

# THE KINGDOM AND THE WORLD

By PETER HEBBLETHWAITE

**A**LL THE OTHER speakers have been experts, in some sense, in the theme with which the *Kingdom* has been linked. Fr Peters placed it in the context of the Exercises, in which he is an expert, Fr Ashton did a demolition job starting from scripture. And so on. This would suggest, therefore, that I am an expert or an authority on the *world*. Perhaps this notion has something to do with living at Farm Street, or with continental travel. Of course there are no *experts* on the world; there are only inhabitants of the world, and that means all of us, even though we have no abiding city here: experience of the world is open to all equally.

So, you might be wondering, what in the world am I going to talk about? That will appear. But I want to make a preliminary remark that I think is of some importance. In every retreat I have ever made which involved listening to someone talk (and this happens even in the 'directed retreat'), what has jarred on me has been the picture of the world, the *Weltbild*, that the retreat director has unconsciously revealed. It comes out in the anecdotes he tells – and how they used tell anecdotes! – or in quotations from secular authors or in political or semi-political allusions which e.g. show the man to be an impenitent *Daily Telegraph* reader.

Let me take an example from a published source, as easier to document. In a well-known commentary on *Perfectae Caritatis*, we read first of all in the text: 'Effective renewal and the right sort of adaptation can be achieved only with the co-operation of all the members of the institute'.<sup>1</sup> That seems a simple enough observation. But the Commentary detects in it lurking dangers: 'Implicit in the decree', it warns – and note the word *implicit* – 'is the awareness that universal collaboration carries its own dangers'. What are they? Well, we're not really told, but the next sentence says: 'The modern slogan, one man, one vote, if pushed to its logical conclusion, could undermine the very foundation of religious life'.<sup>2</sup> No

<sup>1</sup> *Supplement to The Way*, 2 (May 1966), p 22.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p 23 (See below, p 75).

doubt that is true. But nobody had mentioned *one man, one vote*. It was introduced only to be rejected. And one wonders why. It is a terrible distraction from the main point. One feels bound to ask: Would the author be a supporter of Mr Ian Smith, who for his own and no doubt very different reasons, also talks about 'the modern slogan, one man, one vote'?

You see my very simple point. If a man sets up as a guide to the spiritual life, then it is vitally important that he should get *this* world right; because if he doesn't, then his observations on the spiritual realm; where verification is much more difficult, will not inspire confidence. Here is a simple story. In a Canadian diocese, the bishop decided to put on a refresher course in theology for his clergy. They came in great numbers, for a fortnight. The first week was given entirely by sociologists and psychologists who attempted to describe the contemporary world and its characteristics. After a week some of the priests wanted their money back. 'God has not been mentioned', they said, outraged: 'There is no room for Christ'. Some went home. Those who stayed began to grasp the point after a while. There are many phenomena which religious people ascribe to vague forces like 'materialism' or 'permissiveness', which have really quite ascertainable causes in social mobility, the fact that young people are no longer inserted into life through their families, the dominance of the peer-group which is also a market, the existence of the pill. Now in that situation denouncing *materialism* gets you, or anyone else, nowhere. You are merely lobbing hand-grenades into a fog. A study of what is happening in our society will be much more helpful.

My preliminary point is now made. On the plea of spirituality one cannot afford to be stupid or ignorant or wrong about the observable world we live in. Indeed the reverse is the case: a spiritual man is required to be as informed and as accurate as he can be about the world he lives in, precisely because his essential task is to interpret that world and discern the traces of grace in it. And he can't discern what he does not know.

That brings us closer to the subject of this lecture. I want to do something very simple. You may think it is impossible to squeeze anything more out of the battered orange of the Kingdom. But it is possible. What I am going to do is to compare the vision of Christ, the world and (implicitly) the Church which is found in the Kingdom and the Contemplation for Obtaining Love. We shall see a striking contrast. In the second part I will consider the consequences

of the contrast. And then we will be home and dry. Very dry.

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What picture, then, of Christ emerges from the Kingdom? Just listen again to what the earthly king says: 'I am determined to bring under my control the entire land of the unbeliever'. (Note the spanish: *Mi voluntad es de conquistar toda la tierra de infideles.*)<sup>3</sup> It's the atmosphere of the Crusades: 'the whole land of the unbeliever' suggests that. But I think we can give it more precise setting in the life and dreams of Ignatius. This king he imagines has a 'divine mission. He is chosen by our Lord God, revered and obeyed by the princes and all christian men'.<sup>4</sup> Fr Corbishley translates 'the rulers and all the common men of christendom', which is certainly a free translation, but one which introduces a correct note: Ignatius sees christendom, that historical situation in which christianity is influencing the whole social order, in which all men at least officially are christians, as now *threatened*. The very war in which his leg was broken was between two catholic princes, Charles V of Spain and François I of France. And he may have had a sense of the whole of christendom cracking up, or at least being menaced with dissolution. Was he a crisis-thinker, like Augustine contemplating the end of the roman empire? I think he had something of this. And in the situation of warring princes, he imagines this rallying point, this leader, who would transcend the differences and the petty squabbles of the princes of christendom, and thus reforge its broken unity: he would be, to repeat, 'revered and obeyed by all the princes and all christian men'. It is a very persuasive picture. If such a one appeared, it would be very difficult to resist his call.<sup>5</sup> I conclude that in the life of Ignatius, the 'parable' is very deeply rooted and highly significant: it is the sketch of a dream, the fruit of an experience (of division and disunity), and it is the spring of his vocation.

Then this powerful picture (for Ignatius) is carried over and determines his picture of Christ, who addresses us in terms not very different from those of the temporal king he dreamed about: 'I am determined to bring under my control the whole world and all my enemies, and so to come to the glory of my Father'.<sup>6</sup> The same word

<sup>3</sup> Exx 92.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Cf Guy Crouchback, Evelyn Waugh's fictional soldier, who heard the news of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Treaty in 1939 and reflected: 'The enemy at last was plain in view, huge and hateful, all disguises cast off. It was the Modern Age in arms. Whatever the outcome there was a place for him in that battle'.

<sup>6</sup> Exx 95.

is used – *conquistar* – and it sounds very odd placed on the lips of Christ, who formally rejects *that* kind of authority and leadership, and has hard sayings about it. True, there are texts which might seem superficially to provide a background for this kind of talk. One example is from St Paul: ‘Then comes the end, when he delivers up the Kingdom to God the Father, after abolishing every kind of domination, authority and power’.<sup>7</sup> But this is not an operation of conquest, but rather of handing over to the Father; and the ‘last enemy’ envisaged here is *death*. The pauline picture is very different from the ignatian one. For Paul, Christ overcomes the deepest riddles of human existence – suffering and ultimately death; but Ignatius has brought with him a great deal from his parable and read it into the gospels (*Hineinlegen*). Christ is leading a crusade, and those who want to follow him will have to undergo hardships with him. Again the military language comes through: ‘Going against their natural weakness and the love of the world and the flesh . . .’<sup>8</sup>

If you now ask: How is the *world* seen in the Kingdom?, the answer is that the *world* is seen as the *object* of the enterprise, the *object* of the preaching, the *recipient* of the saving message. At the same time – and this is logical – it is seen as the *obstacle* to be overcome, the enemy to be conquered. Once more, there is a certain scriptural justification for this view of the world: ‘Courage! The victory is mine; I have conquered the world’.<sup>9</sup> But the ambivalence of the world in the New Testament is well-known. The world which is overcome is also the world which God loves and into which he sends his only-begotten Son. The Kingdom, however, does not allow for this ambiguity of the world. It sees the world simply as enemy, as obstacle, as object.

Now if we turn to the *Contemplatio ad Amorem* and ask the same questions, we get a very different picture. Christ here is seen as the source, as the overflowing fountain of blessings.<sup>10</sup> The blessings come at all levels, and Ignatius enumerates them: creation, redemption, personal gifts.<sup>11</sup> The Trinity is seen as goodness superabundant. And now as one looks out on the world and men, one sees the partial evidence for this overflowing goodness and concludes that since he has shared so much with me, ‘I will further consider the divine plan whereby this same Lord *wants* to give me all that is in his power to give’.<sup>12</sup> Man is seen, and defined, as *capax Dei*, whose vocation and

<sup>7</sup> 1 Cor 15,24 (*New English Bible*).

<sup>10</sup> Exx 233.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 234.

<sup>8</sup> Exx 97.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Jn 16,33.

whose happiness consist in this openness, in this radiant transparency of grace in the world. Ignatius goes through the whole hierarchy of creation, nothing is left out; and in his third point, he adds an essential note: this vision of the outpouring of God's goodness might just be an object of static contemplation, admirable, God-revealing, but leading nowhere. So in his third point, we are invited to 'think of God *energizing*, as though he were actually at work in every created reality'.<sup>13</sup> The image of the energizing, life-bringing sun completes and fills out the image of the overflowing fountain.

We are many leagues away from the Kingdom. The *world* is now seen not as object and obstacle, but as creation, with all that it implies of closeness, presence and energizing presence. The world is seen here, and Teilhard's phrase is the *mot juste*, as the divine milieu. That is the point to which Ignatius wants to bring you: to make you aware that the world and the men in it are not flat and one-dimensional, but are constantly bathed in this element, which is their *true life*, their *true home*, their habitat. Thus, to one who has cleansed his heart and his eyes, the world is no longer over against, as enemy, as obstacle; on the contrary it is rather the setting, the context in which God's gifts of nature and grace – and Ignatius gives examples of both – are showered upon us.

Now just as the vision of the world, the *Weltbild*, is different in the two contemplations, so the human response is different. What we are invited to do is different. Of course the response in the Kingdom should not be reduced to joining in the battle, steeling oneself for the hardships of the struggle and the crusade. It is interesting that the conclusion of the Kingdom is not that I will engage in the apostolate (that question comes later): it is that I may have the desire 'to imitate you in putting up with all injustices, all abuse, all poverty in reality no less than in the spirit...'<sup>14</sup> Here Ignatius progresses beyond the limitations of his own parable; and clearly the motivation for this assimilation must be love. However, in the Contemplation for Obtaining Love, he is still clearer on the task and the motivation. He is concerned with full, total human response: Take and receive *all*. In the dialogue of salvation man says yes, *Amen*, to the promises of creation and of Christ. Ascetical struggle is presupposed, and transcended, because here it is a matter of 'finding God in all things, and all things in God'.<sup>15</sup> And it is noteworthy that Ignatius,

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 236.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>15</sup> See footnote 4 on p 183 of *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, ed. George E. Ganss,

who is normally so mistrustful of love-talk, uses it, and defines it characteristically as deeds rather than words, and as exchange of everything.

The thrust of the Contemplation can be summed up in the words of St John of the Cross:

You have gone out into everything I love,  
And everything I love has come to rest in you.

I'll add one more point of contrast which you may find surprising. I said that the Kingdom, at least in its account of the temporal king, supposed, or dreamt of, *Christendom*, a situation in which structures are binding, authority is obeyed, and there is a wide-spread consensus about values, about what counts. But the contemplation does not presuppose christendom or a christian environment. It presupposes nothing, except creation and redemption, and they are everything. It is a contemplation that is perfectly compatible with *secularization* as a neutral process, even as it excludes vigorously *secularism*, the ideology of secularization. This point, it seems to me, was admirably grasped by the 31st General Congregation of the Society of Jesus, speaking of the special mission to 'deal with atheism': 'Since also the legitimate desire that the human sciences should be autonomous often leads men to raise objections against God, or even to present irreligion as the liberation of man, jesuits should strive to bring it about that faith should inform and illumine the whole of life, that christian life should not turn people away from developing the world, that human values, developed without pride, and the whole universe, cleansed from corruption, should be illuminated and transfigured, and so in the end can find the "eternal and universal kingdom" which Christ will hand over in the end of time to the Father'.<sup>16</sup> The Kingdom appears here, but it is the Kingdom of first Corinthians, not of Ignatius's parable. The main inspiration of that text is the Contemplation for Obtaining Love.

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(Institute of Jesuit Sources, St Louis, 1970). He refers to Ignatius's 'oft-reiterated phrase' about 'finding God in all things'. The passage in the Constitutions on which he is commenting is also of great interest. Speaking of the study of scholastics, Ignatius says: 'For their devoting themselves to learning, which they acquire with a pure intention of serving God and which in a certain way requires the whole man, will be not less but rather more pleasing to God during this time of study'. That is said in the spirit of the Contemplation for Obtaining Love.

<sup>16</sup> Latin text, p 52: 3 *De Munere Societatis erga atheismum*, 111, 7.

Now we are going to swing away gradually from the text of the Exercises. I am going to suggest formally what I have been implying all along. In these two meditations, we have two contrasting *models* for thinking about Christ, the world, the Church – and indeed anything else. It is not without interest that the two models correspond to those sketched out by one of the ‘task-forces’ entrusted with the preparation of the forthcoming General Congregation of the Society.<sup>17</sup>

A warning first. I am speaking about ‘popular’ interpretations of the Exercises, as they have been conveyed largely in the oral tradition. This may be more important, as far as shaping attitudes goes, than the books that have been published. In the past, more people ‘listened’ to retreats than read books on the Exercises; and this affected the retreats which they, in their turn, ‘preached’. We should not forget the existence of this legacy. I am speaking mainly of the english province of the Society.

Briefly, then, my thesis is that in the Society there are *Kingdom* men and *Ad Amorem* men. Let us call them K-men and aA-men.

K-men will tell you that the Kingdom is the central meditation in the Exercises, and the one which gives the *specific* jesuit note: we are soldiers fighting the good fight, with an intense personal devotion to Christ the King, braced for all the ascetical conditions and hardships that are needed in the struggle. By our work we establish, or begin to establish, the Kingdom of Christ. Père Riquet, the Notre Dame preacher, used to say that St Ignatius was a mystic all right, but that he was a ‘*fighting mystic*’. This is typical of K-men.<sup>18</sup>

The parable is taken literally by K-men. That is to say, they employ its vocabulary, its rhetoric, frequently and with conviction and gusto. In England we had the Knights, the Handmaids (and I believe the Pages) of the Blessed Sacrament. They were exhorted to be chivalrous and pure, and ‘to go out and do knightly deeds, spelled with a k’. We have all heard the noviceship referred to as ‘a spiritual Sandhurst’, all at some time been urged to ‘emulate the spit and polish of the Guards regiment’; and at least some of us were given the example of the Guards at Dunkirk, who marched in perfect formation to their boats, but fast asleep. This was supposed to encourage us to attend morning oblation.

<sup>17</sup> [See Document 4/2, and the text of the work of group 11 F. I shall not follow them with any precision.

<sup>18</sup> Cf Nadal on ‘Le Règne du Christ’, in *Christus* 1 (1954), pp 90–100.

But the parable bit deeper than its rhetoric. It affected the view of the apostolate in most profound ways. For K-men, *laborare mecum* is the key to jesuit life. I do not disagree, but K-men give it their own interpretation. In the prelude, Jesus is seen going about preaching – so that is the first obvious sense of *laborare mecum*, preaching the word in and out of season. After that, actual assimilation with the life of Christ becomes a little more difficult. We cannot, usually, work miracles. Nevertheless K-men like to say that it is precisely in the distribution of the sacraments that we can be Christ-like, since the sacraments express the *compassion* of Christ who forgives sins and thus heals the sinner, and feeds the hungry multitudes with the bread of life. K-men have this strong sacramental sense. Does he go to the sacraments?, they enquire. They note, where they can, a ‘great increase in communions’ or ‘heavy work in the box’ as a sign that the Kingdom is being advanced. In this way K-men, seen ecclesiologically, are rather introverted. They are concerned with the domestic service of the faithful.

And they perceive the world outside as, precisely, *outside*, out there, menacing, dangerous, full of traps and evil maxims. There is a war on, K-men will remind you, and you have to buckle on your armour and wield the sword of controversy against your enemies, who are numerous. The K-men’s mystique fitted perfectly, if it did not determine, the apologetic, polemical approach to theological questions which characterized a large number of jesuits up to Vatican II. At the old Heythrop there was the Bellarmine Society: its function was to refute errors which appeared in the press, and write pamphlets on popular apologetic themes. The combativeness thus manifested owed a lot to the Kingdom. Nowadays, this combativeness is reserved for the ‘enemies within and without the Church’ who are alleged to be undermining it wilfully.

K-men, it follows logically, are strongly institution-minded and centred. This is because powerful institutions, impressive buildings, Eagle Towers, are visible evidence that the Kingdom is making progress: they are *bastions of faith* in an unbelieving world. Looking out from the walls of the citadel (in fact sipping port or sherry), K-men denounce and unmask the enemies without the gate. It does not much matter, for example, to K-men, that the actual community life within the fortress is largely non-existent and regarded as satisfactory when there is a reasonable level of tolerance; it does not matter, since the important thing is the regiment and loyalty to it in a rather abstract way. ‘We cannot afford the luxury of friend-



ship', I have heard someone say (he did not believe, or at least did not practise, what he said). When the Provincial tells you to go, you get up and go. Just as in the army.

K-men were – are – in many ways admirable. From a psychological point of view, they could be well-integrated, with good, solid, sustaining motivation. They were good at putting up with things: 'It's all in the shilling', was a favourite expression. I want to borrow here a quotation from Cardinal Heenan which puts the point well (though he is making a contrast between priests of his generation and later): 'Priests of my generation . . . were able to withstand hardship and injustice more easily than the young priests who came later. We were not made of finer clay but we were less vulnerable. We were perhaps more capable both of inflicting and suffering pain'.<sup>19</sup> A little nearer the truth, and the bone, than usual. I have somewhat sharpened the portrait of the K-men to bring out the contrast, but I do not think that I have drawn a caricature. Nor would I like it to be thought that K-men have to be identified, *simpliciter*, with theological conservatives, though there are obvious correlations.

aA-men are, however, very different. They do not like the rhetoric of the K-men because it seems romantically inflated, and anyway just leaves them cold. It moves them not. It takes far too much for granted. It presupposes a world that no longer exists, thus making the rhetoric of K-men a nostalgic exercise, a 'trip down memory lane'. aA-men start out from the central principle of the *Ad amorem* that grace is already at work in the world, if only we take the trouble to discern it. They are, therefore, more open to its presence in unexpected places. Marx and Freud, to take two fairly obvious examples, do not appear to them as implacable enemies: they appear rather as two thinkers who have influenced the world we live in, and whose work contains insights not otherwise available. This does not mean the hasty baptism or canonization of either of them, but it does mean that aA-men are ready to learn from them.

They have a different attitude to community and to institutions to that of K-men. They take community very seriously, because as aA-men they want jesuit communities to be places where there is a 'real handing over and sharing', as Ignatius puts it. They further know that such communities fulfil their witnessing role, not by their size or impressiveness, but by being friendly, open, welcoming to all,

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<sup>19</sup> *Not the Whole Truth*, (London, 1972), p 272.

simple in life-style, honest in discussion, generous in entertainment. Such communities are rare in the contemporary world. People don't want bastions and fortresses: they want credible communities in which faith, hope and charity are shown to be possible. And they feel much closer to the New Testament: 'This is how we know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brothers'.<sup>20</sup>

So, without being spineless, they are gentler people too, often put out by the aggressive polemics of the K-men, which so often seem to be a cover for insecurity. To K-men, aA-men appear to lack convictions in their eagerness for dialogue on all sides; but the truth is simply that they have a different set of convictions, held with equal tenacity, but bearing a different scale of values. They may have pondered Peter Ustinov's dictum – 'Convictions divide people, doubts bring them together' – and learned from it that the *strength* of a conviction is no guarantee of its truth. Moreover, they have a fear of fanaticism, of authoritarian personalities, and of fascism, whether political or ecclesiastical. I define fascism thus: it happens where an élite thinks it knows what is for the good of the people, and is determined to give it them, whether they like it or not. To K-men talk of conscience is impossible: it is a short cut to disloyalty: it doesn't happen in the Army. But aA-men, grateful for the gifts, even modest ones, showered on them, think that they have a duty to *use* their memory, understanding, and their conscience. Not to do so is no tribute of gratitude to the creator. Faith is the liberation of our faculties, not their suppression.

There is an interesting difference too in the approach to liturgy and the sacraments. Liturgy for K-men, when they think about it at all, is a 'splendid show', baroque theatre, 'something', as they say sometimes, 'fit for a King'. 'We gave him a good send-off', they say after a funeral. And so in the liturgy what matters to them is a smart turn-out, well-drilled movements, and some music as background. aA-men don't like this at all. They think of the liturgy, and the sacraments generally, as setting the seal, providing definitive expression of, a genuine human experience that is, under grace, already present in human beings.<sup>21</sup> To take a simple example: people have assembled in a group, or are working together on some project, and there comes a point at which this collaboration, and the unity that has resulted from it, *cries out*, as it were, for something

<sup>20</sup> 1 Jn 3, 14.

<sup>21</sup> Cf K. Rahner's lecture at Heythrop: published later in *The Tablet*, 'Secular Life and the Sacraments', 6 March and 13 March 1971, pp 236–238 and pp 267–268.

else, something more, which alone can complete it and take it to fulfilment. It is at this point that you say: 'Let's have a liturgy'. So you have here a totally different approach to liturgy among aA-men. The same is true of the sacrament of penance: totting up the number of people who pop into and out of the box does not seem to them a particularly significant or christian exercise; but if someone, in conversation, reveals the rawness of his wounds and his need for forgiveness, then there will be an easy transition to the sacrament. And in that situation the pain and the anguish can be seen to ebb away.

I would like to provide a theological conclusion, but there is no time. It would start from the notion of the Church as *sacrament of Christ* in the world.<sup>22</sup> I draw from it two conclusions which also sum up what I have been saying. 'The sacrament can only become significant for non-christians through the intermediary of *communities* living their faith and bearing witness to that faith'.<sup>23</sup> And secondly: 'We take the word sacrament in a broad sense as the reality of the world which manifests something of the saving plan of God'.<sup>24</sup> At this point, aA-men want to applaud and say Amen.

I may allow myself two further remarks. One is that it is altogether too easy to say in reply to this paper: 'But obviously we need both – the combative ascetical approach of the Kingdom, *and* the openness to the signs of the times shown in the Contemplation'. Nearly everyone would claim to be a both/*and* person, rather than an either/*or* person. But in this case, it seems to me, we have to choose. I mistrust syntheses which consist in a form of words, which exist only on paper. Take either of these contemplations seriously, make it dominant, and you will get a *different* approach to almost any question you care to discuss, from what the Society should be doing to how scholastics should dress. There is, I think, an option involved, which cannot be dodged by elegant formulations of both/*and*.

Finally, a remark about a very great english jesuit, Fr C. C. Martindale. Fr Martin D'Arcy said to me recently, before taking off for America, once more for the last time, that the great thing about Martindale was that he restored the sense of *indwelling grace*. True, grace was always acknowledged, but in the form of actual graces of enlightenment or strengthening; and since they could not be 'laid on', severe asceticism was the best we could do to prepare. The achievement of C.C.M., he thought, was that he showed how

<sup>22</sup> Essential reading here is the document prepared for the French Bishops' Assembly at Lourdes in November 1971, *Eglise, Signe de Salut au Milieu des Hommes* (Le Centurion, 1972).

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p 28.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p 32.

the gifts of the holy Spirit implanted in baptism could *unfold*, and so the moral and spiritual life ceases to be a sort of obstacle race, in which one tries not to knock down too many obstacles, but rather a growth, a flowering, an *épanouissement*. Then I read in Bernard Basset's *The English Jesuits* the following passage: 'It was Tyrrell's charge against the Society that it was rigid, negative, protective; guarding boys at school, nuns in convents, theological students, laymen, laywomen from the dangers of a sinful world. Martindale never saw the world as sinful, but as suffering'.<sup>25</sup> One can't improve on that.

*Editor's note.* Fr Hebblethwaite, in his remarks about *The Way* commentary on *Perfectae Caritatis*, 4 (cf *supra*, pp 64-5), has mistakenly attributed the comment 'Implicit . . . of religious life' to the first sentence of the section; whereas it clearly belongs to the second sentence (which he does not quote): 'But to set out the directives and to legislate for such renewal . . . belongs only to the competent authorities, especially general chapters . . . as far as the law requires' (*ibid.*). In fairness also to the commentator, it should be added that the sentences under criticism do not appear in the original (italian) text. They represent an attempt to elucidate concretely a more abstract phraseology.

<sup>25</sup> London, 1967, p 453.