In 1640, the Bohemian chiliast and visionary Paul Felgenhauer (1593-1661) issued an ambitious work titled Das Büchlein Iehi Or, oder Morgenröhte der Weißheit (The Little Book Jehi Or, or the Dawn of Wisdom), which delineated the contours of his radical theosophical worldview.\(^1\) According to Felgenhauer, knowledge of the world could be divided into triumvirates derived from the three “books” of wisdom: the first book being that of nature, creation, and of the heavens; the second being Holy Scripture; and the third being that of man himself. Yet at the heart of this confident guide to a new world was doubt. This doubt was expressed almost inadvertently in a statement concerning the signs by which readers could recognize that Felgenhauer wrote not presumptuously, and on his own behalf, but on the authority of God through the power of the Holy Spirit:

> Although our knowing and prophesying be but part; yet we will not quench the spirit and we are not to despise prophesying: And the Reader in the Lord may know that we have our wisdom, be it about natural things, or spiritual, learned out of the Holy Scripture, and not out of prophane writings; for the Bible is sufficient to us to all wisdom, and we used in 24 years [i.e., since ca. 1625] no other book to find out wisdom but the Bible. Out of this book the spirit of wisdom,

\(^1\) [Paul Felgenhauer], Das Büchlein Iehi Or, oder Morgenröhte der Weißheit ([Amsterdam], 1640).
through the anointing, can teach us all things and needs no other spirit or man to teach us.2

Why was 1625 so important to Felgenhauer? This date did not signal the inauguration of his prophetic career. Instead, it marked a crucial year in which Felgenhauer was forced to accept the catastrophic failure of the earliest phase of his life as a self-proclaimed prophet. For, between 1621 and 1623, under a variety of pseudonyms, Felgenhauer had issued numerous works, based on a variety of sources which confidently predicted that an earthly millennium would commence in 1623.

When this date came and went, Felgenhauer initially reoriented his hopes, predicting the “year of jubilation” for 1625 and 1626. However, he was evidently riddled with doubt following his initial failures and, saddled with a heavy conscience, in the course of 1625 abandoned his chiliastic prophecies altogether. Instead, in a manuscript work entitled Speculum Poenitentiae (Looking-Glass of Penitence, 1625), Felgenhauer attempted to reconcile his self-image as a divinely-ordained prophet with the failure of his prophecies. The Speculum Poenitentiae is, I believe, a unique example of early seventeenth-century prophetic literature. It comprises an unusual type of spiritual autobiography, as well as a statement of no little interest to sociologists, psychologists, and historians interested in the psychological effects of disconfirmed prophecy on believers. Equally, however, it offers a unique perspective on the vexing theological question of the discernment of spirits from the perspective of early modern heterodox Protestantism.

This chapter examines the content and significance of the Speculum. It is structured in four parts. In the first, I introduce