

THE RACE PROBLEM IN SOUTH AFRICA

by the Rev. W. A. Cotton, B.A.
Community of the Resurrection, S. Rhodesia.

Introduction by the Rev. Edwin W. Smith,
Superintendent of the British and Foreign
Bible Society.



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Student Christian Movement

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WITH A PREFACE BY

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PREFACE

THE Race Problem in South Africa is one of appalling complexity. A more difficult situation is not to be found anywhere in the world. We must be grateful to Mr Cotton for helping us to consider it in a Christian spirit.

The position differs radically from that which exists in some of the other African territories, where the Europeans are few and where the natives export the products of their own toil on their own land. In the Union of South Africa, the Whites, who number about one and a quarter millions, own by far the greater part of the land and form an aristocracy almost entirely dependent upon native labour. While the Africans number about four and a half millions and are increasing rapidly, the land reserved for them is quite inadequate. They are making considerable advance in culture and industrial efficiency, while a certain proportion of the Europeans—the so-called Poor Whites—have degenerated. The Whites, as a whole, refuse to admit the Blacks to anything approaching political, social and industrial equality. They fear that were the Blacks given the franchise on the same terms as the Whites, they would dominate the country; and that if they were allowed unrestricted admittance to skilled grades of labour they would oust the Whites. All this on one side. On the other side, the African has rights as a man which cannot be ignored and he refuses to be repressed. How are these rival claims to be reconciled?

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It seems to me that the only solution is the one advocated by Mr Cotton, namely, segregation. Mr Cotton is sure, and I agree with him, that this involves the division of South Africa into two areas, one for Whites and the other for Blacks. Such territorial segregation exists already in Basutoland, where, under the ægis of the Imperial Government, the natives retain their own land and tribal institutions, and are given the opportunity of advancing in a steady manner under the guidance of sympathetic administrators and missionaries. I should like to see all the South African natives living under such conditions.

Things have happened since Mr Cotton wrote his book. The Colour Bar Bill, which aims at excluding the African from skilled trades, has been passed by the Union Parliament. The day on which I write this Preface, the papers announce that General Hertzog has tabled four Bills which embody a further instalment of his programme. Details are not to hand, so I cannot discuss them here. What we want to know is: How does the Prime Minister fulfil his promise to secure more land for the natives? Unless ample provision is made in this direction, the position of the natives will be definitely worse than ever it has been.

I have read Mr Cotton's book with great profit. Without committing myself to everything he says, I heartily commend it to the attention of all who are studying the Race Problem.

EDWIN W. SMITH

June 3rd, 1926

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