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SOUTH AFRICA, the MISSIONARIES & NATIVE POLICY

Portion of a speech delivered at the laying of the Foundation stone of the Burnet Memorial Church at Kilmerton, Feb. 18, 1939

There are two rocks which we should seek to avoid. The one is the rock of sloppy sentimentalism, of all that we associate with the name of Exeter Hall in the past, the native policy that was based on a narrow interpretation of the Christian ethic, was determined mainly by false sentiment, and to a large extent lacked the direction of knowledge and understanding. The other is that of repression, of attempting ever to sit on the safety valve. One special form in which that appears in these days is in our desire to make this country safe for European civilisation. In that lurks the danger of losing sight of the necessity to provide an economic basis of subsistence for the native. We are anxious, rightly anxious, to save European civilisation in South Africa. But can that only be done at the expense of the native? Is there no other and better way? Of this at least we can be assured, that we cannot make it safe by a policy which creates a sullen, discontented, hostile native community. To do that would be to erect a building on sand, and such a building can have but one fate. Those are the two rocks which we must avoid. But between them lies the path of safety - the path of sympathy and of fair dealing. A wise old Greek once said, that if you don't destroy your enemy, you must make friends with him. It is for us as a European community to see that the native peoples regard us as their friends - and how better shall we secure that than by giving them the greatest gift we have to render, the gift of the Christian Gospel and the Christian ethic.