

Dr. W. J. LEYDS
KANTOOR.

RELIGION OF HUMANITY.

Pro Fidelibus Defunctis.

note biblor
on last
page

THE
PATRIOT BOERS.

A SERMON

*Preached in the Positivist Church, Newcastle-on-Tyne, on Sunday,
July 6th, 1902, at a Requiem for the Citizens of the Transvaal
Republic and Orange Free State, who died defending their
country against British aggression.*

BY

MALCOLM QUIN.

Requiem eternam dona eis, Humanitas, et lux perpetua luceat eis.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE:
CHURCH OF HUMANITY, ST. MARY'S PLACE.
POSITIVIST YEAR 48: CHRISTIAN YEAR 1902.

[THREEPENCE.]

1809.

ON THE FINAL SUBMISSION OF THE TYROLESE.

*It was a MORAL, end for which they fought ;
Else how, when mighty Thrones were put to shame,
Could they, poor Shepherds, have preserved an aim,
A resolution, or enlivening thought ?
Nor hath that moral good been VAINLY sought ;
For in their magnanimity and fame
Powers have they left, an impulse, and a claim
Which neither can be overturned nor bought.
Sleep, Warriors, sleep ! among your hills repose !
We know that ye, beneath the stern control
Of awful prudence, keep the unvanquished soul :
And when, impatient of her guilt and woes,
Europe breaks forth ; then, Shepherds ! shall ye rise
For perfect triumph o'er your enemies.*

WORDSWORTH.

1902.

ON THE REQUIEM SERVICE AT NEWCASTLE,
JULY 6th.

*Where, from his glowing furnace-altars, Tyme
Lifts smoking incense to the god of war,
Peace, at the war-god's very Temple door,
Has built her quiet Chapel and meek shrine.
Enter the lowly Porch of her confine !
No flames upon her altar reek and roar,
But all the House is kindled to the core
With light of Souls that suffered and that shine.
Thro' England's crashing pæans and trumpet-peals
Forlorn her solitary Requiem steals
— Ah, vanished Hero-spirits, not for you !
Who having died are still exempt from death,
A People's memory your blood and breath,—
But for the vanished England that we knew !*

C. H. HERFORD.

The Patriot Boers.

It is a natural prerogative of the Positive Religion that, even when it carries our minds into the highest regions of feeling and imagination, it does not carry them beyond the region of proof. There was at one time an attempt, on the part of some having only an incomplete acquaintance with the teachings of Auguste Comte, to distinguish between what they were pleased to call his philosophy and his doctrine of worship. That attempt, as we may now say, if it is still ever made, has fallen into discredit. Those who have really entered into the mind of our Founder know that the highest worship is an expression of the highest philosophy, and that in the Church of Humanity no process or word of worship is used to which we cannot assign a positive meaning—not necessarily, of course, such a meaning as reveals itself at the first summons of an impatient and shallow criticism, but such a meaning as to a grave and candid mind, moved by the right sympathies, and prosecuting its quest with the right resolution, shall shine forth with the luminous reality of a scientific truth. Therefore, when we say that we have met to celebrate a solemn Requiem for those citizens of the two South African Republics who died to preserve the independence of their country, we use the word "Requiem" in no equivocal or mystical sense, but as the plain word of a human faith. The great words of religion belong to those who best understand them—who can throw upon them the light of human reason, who, amidst the obscurities of theology and metaphysic, can

discover their permanent positive contents, and who can thus turn them to account as instruments of a higher life for man upon Earth. The Religion of Humanity takes possession of the elements of human reasonableness in all religions; and of all religions, therefore, it employs the highest speech, on condition only of so employing it that its reality and utility can be clearly seen.

In the Catholic Church—which we unhesitatingly and gratefully confess to be the immediate mother of our own Church—the word *requies* expresses that state of undisturbed rest which the faithful living must desire for the souls of the faithful departed; and in the doctrine of Catholicism, undoubtedly, the use of the word is connected with the belief in a supernatural life after death, and especially, of course, with the idea of Purgatory. The language of theology, however, as we may say, is almost always a mask for a human meaning—a meaning which theology itself cannot explain, but of the reality and force of which the believers in theological religion are constantly conscious. Catholicism, which has taught the doctrine of a supernatural immortality, has not ventured to offer its adherents an account of the dead. It has never attempted to explain their situation, their occupations, or the precise nature of the discipline imposed upon them as a preparation for a higher life.* While affirming a theological mystery, it has contented itself in practice with securing a great positive and human result: it has established for the dead, as Protestantism has never

*“As to the place, manner, or kind of these sufferings, [in Purgatory] nothing has been defined by the Church.” *“Catholic Belief,”* by the Very Rev. J. Fausti Bruno.

“If we are asked, ‘where is purgatory?’ we may answer, ‘I do not know.’ It exists, this of faith; where it exists, what are its precise punishments, how long are souls detained there, the Church defines nothing.” *“The Catholic Creed,”* by the Very Rev. Father J. Procter, S.P.L.

done, a lasting place in the hearts and minds of the living; it has maintained between them if we may so express it, a relationship of love and honour—a relationship entirely dependent, for its meaning and effect, on the depth and constancy of the affections with which the living recall the dead, and on the vividness and clearness with which they picture them in the mind.

The use of the word "rest" is itself at once an illustration and proof of this truth. The significance of all language is relative to the mind of man. When, therefore, we divorce any word from its roots in human experience—rob it of the reflected light which it derives from its connection with other words, and from the subtle movements of the human spirit, we render it meaningless. The word "rest" is a word simply and directly human. Applied supernaturally—to indicate the inconceivable state of an inconceivable substance, in an inconceivable situation—it is a mere plaything of the mind, and has no meaning whatever. Applied naturally and positively, it has, in relation to the dead, two meanings, differing greatly in their range and capacity for inspiration, but both real, and both beautiful in their reality. When we speak of the dead as being at rest, we either speak poetically, and think of them as if they were still conscious, but lying calm in an endless peace in the earth; or we speak of them not in reference to their physical place in the earth, but in reference to their spiritual place in the human mind—a place of holy quiet and tender light, because from it have been banished the passions which once involved them, and which by their darkness and tumult so obscured and disfigured them that we knew them not. In either case—whether we are thinking of the rest with which our love endows them in the grave,

or of the higher rest which it procures for them as calm, immortal presences in the human mind—in either case the *requies*, or rest, of the dead is a consequence and gift of man's love, and the word Requiem, therefore, finds not a natural place only, but its most natural and fitting place in the Religion of Love, which bids us give to the dead both the reverence which watches over their remains in the Earth, and that solemn and persistent homage which procures for them resurrection in Humanity. Well, therefore, are we in this Church entitled to use the language of the older Church, and to say of the Faithful Departed—with the alteration of only a single word: *Requiem eternam dona eis, Humanitas, et lux perpetua luceat eis*: Grant them eternal rest, O Humanity, and let perpetual light shine upon them.

Never can these words have had a deeper appropriateness than on the present occasion. The "faithful departed" who are in our minds are a company of valiant men, citizens of two little South African Republics, who, less than three years ago, were carrying on their simple and pacific labours in their native land. Now that land and their familiar places know them no more. Their very remains are scattered and homeless, or have only the soldier's common home on the battlefield—that dread and ominous resting-place to which the last words of affection have brought no consecration, which is a sanctuary of no tender memories, but where the dead lie undistinguished and indistinguishable, lost in an endless chaos. Love, if it went to seek them there, could not find them. It is a cemetery of hate, and hate has confounded them with its own blackness, so that not even the widow's desolation, nor the daughter's pious yearning, nor the patriot's sympathy can there separate one soul from another, and

claim its own. Even so, and even there, let them rest, and rest in peace. Not of quiet tenderness and of ordered calm speaks the place, but it is the last abode of dead heroes. Motherhood, wifehood, brotherhood, sisterhood—those holy ties of the family—have there, in a sense, been obliterated, but the tie of the nation remains, and the light of the nation, even in this darkness, rests on her sons, lying linked in an abiding fraternity—a fraternity of service and death. The mother or sister may not be able to discover her loved one in that confused company of the slain, but the nation will know its own, and will remember them.

All the more, indeed, because love has been unable to give to these "faithful departed" a chosen and distinctive resting place in the Earth—all the more because the hate and passions of war have withdrawn them from the tender ministrations of the family—must we be careful to secure for them their spiritual resting-place in the mind of Humanity—the guardian and reparative Spirit of the World. That is especially our office on the present occasion, and, as it is hardly necessary to say, it is an office not of sympathy only, but of judgment. This, I think, follows from that right, positive use of the word "requiem" which we have just established. Love is the first motive of this commemoration of the dead, but it is love calling judgment to its aid, and concerned to pronounce a sentence of even justice. Nothing could be more fatal to the true excellence and power of love than any attempt to divorce it from discrimination—nothing more contrary to its real nature than that vague and hysterical sentimentality, nourishing itself on illusions, and on conscious self-deceptions, which so often usurps its place. Love is indeed a sovereign master of beautiful tenderness,

patient, forgiving, sweet, and charitable, but it also, when need be, arms itself with a strong austerity, utters its solemn word of reprobation and punishment, awes and restrains, as well as attracts and wins, and out of its very depth and purity gains authority to give honour or withhold it. Love in its noblest estate, is not blind, but endowed with sight and foresight, and presses forward with all its forces until it stands by the side of truth. It only reaches its highest capacity when it is wedded to right science.

In this Requiem for the dead Boers, therefore, we do not praise them because they are dead; still less do we praise them, as some Englishmen have lately hastened to do, by way of soothing our consciences, and offering them a sort of posthumous reparation for having traduced them, slain them, and destroyed the freedom of their country. We do not praise them, again, because they died in battle, or because, in a high degree, they displayed the courage of the soldier. The courage of the soldier, even at its best, is in itself a cheap and common quality. The lowest of men exhibits it as well as the highest. It is of the earliest ages of the world as well as the latest. It may serve the purpose of an insolent vulgarity—of lust, of lunatic rage, of inhuman ferocity—as well as of a high-minded and discriminating patriotism, and it has as often been enlisted in the cause of aggression and tyranny as in the sacred interests of liberty and truth. In point of mere military courage, there is little, perhaps, to choose between the British soldiers who have died trying to fasten our yoke upon the Boers, and the citizens of the two Republics who have died resisting them. If, therefore, we do not celebrate a Requiem for the British soldiers who have fallen in South Africa, it is not because we fail to recognise their

valour, but because valour is no title to honour except as serving a high human interest; it is not because we have no sympathy to bestow on them, or on those whom they have left desolate, but because the judgment of love is against them. Pity, indeed, we can give to them, but not honour; and we give them pity not as remembering that they died, but as remembering that they died for an unrighteous cause.

This office of commemoration, then, is also an office of judgment—judgment not only of the Boer citizens whose remains lie scattered in South Africa, but of the cause for which they died. Why do we accept for ourselves the responsibility of forming so solemn and difficult a judgment? We accept it because, as it seems to us, it is imposed upon us by the very nature of our Religion. Here, again, we are bound to sift our words with a watchful sobriety and care. When we use the word judgment, there are two high types of judgment which we shall do well to bear in mind, in order that we may shape its meaning with some degree of sureness—the scientific type and the judicial type. The scientific judgment and the judicial judgment are given for different purposes, but in spirit and process they are not dissimilar. Both are marked by gravity, breadth, and dispassionate calm. In both, the one motive is a severe concern for truth, and in both, evidence is heard with unflinching patience and interpreted in the light of definite principles. We are the more warranted in this appeal to the judicial type, because actually, amidst the existing discords of religious and political opinion, the judge on the bench is the one public functionary who is allowed to practise the fearlessness and open candour essential to right social judgment, and because, as we all remember, in part, at

least, the cause of the dead Boers has already been submitted to a legal tribunal.

But for a full and authoritative judgment on such a cause we need a tribunal higher than a court of law; we need the court of the Church, but of a Church wielding the ordered dispassionateness of the scientific thinker, wielding the fearless impartiality of the judge, and adding to these qualities positive and settled principles of social interpretation, and such a comprehensiveness of human outlook as sees the life of mankind as but one life. In other words, there is but one court competent to summon nations to its bar and judge them, and that is the Church of Humanity. That Church, as all Positivists would admit, is not yet fully formed. Its adherents are only a few men and women, scattered throughout the world. But if we may not disguise its present weakness, we must not exaggerate it. If it is not yet universal in diffusion and authority, it is at least universal in spirit and principle, and in the international character of its actual membership. Few as its adherents at present are, moreover, they possess a two-fold source of strength in dealing with international conflicts, for not only do they acknowledge the Religion of Humanity, which by its proper character liberates them from sectarianism, from a confusing partisanship, and from a narrow nationalism, but it is true also—and it is a truth which we rejoice to admit—that the Religion of Humanity, in varying degrees, influences or represents a much larger number than those who avowedly profess it. When we say, then, that to try an international cause, and deliver an international verdict, we need an international Church, and a Church such as our own—universal in its range of human sympathy, positive and scientific in its social doctrine, and free above all from

any entangling dependence on the temporal power—when we say this we acknowledge, at the same time, that in the judgment of our Church on the cause of the dead Boers many will concur who are not Positivists, but who are conducted, by native largeness of heart and mind, to a conclusion to which Positivism gives systematic expression. During the last two and a half years we have seen a spectacle terrible, indeed, but not without its consolatory aspects: we have seen the civilised world, itself secure, luxurious, gay, refined, watching the progress of a bloody war, as an audience looks on at the stage of a theatre, while some tragedy is being represented there; but from that vast audience of mankind—for the first time, perhaps, in human history—voices of stern and high protest have arisen—representing almost every civilized nation, our own included—against the wickedness and misery of the war. Those voices have not all been instructed by Positivism, but they have all been inspired by Humanity; and we are sure that the solemn judgment of this Requiem is in harmony with that spontaneous verdict.

But while we acknowledge this—and acknowledge it gratefully and unreservedly—we must be allowed to return to our own standpoint. If we are asked what it is that before the war broke out impelled Positivists to condemn the policy which was provoking it; what it is that afterwards amidst its horrors left them not without hope, and amidst the conflicts and pressure of public opinion held them still steadfast and sure in mind; what it is that now, when it is ended, makes it impossible for them to give a moral sanction to its results—then the answer must be that they are thus convinced and unshaken because they hold the doctrine of Auguste Comte, and acknowledge

Humanity as the supreme Life of the World. To Humanity they made their appeal before the war commenced; to Humanity they renew that appeal now that it is ended. That name, and no lower name, we invoke in this Requiem. But let us not invoke it in misapprehension, or so as to miss the full inspiration and enlightenment which it is capable of giving to us. A distinguished English statesman, writing to me words of sympathy, a few years ago, said "I am afraid Humanity is in danger of being *re-barbarised*." If that were so, man's hopes were in vain. But it is not so. Humanity sits sovereign and calm above the ebb-and-flow of contemporary passion, calm because strong, but breathing upon us the beneficence of Her love, and yielding to us, when we ask it, light to the mind, and strength to raise us above our troubles. When we look for the life and power of Humanity, we do not find Her in Her perfect form amidst the gross working and tumult of the Present, although from no heart of man, from no family or nation of men, is she ever permanently absent. We behold Her where we can see Her—if to see Her we are ever privileged—with the spiritual eye alone, rising throned from the purified souls of the Past; we behold Her, too, with the eye of hope and prophecy, feeding Her fuller greatness with the nobler souls yet to be. The stage of our contemporary life is a great stage, and the vast company of the world's nations is so immense, their interests are on so great a scale, the body and limbs of mankind occupy such space, and so confuse us with their ceaseless working, that in the narrowness of nation or sect the vision of even these forces fails us. But to see Humanity we must see something compared with which all this is insignificant. To see Humanity we must often rise above this, and forget it. To see Humanity—as,

indeed, to see the true, inner life of a single human being—we must escape from the obscurity and confusion of the present hour, and free ourselves from the passions of conflict, and clothe ourselves with the calm of love, and exercise ourselves in all insight, and go to Her with guarded hearts and patient holiness, there where She rests sublime in Her impregnable majesty, one soul with the souls of the immortal dead. From those unshaken heights She looks down upon us, Mother and Virgin in the unaided fecundity of Her life, and in the mingling of Her love and purity, but holding also in Her mighty being the masculine forces of wisdom and power. So beholding Her with the eye of the mind—if ever we dare to say that we behold Her at all—we know that, now, as of old, the Highest Life of the world is the Unseen, and that if we would not use the word Humanity with a profane and hasty shallowness, we ought so to use it as to confess that Humanity is the Supreme Human Spirit, and must as a Spirit “be worshipped in spirit and in truth.”

Even those who are of different schools of faith from our own may admit that the working of so great a conception in the mind must enlarge it, bring it patience, bring it calm, widen its range of sympathy and insight, and fit it for doing justice, as nothing else could fit it, to problems so difficult in themselves, and so complicated by the clash of interests, as that presented to us by the South African war. If, then, this Requiem represents a judgment on that war, it is truly, what we have called it, a judgment of love, armed with a right science of social relations. Again, if it is a judgment given on behalf of the Boers, and against our own country, it is a judgment strictly limited to the one question with which we are really concerned—the question of whether the

action of the two Republics—due allowance being made for their defects and mistakes, as for ours—was such as entitles them to the praise of a self-sacrificing and devoted patriotism. Except as patriots, the Church of Humanity has no concern with them. They were not Positivists. We have no title to form a moral estimate of them as individual men and women. We are considering them only as servants of Humanity, who served through their service of the nation. We do not, again, approach this question either as apologists of the Boers, or as mere censors of our own country. English Positivists, if I may speak for them, gave England the first place in their hearts before the war, and during the war, and they give her the first place now. They are patriots, and reckon patriotism high amongst the virtues. They hold, moreover, that in a just cause it is lawful to bear arms, and that military life in the past has given to the world high types of individual genius and social order. At the present time, if England were really threatened, they would be amongst the first to rise and defend her. They would defend her, I am very sure, even if, at the outset, she were in the wrong, rather than that she should lose her national liberty. They are bound to their own country by a double fidelity—first, because they see in her, as in every nation on Earth, an indispensable instrument of the mind and life of Humanity; secondly, because she is the great nursing mother of their first affections. They have little temptation, therefore, to forget her virtues, or to exaggerate the virtues of the Boers. Neither the comparative national merits, nor the national demerits, of the Boers have any right place in this argument. They may be, as some have said, narrow in their religious temper, ungenerous in their civic policy, dogged and stiff in their disposition, or they may,

on the contrary, have all the excellencies which some of their English eulogists—including the generals who conquered them—have recently claimed for them. We have no concern with these things.* Our one concern is with the justice or injustice of the cause for which the men died whose memory we are now recalling. We hold that it was a just cause, and we honour them for their heroic defence of it, because, as it seems to us, English policy with regard to them, was, in the strict sense of the word, an aggression upon their national independence.

That they possessed national independence before the war cannot be questioned; the proofs of it are open to all the world. In regard to the Orange Free State, indeed, it has not been disputed. Over the Transvaal Republic England, it is true, claimed a suzerainty. It was a suzerainty never exactly defined, where precise definition was of the utmost consequence, but such as it was it allowed the Transvaal Republic, by the express terms of a formal treaty, the powers of a Sovereign State in all domestic affairs, the right to maintain an army for self-defence, and freedom of diplomatic relations with foreign countries.† Another tribute to its status is to be found in the King's Speech of last year, which announced the "conquest and annexation" of the two Republics. Had either of them been in any sense a dependency of Great Britain, this language would have been out of place. They were not dependent;

* Nevertheless, it must be allowed that, from the time of the Jameson Raid down to the liberation of Lord Methuen, the Boers, as the inferior Power, frequently showed a political magnanimity and a chivalrous generosity which would better have become the English, as the superior Power.

† "There will," said Lord Derby, Colonial Secretary when the Convention of 1884 was framed, "be the same complete independence for the Transvaal as in the Orange Free State. The conduct and control of diplomatic intercourse with foreign Governments is conceded. The Queen's final approval of Treaties is reserved."

they were self-governing nations, and the Transvaal Republic, by the confession of our own statesmen, was a sovereign community for all domestic, and largely even for diplomatic purposes. Yet it was against this community that first the Jameson Raid, and afterwards Mr. Chamberlain's negotiations were directed. That the Raid was an act of aggression has not been denied, and it was all the more aggression because although officially disavowed in England, it was never adequately punished, and was largely sanctioned by English public opinion. In open harmony with this act of aggression were Mr. Chamberlain's policy and negotiations. They were incompatible with respect for that right of domestic self-government which the Transvaal was recognised as possessing, and they were a natural preface to further interference and encroachment.

We are not called upon to discuss the alleged grievances of the aliens who had crowded into the gold-fields of the Transvaal. Once more, let us keep to essentials. If the Transvaal Republic was a Sovereign State for domestic purposes, she was entitled, on her own responsibility, to grant or deny her citizenship to her alien residents. Any foreign Power dictating to her on a question of this order was denying to her an elementary exercise of self-government, and such a challenge to her sovereignty was bound, if persisted in, to issue in war. Those, therefore, who admit that England had a title to impose domestic reforms upon the Transvaal have, as I think, no case, in principle, against the war, although it is still of course open to them to argue that it was not desirable to enforce such a title at so terrible a cost. But Positivists do not acknowledge the title. They hold that it cannot be justified either on grounds of formal agreement, or on

those larger grounds of international duty and policy which must rank before the technicalities of a treaty. They hold that the assertion of such a title was a menace to the independence of the Transvaal, and that acquiescence in it on the part of its citizens would have been a surrender of their national liberty.* The course and results of the war have been a justification of this view. If the real aim of the British Government had been only domestic reform, it could have secured such an object without the prolongation of the war, and the conquest of the two Republics. The war had no sooner commenced, however, than that conquest was, by our ministerial journals, announced as its end and object.† It has now been accomplished. Of such a system of action—begun by the Jameson Raid, developed by Mr. Chamberlain's negotiations, supported by the threatening accumulation of our military forces, and consummated at last by war and annexation—it is an abuse of language to say that it was not, from first to last, stamped with the marks of aggression. It is true that the Boers took the initiative in the field, and I, for one, have always regretted that they did so, while recognising that military considerations might justify such a step. There is now so great a moral strength in the purely defensive attitude, that, at whatever immediate risks, it is best to preserve it. But while in appearance aggressive, this initial act was in reality defensive, and, according to the ordinary code of policy

* "To go to war with President Kruger in order to force upon him reforms in the internal affairs of his State, in which Secretaries of State, standing in this place, have repudiated all right of interference—that would be a course of action as immoral as it would have been unwise." *Mr. Chamberlain in the House of Commons, May 8th, 1896.*

† "When the Burghers took up arms against us, we warned them that hostilities would be continued till the Republics had ceased to exist as separate States, and the supremacy of the British Empire was fully recognised." *The Standard, June 3rd, 1902.*

and war, was the natural resource of a small people, called upon to struggle for existence against an immeasurably superior power.

This, then, is the judgment that is forced upon us. According to the declarations of our own Government, the object of the war on the part of England was the establishment of British predominance and supremacy in South Africa;* the object of the war on the part of the two Republics was the defence of their national liberty. With that high purpose the Church of Humanity must sympathise. Liberty and patriotism are amongst the great human interests that it consecrates. Those who uphold them serve the best life of mankind, and those who have upheld them at the sacrifice of their own lives have, in all ages, been venerated as heroes and martyrs. Englishmen who are members of the Human Church cannot be false to this great tradition. They must give honour to the men who died to preserve the freedom of their native land—not to the men who fought for predominance and supremacy, even although these were their own countrymen. I repeat, we are not eulogists of the Boers. We are not apologists of their religious temper, their methods of government, their intellectual characteristics, or their industrial habits. They have doubtless, at least as many defects as Englishmen or Frenchmen. But we are honouring the men of the two Republics who died to save their country, and we honour them in love and justice. Do not let us say that they have died in vain. The world is the nobler and richer for what they have done. It lives with a higher life.

* "I am confident that I shall not look to [my subjects] in vain when I exhort them to sustain and renew their exertions, until they have brought this struggle for the maintenance of the Empire and the assertion of its supremacy in South Africa to a victorious conclusion." *Queen's Speech, January 30th, 1900.*

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The standard of human possibility has been raised. To the history of patriotism a new and glorious chapter has been added; and we, loving the life of our own country, but acknowledging a life higher and greater, can say of these faithful departed: *Grant them eternal rest, O Humanity, and let perpetual light shine upon them.*

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