"... and This should not be forgotten"
THE INAUGURAL LECTURE SERIES enables newly appointed Professors of the University of Nairobi to deliver their first public lecture in Kenya. Funds for the publication of the series have been made available through the University Deans' Committee and copies of the lectures are on sale at bookstores.

Other faculties and departments in the University tend to deal with parts; philosophy and religious studies deal with wholes. Philosophy asks the questions, "What do you mean?" and "How do you know?" and thereby finds itself serving as a meeting point for all other branches of human knowledge. Religious studies raise the further question "Is there any meaning in human life, and if so, what is it?" thus finding a close relationship with every other faculty and department. Philosophers in the Department agree with Karl Marx that the business of philosophers is not to understand the world but to change it. In this they would be supported by their colleagues who deal with the religious side of the studies of the Department. Such are the themes taken up in Professor Neill's Inaugural Lecture.
Professor Neill has travelled in almost every part of the world but has not yet managed to visit Jerusalem, Moscow or the South Pole; he hopes to put this right in course of time.

His interest in Kenya was awakened just half a century ago, when the future of Kenya and the rights of the African population were among the subjects most passionately discussed by the Cambridge undergraduates of that time. Interest was
stimulated in 1936, when he was invited to become Anglican bishop of Mombasa, an invitation which he did not feel able to accept. The first actual visit took place in 1950, when Professor Neill made an extensive journey in tropical Africa to study theological education in the African Churches. His last academic post before coming to Kenya was as professor in the University of Hamburg, Germany. Though he speaks six languages, he admits that lecturing in German is not his idea of fun.

Professor Neill's first degree was in ancient history and philosophy, interests which he has retained until the present time. In the evenings he is liable to be found reading Plato in Greek as a relaxation after the labours of the day. The research on which he was elected to a prize fellowship at Trinity College, Cambridge was on Plotinus and neo-Platonism, and the influence of Greek philosophic thought on Christian thinking in the fourth century A.D. Not surprisingly teaching Greek to African students is one of his interests in Nairobi.

Professor Neill does not like the expression 'comparative religion'; he prefers to study each religion, and to let it speak for itself. During his long residence in India, he made himself acquainted with Hinduism, and especially with the forms of Hinduism current in South India. He is currently writing lectures on South Indian Hinduism and its relationship to Christian thought, to be delivered as Westcott Memorial Lectures in Delhi and Madras in December 1971. He has also been appointed visiting professor of the University of San Francisco for the summer session of 1974.

The author of many books, Professor Neill does not find much time to write in Nairobi. He has had to lay by for the time being his projected four volume History of Christianity in India. He has, however, two thrillers in his head and hopes before too long to be able to start getting them down on paper.

So far unmarried, Professor Neill has always been able to find a great deal of time for students, and enjoys making his home a place to which they may enjoy coming. His next assignment is to climb Mount Kenya between Christmas and the New Year in company with a number of younger friends. He regards it as part of his job as a Christian bishop to get on top of anything that stands in the way.
The University is the child of philosophy and religion; and this should not be forgotten.

Whether we turn our thoughts to Socrates, strolling with his young friends in the groves of Ilissus, or to the ancient Hindu University of Nadiya, or to the oldest existing University, El Azhar in Cairo (founded in 1191), we find that, whatever other courses might be included in University education, and Aristotle managed to include them almost all, the aim and end was the consideration of the ultimate problems of man's existence, and of the universe into which he has found himself thrown without consultation or consent.

When southern Europe began at length to awake from the long sleep of the Dark Ages, one of the most remarkable manifestations of its new life was the mediaeval University. And here we shall find just the same central concern. At that time the medical doctors were ahead of the rest of us. The medical school of Salerno is the first institution in which we find many of the characteristics still observable in a modern university. But, as Sir Charles Sherrington has reminded us, at that time and for long after, 'medicine was still largely within the charitable charge of the Church'; and that Jean Fernel, whom he so charmingly depicts, the typical renaissance man, with a width of interests that did not disdain astrology, that Natural Theology of the Middle Ages, would have been astonished by any suggestion that there could be a clash between his intellectual adventurousness and the religious faith which he modestly and humbly treasured. The foolish conflict between religion and science was a monster begotten only two hundred years after the time of Fernel.

It is in the famous school of Bologna, however, in the thirteenth century that we find something still more closely resembling the university as we know it. That was indeed the golden age of universities. The professors were hired by the students, and kept by the students on a very taut rein of discipline. The professor could be fined, if he was a minute late for lectures, if he went on beyond the time for closing, if he skipped a

difficult passage in the text-book, or failed to get through in the given time the text-book appointed by the university. If he wished to get married, he was granted a single day's leave, but no honeymoon. Lest my younger hearers should decide to walk out and immediately to introduce the revolution in the University of Nairobi, let me hasten to remind them that all the students at Bologna were what we should call graduate students, and that what they did then offers no immediate precedent for us today.

The tradition crossed the Alps, and Paris became, and remained for centuries, the great intellectual centre of European life. There theology reigned as queen. The Arts Faculty was introduced as an afterthought, to give elementary education to those who would later engage in serious study; and would-be theologians had first to go through a gruelling course in philosophy, including that most difficult of philosophical works the Metaphysics of Aristotle, before they were allowed to emerge on the serene pastures of theological study. Paris extended its dominion by migration to Oxford. Rather later some dissident doctors of Oxford moved across England to a remote corner of the fenlands, in circumstances which have never been fully elucidated; not long ago Professor Trevor-Roper remarked rather acidly, 'I understand they are still there.' Indeed they are, maintaining the adventurous creativity of the Cambridge schools of philosophy and theology.

The same pattern repeats itself, in rather different form, in the reconstruction of the German University in the Napoleonic period, as described for us by Professor Schelsky in his extraordinarily interesting book Freiheit und Einsamkeit ('Freedom and being on your own'), 1962. The aim of the University must be the fullest development of the personality of the individual; therefore no one must presume to tell him that he must go to lectures, and no one must impose an examination. If at a certain point he feels that he would like to be examined, he may call politely on the professors and ask if they will be good enough to examine him, and professors, being a kindly and helpful race, will probably arrange an examination. Here, by an interesting inversion, theology is no longer the aim, but one of the instruments which the student may use in working

1. Hastings Rashdall; The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages (revised edition, 1936), Vol. I.
out his own personal philosophy, his understanding of himself and of the world in which he lives.

It was inevitable that sooner or later this almost hierarchical arrangement of university studies, with philosophy and theology as the apex of the pyramid, should be challenged, and that an attempt should be made to organise a university with more limited and more pragmatic aims. As far as I have been able to ascertain, the first attempt to organise such a secular university came with the founding of University College, London in 1828. Once made, the experiment found favour, and the majority of the nineteenth-century universities in England, either in practice or by charter, excluded these ‘higher’ and more abstract studies from their field of vision.

In the United States the older colleges followed closely the English pattern and accepted as one of their principal aims the provision of a learned clergy for the Protestant churches. With increasing emphasis on the separation of Church and state, theology was gradually edged out into denominational seminaries; and it came to be taken for granted that no university or college supported by public funds could give any kind of religious instruction. The pattern was that of the secular institution, which did not always exclude the teaching of philosophy, provided that this was kept in discreet detachment from its sister theology.

The last thirty years have seen an astonishing reversal of this trend. Today the great majority of the newer universities in England have departments of religious studies. Even in the United States the distinction between denominational instruction in theology and what the Germans call die Religionswissenschaft (the scientific study of religion), has been clearly drawn. It used to be thought that no state university could entertain the teaching of religion. I believe that the state University of Iowa was the first to take the plunge, with full knowledge of the authorities, and to accept religion as a fit subject for University study. This example has been widely followed. Many state universities now have flourishing departments of religion; the number of students enrolling in these departments shows that the interest among young people is extensive. Many expert theologians prefer the more open atmosphere of these departments to the inevitably somewhat cloisteral air of the denominational seminary.
What was to happen when university education spread to English-speaking Africa? At that time the London influence was strong, and there was quite a probability that the secular University College might become the pattern for Africa. But when the University College which is now the University of Legon was formed, the first principal insisted that he could not preside over an institution which had no theology; as the authorities wished to have his services, they allowed him to have his way and brought into being a Faculty of Theology. This was at first a faculty of Christian theology; before long it became plain that this was not a suitable pattern for a country in which Christians were a comparatively small minority; the faculty was reconstituted as a department of religion, and almost at once began to render notable service in the exploration and study of the West African tradition in philosophy and religion. The contagion spread. All the universities in Nigeria have departments of religious studies; there perhaps the most outstanding contribution has been in the study of those African independent churches which are everywhere a perplexing and fascinating part of the African scene. If I am not mistaken, Makerere University was the first university in Africa to place religious studies and philosophy together in a single department. When the authorities of this university decided that the time had come to make teaching in this area available, this was the example that was followed, and a department of philosophy and religious studies came into being.

Naturally there has been a certain amount of criticism of this step. Did not the introduction of such studies mark a regression into a mediaeval past, especially in an institution of which the origins were so severely pragmatic and practical? Ought not a university which began as a technical college to restrict its aims to those fields which can generally be summed up under the term 'development' especially in a country in which development in such practical fields as agriculture and engineering is so obviously of capital importance?

In point of fact, when the authorities of this University decided to open the door to studies of a different kind, they were bringing the University into line with a worldwide movement, which grows and expands from day to day.
I. Why Philosophy and Religious Studies?

So much for the historical setting of this Department. We still have not even begun to answer the question of the place of philosophy and religious studies in a university, in which the demand for practical results is strongly expressed. What do such studies do?

It is not altogether easy to answer that question. In other disciplines no difficulty arises in the attempt to provide a satisfactory answer. The Department of Soil Chemistry and the Department of Electrical Engineering can speak immediately on their own behalf; in fact the answer is already given in the title of the Department. Where the subject of study is less concrete, the answer cannot just be handed in this fashion on a plate. The cynic has in the past often affirmed that the philosopher occupies himself in saying what everyone knows in language that no one can understand, and that the theologian delights in the elucidation of the incredible by means of the unintelligible. Philosophers and theologians do well to be aware of and to take seriously such criticisms; all too often the philosopher, having expressed trivialities in language of portentous obscurity, imagines himself to have said something wise, and the theologian, having lost himself in barren logomachies bearing no relation to any imaginable reality, supposes himself to be the fountain of all wisdom. It would not be fair, however, to take these studies at their worst, and to suppose that all has then been said that needs to be said.

To sum up the truth of the matter in a sentence, philosophy and religious studies are concerned with wholes, whereas every other faculty and department is concerned with one part or aspect of human life and activity. One of the major problems of university life is specialisation. This is inevitable; specialisation is the means by which knowledge is rapidly advanced, and the fruits of knowledge made available for the raising of standards of living and the betterment of human life. Nevertheless specialisation means fragmentation; as it advances, it becomes increasingly difficult to see the wood for the trees, and to discern the real nature and purpose of university education.

It is common form today to say that the university is passing through its gravest crisis since universities first came into being. Radically
different answers are given to the question, What is a university for, and what is the purpose of its existence? One school of thought, which claims the title revolutionary, maintains that the primary qualification for a professor is not erudition but political engagement, and that a university should be primarily a place of political indoctrination, a situation which seems to have been fairly satisfactorily reached in the universities of the German Democratic Republic. Another answer is that the function of the university is the production of technicians, that a government should ration the number of students according to its own understanding of the number of technicians required in each field, and that all other considerations should be regarded as irrelevant. A third view is that a university is there to produce tame and docile citizens, who will fit readily, and without asking awkward questions, into society as it happens to exist at the time of their graduation.

Against all such views a Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies must stand in permanent and irreconcilable opposition. The word 'indoctrination' is anathema to it. Both sides of every question must be fairly presented. The aim is so to train the critical faculty of the students that they are able to arrive at an intelligent and independent judgement on every question that comes before them. The technician, indispensable as he is to modern society, can be trained in the factory and the laboratory; the university is there to train the technician plus something else. Docility is not the aim of university education as this department understands it. In any social system there must be a place for criticism and rational opposition. 'Her Majesty's loyal opposition', in the odd phrase which the British use, is an essential part of every system; even if that system does not go so far as the illogical British, and arrange for the government to pay a large salary to the leader of the opposition whose one aim in life is to dislodge that government and to replace it by himself.

Any department which stands for wholes is bound to be critical of the parts; and this should not be forgotten. Abstract thought, enquiry into principles, is a hard and laborious task, but it is one which cannot be for ever neglected:

But men at whiles are sober
And think by fits and starts;

10
And when they think, they fasten
Their hands upon their hearts.

II. The Role of Philosophy

In point of fact, most men find it hard to live long without asking what are in reality philosophical questions.

At times the engineer will find himself asking, How does it come about that I can build bridges which do not fall down? This question can be answered in purely professional terms — the good engineer has carefully calculated strengths and strains, and if he has done his work well, his bridge will not fall down. But there may be a far deeper and less obvious meaning in the question; 'What kind of a universe is this, in which there are materials with identifiable qualities and strengths, in which there are creatures which can dream of bridges, make far-reaching plans, and in the end bring the bridges out of dreams into reality?' There are few things that we know with certainty about the world in which we live; one of the things that we know with absolute certainty is that this is a world in which purposes can be formed by human beings, and in many cases brought into effect. Almost every intelligent man at one time or another asks a question in terms of means and ends, and the purposes to which they can be made subservient; once the question has been asked, it is almost impossible to set a limit to the train of philosophical thinking which may be set in motion.

Every scientist accepts, overtly or in secret, the principle of the uniformity of nature; if he did not, he could not even begin to work as a scientist. But this principle is one that cannot be proved; it is accepted as a matter of simple faith. Of course the simple faith of the scientist, like that of the religious believer, is confirmed by signs following. His experiments do work out today as they did yesterday. As his increasingly powerful telescopes explore more and more of the physical universe, he still finds the same substances with which he is familiar on this earth, and, with some perplexing exceptions like dwarf stars, finds the familiar physical principles so often tested on earth in operation in the farthest confines of space. He is comforted to find that it is so, but what evidence has he, other than that of simple faith, that it always will be so?

All of us, whether we know it or not, are in
the position of constantly using metaphysical concepts. It seems that we closely resemble Molière's Bourgeois Gentilhomme, who was astonished to learn that he had been talking and writing prose all his life without knowing it. But we shall never be in exactly the same position as M. Jourdain. There are philosophers who deny that metaphysical affirmations have any meaning. There are scientists and others who are disinclined to ask any questions outside their immediate concerns, and prefer to be unaware of the philosophical dimensions of all human thinking. In neither case does refusal affect the existence of the metaphysical. If we recognise this, and take some trouble to learn the rules, we may do a reasonably good job in our thinking; if we reject the idea, we shall think metaphysically, but our metaphysics are almost certain to be bad and confused.

We begin to see the point at which the existence of a department of philosophy makes sense. The old sad quarrel between science and religion arose when each party in the discussion tried to impose rules and conclusions on the other. A University is not the place for the exercise of domineering authority or for the imposition of rules and conclusions; it is a place of mutual service. We begin, perhaps, to see how a department of philosophy can be of service to the other faculties and departments.

We teach our students that the first two questions to which philosophy directs attention are, What do you mean? and How do you know? In most educational processes far too little attention is paid to the problem of semantics, to the exact meaning of words and sentences and to the problem of communication. With that specialisation, to which we have already referred, communication between different disciplines becomes ever more difficult. It is commonly reported that the professor of chemical physics and the professor of physical chemistry never meet, since they have no common language in which exchange of ideas would be possible. I have sometimes wondered whether the School of Veterinary Science has moved out to Kabete, for fear that one day the animal doctors and the human doctors might meet, and make the pained discovery that the animal and the human cannot really talk to one another.

Clearly every discipline must have a certain
jargon of its own; this is a kind of shorthand, and saves a great deal of time in communication between the specialists. This does not alter the fact that anything worth knowing can be expressed in words of one syllable, if the speaker or writer will take the trouble to know what he himself really means and to find the appropriate words in which to set forth his ideas. Scientific thought has moved on since the days in which A.S. Eddington produced his lectures on the Nature of the Physical Universe (1928) but that great book stands as a superb example of the matching of word to idea, and of perfectly lucid communication of knowledge and understanding.

It is here, perhaps, that the philosopher ought to be able to be of service to his colleagues. It cannot truthfully be said that philosophers have at all times made lucidity one of their chief aims. I can hardly imagine anyone maintaining that the reading of Immanuel Kant, however necessary, is a pleasurable occupation. It must also be admitted that ideas, even when simply expressed, are not always immediately apprehensible by those who have not had the opportunity to learn the laws of thought. But one can cite a great many examples in the other sense. Those who can read Greek find an immense aesthetic pleasure in reading Plato, because of the incredible brilliance of the style and the verve and vivacity with which the intricate patterns of thought are kept in relation to ordinary human experience. It is, perhaps specially characteristic of the British tradition in philosophy that lucidity has always been most highly valued. It is hardly an accident that two of the best writers of English in the eighteenth century were also two of the most distinguished thinkers — an accident perhaps that both were bishops of the Anglican tradition: Joseph Butler excels in perspicuity and precision of language, George Berkeley in the exquisite choice of words and the rhythm of the sentences in that most difficult form of literary art, the dialogue.

One would not, at the first glance, expect elegance to be found in the solemn series of the Gifford Lectures on Natural Theology. Yet at once Professor McNeile Dixon's contribution in The Human Situation leaps from the shelves to remind us that elegance can be found conjoined with serious thought and profound insights even in a philosophical treatise.

13
When we come to our second question, 'How do you know?', I fear that our colleagues in other departments are likely to regard us as a bunch of confirmed sceptics. We bear from the cradle the image of our first great teacher, Socrates, the master of those who teach. Socrates affirmed that his wisdom consisted simply in the fact that he knew that he knew nothing, whereas others were landed in ignorance, because they thought that they knew when they did not. He spent his time making himself extremely unpopular by demonstrating to those who thought they knew the superficiality and inadequacy of their knowledge. Anything which claims to be knowledge, when introduced to members of this department, must expect to be subjected to the most severe scrutiny and required to present unimpeachable credentials.

Let me limit myself to one single example. Is knowledge of the future possible? On our library shelves lies an able book taken up with the analysis of such a proposition as, 'I know that I shall lecture tomorrow'. I ask, Can the word knowledge ever be rightly used in such a connection, and I answer No; the entire enterprise of the distinguished philosopher who wrote the book seems to me to have been misconceived. I could not know when I went to bed last night that I would deliver this lecture today. I knew that I had carefully prepared it. I knew that it had been printed by the administration. I knew that invitations had gone out to a number of distinguished persons. These were empirical certainties such as could be doubted only by the most hardened of sceptics. But any of ten thousand things might have happened to make it impossible for me to lecture today. All existing copies of the lecture might have been eaten by rats. I might have woken up in a state of amnesia and capable of talking only Tamil. 'Very improbable' you say. Exactly so; but improbability must not be confused with impossibility, and a high degree of probability must not be mistaken for certainty. All I could be certain of yesterday evening was my own strong intention to lecture today; of that there was no doubt; I went to bed in the calm confidence that there was a high degree of probability that my intentions would be fulfilled; once again simple faith has been confirmed by signs following, and experiment has confirmed the validity of expectation.

Some years ago the great mathematician J.E.
Littlewood wrote a charming essay on Probability, in which he affirmed that 'everyone knows that, if you put a kettle on the gas, it is probable but not certain that it will boil.' If everyone did know that, the world would be a much better place than it is! Littlewood goes on to work out in an enormous mathematical equation the probability of a celluloid mouse surviving for a week in hell, and the converse probability of a live mouse freezing in the identical situation — from which we infer that Littlewood was not familiar with his Dante, since as you may remember the lowest rung of Dante's Inferno is cold, not hot! Now all this makes little difference practically; Bishop Butler taught us long ago that the law of human life is reasonable probability; on that we act, and, if our probability was genuinely reasonable, we shall obtain confirmation a posteriori. It does, however, make an immense difference intellectually. Socrates was right; a modest scepticism about knowledge is the clue to a right understanding of our own modest position in the universe.

Close to the problem of knowledge is the question of meaning. This is a question that the historian is specially liable to ask. Ever since Heisenberg made his great discoveries (1927), we have been prepared to put up with a certain amount of randomness in the universe. But, if randomness is absolute, there could be no study of history; everything would be senseless and irrational. The historian, in order to work at all, has to postulate a measure of orderliness in the world of men, to believe that he is an explorer not an autocrat, that he discovers patterns in existence and does not simply impose them arbitrarily on his material. The positive historian, as we have learned to call him in these days, goes no further than that; he carries out his research, assembles his facts, draws his conclusions and leaves it at that. The question whether history has a meaning is meaningless to him. But not all historians lie down under this limited definition of their craft. At times they do ask themselves whether human history as a whole has a meaning; is it simply 'a tale told by an idiot, Full of sound and fury, signifying nothing'? Or are there traces in it of significance, of what in another connection the scientists would call
teleology? It has proved well nigh impossible to answer this question empirically from within the world of history. The historian finds himself impelled to seek an Archimedean point outside it, from which he may survey the whole and pose again his question, knowing well that the answer may be No. The moment he has done this, he has stepped out of the world of history proper, and has asked a philosophical question. He is immediately entitled to ask the help of this department in formulating exactly what it is that he seeks, and in ascertaining the direction in which an answer may lie.

III. The place of Religion

The moment the question of meaning is raised, we are on the confines between philosophy and religion; the question and the possible answer to it belong to both these spheres. If meaning in human affairs is ruled out, both these disciplines fall to the ground; they have nothing to say. If the possibility of meaning in the universe and in human affairs is entertained, both philosophy and religious studies receive their validation, though no one is committed in advance to any answers that may be offered to the questions asked.

Is religion a proper subject for academic study? Does it not belong so exclusively to the sphere of subjectivity that no objective study of it is possible? Was Kierkegaard not right, when he said, 'Subjectivity is all'? This is a legitimate question, and one that deserves to be seriously considered.

I would be prepared to argue in favour of a department of religious studies simply on the ground of the enormous part which religion has played and still plays in the life of humanity. In the last two centuries religion in every form has been subjected to assaults more vigorous, more ingenious and more subtle than have ever been brought to bear upon it in the past, and yet it resolutely refuses to fold up and disappear. I had at Cambridge a highly distinguished colleague who used to prophesy that within ten years Christianity, to which he had strong objections, would disappear. As each decade passed and the hated object was still there, he sank ever deeper into disillusionment.

It is, of course, possible to take the view that religion has never done anything but harm. It was not yesterday that Lucretius wrote tantum
relligio potuit suadere malorum (for such a mass of evil must religion accept responsibility). It is important, however, to retain an open mind. Here we share the concerns of our friends in the department of fine art. It is impossible to study art without being confronted by a great deal of bad art; but in this sphere it is not the case that bad money drives out good. The existence of a great many poor and insipid portraits does not abolish Raphael and Rembrandt and El Greco. The fact that there are many ugly buildings in Nairobi does not debar us from appreciating the proportions of the Cathedral of the Holy Family. The enucleation of the principles by which good can be distinguished from bad is delicate and by no means easy; here, by reason of the nature of their subject matter, religion and fine art have a great deal in common.

One of the writers whom students in this department are encouraged to read is Sigmund Freud. The great service which Freud rendered to religion lay in compelling us to recognise the existence of bad religion — self-seeking, fanatical, obscurantist and all the rest. The study of bad religion has an interestingly humbling and refrigerating effect on the student. It is not for his teachers to drive the lesson home; almost inevitably he comes to the point where a voice says, De te narratur fabule — 'it is of you that the story is being told'; and perhaps sorely against his will he finds himself driven to a period of critical introspection.

Particularly in Africa would I claim that a department of religion is a justified and necessary part of a University. We have been assured again and again that the African self is a naturally religious self. In the west, for rather more than two centuries, we have been accustomed to distinguish between the sacred and the secular, and to suppose that religion has a special province of its own, alongside other forms of human activity. The African, we are told, has never lost the sense of the unity of all things; he experiences life as a whole, and always with a sense of the other, the unseen, what we may perhaps call, without attempting to define it too closely, the divine. Indeed, some western thinkers are of the opinion that the great contribution of Africa to the common stock of human knowledge and experience may be precisely the elimination of the twoness of western vision and the recovery of what Canon
John Taylor, in his well-known book, has called the primal vision.

Ethnology, like other sciences, moves from one standpoint to another and then sometimes back to the original point of view. There was a period in which it seemed to be taken for granted that religious ideas and practices could be treated sociologically, simply in relation to society and their usefulness to society, or anthropologically, as one manifestation among others of the cultural organisation of human existence. In recent times there seems to have been a certain reaction against this point of view; the saying that it was not primitive man but Emile Durkheim who made a god of society has a barbed edge. Since the publication of Evans-Pritchard's deservedly famous work on *Nuer Religion* (1956) there has been a willingness at least to give consideration to the view that religion, like law, is something that exists in its own right, and cannot be reduced without remainder to something else.

It is gratifying to find that the study of the African past and present is highly popular with students. One of the aims that we have set before ourselves is to help students to understand the African past, and in the light of that past to feel at home in the present. There is perhaps no region of Africa which lends itself better than Kenya both to scientific and to practical study; this has for a thousand years or more been a meeting place of religions and cultures; there is a vast world of knowledge still to be uncovered by research. Students in the department are beginning already to show their capacity in asking questions, and in that patient accumulation of evidence without which nothing that can be called scientific answers can be found.

Not all students have time or inclination to engage in such contemporary and exciting research. It is hardly possible, however, for a student to attend lectures for a year in this department, without having to face personally the question whether religion has any proper place in an academic world.

There are basically only two views of the universe. One is that which we call for convenience matter (though physicists have shown us long since that the apparently material is only one form of energy) is all, and that matter has the mysterious capacity to produce from within itself consciousness, mind and spirit. The alter-
native view is that spirit is prior to matter, and that matter has within it an inborn nisus to return to spirit. On the latter view, the whole history of the human race presents itself as part of a vast panorama of existence in which spirit plays the leading part. Into a lifeless universe enters the mysterious thing called life, at a time and by means which science has not yet been able to identify for us. Life slowly grows into consciousness, and therewith into a freedom within the universe previously unknown. To fully, consciousness rises into self-consciousness, the capacity for self-criticism and for judgement. Self-consciousness reaches out beyond itself to the concept of eternal spirit, of a return of that which now knows itself as spirit to that spirit from which it has its origin; and so is born the hope that when the material has ceased to exist, spirit alone will be left and the long pilgrimage find its term in the unity of spirit with spirit.

If the validity of one or other of these views could be established by evidence, this would have been done long ago, and every intelligent man would find himself on the side of that view which alone had succeeded in establishing itself as rational and acceptable on the basis of the evidence. This has not happened. The counting of heads will carry us no further. Of those who thirty years ago might have been reckoned the two most intelligent men in England, Bertrand Russell was on the side of the non-believers, William Temple on the side of those who accepted spirit as the supreme reality.

In this debate a department of philosophy and religious studies (and this should not be forgotten) is not on one side or the other. It is not an instrument of propaganda. It is not its business to make up the minds of students for them. Its task is to help students to formulate their questions clearly, to understand the nature of the evidence on which decisions can be reached, to make them aware of all the subtle factors of prejudice, tradition, resentment, dislike, wishful thinking and sheer laziness which do affect our existential decisions, which are rarely if ever reached on purely intellectual grounds. This being so, such a department is pledged in all honesty to attempt to present every side of every question and not to prejudge the decisions to which students may be led. It is not for nothing that the Department of Religion in the University of
Lancaster announces courses in atheism as well as in theism, and encourages its students to read the best and most powerful works that have been written from the anti-religious side.

An anxious question may still arise in the mind of the hearer; is it possible for any man, lecturing on religion or philosophy to be genuinely neutral; is he not by his profession some kind of a propagandist? The answer should not be given hastily. Exactly the same may be said (and this should not be forgotten) of the lecturer in almost every sphere. The lecturer in government may be caught out in manifesting a preference for freedom over slavery, a dogmatic view if ever there was one. The historian may show an inclination to think that the emergence of the African peoples from the epoch of colonialism into greater independence has been on the whole a good thing. We are what we are, and nothing can make us (I am debarred from making at this point a reference to grace!) other than we are. A specious pretence of impartiality can never be other than a cloak for prejudices and preconceptions, since in no sphere is total impartiality to be had. It is far better for a teacher to be honestly what he is, to make no concealment of his own views and partialities, but at the same time to help his students in the art of honesty and self-criticism by showing them how he himself tries to overcome prejudice and partiality, and by putting before them in the best possible light views which he himself is very far from sharing.

It may be said that the problem is at its most acute in the study of philosophy and religion, since there we come much nearer to the bone and both students and teachers are existentially and not only intellectually concerned. If this be counted a weakness, it may be replied (and this should not be forgotten) that in these studies teachers and students come nearer than in any other department to the study of original authorities. The pressure of sheer knowledge that has to be acquired by the student of physics is such that few indeed are those who have time to read for themselves Newton's *Principia*, leading up to their notable concluding sentences: that 'the whole diversity of natural things can have arisen from nothing but the ideas and will of one necessarily existing being, who is always and everywhere, God Supreme, infinite, omnipotent, omniscient, absolutely perfect'. Every schoolboy knows that
Galileo was the first man to see the four moons of Jupiter through a telescope and that he had some trouble with the Inquisition; not every schoolboy knows that Galileo was a notable master of the Italian language, and that pleasure as well as information is to be derived from a perusal of his works.

In a department of philosophy and religious studies, it is otherwise. The attention of the student is constantly directed to the works of great and original thinkers, and to masterpieces of the human mind and spirit. We do not read Plato in order to think just as Plato thought, still less in order to attempt to bring into existence upon earth the intolerable Republic of Plato's imagining; we read him in order to learn how to think — in his own quaint phrase 'to save the phenomena', to leave no loose ends lying about; and above all to follow the argument whithersoever it may lead, without fear and without favour. Each of the great religions has its sacred book or its sacred canon. To these the student is constantly referred back, and away from commentary and the accumulations of later rationalisation; he is encouraged to find out for himself what the Buddha and Jesus of Nazareth actually said and taught, and what the prophet Muhammad revealed in the name of God.

I think it unlikely that any Christian could give a completely impartial account of Marxism; as far as I know no Marxist has so far tried his hand at any serious exposition of Christianity. But why should this be necessary? The student of anti-religion, like the student of religion, needs some preliminary guidance as to sources and as to methods of historical or theological approach. But then he is on his own; the works of Karl Marx are on the shelves; it is for him to search, to absorb, and to put into practice that function of independent criticism which, throughout his studies in this department, he has been learning to exercise.

If the study of religion and philosophy is carried on in this spirit, we come very near to that admirable definition of education, which is attributed to Dante, but which I have not been able to verify as coming from him: 'Education is the encounter with greatness, and the stimulation of the spirit of curiosity.' Encounter with greatness we can guarantee to provide. Whether we have been successful in stimulating the spirit of
curiosity it is for others than I to say. I can only say that this is and always will be the ideal of those who serve and study in this Department.

**Conclusion**

Yet, when all is said and done, the existential dimension cannot for ever be excluded. The challenge, 'Under which king, Besonian? Speak or die!' echoes in many situations other than that in which it was first spoken. On many matters neutrality may rightly be observed, since the available evidence gives no grounds for a firm decision either way, or because the matter is not of such importance that decision either way is necessary. On many other matters deferment of judgement is the part of a wise man, since wisdom demands that a man should perpend, should consider every side of the question before committing himself. But even in such matters it may well be that the time for decision can no longer be deferred, since failure to decide means in point of fact decision in one sense or the other. And in yet other situations, decision cannot be delayed, since the decision must at once lead on to action, and action is what that particular situation demands.

It is unlikely that a student will study for three years in a department of philosophy and religious studies without realising that sooner or later he will have to choose. But in this case, choice is not between this particular opinion or that, between a number of different possible courses of action, on behalf of each of which a number of good reasons can be advanced. This is an existential decision, touching all levels of thought and activity, the choice of a total judgement on the nature of the universe, on man's place in it, and on the kind of ideals that can make life worth living and endurable, if not enjoyable. But this is not a theme that can be pursued in the austere atmosphere of an academic department; it calls for an ampler air, for a wider exercise of freedom, and for a spirit of adventure which an academic department may foster, but which it is not within its competence to create. It is the wisdom of the academic to recognise his own limits. When he has opened doors and windows wide, he has done all that his office or his conscience can legitimately demand of him. He is a door-keeper and no more.
1st Lecture
1st October, 1971

Kenya's Cancers
Professor Hector M. Cameron

2nd Lecture
8th October, 1971

A Definition of Teacher Education: Traditional growth and future development.
Professor Francis C. A. Cammaerts

3rd Lecture
22nd October, 1971

The Relevance of Animal Physiology to Animal Production in Kenya
Professor David Robertshaw

4th Lecture
29th October, 1971

"Home is Neither Here nor There"
Professor Andrew J. Gurr