

# The Religion of Klopstock

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*May 18th, 1903*

Submitted to the Department of Germanic Languages of the University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

Master Thesis

German

Baumgartner, M. D. 1908

Religion of Klopstock.

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## The Religion of Klopstock.

In one of his theological discussions Lessing said:  
"Luther you have freed us from tradition: who will free  
us from the letter?" (Hether<sup>t</sup> Vol. I P. I)

In this sentence we really have the gist of the re-  
ligious situation as we find it in the latter part of the  
seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth.  
Luther had taken a firm stand. He had said, I will not  
accept what some one else maintains to be the right and  
what our fathers have handed down to us. No I will go to  
the original and read for myself. That gave an impetus to  
religion, especially in Germany. Men learned to read and  
think for themselves. So many who before had simply follow-  
ed the dictates of the church, who had by force of habit  
and custom believed in God, now read and thought and grew  
in their religious natures.

In course of time the letter became as objectional.<sup>?</sup>  
Men did not think for themselves. The first question they  
would ask was, What does the Scripture say? The law was  
often obeyed in letter but not in spirit. Science and  
invention as well as secular knowledge were making rapid  
strides in France and England. Their religion of necessity  
changed as did their ways of thinking and living, due to  
progress. Consequently these<sup>the</sup> more progressive, change  
their views on some of the doctrines of Christianity then

held and in the course of time their views abnormally developed into an almost negative position.

In Germany we find a change taking place in the Lutheran church which at first was for the better. It was a breaking away from creed and the letter and a taking up of practical religion. It was a step forward. Only those were permitted to preach whose lives were consistent with their beliefs. In other words piety was demanded and for that reason those belonging to the movement are known to us as Pietists. At the head of this new religious movement we find Spener of Frankfort who was not the first Pietist but was the first to take a bold open stand and proclaim it. In 1670 he began to hold his collegia pietatis, devotional services, in which met together people of all classes to listen to his religious talks, his interpretation of the Bible and to take part in prayer. This religious party which had been organized in part to counteract the spirit of Atheism which had grown up to some extent in France, in the course of time deteriorated into a mere moral life on the one side and what we might call an Asceticism on the other. Spener was pious and tolerant. His followers did not remain thus always. Because Christian Wolff held different opinions from them for instance, they drove him from Halle, Pietism never made itself felt in Germany as did Puritanism in England and Jansenism in France, to some extent similar movements. (Hether Vol. I. P. 61)

This is due to the law ebb to which the movement had fallen. ?  
At last it consisted only of quiet prayer-meetings and  
asceticism much as some of the monastic orders had been ,  
hence it fell into disrepute.

A little earlier than the Pietists a sect sprang up in ?  
England which for a long time wielded considerable influence  
These were the Deists. At first they too were devoted and  
remained religious but were less orthodox than the Pietists.  
They believed in God and immortality. To them Christianity  
meant only a moral code. They rejected revealed religion  
and Christianity as well as the historical Bible. They  
wanted a natural religion which reason would give them.  
Lord Hubert Cherbury was among the first to start this move-  
ment with his book, "De Veritate" which came out in Paris  
in 1684. The book which John Toland published in 1695  
entitled, "Christianity not Mysterious", was far reaching in  
its influence and was much discussed. The main idea Toland  
put forth in his book was that "nothing can justly require  
our faith and submission, save that which agrees with the  
laws of our understanding". ( Gostwick P. 26)  
The "understanding" is the man" is his method of putting it.  
To be sure this doctrine directly overthrew the Christian ?  
religion since some things, in fact many of the teachings  
of the Christian religion are in part mysterious and the  
understanding ~~can~~ not grasp them.



Toland was attacked from many sides. Leibnitz wrote one of the fifty-four replies. He showed him that there were thoughts aside from the Christian religion which were not apparent to the understanding and yet were accepted. Among those he mentions are "scent and color" in nature or the "magnetic laws". Now the magnetic action is partly known but the source is not fully comprehended, yet magnetism is believed in by science and made practical use of.

The Deists were opposed by the so-called apologists who stood up for Christianity and for the historical Bible. There were few who were bold enough in asserting the mysterious in the Scriptures. In arguing with the Deists they failed to grasp the situation well and permitted their opponents to hold the ground that unless they could explain the mysterious in the Christian religion it would have to fall. Had they boldly asserted that, some things they now saw "as through a glass darkly," but accepted as the scientist does many things which he only in part comprehends, they would have strengthened their position.

By many Atheism was feared and for that reason the Deistic doctrine was rejected. The creed that "faith was as old as creation was boldly preached in England and soon heartily accepted in Germany. (Gostwick P. 39)

This gave a hopeful spirit to the movement and men welcomed it. Human nature was misjudged however, for the Deists maintained that the increase of virtue in the world was due

to innate virtues belonging to human nature instead of coming from the good results of Christian labors and sacrifices continued through centuries. Freedom and secular education, according to the Deists, would make the virtues unfold and grow and "make a paradise of the world". False ?  
as this creed was, it encouraged unbelief and gave rise to Atheism and the social revolution in France and Germany under the name of Rationalism.

By the middle of the eighteenth century English Deism had spread into France and Germany. In England this movement, which had not reached the masses of the people so much as the learned or the reading class, was crowded out and supplanted by Wesleyan Methodism, a more orthodox movement. A general revival spread through England and positive faith, Christian faith, became prevalent again. More people were reached because <sup>of</sup> the methods used in promulgating the doctrines. The Deists wrote to the people, while John and ~~Charles~~ Charles Wesley talked to them and in that way got in touch with a larger number. People could better appreciate simple orthodox faith and besides in England freedom was feared, lest Atheism should spread as in France.

In France it was different. There Deism flourished. Voltaire spread the movement. He however, did not remain an orthodox Deist. He asserted, "(l y a un être supreme)" there is a Supreme, but not without some hesitancy. Likewise he affirmed the immortality of the soul, but not firmly.

Condillac, his contemporary, boldly asserted that man is an animal and Diderot for a time inclined toward Deism, but soon changed over to pantheism and still later he assumed a negative position, denying the existence of God and the immortality of the soul. <sup>La</sup> Mettrie, a friend of Frederick II was a materialist and in his book "Système de la Nature," advocated both materialism and Atheism.

In Germany Deism grew and flourished on the ~~Deistic~~ literature imported from England. The decay of Luthern<sup>a</sup> orthodoxy helped much to make Deism popular ~~in Germany~~ for a time. The spreading of scientific books had shaped the minds of Germany enough so that the treatises on Deism were welcomed there and Christian orthodoxy declined while rationalism began to gain a foothold.

It is interesting to note that in England Deism preceded Methodism. In Germany, <sup>Pietism</sup> on the other hand, somewhat of the same nature as Methodism, though less orthodox, preceded Rationalism. In fact Luthernism and Pietism, especially the latter, seemed to prepare the way for the rational movement in Germany.

Semler was one of the first to help bring about the age of "Enlightenment" Aufklärung or "clearing up" during the reign of Frederick II., who was a Rationalist and Materialist. Semler and a number of his followers may be styled

moderate Rationalists for they still were moralists and partly orthodox, for Semler is said to not to have doubted the existence of a Supreme being and to have held to his private religion. (Gostwick P.44)

Rationalism took a more positive aspect; Reimanus, who is a representative of this movement, as well as the first to take an open stand for it, utterly rejected as a fraud the whole of the positive Christianity. He believed in the immortality of the soul. His faith was built on instinct. He argued from the instincts with which the Creator had endowed animals, dumb brutes, and held that their instincts did not deceive them. From that he then drew the conclusion that since that was true of the physical instincts of brutes, it would be true of the superior instincts of the human soul. He taught Utilitarianism as did the "popular philosophers", moralists that espoused Utilitarianism. He is best known for his "Apology" published about thirty years after his death. In this he has a historical criticism of the Scripture. What did not coincide with human experience, he explained away but still he did not reject the Scripture as a whole, and apparently sought the truth.

His follower, Semler, was a man of a different type. He seemed to make it his life's work to destroy faith in historical Christianity, and veneration for the early Church. Although educated among the Pietists at Halle, he secretly rejected Pietism and espoused the cause of the Deists.

For him religion was a private affair, in which no two men ever thought alike. Conscience was to be the guide. This was to be aided by his own interpretation of the Scripture. To him the Bible for the most part, was simply a republication of natural religion. Some of it however, he believed to be Divinely inspired because the perusal of it had an edifying influence on the reader. He is accused of being a hypocrite, of knowingly deceiving men, but his views lack clearness, so that it is hard to know his position. Be that as it may, many through him, lost their faith.

Bahrt, a disciple of Semler, represents yet another phase of Rationalism. The advocates of the religious movements so far have espounded free doctrines but lived moral lives. Bahrt, though a minister, purchased a tavern and there entertained the rabble. He would tell them something serious and move them to tears. The next instant, though an educated man, he would relate something low and trivial, and showed no reverence for the Scripture, no veneration for the Supreme, no regard for human laws for he lived an immoral wretched life. | For a time now, religion was influenced by the already mentioned "popular philosophers" who gave a new trend to Rationalism. Bahrt's immortality was rejected. They did not accept Christianity but wanted to substitute for it morality, which was still in a way dependent on Christian faith for many of their doctrines were indirectly based

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on the teachings of the New Testament. Their one aim, however, was to substitute morality for revealed religion.

Dorner has summed up the result of the Rational movement so well that I do not see how it can be better put, hence I quote in part where he says:

Rational men must accept no evidence, save that which is real. So far did they go on in this way that they lost utterly, at last the faculty of seeing anything holy and morally beautiful in the person of Christ. His grand idea of a Kingdom of God to be established in this world they could not understand otherwise than by ascribing even to Him such secular notions as were recognized in their own sphere of thought. Consequently the character of the Holy One himself was attacked. He was accused as ~~once~~ before the High Priest, so now before Reason's tribunal. Once more he was tried; now at the bar of reason; He was stripped of his glory; reason itself ascended the throne rightfully belonging to Him in His church; once more He was numbered with sinners; the sentence of condemnation was pronounced against Him. What follows? As of old, the way of humiliation is made the road to victory, ascension, glory, a glory that will be brighter ~~than~~ than that of His first appearance in this world. After this death follows His resurrection."

Dorner's figurative summing up, points out two good results for the Christian religion occurring from Rationalism. The

first is that the Christian religion was held up before the people. "The trial" as Dorner puts it, was public and those who witnessed it went away bearing in their memories a picture of the Innocent One. Furthermore Rationalism brought reason into the Christian religion. It will remain true that religion is largely feeling, emotion, but the rational controversy made men think, and reason why and wherefore this or that, as taught them, be true. It did more, for it also taught them that reason could perform only a certain function, that after all faith in some things not fully comprehended in the plan of salvation, was requisite in religion and ought to be accepted in full faith as some things in science which are mysterious, are held as true, even though scientifically they cannot be proved.

For a time let us now leave the religious movements and philosophic tendencies and take up the situation of poetry, which can not be separate entirely from religion. From about 1600 to 1720 we have a period in German literature in which the foreign element predominates. In the beginning of the eighteenth century we find that in Hamburg and Leipzig, for instance, the English, the French and the popular elements predominate in their literature; in Zurich and Berlin we find at this time the influence exerted by French freedom, but there is an inclination toward Shakspeare and Milton, who more nearly represent the Germanic thought

and feeling.

Gottsched, who represented the Leipsic school knew the old Germanic literature but his interest was drawn toward the drama and the France style. Bodmer, along with Breitinger, is the representative of the Swiss and Berlin school. He took less stock in the artistic drama and the early poetry of Germany, the Minnegesong and the Nibelungenlied, which were once more studied. Then further, the Leipsic school separated the religious life from the aesthetic. That gave to their literature a lightness and freedom much as the literature of France possessed at this time. Bodmer and his school did not separate their religion from their poetry. Consequently we find their poetry serious, often gloomy. To him the epic poem was the highest form of poetry. Holding this opinion as Bodmer did, it is not surprising to learn of a German prose translation of "Paradise Lost" which he made in 1732. In his preface to the translation the author refers to Addison as the reviver of appreciation for Milton in the eighteenth century. He also speaks highly of Shakspeare and calls him "the English Sophocles, who introduced the meter of Milton, blank verse, into England and was Milton's model in point of language". (I. Scherer, 23.)

Neither Bodmer's school nor that of Gottsched attached much value to rhyme. The latter insisted on clearness and elegance. It thought poetry was an art to be acquired



by instruction and believed the Greeks were authority on matters of taste. The Swiss school lacked elegance and clarity but made up for this <sup>by</sup> depth of thought. Both schools agreed that poetry was an imitation or better, a representation of nature and thought <sup>and that</sup> what was new and beautiful was worthy to be put into poetry and that the highest function of poetry was to depict the marvellous. They did not agree as to how far the marvellous dared to overstep the probable. (Scherer II. P. 24)

Gottsched for instance, objected to Milton's devils. He held it was against aesthetic propriety to depict a devil, hence protested against the supernatural creations of Milton. The imagination had limitations set by Gottsched which were removed by Bodmer and the sharpness with which Gottsched was set right on this point caused a controversy which resulted in the separation and enmity of the school. The Swiss school had the advantage. Since they held the more universal view and defended the cause of beauty against dogmatism and pedantry, victory belonged to them.

As already said, Berlin belonged to the Swiss school and Halle also espoused their cause. Prussia now came forth and furnished them, to their great joy, a German Milton, Klopstock. Scherer depicts him thus; while the spirit of Enlightenment was reigning supreme, there arose a pure poetic soul,

moulded by sentiments of pietism, who carried away with him the noblest of the nation and aroused the highest religious and poetic enthusiasm for that very Messiah whom Frederick the Great had termed only the Jewish carpenter's son!

It will be of interest to note yet the exact condition in Prussia, the home of Klopstock, before we consider his work as a poet, but more especially his religion as found in his practice. The sentiment and condition of religious belief in Prussia at this time was largely moulded by the ruler Frederick the Great. As already said above, he was a great friend of Mettrie, who was a materialist. This shows his leaning in that direction. In part the liberty of conscience and freedom of the press which he instituted in Prussia accounts for the free thinking in his realm. He was thoroughly in sympathy with the scientific and religious movements of France, at the time, so it is little wonder that the church lost its influence in his reign, while philosophy, which he greatly encouraged, grew and prospered. Wolff the great German rationalist was his friend and possessed a great influence over him in moulding his opinion. This aesthetic philosophy which Wolff represented, was befriended by Frederick as were the views held by Locke, Newton, and the English free thinkers and Deists. Likewise he accepted the moral philosophy of Shaftesbury who taught the identity of the good and the beautiful, of virtue and happiness; he believed in the teaching of Boyle who led the revolt of

reason against faith; and greatly admired Voltaire who carried on Boyle's work with great vigor, and taught that God is only known through Nature and founded morality on the belief in God at the same time that he assailed all positive religion. In short, during Fredrick's time we find enthroned in Prussia as in France, rationalism, materialism and to a great extent Atheism. There faith was overthrown and reason held sway.

It is at such a time as this that Fredrick Gottlieb Klopstock, the oldest of a family of thirteen children is born July 8, 1724 at Quedlinberg. His father, Gottlieb Heinrich Klopstock originally lived in Lower Saxony and was a Jurist of no little renown. He was a brave pious cultured man who had time to attend to his profession and still devote some time to study. He took most interest in literature. His mother, Anna Maria Schmidt, who came from Longensalza, was of humbler descent than his father, but was a gentle and painstaking mother.

In Fredrick's youth, his grandmother Louise seemed to have exerted the greatest influence upon him. It was through her that he was, when yet a mere boy, taught to love and adore Christ. Greatfully he remembered her after he had grown up to manhood. The Bible stories she told him when a child seem to have made a lasting impression upon him. His father's influence also had a lasting effect upon

He was pious but yet gave his children liberty and encouraged them in games and sports, often taking part in ~~them~~ them himself. Fredrick and his brothers were encouraged to race, climb, swim and skate. Skating was especially enjoyed by the boys and Fredrick long after maturity delighted in the sport and usually was superior to his fellows in it. Klopstock says that, his father would permit them to go with the injunction, "Just don't get drowned youngsters!" His father early taught his son to enjoy nature. He encouraged him to find flowers and when the young poet came with them he was never too busy to stop and enjoy and analyze the flowers with his son. These talks he usually closed by pointing out some wonderful arrangement <sup>and would then make some application</sup> or special beauty of this to the All-wise Creator. This he did so naturally and simply that Nature herself suggested to the youth a Supreme. ( **Litteraturkunde**

**für höhere Mädchenschulen. Vol IV. 273.)**

With such surroundings and influences it is easy to appreciate the figure *Zimmermann* uses of his development when he says "Out of his health and out of his religion grew as out of the fertile soil, the socially pure and courageous youth". ( *Archiv Vol XIV p. 67.* )

At the age of fifteen he began attending school at Schulpforta, a Prince's school, where he continued his study for six years during which time he acquired a classical

education and was especially interested in Greek poetry. Even though he was here under the discipline of Monks he maintained a heroic manliness and independence instead of giving up to complete submission as one might reasonably expect from a youth with his inclinations. As a youth here he showed superior talents and devoted his study to forms of poetry apparently going far above his colleagues in his work. Already at Schulpforta he took up the work of Bodmer and Breitinger. It was through them he got the idea that epic poetry was the highest form of poetry. At once he conceived the idea of gaining for Germany the ~~dist~~ distinction of having epic poems such as some of the surrounding nations had, especially England, and before he graduated from Schulpforta he formed the plan for his "Messias".

After graduating at the "Prince's School" in 1745 he went first to Jena and then to Leipsic where he studied for the ministry, but feeling that his powers of speaking were limited so that he would be considerably hampered in the pulpit, he accepted a position as teacher at <sup>Sonnenhals</sup> Largentolze hoping to later on get a position as professor in some college. ( Archiv XIV, P. 74)

As the object of this paper is not concerned with the incidents in Klopstock's life except as they bear on his

religion, the mere outline will here be given of the subsequent events. In 1750 he accepted Bädmer's invitation and went to live with him at Zurich where he remained until in 1751 when Count Bernstorff invited him to the Court of Denmark, where he received a pension after 1771. On his way to Copenhagen he met Meta Müller, the "Gidde" of his poetry, whom he married in 1754 but after four years of happiness she was taken away by the hand of death. The year 1776 he spent with his friend, the Margrave of Baden, in Karlsruhe but during his subsequent days he lived in Hamburg. In the winter of his life he was again married (1792) with Joanna von Winthem, the niece of Meta, who made his last days sunny. On March 14, 1803 he died and was laid to rest <sup>by</sup> his Meta in the Cemetery at Ottensen where the beautiful marble slab at his head bears this inscription; "Sæet vñ Gott gesæet, am Tage der Garben zu reifen ", Seed strewn by God to ripen on the day the sheaves are gathered.

Turning our attention now to the religion of Klopstock we have two sources on which we base our evidence, first the attitude he manifests in his writing, and secondly the testimony we have from his friends and others who are authorities on the subject. Naturally the first question one asks in finding out the religion of man is What is his belief in God or what is his ideal of the nature of God? If we take his odes alone we find that he believes in a Supreme who is All

powerful, All-wise, who created *the earth and rules* the  
destines of men. He is the Being of beings who prevades all,  
He is **F**ather **S**on, and **S**pirit. If we take his odes we find  
that scarcely a year passed from the time that the author  
of the "Messias " began his poetic labors until, <sup>his death</sup> but that  
he in some way gave expression to his belief in **G**od. In 1757  
we have his ode addressed to his departed friend Gisecke  
in which he says "thus He who is in heaven wrote our destinies  
upon brazen plates and what the exalted One wrote I will re-  
vere". On the following year we find abundant references.  
In "the Hour of Devotion" he speaks of God as M ediator  
and in the ode "To God" he says "Thy Omnipresence, God, caused  
me to shudder." In 1749 he produced but little and in what  
we have we find no reference to the Supreme. In the  
following year he refers to God in the ode "To Bodmer where  
he says God sees us in eternity; and in the one "To **J**he  
Redeemer" in 1751 he speaks of the Father when herefers to  
Christ. Again in 1752 the ode addressed to Qween Luise

he calls God our Judge, while in the following year in the ode addressed to Frederick the Great "For the King" he adores Jehovah the Creator and Giver of a gracious King. In the "Recovery" which came out in 1754 he speaks of his Meta as one sent from heaven by the "Lord of life and death"

Now for a period of four years nothing of note is preserved us in his odes. It was the period during which he lived in bliss with Meta and devoted more time to his "Messias". In the one well known ode which he produced in 1758 we have practically all portrayed that he held of his God to be. He calls him, God, Father, Eternal One, Creator, Omnipresent One. "The Omnipresent One," is one of his most devotional ones. We almost feel a touch of pantheism in some of his lines as in the following,

With a holy shudder,

I pluck the flower of His

Which God made;

God is, where the flower is".

In the following year he composed a goodly number of odes all of which are pre-veded by deep devotion, and praise and adoration for the merciful and gracious Lord. IN "The Blessedness of All" he gives one of his best testimonies as to his opinion of God and his nature. He says God Thou art thee father of Spirit\_ Beings of beings , Thou hast been forever\_



Oh thou art Spirit of spirits and Beings of beings."

Another year now intervenes without anything preserved for us. The year 1762 brings to the ode, "The New Year" where he says:

Not alone for the fatherland,  
Where the law and hundreds rule,  
Also for a fatherland,  
Where law and One holds sway."

Here again follows an interlude of <sup>2</sup> few years with nothing of value which gives any clue as to his religious views, after which follows a series of odes all of which contain an allusion to God. Some of these containing such references are "The Worlds," "The Planets" "To The Everlasting One", "Death" and "The Blessed One".

In the odes preserved for us in 1765 we have no reference to God but in 1766 many references are again made to Him. "The Great Halleluja" is full of praise for "the Exalted One, for the Beginner, for the Father of Creation, while Rothchild's Groves" contains several references to Him. Of the odes in the following year the one dedicated

to "The Battlefield" contains numerous allusions to the "Mighty One", and the ode "Stintenburg" contains the name of God.

Now follows a period of fifteen years during which time but few odes were composed. The few that were composed

during this period were not devoted to religion or God. In fact no direct reference is made during all this time to the Supreme. It was during the intervening space from 1767\_1782 that Klopstock directed his attention more to patriotic odes and that may account for the omission of reference to God. In 1782 he speaks of the Angels of God in the ode addressed to "The Transformed", and in the "Morning Song at the Creators Feast, we have reference to "Lord, God, Holy One, Exalted one, and The First. In 1781, however, he again refers to God in the ode, "Friend and Foe" he says, "Religion, holy and exalted, terrible and lovely, great and majestic, is sent from God" Once more in 1786, after a period of four years during which the odes have no reference to God, "The Infidel" appears which again shows that Klopstock's faith in God is not yet shaken.

In 1799 we find among his odes a poem entitled "Psalm". God is adored, Each stanza closing with a line of the Lord's prayer. Three years later in "The War of Freedom" Klopstock says that in war men do not know what God has in store for them. In 1799, after an elapse of seven year "Misbegierde" he has God speak. To him he attributes power over men. Likewise in the following year in the ode "The Blessings", addressed to his long departed Meta under the name of Julia, he says that she pointed him to God.

In 1802, the year before he passed away he again refers to God in the ode "The higher Psalm".

Klopstock's religion is really the orthodox simple faith founded on the Bible. His God so far as we have found him in his odes, does not differ from the orthodox Christian God, The Trinity, The Father, the Mediator and the Spirit have been mentioned by him in his odes. If we leave the last two persons of the Trinity for the present we will find that his *geistliche Lieder* portrayed the same God that we found in the odes, save that he attributed to Him several new attributes. As might be expected, we find his God well defined and described in these hymns. In the "Hymn of Praise" for instance, he makes his God the Lord, Leader, Comforter, Portion, Salvation, Redeemer, Father, Eternal One, Ever present One, and Mediator, and in "The Near Death" he calls him Father, Judge, God and Devoted One, while in the ode to the friend " he calls him ruler of heaven, God, Redeemer and Jehovah. Again in "the Redemption he calls him Judge, God, Jehovah Mediator, Lord, Lord of all glory, Eternal Life Giver, Salvation of Sinners, Power, Conquerer, Conncillor, and Life. Many of these appellations he repeats in some of his other hymns in which he praises and adores his God. Now and then we find still other terms used to characterize his God as in the "Morning Hymn" for instance in which he calls Him Giver of Immortality.

Klopstock also gives some idea of his belief of the Supreme in his Drama "The Death of Adam" where he has Adam say when he knows his time is near at hand when he must die

( Act II Scene 3 )

"I ~~will~~ leave it to ~~him~~ who <sup>gave</sup> the sun his course and the angel of death his judgement. He who created an immortal being, places life and death before me. For God, ~~who will~~ become human, The hope, the joy, the Savior of man kind has been merciful to me. In the next act he says of him "when the God of your Fathers and your God the promised One, to whom I now go, <sup>for</sup> sends you, raise up your heads and look up to heaven, pray and give thanks that ye were created Judge of the world I come" (Act. III. Scene IV)

Indirectly his dramas not dealing with Biblical subjects also testify for Klopstock's belief in God. In them he permits druids and others <sup>to</sup> worship their Gods and bring sacrifices to them very devotedly. While this is no conclusive proof, nevertheless <sup>it</sup> suggests that in ways where Christian nations were set up against each other, they too should implore the Supreme to defend their cause.

The authorities on Klopstock speak of his fidelity <sup>to</sup> and belief in the Supreme. Gervinus says that Klopstock had a deep reverence for God and in his writings seem to have the same respect for God that Robert Boyle did who never mentioned the name of God without removing his hat.

(Gervinus Vol. IV. P. 149)

Zimmermann says that he was God-fearing from his youth up and Gostwick says that his life was consistent with the teachings in his poetry, in which we have already indicated his beliefs. (Archiv XIV, p. 66 Gostwick)

Klopstock also believed in Jesus. The attacks made upon the historical Christ must have grated on his nature having been taught from youth to adore Him. The Rationalism and the philosophy of the time was known to him but the unbelief brought on by this served to stir up his ambition to lead his dear German people back to his own language and to Christ, both of which were sneered at by Emperor Frederick II. While yet at Schulpforto he laid the plans for work which he meant to continue during the following thirty years and this work was to exalt the divine One. Milton's "Paradise Lost" and the Bible furnished him the material for his epic poem. Milton had sung the fall of man; he now planned to sing the redemption of man through the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. The theme is one not well adapted to the poet. He does not portray much that is new, he lacks action and is constantly in the upper realms only making long speeches so that which he gives us is not tangible. Though the work ~~is~~ has not lived in popularity it served his purpose in a measure and there is no doubt ~~but~~ but that it was written with a deep conviction and it was a work devotedly sacred. The study of the "Messias" reveals the fact that Klopstock believed in Jesus as both God and

leader, both human and Divine. Julian Schmidt maintains that Klopstock does not know the Son of man but only the son of God. He is partly right in that for as one reads the epic one feels that it is only here and there ("Klopstock kennt nicht den Menschensohn sondern nur den Sohngottes") that he has the Messiah perform a deed which is human and the human acts he did perform are mostly those which are recorded in the Bible and are taken bodily from it. The opening verses of the "Messiahs" give us his plan for the poem and in that he makes Christ both human and Divine".

He begins his epic thus:

Sing, unsterbliche Seele, der sündigen Menschen Erlösung  
Die nur *Wappstein* auf Erden *in* Menschheit vollendet,  
Indem er Adams Geschlecht zu der Liebe der,  
Leidend, getötet und Verherlicht, wieder <sup>erhöht</sup> hat *Gottheit*  
Also *geschah* des Ewigen Willen Vergebens erhob sich  
Satan gegen den göttlichen Sohn; unsonst stand Juda,  
Gegen ihn auf; er that's und vollbrachte die grosse  
Versöhnung.

When we take Klopstock's own words in which he gives us his plan for the "Messias" and take in connection with that the *epithets* applied to Jesus in his Epic, we are convinced that the author made a vigorous attempt to have the Messiah also be human. His favorite epithet for Him is Gottmensch, God-man, In the fifth canto, for instance, he applies that name to him eleven times. Other names he frequently applies to him

are Mediator, Divine Man, Son of Mortal mother, the Best of men, the most Holy among men. At the close of the eighth canto Klopstock has Mary say, Jesus Christ is also my son.

Some of the actions as Klopstock pictures them to us are human. In the third canto for instance, he has Jesus fall asleep and wake up as any other human beings would. He has him go and take the sleeping Lebbeus by the hand. Of this the gospels give us no record. Again in the seventh canto he is buried deep in thought when he meditates on the suffering he must endure. Likewise when Klopstock has him follow Pilot, he follows after him, but weary as other human beings would be, and with unsteady tread. On the cross the ~~bleeding~~ any human would nailed to a cross and the sweat trickles from his brow and the pain caused him to suffer. Thirst also came to him. At the close of the tenth canto, Klopstock has Christ drink and quench his thirst, the last human feeling that comes to <sup>him</sup> ere he dies.

Aside from "The Messiah" many of the odes and the hymns give evidence of Klopstock's belief in Christ as God and leader but nothing more than what we have in the Epic. The authorities cited above, in discussing Klopstock's belief in God, testify to his belief in Christ. (P. 123)

Erich Schmidt in his "Characterstiken" says; Here arose a young German and chose the greatest of all wonders, the redemption of sinful man through the "Gottmensch".  
(Lit. Gesch. P. 40)

According to Vilmar, Klopstock sang of the Redeemer, whom he accepted as his Redeemer; it was the person of Christ that inspired him.

Klopstock also accepted the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Ghost. He refers to the Spirit in his odes and hymns but not so frequently as he does of Jesus and God the Father. This ode dedicated to "The Omnipresent One" speaks of the moments of bliss he experiences when in His mercy the Everywhere-Present One sends streams of joy into his soul. "Spirit of spirits" Klopstock frequently called his Supreme in his odes, in his hymns and in "The Messiah". Specific mention of the Holy Ghost is made in "The Messiah". In canto nineteen Christ reveals himself to Mary and those who are with her and says, I will pray to the Father that he send you the Comforter, the "Spirit of Truth", and again in the same canto he prays that the "Eternal Spirit might fill them. Further Klopstock has the beloved apostle John see the Holy Ghost in a vision descending upon them like flames of fire and filling their souls. Klopstock does not describe <sup>the</sup> coming of the Holy Ghost upon the followers of Christ in "The Messiah". That goes beyond his theme since he sang only the redemption of man which closed with the ascension of Christ, but at the very close of the nineteenth canto he specifically says that after the ascension the disciples hastened from the Mount of Olives and entered the temple in Jerusalem where



they awaited the pouring out the Holy Spirit. As <sup>his</sup> personal evidence of the experiencing of the Holy Ghost Klopstock gives us in the ode he addressed to "Den Erlöser" for having permitted him to finish "The Messiah". He speaks of the Spirit flame chosen ~~to~~ to be his guide, which burned high and directed him to a better path when he was inclined in "The Messiah" to sing for his own glory, a flame that shielded him from ~~the~~ magic of human pleasures, and often aroused him from slumber to again return to the angelic peace.

Since Klopstock believed in the Trinity, we infer from that, that he probably also believed in immortality. In reading his works we find that next to the Supreme, he oftenest mentions immortality. He seems to carry that idea so strongly that <sup>he</sup> characterizes many things as "Eternal". In connection with his belief in immortality he <sup>the</sup> also believes in resurrection. So is he imbued with this idea, that ~~he~~ he has it in the epitaph of his dearest Meta. He gives full expression of his belief in immortality in the ode dedicated to his Meta under the title "Petrarcò and Laura". The ode dedicated to Fredric V. contains a number of references to immortality as does the ode "For the King" in which he praises his Creator for leading him from the threshold of life to the immortal life and also that the Omnipresent One will create the immortal out of dust. In his hymns we have likewise many evidences of his belief in immortality. The hymns in

which he praises "His Eternal Life", for instance, he

begins thus:

His eternal life

We shall gain without strife,

For we shall then through His ~~own~~ grace

Behold him eye, e'en face to face,

Him, our Mediator.

In his "Morning Hymn" he calls <sup>him</sup> the Supreme, <sup>the</sup> Giver of Immortality. Along with immortality Klopstock believes in resurrection. From the evidence that I have been able to gather he seems to believe in the resurrection of the body but yet again at times he seems to refer to resurrection in a non-committal way so that he may refer to the resurrection of the soul. The hymn "Preparation for Death" does not commit <sup>him to</sup> this belief. He simply says that the heirs of heaven are blessed, who die in the Lord, consecrated for the resurrection. In the hymn, The Resurrection, which by the way is one of his most beautiful, he speaks of the Resurrection of the body. He begins thus:

"Auferstehen, ja auferstehen wirst du,

Mein Staub nach kurzen Ruh,

Unsterblich's Leben

Wird, der dich schuf, dir geben! Halleluja

Rise again, yes, rise again wilt thou

My dust, though buried now!

To life immortal

Is this brief life the portal,

Hallelujah!

In the third stanza of the same hymn he says that after a sufficient repose in the grave he will be awakened.

The hymn "The Redemption" seems to refer to the resurrection of the body in the stanza where he says, that he whose body would decompose, He would awake from the earth. The "Messias" above all of Klopstock's writings, gives us his view of the resurrection in the eleventh canto where he enumerates those who arose from the grave, among them being Adam, Eve, Noah, Abraham, Job, Moses, David and John the Baptist. Specific mention is made by the author in this canto that the dust, decomposed, which was the habitation of our spirits, should be collected and the Lord would command it to become body again.

To Klopstock the Bible was a sacred book. He believed in the Bible from his youth up. The stories recorded in it which his grandmother told him when a mere boy, he believed in and accepted. Deism, Rationalism and Materialism could not shake his faith. His early training at home, his surroundings at school, and his theological study at Jena and Leipzig, all these worked together with his naturally endowed serious disposition to make him a faithful adherent to the teachings in the Bible. In his writings he quotes much from the Bible. His <sup>greatest work</sup> ~~his writings~~ was based on material taken from the Scriptures. We have every reason to believe that he was sincere in what he wrote, hence he must

have accepted the Bible. In the tenth canto of "The  
ly<sup>te</sup> Rationalists, for they still were moralists and  
Messias" he calls the word of God, Urquell jâdes hôheren  
gedankens und jeder bessern Empfindung, The fount of  
every noble thought and of each better feeling. Among  
the authorities who refer to Klopstock's attitude toward  
the Bible, none gives us definite an opinion as Goswick d *Sachwitz*  
does who says: Klopstock loved the Bible, and believed in *P. 254.*  
it as the record of the highest inspiration given to man.

During Klopstock's time many did not accept the his-  
torical bible, nor Christ as God and Leader, but they did  
accept as valid the ethics of the Christian religion. Some  
who made it a part of their life's work to tear down pos-  
itive faith accepted unknowingly, the teachings of Him,  
whom they rejected. Klopstock, as was already shown, ac-  
cepted both the historical Bible and the validity of  
Christian Ethics. He was not content with the ethick of  
Christianity but he believed in the Chri tian religion  
and endeavored to establish it in the atate, in society,  
in friendship, in love, and in the family life. The  
civilized nations as a rule, were ready to accept the  
validity of the ethics which the Christian religion brought  
them but not all Christianity itself. The one aim of  
Klopstock's "Messias" was to again introduce Christianity  
into his fatherland. Rationalism had in part crowded it  
out. In the ode, "Für den König" he shows how high regard  
he held for the King, who believed in God and how the

subjects of such a King, a Christian King, would love their ruler and do him homage. He sent to his own ruler Fredrick, a copy of the first three cantos of the "Messias" hoping to influence him for the Christian religion. ~~religio~~ Society in general, he hoped to reach with his book and thus again establish adoration for the Christ, the Redeemer of mankind. His own friendship, his love affairs and his family life, serve as examples of his belief that these institutions, if we may so term them, should be pervaded by Christianity. His ties of friendship were formed with Schmidt, Bodmer and men of such a type who were Christians, and were interested in Christian poetry. His love affairs with "Fanny" shows us that such relations should be held sacred; hence he did not hesitate to make his own feelings public, yes he gave vent to his own feelings in odes and published them to the world. If we study his short married life with Meta, from 1754-1758, we see that they lived with each other in living devout Christian lives. Apparently in his own case, the promulgation of Christian ethics and Christian faith was a part of the foundation of the family life.

Klopstock believed in immortality and in the validity of Christian ethics, so he also believed in the brotherhood of man. His love for his fatherland was great, so also was his respect for the children of Israel: the Germans were dear to him and the chosen people of God seemed

to attract him, yet Klopstock had a broader view.

He loved man. The Redeemer which he portrays to us is not only the Christ of the Jew, but also a Mediator for the Gentile. To him, man is a fraternity molded from the same clay, by a common Hand. In his "Messias" he does not claim to sing the Redemption of a chosen land, but the welfare of all is clear to him. The poet creates a Pottia of whom the Scripture ~~contains~~<sup>makes</sup> no mention. This Porio has sympathy for the mother who fears and trembles lest the decree for her son be, "crucified Him!"; In a psalm written in 1789, in his ripe old age, long after "The Messias" was finished he writes: ~~that~~<sup>On</sup> all the planets giving forth light and on those reflecting lights, spirits dwell, having unlike powers and unlike forms, yet all are mindful of God and rejoice in God" .

Of the ethical government of the universe Klopstock has given us nothing tangible. He does not show directly that the evil in the world is for the good . In many of his odes and Hymns he has the Supreme rule and guide the destinies of men. From that we can infer that since he held the Supreme to be All-wise, he accepted his judgment infallible. He did worship and adore Christ, as was already shown. He loved and praised him above all else.

Surely suffering and persecution inflicted upon such a friend would cause Klopstock pain for he was subject to the

highest emotions. He does grieve for his Lord whom he has endure so much, but he sees in his suffering some good. Through his death redemption is purchased for mankind. Hence Klopstock sings in his epic of the nailing to the cross of his best friends for thereby the brotherhood, man, lived. The love that Klopstock bore for his Meta is hardly to be measured. Being so warmly attached to her it is hard to believe that a man, emotional as he was, should retain his reason when she was taken from him. It grieves him much, but during her illness he resigns himself and says: "Were I unfortunate enough not to be a Christian I would become one now". ( *Lib.* Brief. J. Schmidt 172 )

On the following year he refers to her slumbering in the grave, and says that her reposing in the Earth served to remind him that the Lord also was in the grave, but rose again as she would some day.

*Space for material not found.*

There is some dispute as to the attitude Klopstock held toward the Catholic Church. Some accuse him of leaning toward Catholicism and think their ceremonies especially fascinate him. The evidence manifested in his writing does not point that way. Bodmer says that Klopstock wished to so compose his hymns that the Catholics could have sung them too. He further says that he was dissatisfied with the Protestant services and desired to have more consecration introduced into the worship and believed that instrumental music liturgy, in short, some of the Catholic ceremonies would bring about the change desired. Then further, he is accused of having once read a part of his "Messias" to some nuns while he traveled in Switzerland. These in return sang for him a "Gelobt sei Jesus Christi" which moved him much. This evidence coming from Bodmer who was not on friendly terms with Klopstock, makes it harder to know just how much credit to give to the report.

It is known that Klopstock said some things not favorable to Catholicism. In one of his Epigrams, for instance, he says that the Faust legend is simple a lie invented by the monks. (Ges. Werke Vol. IV 208)

The ode addressed to the Emperor in 1781 does not speak favorably of the Pope but rather ridicules him and his cardinals. The "Messias" however, contains the strongest negative proof that Klopstock did not share the belief of Catholicism. To the Catholics, Mary the mother of Jesus,



is holy. They, as Klopstock, worship and adore Christ. They go farther, they also worship Mary. In his description of Mary in the fourth canto she is not worshiped, neither in the nineteenth where she comes in contact with Portia.

Klopstock's attitude toward prayer and worship is definitely known from both his works and from the authorities. Zimmerman says that Klopstock learned complete resignation to God and the power of prayer from his father. Other authorities point out the fact that his school life at both Schulpforta and Jen was *a devours*. In the odes prayers are offered to the Supreme constantly. The same holds true of the hymns and the "Messias". Zimmerman says that the "Messias" must be considered as a succession of masses and choruses *in order* to be enjoyed. "The Merciful One", "The Blessedness of All" and "The Recovery of the King" are permeated with exhortations to praise and worship. The hymns, "To The Trinity", "Hymn of Praise" and the "Prayer of the Lord", all contain praise and adoration offered to the Supreme. At the death of Meta he tells us himself that he went into his chamber and prayed.

He did <sup>not</sup> worship with words alone. The reading of his odes as **also** that of the "Messias", convinces the reader that Klopstock was extremely musical. Even though the things he said were often rather visionary, the harmony he used in saying what he had to say was musical. Few authors have equalled Klopstock in this one thing.

Julian Schmidt says that Klopstock had an eminently musical nature; that he was convinced that in heaven everything was regulated by music and that he strove to introduce the same regulation already here upon earth.

Having now discussed the beliefs of Klopstock and considered his attitude on some phases of religion, let us yet notice how far the author of the "Messias" was consistent in his belief and in his practice. Two positions are here occupied. Some hold that he was consistent while others maintain that his practice differed much from his teaching. That he was proud, arrogant to some extent, emotional and non-practical lacking ~~in~~ *judgment, no one* questions. His pride and arrogance can be attributed to his training and his national inheritance for the Prussians are generally a race fond of pomp. Furthermore he was a born genius and so as other such men, he often manifests a superiority that makes him disagreeable. His emotional nature was in part inherited and was increased by his training in school where Pietism and devout religion reigned. His lack of judgment and ~~non-~~ <sup>in</sup> practicability were in part inborn. His conviction that he was cut <sup>to</sup> ~~out~~ exalt the "Echt" German *National feeling* again and to re-establish faith in Christ where Rationalism reigned, tended to make him visionary. The non-practical view he had of life was brought about by the support which was given him while yet a young man, thus making it unnecessary for

him to cope with the world for the real necessities of life. His pension robbed him of the opportunity of learning to know one side of the world.

Graver charges are brought against him. In Erichs Schmidt's "Charakteristiken" there is an article on Klopstock by a Höfling. (Pages 160-170)

In this he accuses Klopstock, of being coarse in his speech careless in his habits, very uncleanly, of having no regard for the feelings of other and being ungrateful for favors received from them. Bodmer's accusations are still more gross. He says that Klopstock is not <sup>o</sup>hly. He does not understand how it is possible for one to write "The Messiah" and at the same time drink wine, loaf, and kiss maidens as the poet did at Zurich. Klopstock was giddy and thoughtless to a high degree and loved the cup of pleasure. Bodmer, however, expected too much of the author of the epic. He expected to find a "Gott-mensch", instead of only a human being. He failed to appreciate that Klopstock was young yet. He did not take into consideration that the author was relaxing now for a time from his work and that his popularity, ~~was~~ coming from the first three cantos, ~~was~~ injuring him for the time being. Thoughtless and ungrateful as Klopstock showed himself to his benefactor who was aiding him, he ~~in~~ the end proved himself more manly than Bodmer himself, for he did not bear away a personal grudge

against him, even though his benefactor turned against him and even asked from him the money he had given him voluntarily for his support.

Klopstock had faults. Not all can be explained away, yet by far the greater part of the authorities make his life meritorious. Zimmermann calls Klopstock "the poet of Faith", who as a youth was led to Christ, and from his father learned resignation to God, and the power in prayer.

(Archive XIV66)

He says that in the storms of life he was as the oak which withstands the hurricane and that his firm Christianity did not let him sink into despair. Further he says that a social purity grew out of his religion and out of his healthy body.

In the article on Herder's Aesthetick in the Archive, Klopstock is portrayed as a man having "moral beauty, a calm dignity, simple bigmindedness and an earnest liveliness". (Archive Vol. I7 P 345) ?

Gostwick says of him His life had accorded well with his belief, that the practice of a literary man should be in harmony with his teaching. For him writing poetry was a sacred vocation and he always remembered that he had written "The Messiah". Further Gostwick says that at his funeral all the bells in Hamburg and Altona were tolling a that over one hundred carriages and a thousand mourners followed him to the grave. Specific mention is made that

this was an unusually large funeral at that time. Now that ~~would indicate~~ that he must have had friends.

Garvinus says that Klopstock inherited his piety and simple faith at home, and that he would not take part in disputations, as he did not consider them honorable, and made it his rule to pay no heed to ridicule, heaped upon himself even where his silence was interpreted as weakness.

Vilmar speaks of the life of Klopstock as one filled with Christian experiences, one whose very soul is filled and dominated by Christian faith.

A resume of a book entitled Klopstock's "Religious point of View", found in the Archive, the author says that Klopstock's life was an attraction to God and a rest in God. Further he considers that "The Messiah" occupies a higher place religiously, than "Paradise Lost". Then too he says: "truly he belongs to the genuine pious souls, and his firm character and clean tendency is recognized by his contemporaries". *Archiv Vol 39, P. 470*

Wirkworth says: "Throughout life he was a man of singularly pure and amiable character, while Bayard Taylor says: " He was a frank, honest and loving nature, attracting to himself the best friendship of men" P. 230

Klopstock did not show generosity in his religion, did not help the needy but such deeds ~~are~~ practical and since Klopstock was not even practical enough to earn his

own bread in the usual manner, doing <sup>charitable</sup> deeds would not be ex-

pected of him. His characters in "The Messiah" do not go about doing good in the usual manner. Klopstock was not philanthropic.

In following Klopstock's career, there seems to be no growth in his faith. His first cantos of "The Messiah" are rather his best and show the most religious fervor. He was rather more staid in his old age, but his youth clung to him through life. For a time after Meta's death he is more resigned in his religion. Orthodox as he was, no room was left for growth in his religion, for his conception formed in his youth, was the highest he could attain, namely the redemption of man through the suffering of Jesus.

Klopstock's religion exerted considerable influence on his contemporaries and upon the German people. Yet belonging to the old school of poetry as he did, he was soon forgotten. He was the last of the Sacred Christian poets who was really a great poet. Lessing, who for a time was interested in Klopstock's movement, soon went over to the new school which did not write Christian poetry but secular in which the Christian ethics and ideas predominated. No doubt, however, Klopstock's work did much to bring these ideas into the works of his contemporaries.

In conclusion we ask what position does the Christian poet, the author of "The Messiah", hold among the writers of the eighteenth century in Germany? Going to the same

source that he went for his material, as his contemporaries did largely, the best reply seems to be, "Klopstock was the John the Baptist of the eighteenth century in Germany. He pointed out and prepared the way. German thought, German feeling and German language was exalted by him. Those who come after him far outshine him. Goethe and Schiller are read while Klopstock is praised. Klopstock honored and revered the Person of Christ and believed in him. Those who come after him revered the spirit, the Character of Christ and the Ethics for which he stood.

## THE RELIGIOUS OF KLOPSTOCK.

- I. The religious movements leading up to Klopstock and those during his time.
  - A. Pietism.
  - B. Deism.
  - C. Rationalism.
2. Klopstock's life
  - A. His youth and home training.
  - B. His school days.
    - a. At Schulpforta.
    - b. At Jena and Leipsic.
  - C. His later life's incidents.
3. Klopstock's views and his attitude toward religion.
  - A. His idea of the Supreme.
    - a. As Father.
    - b. As Christ.
      - x. Human.
      - y. Divine.
    - c. As HOLY Spirit.
  - B. His belief in immortality.
  - C. His belief in resurrection.
  - D. His attitude toward and belief in the Bible.
  - E. His belief in the validity of Christian Ethics.
  - F. His belief in the Ethical government of the Universe
  - G. His attitude toward the Church.



- H. His attitude toward the Catholic religion.
- I. His attitude toward Prayer and Worship.
- J. His attitude as compared with his practise.
- K. His lack of practical religion.
- L. His lack of religious growth.
- M. His position and influence as poet.

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