unbelief and atheism, but for all the energy they put into

²⁴ Ibid., 214.

²⁵ See Brandt, *Die Bestimmung des Menschen bei Kant*, 135.

²⁶ See, for example, Spalding, *Gedanken über den Werth der Gefühle in dem Christenthum* (Leipzig, 1761); and Spalding, *Ueber die Nutzbarkeit des Predigantmes und deren Beförderung* (Berlin, 1772).

²⁷ Joseph Butler, *The Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature*, 2nd edition (London, 1736).

these efforts the attacks only increased. In the preface to his translation of James Foster's *Discourses on the Principle Branches of Natural Religion and Social Virtue* (1749–52), published shortly after his *Bestimmung des Menschen*, Spalding observed that: “we have come into a time when religion is attacked in its very fundamentals with a previously unheard of boldness.”²⁸ The challenges to Christianity and revealed religion came in several waves. Radical Spinozist ideas spread in Germany in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, well before the “storm tide” of English deistical works in the 1720s. Germany had a history of radical spiritualism, millenarianism, and heterodoxy going back to the Reformation. Also, a long tradition of alchemical and mystical interest existed, albeit pushed to the margins of society or restricted to small intellectual and aristocratic circles. Additionally, Pietism had fostered its own radical wing in the early eighteenth century, represented most famously by Gottfried Arnold and the alchemically-inclined Johann Konrad Dippel. New to the 1740s, however, was a specifically anti-Christian and anti-religious radicalism. Pietists, for all their criticism of the established church, nonetheless believed in the revealed Word of God, even if their stances varied on such dogmas as the Trinity and the Atonement.²⁹

An additional threat could be seen in the philosophy of Christian Wolff, which seemed to more traditional believers to be a double-edged sword.³⁰ While he always claimed that his philosophy provided the best intellectual support for revealed religion and Christianity, Wolff could not prevent his writings from being appropriated by deists, whose publications resulted in public scandal.³¹ In 1735, for example, Johann Lorenz Schmidt's “translation” of the Pentateuch systematically argued away every instance of divine intervention in the world. The book was so threatening that it managed to arouse a rather uncommon interconfessional co-operation at the imperial level against the text and its author, who eventually wound

²⁸ [Johann Joachim Spalding], preface to James Forster, *Betrachtungen über die vornehmsten Stücke der natürlichen Religion und der gesellschaftlichen Tugend*, vol. I (Leipzig, 1751), np.

²⁹ Martin Mulsow, *Moderne aus dem Untergrund: radikale Frühaufklärung in Deutschland, 1680–1720* (Hamburg: Meiner, 2002), 8. On the “Sturmflut” of English deism, see Emanuel Hirsch, *Geschichte der neueren evangelischen Theologie* 1 (Waltrop: Spenner, 2000), 292–323.

³⁰ Norbert Hinske, “Wolffs Stellung in der deutschen Aufklärung,” in *Christian Wolff, 1679–1754. Interpretation zu seiner Philosophie und deren Wirkung*, 2nd ed., ed. Werner Schneiders (Hamburg: Meiner, 1986), 317.

³¹ Günter Gawlick, “Christian Wolff und der Deismus,” in *Christian Wolff*, 139–47.

up in Danish Altona and subsequently published a German translation of Spinoza's *Ethics*.³² While Germany's most famous deist, Hermann Samuel Reimarus, would not make his anonymous appearance in Lessing's writings until 1774, translations of English deist works appeared in German in the 1740s. Indeed Schmidt played a vital role with his translation of Mathew Tindal's *Christianity as Old as Creation, or, the Gospel a Republication of the Religion of Nature* (1741).³³ Deist works had been known in Germany long before Schmidt's edition of Tindal, but that translation indicated that deism had become a matter for mainstream debate by the 1740s.³⁴ Even more notorious was the case of Johann Christian Edelmann, whose *Moses mit aufgedecktem Angesichte* (1740), inspired by Spinoza's *Tractatus*, dealt with the Bible as a human creation. His later defense (*Glaubensbekenntnis*) in 1747 was banned and burned. The author finally took refuge in Frederick's Berlin, albeit under the order to publish no more. As Jonathan Israel notes, despite this humiliating end, the public nature of Edelmann's case meant that these ideas were out in the open and widely discussed. There was no returning to the underground.³⁵

As these theological and philosophical debates became more and more a matter of public interest, theologians increased their efforts to defend the established faith. In 1717, the eclectic philosopher and theologian Johann Franz Budde (Buddeus) wrote in his *Lehr-Sätze von der Atheisterey und dem Aberglauben*—also published in Latin to wide European circulation—that teachers of the church have no greater duty than to “uncover the daily growing poison of *atheism*, have their weapons at hand, and destroy this monster.”³⁶ In over seven hundred pages of densely-argued and annotated text, Budde, who had held positions in philosophy as well as theology in Halle and Jena, treats the nature of atheism, its history and related doctrines, proves the existence of God, refutes the arguments of the atheists, and proposes a cure for superstition.³⁷ A similar academic attack on deism emerged from the pen of Tübingen's chancellor Christoph Mathäus Pfaff.

³² Jonathan Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible: Translation, Scholarship, Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 118–31; Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1670–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 552.

³³ Matthew Tindal, *Beweis, daß das Christenthum so alt als die Welt sey* (Frankfurt and Leipzig, 1741).

³⁴ Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 655.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 661–63.

³⁶ Johann Franz Budde, *Lehr-Sätze von der Atheisterey und dem Aberglauben* (Jena, 1717), np [Preface, 4–5].

³⁷ *Ibid.*, np [29].

His sprawling *Theologiae Anti-Deisticae* offered almost five hundred questions and topics intended as an academic program to insulate theology students against these “new” arguments against Christianity. He followed this work a few years later with a set of lectures on “anti-deistical theology.”³⁸ At Halle, Sigmund Jacob Baumgarten adapted Wolff’s method in order to chart a defense of Lutheranism on rational grounds in which he borrowed from Anglican defenses against deism and radical thought. The cultivation of French freethinkers at Frederick’s court after his accession in 1740 provided another spur for “defenses” of Christianity. Spalding’s future colleague, August Friedrich Wilhelm Sack, published one of the most important of these defenses, *Verteidigter Glaube der Christen* (1748).³⁹ All of these works followed a long line of Christian apologetics and relied on a rich tradition going back to the days of the early church.⁴⁰

Spalding moved beyond the types of “proofs” and arguments offered by his contemporaries, while not necessarily rejecting their convictions. For Spalding, a new basis for evaluating religion was to be found in feeling and the moral sense. However, this did not represent a return to Pietism; instead, feeling and intuition were supposed to lead not to the mystery of the Word and the Augustinian moral pessimism of Pietist dogmatics, but rather to a new secure grounding for religion.⁴¹ Rather than responding to the critics of religion with metaphysical and theological arguments, Spalding wanted his readers to arrive at a sense of wonder, and for them to achieve the right disposition to see an analogy of order between the moral and natural world.⁴² The readability and popularity of Spalding’s *Bestimmung* moved apologetics out of the lecture hall and integrated it into the piety of modern Protestantism. In firmly binding a new vision of politeness and sociability to a vision of enlightened Christianity, he sought to assure a continued role for Christianity in modern society.

Spalding found inspiration for this move away from the academy and into polite society in the writings of Shaftesbury. Shaftesbury, the “Oracle of Deism,” may seem a strange choice for a Lutheran pastor—however

³⁸ Pfaff, *Entwurf der Theologiae Anti-Deisticae* (Giessen, 1757); and Pfaff, *Academische Reden über den Entwurf der Theologiae Anti-Deisticae* (Frankfurt, 1759). On deism, see Wayne Hudson, *Enlightenment and Modernity: The English Deists and Reform* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2009).

³⁹ Aner, *Die Theologie der Lessingzeit*, 28.

⁴⁰ Karl Gerhard Steck, “Apologetik,” *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* 3 (1995), 371–429.

⁴¹ Mark-Georg Dehrmann, *Das “Orakel der Deisten.” Shaftesbury und die deutsche Aufklärung* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2008), 136–39.

⁴² Andreas Kubik, “Spaldings *Bestimmung des Menschen* als Grundtext einer aufgeklärten Frömmigkeit,” *Zeitschrift für neuere Theologiegeschichte* 16 (2009): 1–20.

open-minded—intent on preserving key elements of Christianity.⁴³ Yet, as Mark-Georg Dehrmann argues, Spalding sought to demonstrate how deism’s rational proofs of the existence of a higher power led not to a denial of revelation but to a firm conviction of the truth of Christianity, since theism and revelation reinforced one another.⁴⁴ Spalding found in Shaftesbury a genial ally among the freethinkers. A brash iconoclast like John Toland would not do. Shaftesbury’s gentlemanly “politeness” was firmly anti-dogmatic and eager to dismantle the authority of the church and court. For Shaftesbury, revealed religion posed a danger to polite sociability.⁴⁵ Nonetheless, he seemed sincere in his proclamation in *An Inquiry Concerning Virtue and Merit* that “the Admiration and Love of Order, Harmony and Proportion, in whatever kind, is naturally improving to the Temper, advantageous to social Affection, and highly assistant to *Virtue*,” and that “‘tis impossible that such a *Divine Order* shou’d be contemplated without Extasy and Rapture.”⁴⁶ He declared that virtue is not “compleat” without piety, and that the “Perfection and Height of VIRTUE must be owing to *the Belief of a GOD*.”⁴⁷ Spalding saw in Shaftesbury an opening to deism, and instead of simply arguing against it on rational grounds—which he continued to do through his translations, and as many of his Wolffian colleagues did as well—he saw in the sense of moral obligation an invitation to Christianity.⁴⁸

III. THE LANGUAGE OF RELIGION: ENLIGHTENMENT THEOLOGY AND THE PROTESTANT PUBLIC

This modern invitation to Christianity required a new language as well. Although it has been common since Karl Aner’s classic treatment of

⁴³ The term “oracle of deism” for Shaftesbury goes back to Elisha Smith, *The Cure of Deism: or, The Mediatorial Scheme by Jesus Christ the only true Religion. In answer to the objections started, and to the very imperfect account of the religion of nature, and of Christianity, given by the two oracles of deism, the Author of Christianity as old as the Creation; and the author of the Characteristicks*, 2 vols. (London, 1736).

⁴⁴ Dehrmann, *Das “Orakel der Deisten,”* 136.

⁴⁵ Lawrence Klein, *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness: Moral Discourse and Cultural Politics in Early Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 158.

⁴⁶ Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, 2 volumes, ed. Philip Ayres (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 1: 225.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 226.

⁴⁸ Dehrmann, *Das “Orakel der Deisten,”* passim.

Enlightenment theology in 1929 to point to the centrality of theological Wolffianism in the dismantling of dogma, the importance of form and language cannot be underestimated. In launching a new era in the language of Protestant apologetics that would appeal to a broad middle-class readership, Spalding laid the foundations for an enlightened Protestant public sphere in which modern Protestantism would take form. The new defense of Christianity which Spalding put forth with so much success did not explicitly draw from the formal academic language of Lutheran Orthodoxy, nor from the precise language of Wolffian philosophy. Instead, it had more in common with the language of feeling and sentimentality that was establishing itself in other branches of literature. This new idiom was critical in what Eric Blackall famously termed the “emergence of German as a literary language.”⁴⁹ Spalding’s new style and argumentation in defending Christianity became part of mainstream German Protestant culture and was especially important for its influence in the Protestant reading public. Spalding and his cohort of new theologians would proceed to occupy not only important educational and institutional positions in the German Protestant lands; they would also establish themselves in the literary public sphere. The longevity of Spalding’s text, with its numerous editions and imitators down to the end of the century, is sufficient evidence of his influence.

In the same year that Spalding’s *Bestimmung* appeared, Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock published the first three cantos of *Der Messias* [*The Messiah*], a long hexameter epic on Christ’s redemption of humankind. This work inaugurated a new age in German poetics. Styling himself a German Milton, the young Klopstock composed and published his poem soon after leaving Schulpforta, a renowned Saxon boarding school. The poem asks whether human language is adequate to describe God’s mercy and Christ’s redemption. “Sing, immortal soul, of the redemption of sinful man,” the epic begins.⁵⁰ “But, oh Deed, which can only be known by the All-Merciful,/ can poetry also approach you from the shadowy distance?”⁵¹ He then implores the “creator spirit” to bless the art of poetry and to “lead it, as your imitator, to me.”⁵² Klopstock, in Blackall’s words, “laid the founda-

⁴⁹ Eric A. Blackall, *The Emergence of German as a Literary Language, 1700–1775*, 2nd ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978 [1959]).

⁵⁰ Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock, *Der Messias, Band I: Text*, ed. Elisabeth Höpker-Herberg (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1974), 1: 1. “Sing, unsterbliche Seele, der sündigen Menschen Erlösung.”

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 1: 8–9. “Aber, o That, die allein der Allbarmherzige kennet,/Darf aus dunkler Ferne sich auch dir nahen die Dichtkunst?”

⁵² *Ibid.*, 1: 10–12. “Weihe sie, Geist Schöpfer, vor dem ich hier still anbeten,/ Führe sie mir, als deine Nachahmerin, voller Entzückung,/ Voll unsterblicher Kraft, in verklärter Schönheit, entgegen.”

tions of a new grand style, giving to the German language a whole new register of voice.”⁵³ By infusing the language with a new richness, Klopstock also prepared the way for the rise of sentimental literature in Germany. The *Messias* has been seen as the “high-point” of sentimental poetry,⁵⁴ inspiring both the *Sturm und Drang* as well as the lesser known Göttingen “Hainbund” in the 1770s. In Goethe’s epistolary novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774) the two would-be lovers stand at the window observing a thunderstorm. As Werther describes Lotte looking across the landscape he writes, “I saw her eyes full of tears, she laid her hand on mine and said—Klopstock! I recalled immediately the glorious ode that lay in her thoughts. I fell into the flood of feelings [*Empfindungen*] that she poured over me with this byword [*Losung*].”⁵⁵ Nominally fictional, Goethe’s *Werther* was one of the most famous enthusiasts of Klopstock’s poetry.

The poet also inspired a wide range of non-fictional followers, including many Enlightenment theologians. Spalding wrote to Johann Ludwig Wilhelm Gleim that Klopstock needed to be guaranteed financial support and security, and Johann Friedrich Wilhelm Jerusalem, the founder of the Collegium Carolinum, tried to bring Klopstock to Braunschweig.⁵⁶ Their enthusiasm is remarkable as much for what these theologians shared with Klopstock as for how they differed. Spalding and Jerusalem, after all, were two of the most influential public theologians in the long process by which Protestant theology slowly distanced itself from traditional doctrines, especially the central dogma that Christ needed to come and redeem a helpless and sinful humankind. By contrast, Christ’s act of redemption was a central dogma of Orthodox Lutheran Christianity and was the motivating factor for Klopstock’s epic. Nonetheless, Klopstock and theologians such as Spalding and Jerusalem shared a common intellectual heritage in Leibnizian-Wolffian philosophy. They saw the world as essentially harmonious and indicative of God’s goodness. For his part, Klopstock did not think that rational argument for the immortality of the soul would convince an unbeliever; indeed, it would only drive him farther away. This belief led him to employ poetic language to reach non-Christians.⁵⁷ Spalding thus shared

⁵³ Blackall, *The Emergence of German as a Literary Language*, 350.

⁵⁴ Ernst and Erika von Borries, *Aufklärung und Empfindsamkeit, Sturm und Drang*. Deutsche Literaturgeschichte (Munich: DTV, 1991), 2: 69.

⁵⁵ Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers in Gedenkausgabe der Werke, Briefe und Gespräche*, ed. Ernst Beutler (Zurich: Artemis Verlag, 1953), 4: 289.

⁵⁶ Gerhard Kaiser, *Klopstock: Religion und Dichtung* (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1963), 28–34.

⁵⁷ Bernd Auerochs, *Die Entstehung der Kunstreligion*, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 239.

with Klopstock the conviction that the struggle against skepticism and unbelief requires a new tone and a new language. While Klopstock's obvious contributions to German language and literature are thoroughly documented and well known, Spalding's role in the formation of a language of Protestant piety has been largely forgotten. By pointing to their conjunction at mid-century, I would like to indicate that the development of a Protestant literary voice and reading public was as important as the Wolffian attempt to harmonize reason and revelation.

The idiom Spalding pioneered in devotional works reverberated throughout the remainder of the century. Its influence can be seen most readily in Jerusalem's *Betrachtungen über die vornehmsten Wahrheiten der Religion*, the first installment of which appeared in 1768. Jerusalem (1709–89) was first the tutor and then advisor to Duke Karl I of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel. In addition to his religious writings, he was influential as an educational reformer. His language mirrors Spalding's quite precisely. In the first "observation," "The Importance of the Investigation, whether God exists" he writes: "I see everywhere a beauty, and in infinite diversity a harmony, into which my soul loses itself in delight. I look at the heavens. What hidden power keeps those enormous and innumerable heavenly bodies in that empty space in their immovable [*unverrückten*] order . . . ?"⁵⁸ Like Spalding's narrator, Jerusalem's speaker proceeds to question whether such order could have arisen without a creator. He comes to realize that "I myself am even an infinite wonder . . . without me all of nature is dead, all of its order nothing better than chaos." The grapevine cannot enjoy itself, the silkworm spins in vain without man to profit from it, the flower does not sense its own beauty.⁵⁹ He exclaims:

In me everything is united, through me everything becomes reason, everything harmony, everything true beauty. Without me nature is impoverished. I create for her in every moment new forms, I delve into her inner workshop and discover her hidden laws. I measure the skies, I study the planets and calculate their course. I make the past and the future my own. My prospects, my abilities and my drives have no boundaries, it is all infinite in me. Even more, the source of my pleasure and displeasure is in myself. I am my own lawgiver, my own judge. I praise and condemn, I reward and pun-

⁵⁸ Johann Friedrich Wilhelm Jerusalem, *Betrachtung über die vornehmsten Wahrheiten der Religion* (Braunschweig, 1768; facs. repr., Hildesheim: Olms, 2007), 2.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

ish myself, and my approval is more important to me than the praise of a thousand flatterers.⁶⁰

Here the Leibnizian-Wolffian conviction about the harmony of the word is rooted in a firm awareness of the self and subjective experience. But lest he fall into solipsistic self-praise, Jerusalem follows with the question, “but what do I see in all this richness of this order, if there is no God, no free, reasonable being who has created all this and fashioned this glorious order?”⁶¹ If there were no God or eternal life, he exclaims, he would rather be an animal, because the animal is content when its drives are fulfilled. These passages anchor man’s place in the world with subjective language that echoes that of Spalding.

When Jerusalem first set out to write his *Betrachtungen*, he intended to publish three parts with ten “observations” each. Each part would deal respectively with natural religion, biblical Judaism, and Christianity. The final “observation” in the third book on Christianity promised—in the table of contents—to cover the rise and spread of the religion, its temporary decline, and eventual improvement. The last few projected topics read: “Gradual Enlightenment. Reformation. Present condition. Fortunate prospects in our times and the future. Brief observation of the present fanatical Deism.”⁶² These later volumes never fully materialized, reaching only up to Moses in the portions published by the end of the 1770s, although his daughter published some of his material on Jesus after his death.⁶³ Nonetheless, Jerusalem’s *Betrachtungen* was extremely well-received. Translated into Danish, French, Dutch and Swedish, it was praised by Goethe, among others, for its style.⁶⁴ The Berlin pastor Andreas Riem, who would be sacked for refusing to subscribe to the Prussian Religious Edict of 1788, published his own four-volume *Fortgesetzte Betrachtung über die eigentlichen Wahrheiten der Religion, oder Fortgang da wo Herr Abt Jerusalem stillstand* between 1789 and 1795.⁶⁵ The simplicity of Jerusalem’s style was intentional, as Andreas Urs Sommers points out. While the title was certainly a nod to Reimarus’s *Die Vornehmsten Wahrheiten der natürlichen Religion* (1754), it was also important that Jerusalem’s “observations”

⁶⁰ Ibid., 7–8.

⁶¹ Ibid., 8.

⁶² Ibid., np [Vorrede, xiv].

⁶³ Andreas Urs Sommer, “Neologische Geschichtsphilosophie,” 169–217.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 173.

⁶⁵ Andreas Riem, *Fortgesetzte Betrachtungen über die Wahrheiten der Religion, oder Fortgang da wo Herr Abt Jerusalem stillstand*, 4 vols. (Berlin, 1789–95).

were directed not at *theology* but at *religion*. Theology was a learned and dry subject; institutionalized in the academic establishment, it could drive people away from actual devotion, or so he believed.⁶⁶ Jerusalem followed Spalding's cue in adopting the first-person seeker of truth with whom the non-specialist reading public could identify. Literary and linguistic improvements allowed theology to be integrated into vernacular enlightened intellectual culture. Pietists, of course, had also addressed themselves to a broad German readership. But unlike Pietist devotional tracts, Spalding's *Bestimmung* and the works that echoed it engaged the mind as much as the heart.

Style alone, however, was not sufficient to revolutionize German Protestant culture. As important were new developments in scholarly theology, which will only be indicated briefly here. They are important, however, because the new theology went hand in hand with the rise of a new kind of vernacular Protestant readership. As the new theology developed, it also learned to cultivate the reading public. Together, new scholarly developments in theology, coupled with a broad Protestant reading public, ensured a prominent role for enlightened Protestantism in German life. While many hands worked to set this theological revolution in motion, the key figure was without a doubt Johann Salomo Semler (1725–91), Baumgarten's successor at Halle and the father of historical-critical theology.⁶⁷ Through his pioneering work in historical biblical criticism Semler sought to recast Scripture in terms that spoke to his contemporaries. An incredibly prolific author, who published some two hundred and fifty works by some counts, Semler wanted to refine theology as a scholarly discipline and raise its intellectual standing.⁶⁸ He insisted that theologians should have free rein to revisit long-standing doctrines and traditions, but at the same time he thought that the established churches still needed their formal confessions and historical liturgies. It was a difficult balancing act, one that in Protestant theology would only be completed by Schleiermacher.⁶⁹ As important as Semler's scholarly and technical innovations, however, was the emergence of a Protestant reading public to which appeals about the legitimacy

⁶⁶ Sommer, "Neologische Geschichtsphilosophie," 181.

⁶⁷ On Semler see especially Gottfried Hornig, *Johann Salomo Semler. Studien zu Leben und Werk des Hallenser Aufklärungstheologen* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1996); Hornig, *Die Anfänge der historisch-kritischen Theologie. Johann Salomo Semlers Schriftverständnis und seine Stellung zu Luther* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961); Hirsch, *Geschichte*, 4: 48–89.

⁶⁸ See the bibliography in Hornig, *Johann Salomo Semler*, 313–36.

⁶⁹ Hirsch, *Geschichte*, 4: 89.

of new ideas about Christianity or the relationship between religion and society were addressed. Spalding and the new language of religion helped shape a Protestant reading public to which Enlightenment theology would make its appeal.

IV. PHILOSOPHY, THE PUBLIC, AND MODERN PROTESTANT CULTURE

Although Spalding's text owed its roots to an apologetical impulse, the discussions it unleashed would eventually move far beyond their original religious roots, and his themes and language would reverberate over the course of the German Enlightenment for almost fifty years.⁷⁰ Spalding the theologian therefore played a key role in shaping the concerns of German philosophy, especially the latter's interest in asserting a notion of human spirit and free will in the face of materialist assertions about human nature. Upon the appearance of the seventh, significantly expanded, edition of Spalding's text in 1763, Moses Mendelssohn and his good friend Thomas Abbt decided to publish their exchange over Spalding's central questions.⁷¹ Their discussion recapitulated a central Enlightenment debate over optimism, but it is important to recognize that Spalding's *Bestimmung* added to the Leibnizian optimistic argument a conviction about the immortality of the soul. "The *actual* destiny of man in this world [*hienieden*]," Mendelssohn wrote, "both of the fool and the wise, albeit realized in unequal measure, is therefore the *formation of the soul's faculties according to divine intentions*."⁷² He would maintain this view in his contribution to the "What is Enlightenment?" exchange some twenty years later, where he would also repeatedly invoke the phrase "Bestimmung des Menschen." Abbt, for his part, responded much more skeptically, citing Bayle's notion of human history being nothing other than an unending chain of war, violence, intolerance, and butchery.⁷³ After Abbt's death, Mendelssohn further developed his optimistic view, resulting in his reworking of Plato's *Phaedo*. This modern version of the Socratic dialogue about the immortality of the soul would

⁷⁰ Ulrich Barth, "Religion und Vernunft," *International Yearbook of German Idealism* (New York: De Gruyter, 2010), 7: 25–27.

⁷¹ Stefan Lorenz, "Skeptizismus und natürliche Religion," 113–33.

⁷² Moses Mendelssohn, "Orakel, die Bestimmung des Menschen betreffend," in *Moses Mendelssohn Jubiläumsausgabe* (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1981), 6: 20.

⁷³ [Thomas Abbt], "Zweifel über die Bestimmung des Menschen," in *Moses Mendelssohn Jubiläumsausgabe* 6,1:12.

earn Mendelssohn Europe-wide fame. He maintained that the soul was unified, indivisible, and immortal. From this followed the necessity of a divine creator.⁷⁴ Mendelssohn thus used Spalding's treatise to re-launch a debate about optimism and harmony, thereby ensuring that the book would continue to serve as a focal point for the German Enlightenment.

The Kantian scholar Reinhard Brandt has recently argued that the question of "the determination of man" was the key philosophical issue of the second half of the eighteenth century. "The transition from the static, objective essence of the ontological question 'what is man' to the dynamic, subject-oriented and practical determination marks the path in German philosophy from Christian Wolff and the Wolffians to Kant," Brandt writes.⁷⁵ "The appearance of Spalding's little work in 1748," he continues, "is the beacon of a new concept of the self that ends around 1800."⁷⁶ Brandt argues that the pervasive question about the "Bestimmung des Menschen" motivated Kant's critiques, in which he engaged the popular philosophical question about the determination of man and sought to put it on firm epistemological foundations.⁷⁷

While Brandt is right to point to the importance of Spalding's work, he also sells Spalding short as a Christian theologian. According to Brandt, Spalding's text was nothing more than a restatement of common neo-Stoic themes that were current among European intellectuals. With the "second era of the Enlightenment" after 1750, Brandt asserts, Christian ecclesiastical faith was essentially "replaced with a neostoic world-view. This dechristianization occurred without anyone being martyred or burned at the stake" because "important parts of the Christian religion were kept, even as uncomfortable doctrines such as original sin, the Redemption or the punishments of hell" were discarded.⁷⁸ While it is certainly true that Enlightenment theology did indeed soften if not reject several doctrines that had been at the heart of confessional Christianity, historians—and even philosophers—cannot retroactively excommunicate figures who considered themselves to be good Protestant Christians. After all, Spalding not only published eleven editions of *Die Bestimmung des Menschen*; he also dedi-

⁷⁴ Alexander Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn: A Biographical Study* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1973), 130–57; David Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment: Protestants, Jews, and Catholics from London to Vienna* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 207–8.

⁷⁵ Brandt, *Die Bestimmung des Menschen bei Kant*, 15.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 133–34.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 73. On the pervasiveness of the formula see *ibid.*, 57–138.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 135.

cated his entire career to the Lutheran Church, to preaching, and to publishing works of Christian devotion. It is on his self-professed grounds to be defending the truth of Christianity that his work is to be assessed. And it is precisely in the grey area between neo-Stoic philosophy and enlightened Protestant theology where Spalding made his contribution to the subsequent unfolding of the German Enlightenment.

The question remains whether Spalding's text merely provided the German Enlightenment with a catch-phrase that others would exploit to greater effect, or whether his work set ideas in motion that were productive for new ways of thinking about man's place in the world. Spalding's linguistic innovation on its own was significant for recasting the language of apology in a subjective tone. I would also like to suggest that in presenting a Leibnizian-Wolffian world view in a language of piety, Spalding fueled a conflation of theology and philosophy that pervaded the Protestant public sphere. As *academic* disciplines, with highly technical terminology and institutional homes, theology and philosophy did indeed continue to develop distinct identities and genres, albeit at differing paces. Yet Spalding's work was important for the evolution of German popular philosophy and its characteristic blending of religious and secular concerns.

Employing the term "popular philosophy" risks repeating the disdain of its historical opponents, but it has contemporary provenance. Johann August Ernesti first used the term (ironically enough in Latin) in an inaugural lecture of 1754, borrowing Diderot's injunction to make philosophy "popular."⁷⁹ Popular philosophers never formed a cohesive group, though many of them would later object to the opacity of Kant's philosophical vocabulary. Their main goal was not to simplify or popularize academic philosophy in the vulgar sense, but rather to elaborate a more useful, practical philosophy for life in the world.⁸⁰ Popular philosophy, as George di Giovanni notes, "encompasses areas of discourse that we would nowadays more comfortably associate with literature, religion, and social criticism."⁸¹ It embodies the goals of Enlightenment writers who sought to harmonize a

⁷⁹ Roland Mortier, "Diderot, Ernesti, et la 'philosophie populaire,'" in John Pappas, ed., *Essays on Diderot and the Enlightenment in Honor of Otis Fellows* (Geneva: Droz, 1974), 207–30.

⁸⁰ Johan van der Zande, "In the Image of Cicero: German Philosophy between Wolff and Kant," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 56 (1995): 425. See also Ian Hunter, *Rival Enlightenments: Civil and Metaphysical Philosophy in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 272–73; and Zammito, *Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology*, 137–78.

⁸¹ Di Giovanni, *Freedom and Religion in Kant*, 38–39.

program for social and intellectual reform within the general umbrella of Protestant Christian culture. This is why it is important to recall the apologetical thrust behind Spalding's attempt to discern the "purpose" of man. The history of Spalding's *Bestimmung* shows us the centrality of the apologetical impulse to both Enlightenment theology as well as popular philosophy.⁸² This insight helps us better understand the continued conflation of philosophy and theology that would underpin the struggle for a self-consciously modern Protestantism. In exploring the ways in which Spalding's text intersected with the interests and concerns of popular philosophy over the second half of the eighteenth century, we can see how modern Protestant theology entered a pact with modern German philosophy that would provide it with a creative vitality, but also a lurking instability.

Spalding's distinctive formulation—the determination of man—would remain a guiding theme of the late German Enlightenment down to Fichte's 1800 popular philosophical tract of the same title. Fichte's echo of Spalding's *Bestimmung* in his own work is unmistakable (he also publically appealed to Spalding in the atheism controversy). Earlier, in 1794, Fichte already employed the phrase "Bestimmung des Menschen" in his series of highly successful Jena lectures, *Über die Bestimmung des Gelehrten*, but here his language was firm and declarative rather than introspective.⁸³ One can only define the purpose of the scholar, he asserted in 1794, if one first understands the purpose of man in society, and to know this one must ask the question, "what is the calling of man as such?" This question, he continues, is essentially the fundamental question of all philosophy.⁸⁴ Later, after his expulsion from Jena and seeking to establish himself on a new footing, he revisited the question of the determination of man. Not only was his title a quotation of Spalding, but more significantly, the whole first section, "Doubt," echoed Spalding's language and tone. Like Spalding's narrator, the "I" of Fichte's *Bestimmung des Menschen* starts from a reflection about his existence. At first assured by his education and culture that such a question is "superfluous," he soon begins to think more deeply about his purpose in life. The "I" of the text is not meant to be Fichte himself, but the reader—explicitly not a professional philosopher—who would ideally

⁸² Clemens Schwaiger, "Zur Frage nach den Quellen von Spaldings *Bestimmung des Menschen*. Ein ungelöstes Rätsel der Aufklärungsforschung," in *Die Bestimmung des Menschen*, ed. Norbert Hinske, vol. 11:1 of *Aufklärung* (1999), 17–18.

⁸³ Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Über die Bestimmung des Gelehrten*, in *J. G. Fichte-Gesamtausgabe der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* I, 3, ed. Reinhard Lauth and Hans Jacob (Stuttgart: Frommann, 1966), 23–68.

⁸⁴ Fichte, *Bestimmung des Gelehrten*, 27.

make the same intellectual journey. He asks: “Am I free and independent, or am I nothing on my own and simply a phenomenon of an external power?”⁸⁵ This conflict rehearses the pantheism debate of the 1780s, and more broadly the conflict between free will and determinism that surfaced with Spinoza. Remarkable, however, is Fichte’s recapitulation of these themes in the popular language of Spalding’s *Bestimmung des Menschen*. At the end of the first section, Fichte’s “I” is left on the precipice: “Upon the answer to this question hangs my entire sense of peace and worth. But it is impossible for me to decide: I simply have no reason to decide for one opinion or the other. Unbearable condition of uncertainty and indecision! [. . .] What power can save me from you, what power can save me from myself?” The answer comes in the form of a spirit, who conducts a long epistemological dialogue with Fichte’s “I.”⁸⁶ At the end of this section, however, the spirit disappears, throwing the “I” back onto himself, where he comes, in the final section, “Faith,” to find comfort in the realization that all his representations are not the reflection of some external reality, but are rooted in his own self and consciousness.

It is beyond the scope of this essay to fully explicate Fichte’s system here, much less to detail the subsequent, almost universally negative, reactions by, among others, Jacobi, Reinhold, Schleiermacher, and Hegel.⁸⁷ These reactions, notably Hegel’s essay *Glaube und Wissen* (1802), played an important role in the subsequent development of post-Kantian idealism. It suffices to note that the subjective turn initiated by Spalding had gone far beyond the intentions of his original intervention. However, Fichte’s appeal to the public with this work shows that the questions and, as importantly, the form that Spalding unleashed still had cultural relevance up through the end of the eighteenth century. In leaning so heavily on Spalding—whose text had become a monument of neo-Protestant piety—Fichte signaled a new stage in philosophy’s assertion to supplant religion’s claim on public life. As Anthony La Vopa writes, Fichte aimed “to reconceive the self as a moral agent [and] to position philosophy at the center of a new configuration of knowledge so that it could validate its claim to be the moral arbiter for a modern public culture.”⁸⁸ In Fichte, we see the most spectacular exam-

⁸⁵ Fichte, *Bestimmung des Menschen* (Hamburg: Meiner, 2000), 32.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 35. For a summary, see di Giovanni, *Freedom and Religion*, 272–85, to which my account of the philosophical issues is indebted.

⁸⁷ For these, see di Giovanni, *Freedom and Religion*, 285–93, and Hansjürgen Verweyen, “Einleitung” to Fichte, *Die Bestimmung des Menschen*, xxx–xxxvii.

⁸⁸ Anthony La Vopa, *Fichte: The Self and the Calling of Philosophy, 1762–1799* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 185.

ple of philosophy seeking to become the binding agent and moral grounding of public culture. Hegel would likewise continue the social-pedagogical impulse of popular philosophy and Enlightenment theology, even while breaking with its basic epistemological foundations.⁸⁹ Re-examining the role that Spalding's *Bestimmung* played in the creation of a new language and discourse of Protestant piety reminds us of the unstable boundaries between philosophy and religion in the second half of the eighteenth century.

In describing the "conflict" between the theological and philosophical faculties, Kant argued that, while the "biblical theologian" may *describe* the nature of God based on the text of the Scriptures, he "cannot and need not prove that God Himself spoke through the Bible, since that is a matter of history and belongs to the philosophical faculty."⁹⁰ While nominally claiming to respect the autonomy of each discipline, Kant sought to subordinate theology to philosophy, anticipating the latter's ascendancy in the nineteenth-century German university. From the perspective of disciplinary autonomy, Kant and subsequent philosophers proved successful in asserting the primacy of philosophical and historical claims over those of scripture or official statutes and doctrines. But on another level, namely in the appeal to the educated Protestant public, the separation of theology and philosophy was never so clear. Here is where Spalding's text tells us something about the way in which the Protestant Enlightenment shaped modern German intellectual culture.

The Protestant Enlightenment bequeathed to modern Germany a conviction that a Christianity purified by the twin phenomena of the Reformation and the Enlightenment had enabled its culture to stand at the forefront of historical development. At the heart of this conviction was an ambivalence about the place of creedal Christianity in this world view, an ambivalence that would much later bring the whole intellectual construct to collapse in the wake of the First World War. This conviction of Protestantism's positive contribution to world history rested on three legs: a modern apologetics rendering Christianity compatible with polite society; a vernacular idiom that appealed simultaneously to heart and mind; and an engagement with philosophical arguments about man's place in the world. All three of these elements featured prominently in Spalding's *Bestimmung des*

⁸⁹ George di Giovanni, "Faith without Religion, Religion without Faith: Kant and Hegel on Religion," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 41 (2003): 381.

⁹⁰ Immanuel Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties/ Der Streit der Fakultäten*, trans. and intro. Mary J. Gregor (New York: Abaris Books, 1979), 35.

Menschen in its repeated iterations over the second half of the eighteenth century. Spalding's *Bestimmung* and its reception show us how the enlightened German public could plausibly see modern Protestant Christianity and the new philosophy as mutually re-enforcing phenomena. As a modest heir to Wolffian rationalism and optimism, the popular philosophy that underpinned the German Enlightenment emphasized the rational order of the universe, the existence of providence, and the reality of the soul and of a future life—elements obviously in harmony with Christian doctrine. It was to these expectations and assumptions that philosophers such as Fichte appealed in seeking to assert philosophy's Protestant heritage, even as theologians resisted such claims. While philosophers and theologians, from the perches of their professorial lecterns, may have insisted on the autonomy of their disciplines, the public to which they appealed could more easily entertain ambivalent and overlapping claims on the legacy of Protestantism. The result was a powerful intellectual synthesis that would dominate German culture until the twentieth century.

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