

# THE COLOUR PROBLEMS OF SOUTH AFRICA

*Being the Phelps-Stokes Lectures, 1933, delivered at the  
University of Cape Town*

BY

EDGAR H. BROOKES,  
M.A., D.LITT.



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## BETWEEN OURSELVES: A PREFATORY NOTE FOR MY SOUTH AFRICAN READERS.

I should like to express here, very briefly, the spirit in which I, as a good South African, would wish to offer this study of our Colour problems to you, my fellow-countrymen.

Merely to press certain points of view, merely to argue, would be of little help. For South Africa the issues here discussed are issues of life and death, not to be handled on academic lines only, but with a vivid consciousness of the human lives involved, White, Brown and Black. A South African who loves his country dare not justify any existing unfairness or prejudice; but he must not lightly flout traditions held sacred by many. His words must be weighed, and he must suffer where he makes others suffer. No plea for the Brown man or the Black man can be of maximum value if it is not based on a real love for and understanding of White South Africa, and a frank recognition that many accusations of cruelty and injustice made in the past have been founded on imperfect information and deficient sympathy.

To me the fundamental solution of these, as of all, problems depends upon a right relation with God, Whose will is our peace. I should be far happier to bring any individual to the issue of real willingness to know and to do that Divine Will than to bring him to exact agreement with my point of view. Such a surrender would inevitably lead, step by step, to a complete solution of problems, the end of which men may to-day find it hard to see.

And, on a lower plane, I should be far more satisfied to persuade South Africans to embark on a really honest attempt to think out what economic policy will benefit the country most than to win them to any specific point here advocated.

Nevertheless I make no apology for the effort made in these Lectures to make clear the issues involved and the decisions to be taken, and to give my own considered opinion thereon.

That opinion differs in some respects—though not so greatly as a hurried reading might suggest—from my *History of Native*

*Policy* published in 1923 and revised in 1926. I think it best to own, frankly and simply, that the march of events and the development of my own thought have produced changes.

Elements of differentiation and of assimilation—the latter term by no means necessarily implies racial miscegenation—must, as far as we can see into the future, combine in any African Native Policy. There is no need for us to pursue the school-boy plan of “taking sides” in this matter. The coming together of races and parties which has ended the period of South African history covered by this book, and which represents no mere political manoeuvre but a real hungering for unity, ought to open up a new era—an era in which policies such as those here discussed are handled without partisanship and in which every honest effort towards solution should be received with welcome and attention.

If, after all, the good of every race in South Africa is the good of every other, as I devoutly believe, is this not simply a gospel—a “good news”—for our country?

It is in this spirit that I have tried as fearlessly, as clearly, as honestly and as sympathetically as possible, to handle the topic of Union Native Policy during the era of national division (1910-32).

EDGAR H. BROOKES.

*15th March, 1934.*