



JUDGE CHRISTOPHER WEERAMANTRY

Vice-Chancellor, I present Judge Christopher Weeramantry.

Politician is to statesman as lawyer is to jurist. Judge Weeramantry was trained as a lawyer in his native Sri Lanka, then still known as Ceylon. He practised as a lawyer, he wrote as a legal scholar, he taught as a professor of law, and he became a judge, first in Sri Lanka, and then at the International Court of Justice in The Hague. He became one of the best-known lawyers in the world, and – more than that – he is acknowledged as one of the world’s leading jurists.

His professional career began in Ceylon in the late 1940s when he became an advocate in Colombo, practising law across a wide range of types of cases. After seventeen years as a lawyer he became a judge, and then in 1967 a Justice of the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka. In 1972 he became a professor, moving to Australia to take up the Sir Hayden Starke chair of law at Monash University in Melbourne. He held that chair for nineteen years, during which time he also had a consultancy practice as a barrister in Victoria.

In 1991 he became a Judge at the International Court of Justice, serving for a time as Vice-President of the Court. He has only recently retired as a judge at the International Court. Throughout the course of his distinguished legal and academic career, in three different countries, he has produced many important publications, publications which have made distinguished contributions in a number of different fields. He has published over twenty books. Let me cite the titles of his recent trilogy with the revealing overall title of *Justice Without Frontiers*; the first volume was called *Furthering Human Rights*; the second *The Protection of Human Rights in the Age of Technology*, and the third *Extending the Canopy of International Law*.

Let me give a further indication of his range by citing the title of just one of his many articles – ‘Buddhism and International Law’, and the title too of just one of the many lectures he has given to distinguished audiences all over the world – ‘The Role of the Judiciary in the Development of Environmental Law’, this at a recent United Nations symposium in his native Colombo. He may have retired as a judge, but he has not given up the promotion of the role and effectiveness of international law in the world’s affairs. He is, for example, President of the International Association of Lawyers against Nuclear Arms.

It is entirely appropriate that he should be honoured by the University of London, and especially appropriate that he be honoured at this graduation ceremony for external graduates, since he himself has been awarded no less than three external degrees by the University of London. In 1949 he took the LLB degree in Colombo, and two years later he took a BA in history – a very wise thing for a lawyer to do, may I add? – and in 1968 he was awarded an LLD, the higher doctorate in law achieved on the basis of published seminal contributions which have advanced the discipline of law.

Judge Weeramantry is a shining example of the success that taking London external degrees can bring. The terms ‘external’ and ‘internal’ came into use in 1900, when the University was re-constituted to forge closer links between the London colleges which then became the ‘internal’ side. The ‘external’ side carried on the University’s nineteenth-century tradition of offering examinations to all-comers. Originally candidates for the examinations came from all over the United Kingdom, but the University first sent its exam papers overseas in 1865 when they were first sent to candidates in Mauritius, the beginnings of what came to be important connections with various places in the Empire and later in the Commonwealth. In the late nineteenth century the University of London became the imperial university.

Judge Weeramantry represents an important tradition for the University of London. In fact he has further connections with the University, and with its internal side. His father, the late Gregory Weeramantry, attended University College London and graduated in 1916 with first-class honours in mathematics. His father always used to speak of the University of London as the world’s leading university. And more recently in 1994 Judge Weeramantry’s son, Romesh Weeramantry, graduated from King’s with an LLM degree. May I proclaim the Weeramantrys as a London dynasty, standing for the liberal and progressive tradition that the University of London has always exemplified.

Since Judge Weeramantry already has a doctorate in laws from the University of London, an earned one, the only way we can honour him further is by presenting him with an honorary doctorate in literature, entirely appropriate given the elegance and brilliance and erudition of his many published writings in many fields, not just the law.

Vice-Chancellor, I request you by the authority of the Council to admit Judge Christopher Weeramantry to the degree of Doctor of Literature *honoris causa*.