

## UNIVERSITY OF NATAL

**Laudation**

spoken by the University Orator

**Professor J. V. O. REID, B.A., B.M., B.Ch. (Oxon.), M.R.C.P. (Lond.)**

in presenting

**EDGAR HARRY BROOKES**

to the Chancellor at the Graduation Ceremony

on the 18th April, 1970.



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Edgar Harry Brookes presents to an orator both difficulty and ease: difficulty, because he must have made more speeches himself than anyone in this whole country, and more excellent speeches; ease because who could have more to be said about him? One has the feeling that from the moment he matriculated at the age of 14 from Maritzburg College, he set himself deliberately to establish a record in the lists of achievements to be recited at the later awarding of an honorary degree by his University. He was a Master of Arts 50 years ago, having majored in four subjects, a Doctor of Letters and Professor of Public Administration and Political Science at the age of 26. Four years later he was sent by South Africa as a delegate to the Assembly of the League of Nations. Thrice President of the South African Institute of Race Relations, Principal of Adams College for 12 years, Senator representing the Africans of Natal and Zululand for 15 years, Chairman of the Government University Advisory Committee for 5 years, and in 1947 of the University of South Africa Commission, Member of the Council of the University of South Africa for 12 years, a member of the Native Affairs Commission for 5 years, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Group of the Empire Parliamentary Association in 1943, member of the Social and Economic Planning Council in 1942, a Government delegate to UNESCO in 1947. The combined total is 2 years longer than he has lived, and one wonders what has been omitted from those apparently blank years, from the age of 0 - 14. Perhaps he was pondering the fact that he was named Brookes and not Brooke, and must therefore do more than can be expected of one. When he first came to the staff of this University after 30 years of academic and public life he had already produced 7 books. But then the pace increased, and in the space of 14



years he produced 10 more. Indeed if we are to finish tonight it is as well that the University did not wait longer before awarding their highest honour. The only pity is that the biographer of this University could not record the award of his own honorary degree.

Virtually all the writings of Edgar Brookes have reflected, as his actions have done, major concern with the people of this country and the management of their affairs. They do so from the standpoint of thinker, historian, political scientist, politician and poet. He is an earnest man, and at the same time the most humorous of men; a man with many years of labour behind him, and at the same time the youngest of men. He has sat in many a seat of power and authority, and yet is something of a rebel. Earlier than anyone in South Africa he began to grapple with the modern problems of South African life, and at the same time he has been a shy and thoughtful poet; enormously varied in accomplishment, always consistent; always liberal in the true meaning of that word - pertaining to a free man. In that we may have his secret, for his religion and faith, expressed in many ways and places, have freed him from the constraints and restraints that limit the ordinary man, and allowed him to exploit to the full the rich talents given him.

It is fitting therefore to describe the work of his life in the words of a psalm, fitting that this should be one of David's songs of degrees, and fitting that it is sung for the author of "The City of God and the Politics of Crisis"

I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.

Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.



Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together:  
Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord.  
Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper  
that love thee.  
Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy  
palaces.  
For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say,  
Peace be within thee.  
Because of the house of the Lord our God I will  
seek thy good.

He is already an honorary graduate of the University of  
Cape Town and of the Queen's University in Canada; and we too  
would gild the lily. For outstanding services as teacher,  
author, historian and politician, to the University, to the  
Province of Natal and to South Africa and beyond its borders,  
I present to you, Mr. Chancellor Sir, for the degree of Doctor  
of Letters, Honoris Causa, Edgar Harry Brookes.