Introduction

THE papers reproduced in the pages that follow were, with one exception, presented during the 1964 winter term at York University. They constitute the Gerstein Lectures, the third in a series of Invitation Lectures delivered at the University and generously supported by a grant from the Frank Gerstein Foundation. Following the lectures, and as a result of the very considerable interest aroused by the lectures, a panel discussion-seminar of faculty and students was held to permit further consideration of the topic. At this meeting Professor Alexander Wittenberg expressed a view somewhat different than that put forward by any of the lecturers. He was asked to incorporate these ideas in a paper, a request to which he was good enough to accede, and we are happy to include his paper in this book.

The fact that "Religion and the University," the theme selected for the 1964 series, occasioned some surprise, if not consternation, in the University is a matter which, in itself, is of considerable interest. There are some who assume that because a university by its very nature must consistently raise questions and search out new truths, it cannot deal with religion in which, it is suggested, truth is already presumed to be known. There are others who assume that, because of the traditional separation of Church and State, any state supported institution must scrupulously avoid any discussion of religion. Both of these assumptions are, I believe, false.

It is not my place to discuss this matter in any detail—this will be done more effectively in the chapters that follow—but let me at least suggest why I think these assumptions are erroneous and why we selected “Religion and the University” as the theme of the 1964 lecture series.

First, as my colleague Professor Wittenberg has said, religion is part of social reality and cannot be ignored by any university which seeks to understand man and civilization. Can history, for example, be taught without reference to religion and its impact on the development of ideas and ideals in every nation in the world and in every period of history? Can sociology be taught without some understanding of the institutionalization of religion and of its influence on the customs and mores of any given community or society? Can psychology be taught without some understanding of religion as a force which influences, regulates, and even directs the behaviour of many individuals? Surely the answers to such questions must be in the negative. Indeed, religion is discussed in many courses, such as Professor William Kilbourn’s course in Humanities at this University; religion is the subject of considerable research by outstanding social scientists such as Professor Gordon Allport, whose work focuses on the relation of religious beliefs and every day behaviour; and religion has a recurrent place in the content of every comprehensive and authoritative book in the social and behavioural sciences. And what is true of the few disciplines I have mentioned is also true of other disciplines, including English and philosophy. The fact is that religion *is* part of objective reality and cannot honestly be excluded from the curriculum of a university.

The argument that any university—private or state-supported—can ignore religion, is quite unrealistic. There can be no question that religion must have consideration in a vital university. There are, however, some important and

highly relevant questions which can be raised in any discussion of "Religion and the University." The first must relate to the manner in which religion is considered by the various disciplines in a university. Must religion be subjected to the same cold analysis to which the scientist subjects natural phenomena, or would this approach actually prevent an understanding of religion because faith and belief are such essential ingredients? Does the scientific approach to the study of religion actually permit full comprehension of religion? If not, is any other method of study tolerable in a university?

A different and more difficult question is whether there is a place in a university, and in a state university particularly, for a department or faculty, or school, devoted exclusively to the study of religion? Can a university, without developing a partisan or denominational approach, develop a faculty in which there is a general and genuine interest in the study of religion and the religions of man?

A third question one must ask relates to the place of religion in the informal or extracurricular programme of a university. Is there a place for religious services in such a programme? For the discussion of religious problems? For a university chaplain? For a university chapel? Here many people are adamant, for even if they agree that religion is a legitimate subject for critical study in a university they vehemently resist the idea of religion being used as a proselytizing force on the campus. Others argue that help is provided for students to organize athletic teams, debating clubs, political organizations, art clubs, and, therefore, similar help should be provided to those students who wish to study or worship together.

There are other issues, of course, which will arise in the chapters that follow, but the above were the compelling reasons and issues that led us at York University to plan a lecture series around the topic "Religion and the Univer-

sity." I hope all who read this volume will find that the effort was justified and that fresh light is thrown on an extremely complex and difficult problem.

The production of this book owes much to Mr. Timothy E. Reid who carried much of the burden not only of organizing the lectures, but also of collecting and editing the manuscripts and working out the many details of publication.

MURRAY G. ROSS,
President