

Las colecciones de Documentos de Trabajo del CIDE representan un medio para difundir los avances de la labor de investigación, y para permitir que los autores reciban comentarios antes de su publicación definitiva. Se agradecerá que los comentarios se hagan llegar directamente al (los) autor(es). ❖ D.R. © 2003, Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas, A. C., carretera México - Toluca 3655 (km.16.5), Lomas de Santa Fe, 01210 México, D. F., tel. 727-9800, fax: 292-1304 y 570-4277. ❖ Producción a cargo del (los) autor(es), por lo que tanto el contenido como el estilo y la redacción son responsabilidad exclusiva suya.  
06-febrero-2003



---

**NÚMERO 24**

Michael J. Sauter

**PREACHERS, PONYTAILS AND ENTHUSIASM:  
ON THE LIMITS OF PUBLICNESS IN ENLIGHTENMENT  
PRUSSIA**

## *Resumen*

Este artículo desafía el entendimiento reinante de la esfera pública prusiana del siglo XVIII. Los académicos han discutido que esta esfera fue definida por los impresos, y ya que éstos eran fácilmente distribuidos, su público era potencialmente universal (o de hecho lo era realmente). Este artículo, sin embargo, sostiene que el público de estos impresos era considerablemente limitado. Estaba basado, de hecho, en una división del público en esferas oral e impresa. La esfera oral era local y enraizada en la práctica religiosa; la esfera impresa era universal y justificada por el propio sentimiento de superioridad de las élites educadas. Los predicadores trataron de mantener la frontera entre estas dos esferas. Para ello, siempre filtraron de sus sermones conocimiento que era peligroso para la visión purista y más limitada de sus congregantes. Entonces, cuando Emmanuel Kant definió el “Iluminamiento” con referencia a los debates libres en impresos —tema retomado posteriormente por Jürgen Habermas— él ideó la teoría de un público limitado que era inherentemente conservador y conflictivo. En cuanto los predicadores comenzaron a usar nociones de impresión heterodoxas en sus sermones, la esfera pública prusiana se colapsó y tomó su promesa eterna junto con ella.

## *Abstract*

This article challenges the reigning understanding of eighteenth-century Prussia's public sphere. Scholars have argued that Prussia's public was defined by print, and since print was easily distributed, its print public was potentially (if not actually) universal. This article holds, however, that Prussia's print public was quite limited. It was based, in fact, on a division of the public into separate oral and print spheres. The oral sphere was local and rooted in religious practice; the print sphere was universal and justified by the educated elite's sense of its own superiority. Preachers policed the boundary between these two spheres, always filtering out of their sermons knowledge that was dangerous to their congregants' more limited purview. Thus, when Immanuel Kant defined Enlightenment with reference to free print debates—a theme later picked up by Jürgen Habermas—he was theorizing a limited public that was inherently conservative and conflicted. As preachers began to use heterodox print notions in their sermons, the Prussian public sphere collapsed and took its eternal promise along with it.

## Introduction

Over the last ten years, historical work on the eighteenth-century public sphere has recast the debate about the Enlightenment's responsibility for the French Revolution.<sup>1</sup> In general historians have argued that the print public sphere and its concomitant forms of elite sociability, such as salons, reading clubs and coffee houses created social spaces from which criticism of the state emerged.<sup>2</sup> This elite criticism corroded the Old Regime's foundation and the resulting crash in 1789, if it was not directly the intellectuals' fault, was sufficiently related to their mental labors to show that enlightened publicness had consequences.

There is merit in this approach, but its broader assumptions need differentiation. So much work has concentrated on the French Revolution's origins in print that the Enlightenment, publicness, and subversiveness have been inextricably linked. I am not disputing that enlightened pamphleteering could cause political subversion; in some cases it did. Nonetheless, there are two problems with universalizing this undercurrent. First, enlightenment meant different things in different countries.<sup>3</sup> If the Enlightenment in France was hostile to the state and

<sup>1</sup> This literature is founded on Jürgen Habermas' *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: an Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989); originally published as *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit: Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* (Neuwied: Berlin: Luchterhand, 1962). For introductions to this literature, see Benjamin Nathans, "Habermas' Public-Sphere in the Era of the French-Revolution," *French Historical Studies* 16, no. 3 (1990): 620-644, Margaret C. Jacob, "The Enlightenment Redefined: The Formation of Modern Civil Society," *Social Research* 58, no. 2 (1991): 475-495, Craig J. Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992), Dena Goodman, "Public Sphere and Private Life - Toward a Synthesis of Current Historiographical Approaches to the Old Regime," *History and Theory* 31, no. 1 (1992): 1-20, and Anthony J. LaVopa, "Conceiving a Public: Ideas and Society in Eighteenth-Century Europe," *Journal of Modern History* 64, March (1992): 98-115. For applications of Habermas' ideas, see Keith Michael Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution: Essays on French Political Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Daniel A. Bell, "The Public-Sphere, the State, and the World of Law in 18th-Century France," *French Historical Studies* 17, no. 4 (1992): 912-934; Goodman, *Criticism in Action: Enlightenment Experiments in Political Writing* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989); Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment: Freemasonry and Politics in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

<sup>2</sup> Baker's *Inventing the French Revolution*, and Jacob's *Living the Enlightenment* are the finest examples of this kind of work for France. For work that applies these approaches to Germany, see Richard van Dülmen, *The Society of the Enlightenment: The Rise of the Middle Class and Enlightenment Culture in Germany* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992); originally published as *Die Gesellschaft der Aufklärer: zur bürgerlichen Emanzipation und aufklärerischen Kultur in Deutschland* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 1986), and Ulrich Im Hof, *Das Gesellige Jahrhundert: Gesellschaft und Gesellschaften im Zeitalter der Aufklärung* (Munich: Beck, 1982).

<sup>3</sup> Roy Porter and Mikulas Teich, *The Enlightenment in National Context* (Cambridge: New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

religion, in Germany's Protestant states it was associated with both.<sup>4</sup> Second, print publics could be constructed differently from the one that undermined the Bourbons. In some cases, print guaranteed political stability, rather than threatening it.<sup>5</sup> Publicness was, indeed, a universally important phenomenon, but it was also varied in its structures and effects. We must, therefore, understand it in its complexity, remaining sensitive to the changing relationship between publicness and subversiveness, as well as the multiplicity of contexts in which this relationship was played out.<sup>6</sup>

This article examines enlightened publicness in late eighteenth-century Prussia. It argues that the enlightened elite there conceived of the public differently from their colleagues in other countries. Prussian thinkers held that print debate was beneficial to the state.<sup>7</sup> Yet their understanding of print was elitist, deliberately excluding popular participation. This elitism became the foundation of a unique "bi-cameral" public, one that was split into print and oral parts. The educated (*Gelehrten*) debated controversial issues on paper, while oral communication among the populace was kept within strict boundaries. After intellectuals finished searching for (politically innocuous) truth, reliable people --usually preachers--distributed the results to the oral sphere. This conceptual division was important throughout Germany's Protestant territories, but it was the cornerstone of Prussian enlightened publicness. Historians often note that the German Enlightenment, by which they mean its Protestant version, had its own *élan*. Henri Brunschwig argued long ago that Germany had the most "complete" enlightenment in Europe, holding that Germans critiqued religion in order to improve it, not to discard it.<sup>8</sup> This article

<sup>4</sup> I limit this discussion to Germany's northern Protestant regions. Catholic Germany had its own enlightenment, but it functioned according to different rules. Württemberg, though a Protestant kingdom in southern Germany, recruited its preachers and ministers much differently. For that reason, it is also excluded here. For a discussion of Württemberg's political system, see James Allen Vann, *The Making of a State: Württemberg, 1593-1793* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984).

<sup>5</sup> Richard Sher, for example, has shown how the enlightened elite in Scotland conceived of their work as a bulwark against political unrest. Richard B. Sher, *Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment: the Moderate Literati of Edinburgh* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985).

<sup>6</sup> John Christian Laursen's "Kantian Politics 3: The Subversive Kant - The Vocabulary of Public and Publicity," *Political Theory* 14, no. 4 (1986): 584-603 is crucial here, because he shows how Kant modulated his subversiveness by setting it in a broader temporal context.

Johann Friedrich Zöllner, whom I discuss further below, defended publicity in a legal case against him by citing the elite debates about the new *Allgemeine Landrecht* (1794): "And these [discussions] were in no way forbidden as contrary to the laws, but were accepted gratefully as a contribution for illuminating an important issue from all sides." (Johann Friedrich Unger, ed., *Prozess des Buchdrucker Unger gegen den Oberkonsistorialrath Zöllner in Censurangelegenheiten wegen eines verbotenen Buchs. Aus den bei Einem Hochpreissl. Kammergericht verhandelten Akten vollständig abgedruckt* (Berlin: Johann Friedrich Unger, 1791), 70).

<sup>8</sup> Henri Brunschwig, *Enlightenment and Romanticism in eighteenth-century Prussia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974); originally published as *La crise de l'État prussien à la fin du XVIIIe siècle et la genèse de la mentalité romantique* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1947). This is true only for Germany's northern Protestant territories. See (n.4) above.

does not accept Brunschwig's explanation for German Romanticism's rise, but it cleaves to his insight about the German Enlightenment, namely that it existed within a web of interconnections among state, academia, and religion. People hailing from this environment followed their own paths and bore their own culturally specific burdens.

Religion and state's interpenetration was the central fact of public debate in Prussia.<sup>9</sup> This had effects on a number of levels. First, the state oversaw religious practice through a network of consistories (*Konsistorien*). These bodies were comprised of the educated elite who hired and fired preachers, and also determined religious doctrine. Second, religious themes penetrated the entire academic world. Prussian academics were often either religiously trained as preachers or theologians, or they were sons of the religiously trained.<sup>10</sup> Third, since the Prussian state recruited from the universities, people who entered state service were products of this academic-religious world. Thus, religion permeated both the state and public debate, while the state shaped all public debates, but especially religious ones.

Prussia's politico-religious constitution had two effects on public discussion. First, Prussia's elite feared the untutored spoken word over the educated written word.<sup>11</sup> This fear was historically specific, as it stemmed not from a disdain for print criticism, but from fear of religious unrest among the populace. Second, since preachers interacted directly with the people, defining their public role became a fundamental public issue. A unique combination of overseer and tutor, the preacher was the gatekeeper between elite print and common orality. In theory, he kept these two spheres separate. This assured the state that its subjects remained quiescent, while giving the elite maximum freedom to uncover truth without consequences.<sup>12</sup> In practice, however, the preacher breached this boundary, bringing Prussia's public to the point of collapse.

<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of the enlightened elite's social background, see Hans Gerth, *Bürgerliche Intelligenz um 1800: Zur Soziologie des deutschen Frühliberalismus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1976).

<sup>10</sup> The links among religion, education, and state recruitment made this a wholly masculine world. For recruitment patterns in Prussia, see Anthony J. La Vopa, *Grace, Talent, and Merit: Poor Students, Clerical Careers, and Professional Ideology in Eighteenth-Century Germany* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

<sup>11</sup> For Old Regime's France's fear of the spoken word, see Arlette Farge, *Subversive Words: public opinion in eighteenth-century France* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994); originally published as *Dire et mal dire: l'opinion publique au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Seuil, 1992).

<sup>12</sup> The dualities that this atmosphere encouraged are clearly displayed in Immanuel Kant and Moses Mendelssohn's contributions to the "What is Enlightenment?" debate. See Immanuel Kant, "Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?" *Berlinische Monatschrift*, no. 2 (1784): 481-494, and Moses Mendelssohn, "Ueber die Frage: was heißt aufklären?" *Berlinische Monatschrift*, no. 2 (1784): 193-200. Both texts are reprinted in Erhard Bahr, ed., *Was ist Aufklärung?: Thesen und Definitionen* (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1974), and James Schmidt, *What is Enlightenment?: eighteenth-century answers and twentieth-century questions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

Prussia's enlightened public sphere was extremely complicated, rife with tensions and fissures. Concentrating on print's subversiveness only obscures the politics that lay behind print debate. We must, therefore, consider what subversion was and what forms the fear of subversion took. If we wish to understand the Prussian Enlightenment's relationship to the public sphere clearly, we need to approach it through the categories Prussians used and consider the tension *between* its publics, rather than just the perceived opposition of print and state.

### Prussia's Public Sphere: Theory and Practice

Johann Salomo Semler is an example of the interconnections that characterized enlightened publicness in Prussia.<sup>13</sup> As a professor at the University of Halle, a theologian, and a member of the print elite, he shared the ambivalence that Prussia's enlightened elite felt toward free debate. This ambivalence was prominent in his theology, in which he carefully balanced the benefits of academic research against the pitfalls it presented for the uneducated. In order to soften religious debate's effects on common people, Semler constructed a public sphere that separated academic debate from religious practice.

In 1774, he published his main contribution to Prussian publicness, *Treatise on the Free Investigation of the Canon*, which became a benchmark in the public sphere's development.<sup>14</sup> In it Semler defined two publics. On the one hand, there was a religious public, in which preachers ministered directly to their flocks. On the other hand, there was an academic public--an elite, literary space that allowed experts to debate theology openly. The local preacher was perched between these two spheres, since he was aware of both the debates' contents and his flock's limitations. Thus, Semler defined the preacher's role carefully, writing:

But theologians must not [through] their abilities transform those holy truths, which the Christian religion constitutes in people. The [people] require much less elevated matter and form to be good Christians, which trained and able preachers [*Lehrer*] must know, in order to be good preachers.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Karl Aner, *Die Theologie der Lessingzeit* (Halle/Saale: M. Niemeyer, 1929).

<sup>14</sup> Johann Salomo Semler, *Abhandlung von freier Untersuchung des Canon: nebst Antwort auf die tübingsche Vertheidigung der Apocalypsis. Theil I.* (Halle: Carl Hermann Hemmerde, 1776). I had access to a revised version of 1788.

<sup>15</sup> "Aber nun müssen Theologi ihre Geschicklichkeit nicht verwandeln in diejenigen göttlichen Wahrheiten, welche die christliche Religion in den Menschen ausmachen: diese brauchen viel weniger in materia und forma intelligendi um gute Christen zu seyn, als so und so geübte und geschickte Lehrer wissen müssen, um gute Lehrer zu seyn." Semler, *Abhandlung*, 168. (All translations are my own.)

In Semler's public the preacher determined what his flock needed. Yet, the processes of translation and dissemination of new ideas into practice was fraught with danger. If the preacher could not negotiate the dangers well, enlightened improvement of religion and state would be impossible.

Semler's ideas crystallized an emerging consensus within Germany's public sphere. Most educated Germans agreed that true enlightenment did not rock the boat, and since enlightened debate could be either good or bad, it had to be regulated.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, by the late eighteenth century some preachers had begun disseminating radical theological ideas through their sermons. A few preachers, for example, became *Socinians* (Unitarians) and preached that the Holy Trinity was false and Jesus not divine. This was fundamentally a political problem, because doctrinal changes upset the delicate balance between print and oral publicness on which the Enlightenment in Prussia had been built.

Throughout the 1780s, radical doctrines spread across Germany, undoing the Semlerian public sphere. Although one historian has argued otherwise, the growing conservatism in this period was due only in small measure to Enlightenment thesis being overwhelmed by its antithesis.<sup>17</sup> It was, in fact, the danger of common people speaking religious nonsense that inspired fear across the across the political spectrum. We can understand why conservative Prussians would fear talk among the masses; they always had. For the liberal, enlightened elite, however, the issue was equally important, since subversive talk threatened them, too. Thus, during this period, it was actually the enlightened elite, working within the state, who repeatedly fought against unauthorized distribution of heterodox ideas in the oral public.

In 1788, the final sign that Semler's public had disintegrated came with Prussia's Edict on Religion. Registered one year before the French Revolution's outbreak, it required that preachers teach Christianity's fundamental truths--the divinity of Jesus, the truth of the Bible, and the triune God. Although historians have portrayed it as a counter-enlightened reaction, the Edict on Religion was intended to recover the Prussian public sphere's oral/print balance.<sup>18</sup>

Johann Christoph Woellner, head of Prussia's Religious Ministry (*Geistliches Departement*), was behind the edict. I cannot discuss the mythology that surrounds Woellner and his policies here. I will note, however, that historians consider him the Counter-Enlightenment's ringleader, because many of the enlightened opposed the edict.<sup>19</sup> Yet, many of Germany's enlightened also

<sup>16</sup> See Werner Schneiders' discussion of German debates about the Enlightenment's "true" nature in *Die wahre Aufklärung: zum Selbstverständnis der deutschen Aufklärung* (Freiburg.: K. Albert. 1974).

<sup>17</sup> Steve Lestition. "Kant and the End of Enlightenment in Prussia." *Journal of Modern History* 65, no. March 1993 (1993): 57-112.

<sup>18</sup> Paul Schwartz. *Der erste Kulturkampf in Preussen um Kirche und Schule (1788-1798)* (Berlin: Weidmann. 1925).

<sup>19</sup> For Woellner and his role in the Edict on Religion, see my dissertation "Visions of the Enlightenment: The Edict on Religion of 1788 and Political Reaction in Eighteenth-Century Prussia." Ph.D. Dissertation. University of California Los Angeles. Los Angeles, CA. 2002.

supported the edict (the most notable being Semler himself).<sup>20</sup> In addition, Woellner had claims to being enlightened himself, as he traveled through the same institutions that produced most Prussia's elite, the University of Halle, Friedrich Nicolai's *Allgemeine Deutsche Bibliothek*, and Freemasonry. In this sense, the edict identifies not a reversal of the intellectual tide, but a crisis in a tense debate about publicness' boundaries.

The problems in Prussia's public are clearest in the dismissals of Johann Heinrich Schulz and Karl Wilhelm Brumbey. Both were Prussian preachers; both were dismissed for violating the Edict on Religion. Although one historian has anointed them victims of the Prussia's counter-enlightened reaction, their stories blur simple oppositions.<sup>21</sup> Schulz was dismissed for his heterodox teachings, but this came only after the enlightened bureaucracy had repeatedly failed to remove him for other offenses against the public. Brumbey's situation is even more revealing. He was dismissed and banished from Berlin, because his theology was so objectionable that it threatened Woellner and the enlightened elite. Tracing Schulz and Brumbey's histories will expose the unique structure of Prussia's public sphere, while offering another window onto the politics of publicness in eighteenth-century Europe.

## The Ponytail

On 13 September 1793, the Prussian state dismissed Johann Heinrich Schulz, after a decade of conflict over his heterodox writings and sermons. The case had become a *cause célèbre*, with books and articles appearing across Germany that decried the "attack" on the Enlightenment.<sup>22</sup> Historians have accepted this view, even though it misses the real point of the affair.<sup>23</sup> Schulz had been the subject of controversy for eleven years before he was finally dismissed, but it was only after 1788 that a conservative Prussian state pursued him. For the previous six years, Prussia's enlightened elite had fought among themselves over Schulz's removal. Telling the

<sup>20</sup> Johann Salomo Semler, *D. Joh. Salom. Semlers Vertheidigung des Königl. Edikts vom 9ten Jul. 1788, wider die freimüthigen Betrachtungen eines Ungenannten* (Halle: Johann Gottfried Heller, 1788).

<sup>21</sup> Paul Schwartz, "Die beiden Opfer des Preussischen Religionsediktes vom 9. Juli 1788: J.H. Schulz in Gielsdorf und K.W. Brumbey in Berlin." *Jahrbuch für Brandenburgische Kirchengeschichte* 27, 28 (1932, 1933): 102-155, 96-122.

<sup>22</sup> Schwartz's *Kulturkampf* is the the classic work in this tradition. It is often cited as evidence negative views of Woellner. See also Johannes Tradt, *Der Religionsprozess gegen den Zopfschulzen (1791-1799): ein Beitrag zur protestantischen Lehrpflicht und Lehrzucht in Brandenburg-Preussen gegen Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt am Main : New York: P. Lang, 1997). Fritz Valjavec's article "Das Woellnersche Religionsedikt und seine geschichtliche Bedeutung" takes a different approach, sidestepping this issue by positing an alternate historical framework. See Fritz Valjavec, Karl August Fischer, and Mathias Bernath, *Ausgewählte Aufsätze* (München: R. Oldenbourg, 1963), 294-322.

<sup>23</sup> Schwartz, "Opfer."

full story will reveal how deeply the enlightened elite was implicated in the barrier between print and orality, while providing a crucial backdrop against which we must understand Woellner's edict.

Schulz's troubles began in 1782, when he intervened in a dispute between his peasant congregants and their abusive landlord.<sup>24</sup> He had the landlord, A.F. Bußmann, jailed for mistreating the peasants, and Bußmann responded by having Schulz reported to the authorities for eccentric behavior.<sup>25</sup> A contemporary account summarized the charges this way:

First, that the accused based his teaching on Fatalism. Second, that he preached these [teachings] to the community in his ponytail and not with a wig or adorned hair.<sup>26</sup>

The accusation is consistent with early-modern practices of denunciation. Local intrigues rather than state surveillance set justice in motion.<sup>27</sup> The substance of Bußmann's denunciation is, therefore, of decisive importance, since it would have emphasized Schulz's vulnerabilities. These lay in two areas: 1) Heterodoxy was suspect because it could unsettle the populace; 2) The wig was a symbol of the preacher's social position. These two vulnerabilities were rooted in the Prussian construction of separate public spheres.

On March 21, 1782, the Superior Consistory (*Oberkonsistorium*) in Berlin, Prussia's highest consistory, called Schulz to answer the charges. The consistory was packed with "enlightened" religious leaders; their names read like a who's who of Berlin's service elite, including Anton Friedrich Büsching, Johann Samuel Diterich, Karl Friedrich von Irwing, August Friedrich Sack, Johann Joachim

<sup>24</sup> The historical background is based on Tradt, *Religionsprozess*, 5-21.

<sup>25</sup> This section is based partially on published documents available in Karl Ludwig Amelang, *Religions-Prozess des P. Sch. zu G. nebst dessen eigenen gerichtlich übergebenen Vertheidigungsschrift seiner Lehren* (s.l.:1792); Amelang, *Vertheidigung des Prediger Schulz in der zweiten Instanz* (Hamburg: Hoffmann, 1798); Amelang, *Zur Vertheidigung des Prediger Herrn Schulz zu Gielsdorf, Wilkendorf und Hirschfelde* (Berlin: Vieweg, 1792); Leopold Volkmar, *Religions-Prozess des Predigers Schulz zu Gielsdorf genannt Zopfschulz, eines Lichtfreundes des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig, 1846). Schulz and Bußmann had quite a history. Bußmann had married Schulz's sister, despite the preacher's disapproval, and the two had already come to blows over the content of his sermons. (Tradt, *Der Religionsprozess*, 14).

<sup>26</sup> "Der vorzüglichsten dieser Beschwerden bestanden darin, daß der Angeschuldigte, einmal, seine Lehren auf den Fatalismus gründe, und hiernächst selbige im Zopfe und nicht in einer Peruque oder gekränselten Haaren der Gemeinde vorträge." Amelang, *Vertheidigung*, 20.

<sup>27</sup> For more on these practices, see David Warren Sabean, *Power in the Blood: popular culture and village discourse in early-modern Germany* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984) and Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality, and Religion in Early-Modern Europe* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994). The investigation actually began with Schulz's immediate superior, Friedrich August Hanses, Inspector and Chief Preacher in Strausberg. Schulz successfully defended himself against this initial investigation, but Bismarck sent another letter of complaint to the Superior Consistory in Berlin, which then began its own investigation. (Tradt, *Religionsprozess*, 13-16).

Spalding, and Wilhelm Abraham Teller.<sup>28</sup> Initially, the members asked Schulz to explain his teachings.<sup>29</sup> He replied that he taught only that rational laws governed God's universe, and that human beings were bound by them.<sup>30</sup> He called this Determinism, not Fatalism, adding that this meant only that bad acts inevitably brought bad consequences.

The consistory's members were predisposed to give Schulz doctrinal leeway, as long as he emphasized reason.<sup>31</sup> This appears to stem from enlightened tolerance, but it is important to recognize other, less "enlightened" motivations behind this policy. In addition to being enlightened men, the consistory's members worked in a world of state power. This will be important for understanding the differences between Schulz and Brumbey. For the moment, however, we must recognize that as state servants, the members had an interest in limiting disturbances, and if such occurred, in keeping them local. Thus, however enlightened they were, the members were also quite happy if a preacher's villages remained tranquil. This meant that the most "enlightened" policy was often also the bureaucratic default: if peace was being maintained, the best option was to do nothing.

The ponytail was, however, another matter. When the consistory asked Schulz to defend his eschewing of the clerical wig, he responded that his natural hair was so thick that wearing a wig overheated his head and made him feel faint. He even reported collapsing at the pulpit on occasion.<sup>32</sup> Nonetheless, this explanation proved insufficient, as the members expressed serious misgivings about Schulz appearing in public without his wig.<sup>33</sup> Some members demanded assurances that the villagers were not offended by the wig's absence. Others worried that Schulz's actions could lead to further experimentation: preachers everywhere may discard their black regalia and put on green robes!<sup>34</sup> We can draw a useful comparison

<sup>28</sup> In keeping with its Protestant origins, the consistory was divided into two halves--one lay, the other clerical. When Frederick William II ascended the throne in 1786, the consistory had the following members. Clerical: Anton Friedrich Büsching, Johann Samuel Diterich, Friedrich Samuel Sack (who had recently succeeded his father August Friedrich Sack), Johann Esias Silberschlag (the consistory's lone pietist; he would also die in 1786), Johann Joachim Spalding, and Wilhelm Abraham Teller. Lay: Friedrich Gedike, Thomas Philip von der Hagen, Karl Friedrich von Irwing, Johann Friedrich Lamprecht, Johann Christian Nagel. In 1788, Johann Friedrich Zöllner would join the clerical side. See Schwartz, *Kulturkampf*, for a thorough, though opinionated, discussion of the membership.

<sup>29</sup> Frederick William I expelled Christian Wolff from Prussia because his philosophy supposedly encouraged fatalism. Frederick II, of course, invited Wolff back, though without success. See Lewis White Beck, *Early German Philosophy: Kant and his Predecessors* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1969), 256-275.

<sup>30</sup> Amelang, *Vertheidigung*, 20.

<sup>31</sup> Johann Esias Silberschlag was a committed Pietist and the only member of the consistory that could not be called a rationalist. (Schwartz, *Kulturkampf*).

<sup>32</sup> Amelang, *Vertheidigung*, 27.

<sup>33</sup> On this point, see Tradt, *Religionsprozess*, 17-18. Tradt's narration of the legal events is excellent, and I have relied on it heavily for the next few paragraphs. For the entire exchange between Schulz and the Consistory, see Amelang, *Vertheidigung*, 20-36.

<sup>34</sup> Amelang, *Vertheidigung*, 27.

between the consistory's attitudes toward Schulz's sermons and those toward the wig. For the consistory, Schulz's sermons were a localized phenomenon. Not only was his audience small and rural, but since preachers worked independently and delivered their sermons orally, others were unlikely to his ideas in their sermons. Changes in clerical attire, however, were not only easily adopted but also potentially unsettling. If the wig symbolized the gulf between the preacher and his flock, removing it changed existing social arrangements and threatened anarchy in the oral sphere.

Although some of the members expressed misgivings about Schulz's ponytail, the consistory decided, in the end, not to reprimand him for it. This appears to be another enlightened policy, but the appearance is deceiving. Schulz's case presented the consistory with a serious problem: Prussian law did not, in fact, require a preacher to wear a wig, which meant that a reprimand would have had no legal force. Any attempts to require a wig would, therefore, have immediately become a public issue, as Prussia's scholars would, no doubt, have endlessly debated the substance of the affair in print. Since Schulz's threat was still local, the bigger danger lay in giving him print publicity. Accordingly, everyone decided to drop the issue.<sup>35</sup>

Unfortunately for the consistory, Schulz refused to keep out of print. In 1783, he came to the public's attention with a radical theological work, entitled *Attempt at an Instruction in Ethics for all Humans Regardless of Religious Differences*.<sup>36</sup> Schulz had received the imprimatur from Wilhelm Abraham Teller, the most liberal member of the Superior Consistory and one of Germany's most famous enlightened theologians.<sup>37</sup> Teller was an extremist on the question of publication, believing that just about anything could be published, as long as the author used the proper academic tone.<sup>38</sup> However, Anton Friedrich Büsching, another enlightened theologian and also member of the consistory, was more representative of the mainstream. He denounced the book, arguing that it undermined all religion, which occasioned another official investigation.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Amelang, *Vertheidigung*, 36.

<sup>36</sup> Johann Heinrich Schulz, *Versuch einer Anleitung zur Sittenlehre für Menschen, ohne Unterschied der Religionen: nebst ein Anhang von den Todesstrafen*, 4 vols. (Berlin: Stahlbaum, 1783).

<sup>37</sup> ADB, vol. 37, 556-558.

<sup>38</sup> In the publication battle that raged over the Edict on Religion Teller chided his colleagues for not showing sufficient decorum. He wrote, "it is not as if men are discussing together a great, important issue sacred to Truth and Conscience, but as if bad-mannered boys are quarreling about who won and who lost a game." (Wilhelm Abraham Teller, *Wohlgemeinte Erinnerungen an ausgemachte aber doch leicht zu vergessende Wahrheiten auf Veranlassung des Königl. Edicts die Religionsverfassung in den Preussischen Staaten betreffend und bey Gelegenheit einer Introductionspredigt von D. Wilhelm Abraham Teller* (Berlin: August Mylius, 1788), 3.)

<sup>39</sup> On Büsching's background, see ADB, vol. 3, 644-645. For a recent apotheosis of his enlightened virtue, see Peter Hoffman, *Anton Friedrich Buesching (1724-1793): ein Leben im Zeitalter der Aufklärung* (Berlin: Berlin Verlag, 2000). On his role in denouncing Schulz, see Amelang, *Vertheidigung*, 37; and Schwartz, "Die Beiden Opfer," 116.

On October 2, 1783, the consistory recalled Schulz for another interrogation. How are we to understand this change in the consistory's attitude, coming as it did only seven months after the previous investigation had been quietly buried? A closer look at Büsching's denunciation provides some clues. According to Büsching, Schulz's book made three dangerous arguments: 1) that reason cannot help us understand the first cause; 2) that God can only appear to us as a first cause; 3) that we can derive no moral lessons from a rational explanation of God's existence.<sup>40</sup> From the enlightened consistory's perspective, Schulz had used reason to undermine religion--a most unenlightened thing to do.

Additional context for explaining the consistory's turnaround comes from a review of Schulz's book by Immanuel Kant.<sup>41</sup> Writing in 1783, Kant argued that Schulz's theology was dangerous, because it undermined all intervening religious authority. Protestants historically placed great emphasis on rational assent, believing that one agreed to the truth *after* a religious authority had presented it. For Kant, removing such intervening authority made rational assent impossible, which robbed people of their reason and invited Enthusiasm.<sup>42</sup> Kant described the results this way:

From which the coarsest Enthusiasm must arise, which overrides all the healthiest influence of reason, whose rights the author ought to have endeavored to hold up.<sup>43</sup>

Enthusiasm had been a political specter in Germany since Martin Luther coined the German equivalent, *Schwärmerei*.<sup>44</sup> Enthusiasts placed the believer in direct communion with God, which bypassed all structures of authority, such as princes, preachers, and even reason itself.

Kant's position is, thus, particularly Lutheran and highlights again religion's pervasive effects on public debate in Prussia. As did his colleagues, Kant believed that the printed theory of religion had to be separate from its oral practice. This division presumed the preacher's special status, while also giving him special obligations, which is why Kant stated that the preacher *ought* to hold up reason's rights in religion. I will discuss this issue further in the conclusion, but for now we must understand two things. First, the preacher was a civil servant, which meant

<sup>40</sup> Amelang, *Vertheidigung*, 36.

<sup>41</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Kant's Werke*, vol. VIII (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1923), 10-14.

<sup>42</sup> See the following for discussions of Enthusiasm: Lothar Kreimendahl and Norbert Hinske, *Die Aufklärung und die Schwärmer* (Hamburg: F. Meiner, 1988); Anthony J. LaVopa, "The Philosopher and the Schwärmer: On the Career of a German Epithet from Luther to Kant," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 60, no. 1&2 (1999): 85-115; J.G.A. Pocock, "Enthusiasm: The Antiself of Enlightenment," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 60, no. 1&2 (1999): 7-28.

<sup>43</sup> "woraus denn die gröbste Schwärmerei entspringen muß, die allen Einfluß der gesunden Vernunft aufhebt, deren Rechte gleichwohl der Herr Verf. Aufrecht zu erhalten bemühen gewesen." Kant, *Werke*, vol. VIII, 13.

<sup>44</sup> LaVopa, "Philosopher," 87.

that he had to carry out the state's orders. Second, only an effective system of religious policing could assert reason's rights. For Kant, Semler, and everyone else, irresponsible preachers made enlightenment a practical impossibility.

Kant's review suggests that Büsching and other enlightened theologians sensed Enthusiasm beckoning in Schulz's heterodoxy—and if not Enthusiasm, at least a vague threat to order. Schulz responded to these doubts by digging himself a deeper hole. On November 8, 1783, he sent the consistory a defense, entitled "Necessary Defense of the Publication of My Book: Attempt at an Instruction in Ethics for all Humans Regardless of Religious Differences," wherein he argued that the consistory had no right to attack him for what he published as a scholar.<sup>45</sup> The members thought this response impertinent, since they were duly charged with overseeing his activities. To make matters worse, he also held that the entire investigation was beside the point, because in his view he should be judged by his people's behavior and not by the doctrines he taught them. This amounted to a declaration of independence from the consistory's oversight, and the political implications of this required that Schulz be silenced.

On December 4, 1783, led by Büsching, the consistory wrote a letter to the Department of Ecclesiastical Affairs (*Geistliches Departement*), asking that Schulz be dismissed for undermining religion.<sup>46</sup> Schulz was lucky that Karl Abraham von Zedlitz headed the department at the time.<sup>47</sup> Zedlitz was a member of the enlightened elite and was famous for defending writers against censorship. He defended Schulz by offering a classic "enlightened" definition of the freedom to publish. He wrote:

That Schulz does not deserve the proposed reprimand, as he is responsible only to the public for the philosophical-speculative sentences infused throughout his book, and that the Consistory, as a religious collegium responsible for preachers and communities, only has the right to expect that he [the preacher] keep his community in order and leaves no doubt that he teaches people to have good attitudes, and directs their will to the Good, and that he is determined to refine their impressions and inclinations.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>45</sup> "Abgenöthigte Rechtfertigung über die Herausgabe meines Buches: Versuch einer Anleitung zur Sittenlehre für alle Menschen ohne Unterschied der Religion." Amelang, *Vertheidigung*, 44; Tradt, *Religionsprozess*, 19.

<sup>46</sup> Amelang, *Vertheidigung*, 46.

<sup>47</sup> On Zedlitz in general, see Peter Mainka, *Karl Abraham von Zedlitz und Leipe (1731-1793): Ein schlesischer Adliger in Diensten Friedrichs II. und Friedrich Wilhelms II. von Preussen* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1995).

<sup>48</sup> "daß der Schulz die angestellte Rüge gar nicht verdiene, daß er die in seinem Buche eingeflossene philosophisch-speculative Sätze nur gegen das Publikum zu verantworten habe, und daß das Consistorium als ein, den Predigern und der Gemeinde vorgesetztes geistliches Collegium nur darauf zu sichern habe, daß er seine Gemeinde im Guten festhalte und nicht wankend mache, ob er sie gutgesinnten Menschen bilde, ihren Willen aufs Gute zu lenken und ihre Neigungen und Empfindungen zu veredeln sich angelegen seyn lasse." Amelang, *Vertheidigung*, 47.

Zedlitz's response saved Schulz, but its substance also suggests the increasing tensions in Prussian publicness, which would overthrow Semler's ideas.

Although Zedlitz agreed with his colleagues that public debate had boundaries, his response also implied great tolerance for deviations. This is evident in his characterization of the preacher's role. Zedlitz omitted scripture from religious practice, and called for preachers merely to refine the people's impressions. In demoting scripture he joined a tradition of religious criticism that dated back to Gotthold Lessing and Samuel Reimarus, who had emphasized moral examples over the Bible's historical truth.<sup>49</sup> This vision put Zedlitz in conflict with much of his "enlightened" consistory, for whom scripture remained central to religious practice.

Contrary to Zedlitz's position, scripture was fundamental to the practice that anchored oral/public division. Protestant preachers interpreted the text *for* their people, modulating its message to keep vulnerable heads and hearts cool. Without scripture, the preacher's role diminished, and Enthusiasm beckoned. Some were more sensitive to this than others, which may explain why the consistory's enlightened members wanted Schulz's termination, whereas the enlightened Zedlitz did not. Thus, as long as Schulz did not openly preach Enthusiasm, the enlightened elite could go either way on the dangers he presented. More generally, however, this division raises an important theme that I will take up in the conclusion: no matter how "enlightened" Zedlitz was, he did not speak for the "Enlightenment," as there was always a spectrum of opinion on the boundary between print and orality.

Schulz was uncowed by the mounting scrutiny. Between 1784 and 1786 he published six more radical books.<sup>50</sup> On 5 February 1784, the consistory again unsuccessfully petitioned Zedlitz to punish Schulz.<sup>51</sup> Schulz kept working, nonetheless. In 1786, he published *Proof of the Vast Difference Between Morality and Religion*, in which he argued that religion and morality were unconnected.<sup>52</sup> He wrote:

<sup>49</sup> Lessing's thought was crucial to this critical approach's development. See: Aner, *Theologie*; and, especially, Karl Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie im 19. Jahrhundert: Ihre Vorgeschichte und ihre Geschichte*. 3rd ed. (Zurich: Evangelischer Verlag AG, 1960).

<sup>50</sup> The titles are Johann Heinrich Schulz, *Predigt über die falschen Lehre von ewigen Höllenstrafen* (s.l.: s.d.); Schulz, *Antwort der weltliche Stände auf die Supplik, welche der Protest. Geistliche Fried. Gern. Lüdke über die Nichtabschaffung des geistlichen Standes bei ihnen eingerichtet hat*. (Amsterdam, 1784); Schulz, *Beurtheilung der vertrauten Briefe, die Religion betreffend, vom Verfasser der Antwort der weltlichen Stände*. (Amsterdam, 1786); Schulz, *Der Entlarvte Moses Mendelssohn oder völlige Aufklärung des rätselhaften Todeverdrüßes des M.M.* (Amsterdam, 1786); Schulz, *Erweis des himmelweiten Unterschieds der Moral von der Religion* (Frankfurt and Leipzig, 1786); Schulz, *Philosophische Betrachtungen ueber Theologie und Religion überhaupt, und die jüdische Insonderheit* (Frankfurt und Leipzig, 1784).

<sup>51</sup> Amelang, *Vertheidigung*, 53.

<sup>52</sup> Amelang, *Vertheidigung*, 78. (I have used a later edition of this work: Johann Heinrich Schulz, *Erweis des himmelweiten Unterschieds der Moral von der Religion, nebst genauer bestimmung der Begriffe von Theologie, Religion, Kirche und (protestantischer) Hierarchie, und des Verhältnisses dieser Dinge zur Moral und zum Staate* (Frankfurt and Leipzig, 1788)).

Out of all these incontrovertible reasons comes the completely indisputable truth: that no state, no society, no establishment—whether called prince or master, or consistory—no priest, no father or mother, in short, neither an association nor any single person may command fellow human beings in theology and religion, or non-theology and non-religion. Here each individual human being is his own and only lawgiver.<sup>53</sup>

For the consistory the new book was the last straw. If religion and morality were unconnected, then the Prussian Enlightenment would collapse, because reason would lose its rights and the consistory its authority. On 14 September 1786, again led by Büsching, the consistory complained to the Department of Ecclesiastical Affairs. Zedlitz, however, stood firm and (wisely, it turned out) refused to put the issue before the new king, Frederick William II.<sup>54</sup>

Had Zedlitz brought Schulz's case before the new king, a full-blown judicial investigation would have resulted, since Frederick William II was more conservative on religious matters than his predecessor, Frederick II, had been. Beyond the tactics involved, however, Zedlitz's resistance to his consistory highlights the growing disunity among the enlightened. Although he had the power to reprimand Schulz, Zedlitz chose not to do so. The reason he gave is at once instructive and foreboding: Zedlitz held that Schulz should be left unmolested, because the consistory had no evidence that he preached his ideas from the pulpit.<sup>55</sup> This was specious, since there was ample reason to believe otherwise. Nonetheless, Zedlitz's position suggests that Schulz was becoming a serious problem. Faced with an uprising in the consistory, Zedlitz retreated to a minimal standard of behavior that seemed uncontested.

Schulz stayed out of trouble until 1789, by which time the political climate in Berlin had changed dramatically. In early 1788, Woellner had ousted Zedlitz from his positions as head of the Department of Ecclesiastical Affairs and Ministry of Justice (*Justiz Ministerium*). The conservative mood that descended on Prussia became manifest in the promulgation on 9 July 1788 of Woellner's Edict on Religion. Although some took this as a bad sign for the Enlightenment, it is important that Schulz got into trouble with the new king for the same reason that he had been in trouble with the enlightened consistory: he violated the boundary between the oral and print spheres.

It is, therefore, appropriate that Schulz's next scandal stemmed from the hiring of a new preacher. It began when Major General Otto Friedrich von Pful, Schulz's friend and patron, hired a preacher under a heterodox vocation.

<sup>53</sup> "Aus allen diesen unbestreitlichen Gründen geht die ganz unwidersprechliche Warheit hervor: daß kein Staat, keine Gesellschaft, keine Obrigkeit, sie mag Fürst und Landesherr, oder Consistorium heißen: keine Priesterschaft, kein Vater und Mutter, kurz, weder eine Gesellschaft, noch irgend ein einzelner Mensch,—über die Theologie und Religion, oder Nichttheologie und Nichtreligion irgend eines ihrer Nebenmenschen das allermindeste zu gebiethen haben. Hier ist sich ein jeder einzelner mensch, sein eigener und einziger Gesetzgeber." Schulz, *Erweis*, 87.

<sup>54</sup> Amelang, *Vertheidigung*, 36; Schwartz, "Opfer," 126-128.

<sup>55</sup> Tradt, *Religionsprozess*, 21.

Traditionally preachers were hired to teach Christianity's fundamental truths, such as the trinity and Jesus' divinity. (Incidentally, this is exactly what the Edict on Religion demanded.) Nonetheless, von Pfuel's vocation omitted these precepts, and Schulz took the blame. When Frederick William II learned of the heterodox vocation, he ordered von Pfuel to use a traditional vocation and announced his intention to get Schulz:

My dear Major General von Pfuel, apparently the notorious Preacher Schulz, whom I will expel presently, conceived of and composed the vocation that you sent to me without any afterthought...<sup>56</sup>

In spite of this letter's tone, Schulz disappeared from the scene. It was dated June 1789, and the court probably put Schulz's case aside, while events in France unfolded. Nonetheless, his enemies did not forget him.

On 13 August 1791, the king ordered another investigation, and Woellner dispatched two agents to Schulz's villages as spies, who would collect the evidence that Zedlitz had once demanded.<sup>57</sup> Upon arrival the agents discovered that Schulz was out of town, so they interviewed a young boy, who told them that Schulz taught:

1. There is only one God
2. God does not punish people, he only induces them to act better.
3. Jesus was only a wise man, not the son of God.
4. Jesus died because he was persecuted. He did not die for our sins.
5. God cannot speak to humans.
6. Jesus performed no miracles.
7. Prayer is unnecessary, because God only acts in accord with laws.
8. Our bodies die and never rise again.
9. There is no final resurrection. Our souls leave our bodies immediately upon death.
10. There is no Hell. Evil people are just sent back to the world to become smarter and to live better.
11. The Bible is a human product and is, therefore, flawed.<sup>58</sup>

Although the report is hostile in origin, it still suggests that Schulz strayed from orthodoxy. This was important, since Woellner now had documentation that he could forward to the consistory for action.

In a remarkable turnaround, however, the consistory refused to pursue Schulz. Rather than prosecute the case, the members concertedly did nothing, hoping that everything would go away. Nonetheless, with the king watching, they

<sup>56</sup> "Mein lieber General-Major von Pfuel, vermutlich hat der berüchtigte Prediger Schulz, den ich nächstens fortjagen werde, diejenige Vorstellung und Vocation aufgesetzt, welche ihr mir zuzusenden kein Bedenken getragen..." Amelang, *Vertheidigung*, 64.

<sup>57</sup> Amelang, *Vertheidigung*, 77.

<sup>58</sup> Amelang, *Vertheidigung*, 82.

could not simply bury the case, and on 30 March 1792, seven months after Woellner had authorized the investigation, the consistory offered a surprising act of defiance, finding that although Schulz was no longer legally a Lutheran preacher, he remained a Christian of sorts and deserved, thus, to be tolerated under existing laws.<sup>59</sup>

The acquittal left Frederick William nonplussed. He took the case from the consistory and sent it to the Aulic Court (*Hofkammer*), Prussia's highest court, along with orders that Schulz be convicted, which promptly occurred. The King then sought to make an example of the disobedient consistory. He singled out Wilhelm Abraham Teller for punishment, suspending him for three months without pay, with the unpaid salary designated for charity. Meanwhile, Schulz lived on the charity of his friends until 1798, when he obtained a job as an industrial inspector.<sup>60</sup>

The consistory's efforts in Schulz's defense are surprising, considering how they had earlier tried to remove him. Yet, this change makes sense, if we look at the oral/print division from the opposite side. Woellner intended the Edict on Religion to protect religious practice, but in this it failed completely. Too many bureaucrats resisted the measure for it to be implemented seriously. Moreover, while the edict languished, the enlightened who opposed the edict assiduously published attacks on it and its author.<sup>61</sup> This offended Woellner and only exacerbated the original problem that the edict had been meant to solve. Now the oral and print spheres were truly collapsing, and on 19 December 1788, Woellner responded with the Censorship Edict, which allowed the state to suppress works that attacked the Edict on Religion. In doing so, however, Woellner threatened the *print* half of the oral/print divide. Since print had been devoted to public reasoning, the *Gelehrten* suddenly felt their print freedom was under attack. Given the choice between a heterodox rural preacher and a zealous state minister, the consistory sided with Schulz over Woellner.

Woellner's edicts transformed Schulz from a threat to the enlightened establishment into an enlightened hero. The same consistory that had tried repeatedly to fire Schulz was unwilling to support an edict that silenced people like him. This shift in public discussion throws into relief the complexities behind Prussia's public. As we will see, the real litmus test for the Prussian Enlightenment was whether an individual threatened the public sphere's stability. What is important is that what constituted a threat changed constantly, as will be apparent in common front that all civil servants showed the edict's other victim, Karl Wilhelm Brumbey.

<sup>59</sup> Volkmar. *Religions-Prozess*, 167.

<sup>60</sup> *ADB*, vol. 32, 747.

<sup>61</sup> Carl Friedrich Bahrdt's anonymously published *Das Religions-Edikt. Ein Lustspiel in fünf Aufzügen. Eine Skizze. Von Nicolai dem Jüngern* (Thenakel [Vienna]: Johann Michael Bengel, 1789) is an example. The text is reprinted in translation in Bahrdt, *The Edict of Religion. A Comedy and The Story and Diary of my Imprisonment*, trans. John Christian Laursen and Johan van der Zande (Lanham, Boulder, New York, Oxford: Lexington Books, 2000).

## The Enthusiast<sup>62</sup>

On 10 May 1796, just after midnight, a police officer Voigt and his assistant Grothe escorted Karl Wilhelm Brumbey out of Berlin and into exile in Baruth (Saxony). According to Police Commissioner Friedrich Philipp Eisenberg's report, the action went so splendidly that local residents were left unaware.<sup>63</sup> Brumbey's break with Berlin was complete, but to prevent further trouble, Eisenberg reported that he would, "have him watched everywhere, to which purpose I have already informed the authorities in Baruth of what he is like..."<sup>64</sup> Brumbey has been linked with Schulz, though the situations differed markedly. First, Brumbey was physically expelled from Prussia. Second, this happened without any "enlightened" resistance. Finally, by comparison to the media coverage of Schulz, Brumbey was almost ignored.<sup>65</sup>

The difference in the establishment's attitudes is explained by each man's position in the German cultural context. Although Schulz was on rationalism's fringes, he remained a rationalist. Brumbey, however, was a declared Enthusiast, which threatened the entire religious structure. Eisenberg's report betrays a level of suspicion that was probably common among the elite. After reporting on the deportation, he noted that Brumbey's friends had held a meeting from 5 until 7 the same day (whether in the morning or evening is unclear) at which one speaker lamented the "current persecution of true-believing Christians."<sup>66</sup> He added that this speech was given in such an enthusiastic tone that this "sect's" ill intentions were obvious. Eisenberg's actions shed light on the differences between Schulz and Brumbey. In order to get such details, Eisenberg had to put the group under *police* surveillance. Whereas Schulz had merely merited visits from Woellner's personal agents, Brumbey and his colleagues were under intense state scrutiny. Part of this

<sup>62</sup> See LaVopa, "Philosopher," 85-91, for a discussion of the philosophical relationship between *Schwärmerei* and *Enthusiasmus* in the German Enlightenment.

<sup>63</sup> GSta PK. I. HA Rep. 96. Nr 222D. Brumbey. Prediger in Berlin 1796-97. (unpaginated). The letter is dated May 10, 1796.

<sup>64</sup> "Damit der Brumbey im Auslande keine Meuterei mache: so werde ich ihn überall beobachten zu laßen suchen. zu welchen Ende ich schon in Baruth der dorthigen Obrigkeit ihn so geschildert habe, wie er ist..." GSta PK. I. HA Rep. 96. Nr 222D. Brumbey. Prediger in Berlin 1796-97. (unpaginated). The letter is dated May 10, 1796.

<sup>65</sup> Among the 118 published texts that are available in Dirk Kemper's microfilm collection *Missbrauchte Aufklärung? Schriften zum preussischen Religionsedikt vom 9. Juli 1788* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1996) eight cover Schulz's dismissal, while not one covers Brumbey. The same is true for the journal literature on the edict. Although Schulz's tribulations appear three times, Brumbey's dismissal merited not one comment. (I have relied on the Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen's indispensable *Index deutschsprachiger Zeitschriften: 1750-1815* to verify this fact. The text version of the index is Klaus Schmidt, ed., *Index deutschsprachiger Zeitschriften: 1750-1815* (Hildesheim: Olms Verlag, 1996.) The online version is available at [www.gbv.de](http://www.gbv.de).)

<sup>66</sup> "über die jetztige Verfolgung der der rechtgläubigen Christen." GSta PK. I. HA Rep. 96. Nr 222D. Brumbey. Prediger in Berlin 1796-97. (unpaginated). The letter is dated May 10, 1796.

can be explained by the state's accumulated experience. It was 1796, and the government had grown more repressive since the French Revolution. But this does not explain the relative ease with which Brumbey was dismissed. Bureaucrats still had opportunities to resist the edict's implementation in this case, but exploited none of them.

Brumbey was ousted so unceremoniously because he threatened the entire establishment. On the one hand, he worked within Berlin's environs and, on the other, preached Enthusiasm. Woellner provides good example of the elite reaction to the dangers Brumbey presented. In a letter to the king, dated 16 February 1796, he reported:

I see Brumbey as a conceited sectarian, puffed up with spiritual pride. [He] wants to make inroads among the common people and set himself up as something special.<sup>67</sup>

Brumbey had violated the boundary between print and orality in the worst way possible. Puffed up with pride and close to the people, he threatened the service elite's social status. Woellner articulated the dangers more clearly in a subsequent report. It listed eight charges against Brumbey, which are paraphrased below:

1. That Brumbey is obviously proud and believes himself to be wiser than other people.
2. That he has developed a following among the common folk.
3. That he has told the people they must obey God more than man.
4. That he listens only to the voices of his people because the voice of the people is the voice of God.
5. That he does not obey the orders of the Consistory.
6. That he sings unapproved songs in his service.
7. That in the previous month he called for a singing of the *Te Deum Laudamus* in honor of his fortieth birthday.
8. That in his last two sermons he characterized the state as externally decayed.<sup>68</sup>

These charges suggest why Brumbey had so few allies. In almost every respect, he challenged the state's power, and broke down the barrier between himself and his flock. Brumbey had become an enemy of the state, and even the most enlightened bureaucrat could not abide that. When Woellner called for a full investigation, the

<sup>67</sup> "Ich hingegen halte den Brumbey für einen eingebildeten von geistl. Stolz aufgeblasenen Sectirer, der sich unter dem gemeinen Volk einen Anfang machen, und etwas besonders vorstellen will." GSta PK. I. HA Rep. 96. Nr 222D. Brumbey, Prediger in Berlin 1796-97. (unpaginated). The letter is dated February 16, 1796.

<sup>68</sup> GSta PK. I. HA Rep. 96. Nr 222D. Brumbey, Prediger in Berlin 1796-97. (unpaginated). The report is dated February 22, 1796.

list of people who added their names to the report included Diterich, Gedike, Irwing, Friedrich Samuel Sack (August Sack's son and replacement), Teller, and Zöllner, all "enlightened" men who had supported Schulz and opposed Woellner.<sup>69</sup> Brumbey may have been a victim of state persecution, but his trials occurred under the benign oversight of Schulz's defenders.

### Preaching and the Enlightened Public Sphere

The Prussian state was so entangled with religion that it was difficult to establish a permanent boundary between religious practice and print debate. The elitism that coursed through the Prussian Enlightenment often put its universalist rhetoric in conflict with the service elite's practical needs. Thus, behind each call for enlightened public debate was always the belief that public space had to be clearly defined and policed. Even if the enlightened disliked Woellner's edicts, they still agreed that the oral and print spheres had to be kept separate.

Johann Friedrich Zöllner encapsulates the tensions in Prussian publicness. An author, state censor, preacher, and member of both the Superior Consistory and the *Mittwochsgesellschaft* (Wednesday Society), he was embedded in the establishment. Zöllner is especially notable for having sparked the "What is Enlightenment?" debate of the 1780s and 1790s, which began with his "What is Enlightenment?" query in the December 1783 issue of the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*.<sup>70</sup> Historians have recognized this article's significance, but have failed to note an article Zöllner published in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*'s February 1783 issue, entitled "Comparison of the Activities of the Preacher with the Activities of the Actor."<sup>71</sup> Looking closely at this text will illuminate not only the limits of Prussia's public but also how its divisions were wrapped up in religious issues.

The "Comparison" was Zöllner's contribution to a debate about whether preachers should borrow speaking techniques from actors. In the text Zöllner argued that preachers should borrow nothing, because the theater and the church were different kinds of places. His argument worked on two levels. First, he held that the

<sup>69</sup> GSta PK. I. HA Rep. 96, Nr 222D. Brumbey. Prediger in Berlin 1796-97. (unpaginated). The letter is dated 18 February 1796.

<sup>70</sup> The text that started everything is Johann Friedrich Zöllner. "Ist es rathsam, das Ehebündniß nicht ferner durch die Religion zu sanciren?." *Berlinische Monatsschrift* 2 (1783): 508-517. Ironically, the "What is Enlightenment?" question is tucked away in a footnote. For historical works on this debate, see H.B. Nisbet. "Was ist Aufklärung?": The Concept of Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century Germany." *Journal of European Ideas* 12 (1982): 77-95. and James Schmidt. "The Question of Enlightenment: Kant, Mendelssohn, and the Mittwochsgesellschaft." *Journal of the History of Ideas* (1989): 269-291. For collections of documents, see Bahr. *Aufklärung*; and Schmidt. *Enlightenment*.

<sup>71</sup> Johann Friedrich Zöllner. "Vergleichung der Aktion des Predigers mit der des Schauspielers." *Berlinische Monatsschrift* 1 (1783): 168-177.

working environments were physically different. Whereas the actor could roam the stage, gesticulate, and make faces, the preacher was literally boxed in. Zöllner wrote:

The preacher's actions are constrained in every way. Barely one third of his body is visible, and even the gestures he makes with his hands are constrained by the lectern and the pulpit. He cannot move a single foot away from his position.<sup>72</sup>

For Zöllner, preachers were physically, socially, and religiously bound to a specific place. As we will see, the desire to locate religion in specific practices and places dominated Zöllner's understanding of publicness.

At the second level, Zöllner argued that the church's special place in Prussian society justified constraints. The church maintained order, which subjected it to rules that did not apply elsewhere. Zöllner, for example, urged preachers not to preach on aesthetic issues, writing:

The preacher who is content to influence his listeners according to aesthetic laws misjudges his position. It is not his duty to awaken sensual ideas of Truth and Beauty in them, but to enlighten their understanding, to convince them, and to lead them to reflect free of prejudice.<sup>73</sup>

Preachers were constrained because they preached the Word, not the aesthetic education of man. This aversion to aestheticism was a residue of the elite's fear of Enthusiasm, and it permeated the elite's suspicion of religious practice.

Zöllner's attempt to localize religion casts light on the tensions religious practice caused in Prussian publicness. Let us consider how these practices worked. In a traditional church, before delivering his sermon the preacher ascended to the pulpit, climbing up narrow stairs to a perch over the congregation. This physical move from the altar at the front of the church to the side and up was (and still is) important to Protestant ritual, because it marked the moment when the preacher spoke *publicly* to his flock. This sermon as public moment was embedded in ritual because it existed in the contested space between religious belief, theological practice, and public order. If we consider Schulz for a moment, we can see why his ponytail was so irritating: the trappings surrounding the sermon's delivery were a means of keeping order and, hence, of upholding Prussian publicness.

<sup>72</sup> "Die Aktion des Predigers dagegen ist in jeder Rücksicht eingeschränkt. Kaum mehr als der dritte Theil seiner Figur ist sichtbar, selbst den Bewegungen seiner Hände setzt die Einfassung der Kanzel und das Pult Schranken. Er kann sich keinen Fuß breit von der Stelle bewegen." Zöllner. "Vergleichung," 171.

<sup>73</sup> "Der Prediger verkennt sein Amt, wenn er sich begnügt nach ästhetischen Gesetzen auf seine Zuhörer zu wirken. Seine Pflicht ist es, nicht sinnliche Vorstellungen des Wahren und Schönen in ihnen zu erwecken; sondern ihren Verstand aufzuhellen, ihn zu überzeugen und zu einem von Vorurtheilen freien Nachdenken zu leiten." Zöllner. "Vergleichung," 174.

As we have seen, the preacher's appearance was deemed central to social order. Many writers underscored this theme in Germany's print sphere. In 1790, for example, one anonymous writer argued in the *Journal von und für Deutschland* ("Journal from and for Germany") that calls to discard the cleric's black robe undermined religious practice, since the robe and its color demarcated the preacher's social position.<sup>74</sup> He wrote:

What would you put in this color's place? No one will contradict me, when I insist that the preacher must always appear respectable at the pulpit [*Lehrstuhl*], and that his clothing has an influence on his respectability.<sup>75</sup>

The author was not against loosening some restrictions, even suggesting that preachers be allowed one daily stroll without their clerical garb. Yet, he preferred that changes in garb be minor, since clothing maintained the preacher's authority.

The same author highlighted the political stakes in a subsequent issue of the *Journal von und für Deutschland*. Here he argued that religious practice must be unchanging, since:

The masses, be they respectable or poor rabble [*Pöbel*], are too accustomed to the sensual, and cling too much to their prejudices: [they] would make it a criminal act for the preacher to abolish the robe and collar on his own.<sup>76</sup>

The average person was not educated enough to take changes with equanimity, be they matters of dress or doctrine. Thus, changes in the preacher's appearance could subject the power structure to the people's whims, were they to find them unacceptable. If we recall how one member of the Superior Consistory demanded to know whether Schulz's villagers were offended by their preacher's ponytail, it is clear that the fear that changes in practice boded religious unrest was common among Prussia's elite.

The debate about preachers' clothing highlights the complicated interaction between religion, publicness, and the state in eighteenth-century Germany. The preacher's constraints (physical and sartorial) were a firewall between religious

<sup>74</sup> Anonymous, "Ueber Prediger-Kleidung," *Journal von und für Deutschland* 7, no. 10 (1790): 321-323. Leopold Friedrich von Göckingk, another member of the *Mittwochsgesellschaft*, published this journal.

<sup>75</sup> "Was will man an die Stelle dieser Farbe setzen? Kein Mensch wird mir widersprechen, wenn ich behaupte, daß der Prediger immer mit einem schicklichen Anstand auf seinem Lehrstuhle erscheinen müße, und daß seine Kleidung auch auf diesen Anstand Einfluß habe." Anonymous, "Ueber Prediger-Kleidung," 322.

<sup>76</sup> "Der große Haufe, sey er vornehmer oder geringer Pöbel, ist zu sehr an das Sinnliche gewöhnt, hängt zu sehr an seinen Vorurtheilen, als daß er es nicht dem Prediger zum Verbrechen machen würde, wenn er sich selbst Mantel und Krägelchen abschaffen wollte." Anonymous, "Nachtrag zur Abhandlung von der Predigerkleidung im XI. Stück dieses Jahrgangs," *Journal von und für Deutschland* 7, no. 12 (1790): 556.

practice and Enthusiasm. Consider the distinction yet another anonymous author drew in 1790 between orators and preachers. Of the orator, he wrote:

I am stirred, shocked, appalled. The expression of the passions carries me away mechanically. But it was only an intoxication, a dream. It disappears as soon as I cool off and maybe I am ashamed that I allowed myself to be carried away blindly. In short, I was agreeably amused, but not instructed, nor edified; if such occurred at all, it was obviously by accident.<sup>77</sup>

This writer suggests why the distance between preacher and congregation was a precondition for Prussia's public. If preachers calmed people and taught them their place in the world, then acting methods, ponytails, green robes, and especially Enthusiasm only interfered in that sacred public mission.

Fear of change in religious practice was endemic to the elitism that suffused enlightened Germany. Each member of the elite was aware of his status and of the political implications that any changes implied. Zöllner, for example, distinguished sharply between the educated and the uneducated:

The more raw a people is, the more its arbitrary verbal expressions are accompanied by the pantomimic expressions of Nature. The same is true for individuals. Nowhere does one find more lively, stronger, and frequent gesticulations than among the rabble [*Pöbel*] of any people.<sup>78</sup>

Zöllner locates the problem of Enthusiasm precisely in the oral sphere. Whereas gestures were absent from the print sphere by its nature, they were always a potential danger in the oral sphere. (Indeed, the entire religious constitution was designed against such gesturing.) Thus, preachers and the rest of the elite were different; they were educated, rational, and politically reliable.

Print elitism was not separate from the Prussian understanding of publicness, but was essential to it. To the elite, the print sphere was politically innocuous because the learned alone traversed it. Public print debates were rational, calm, and respected the state's role in public life. The oral public sphere was dangerous, however, because it included common people and centered on matters religious.

<sup>77</sup> "Ich werde gerührt, bestürzt, erschreckt; der Ausdruck der Leidenschaften reißt mich machinenartig hin; aber es war nur ein Rausch, ein Traum. So wie ich kalt werde, verschwindet er und ich schaeme mich vielleicht, da ich mich blindlings hatte hinreissen lassen. Kurz ich ward angenehm unterhalten, aber nicht belehret, nicht erbauet, oder wemns geschieht, gesichts per accidens." Anonymous, "Ist es wahr, dass der Redner auf der Bühne stärker rührt, als der Redner auf der Kanzel?" *Magazin der Sächsischen Geschichte*, no. 7 (1790): 613.

<sup>78</sup> "Je roher ein Volk ist, desto mehr begleitet es den wörtlichen willkürlichen Ausdruck mit dem pantomimischen Ausdruck der Natur. Von einzelnen Menschen gilt dasselbe. Nirgends findet man lebhaftere, stärkere und häufiger angebrachte Gestikulation als beim Pöbel des Volks." Zöllner, "Vergleichung," 176.

Enthusiasm lurked here, and it could only be dampened by a preacher who kept the vagaries of print debate out of the certainties that common orality required.

## Conclusion

In 1784, Immanuel Kant published a response to Zöllner's famous question, entitled "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?" As Kant put it, "*Sapere Aude!* (Have the courage to use your own understanding!) is, thus, the motto of the Enlightenment."<sup>79</sup> These words have been celebrated ever since as the Enlightenment's battle cry. As many have noted, however, this definition includes a unique inversion of traditional notions of public and private.<sup>80</sup> Kant's public sphere (*Öffentlichkeit*) was a print realm in which *Gelehrten* made *public* use of their reason. The private realm, in contrast, was constituted by state service. State workers (that is, almost all the *Gelehrten*) were *required* to obey the state's commands. Thus, they were forbidden by the Enlightenment to reason publicly, since others had no choice but to obey such commands. Kant's public was, therefore, an attempt to create a realm that was both beyond religion and still informed by it.

Contrary to some other arguments, Kant's definitions highlight the Prussian Enlightenment's coming collapse, not its eternal promise.<sup>81</sup> Kant's view of publicness reveals how deeply conflicted the Prussian Enlightenment was over the issue. Although it has been justly celebrated for its commitment to intellectual freedom, Kant's public was narrow in its application, as it presumed the same educational differences that ran through the Prussian debate about preachers and publicness. Consider Kant's definition:

Under public use of one's reason I understand that which someone renders as an educated person before the entire reading public.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>79</sup> Kant, "Beantwortung," 481.

<sup>80</sup> See, for example, Nisbet, "Aufklärung," and Onora O'Neill, *Constructions of reason: explorations of Kant's practical philosophy* (Cambridge: New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

<sup>81</sup> I am opposing the kind of work that Jürgen Habermas has inspired. See Habermas' *Structural Transformation* and his *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987). The exchange between Foucault and Habermas on this issue is instructive. For Foucault, see Michel Foucault and Paul Rabinow, *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984). For Habermas, see his *Discourse*.

<sup>82</sup> "Ich verstehe unter dem öffentlichen Gebrauche seiner eignen Vernunft denjenigen, denn jemand als Gelehrter von ihr vor dem ganzen Publikum der Leserwelt macht." Kant, "Beantwortung," 485.

A legacy of his Lutheranism and state service, Kant's definition limited the public sphere to educated writers and their literate public. The common people were absent, because Kant assumed the same "bi-cameral" public as did his colleagues.

As I have already noted, Enthusiasm in the oral sphere was an omnipresent danger for the enlightened elite. It is, therefore, suggestive that Kant devoted four pages of his fourteen-page text to preaching and doctrinal issues, as it laid bare the Prussian Enlightenment's deepest conflicts. Kant wrote of preachers:

Thus, is a cleric [*Geistlicher*] beholden to deliver his sermons [*Vortrag*] to his students and community according to the church's symbols, since he was hired on this condition....Thus, the use that a hired preacher makes of his reason before his community is purely private....And in view of this [he] is not free as a preacher and must not be so, because he is following another's orders.<sup>83</sup>

Yet the tensions in this dichotomous approach to freedom are apparent in Kant's prohibition of the state *eternally* establishing what preachers taught:

A contract made to prevent eternally all further Enlightenment of the human race is, unfortunately, null and void--whether it is ratified by the highest authority, parliaments, or the most solemn peace treaties.<sup>84</sup>

Thus, laws establishing one religious belief were appropriate for the short term, but not forever. This distinction was untenable, and it is no wonder that it collapsed.

Kant's text augured the coming storm over the Edict on Religion, because its arguments supported both sides of the issue. The tension in Kant's argument—and by extension, the Prussian Enlightenment's—provided the space that Schulz and Brumbey later exploited, much to their collective misfortune. In the end, individual preachers were both free and bound to their positions in reason's name. Yet, religious debate in general could never be officially constrained in reason's name. The end result was a constantly shifting debate about the relationship between the elite print sphere and the demotic oral sphere. If Kant's ideas represent the Enlightenment's distilled essence, then it is clear that this movement could never

<sup>83</sup> "Eben so ist ein Geistlicher verbunden, seinen Katechismusschuelern und seiner Gemeinde nach dem Symbol der Kirche, der er dient, seinen Vortrag zu thun; denn er ist auf diese Bedingung angenommen worden....Der Gebrauch also, den ein angestellter Lehrer von seiner Vernunft vor seiner Gemeinde macht, ist bloss ein Privatgebrauch....in Ansehung dessen ist er, als Priester, nicht frei, und darf es auch nicht sein, weil er ein fremden Auftrag ausrichtet." Kant, "Beantwortung," 487.

<sup>84</sup> "Ein solcher Kontrakt, der auf immer aller weitere Aufklärung vom Menschengeschlechte abzuhalten geschlossen würde, ist schlechterdings null und nichtig; und sollte er auch durch die oberste Gewalt, durch Reichstäge und die feierlichsten Friedensschlüsse bestätigt sein." Kant, "Beantwortung," 488.

clearly define the relationship between freedom and order in a religiously circumscribed world.

Kant's position reflects the Prussian Enlightenment's problem with balancing religion, security, and freedom. The elite's fear of religious upheaval always limited its desire to expand the public. By the late 1780s, as these problems perdured, the enlightened vision of publicness collapsed. Kant's text suggests that enlightenment in Germany included two streams of thought on publicness. One was conservative and emphasized keeping religious practice stable in the name of order. The other was liberal and emphasized freedom of debate for the right kind of people. These streams came together in the division between the oral and print sphere, with a preacher standing sentinel between them. Neither tendency was free of the other's influence, because the Prussian Enlightenment was rooted in both state and church. This was why Enthusiasm proved to be such a generally apprehended threat.

Thus, Schulz and Brumbey show us that German debate about publicness cannot be reduced to print versus state. Print was a pillar of social and political order, because it guaranteed enlightened advancement and left ordinary folk secure in their traditional truths. Yet, the problem of orality and Enthusiasm proved to be too much for the Enlightenment to resolve through the public. In Prussia's tightly organized, elitist public sphere, the smallest change in religious symbols had large political consequences. Allowing the elite to argue in print was good, but having the common folk babbling on Sundays was bad. These two positions assumed and reinforced each other, transforming themselves into a general political conservatism. Whatever else the German Enlightenment tolerated, it was not about to let preachers sporting ponytails and green robes fulminate before the common man at the educated man's expense.