

the Middle Ages was truly Catholic, and I am convinced that we should do well to study that conception to-day, not, indeed, with a view to any return of the past, such as some vainly long for, but that we should grasp its essential spirit with a view to giving it that embodiment which is adapted to our own environment. Although the medieval ideal was always far from realization, yet even in its imperfect form it made a splendid contribution to the establishment of Christianity in Europe. ¹⁰

The Reformation, being largely a reaction in favour of individualism, naturally undertook no thorough-going examination and criticism of the ideal of the Church. To the reformer the old Church appeared to be a great tyranny, but instead of distinguishing between the true ideal of the Church, and its inadequate and false presentation by Rome, it relegated it to the background. It simply postulated an invisible Church of true believers (this too is at bottom an individualistic conception) and either developed a very singular, not to say absurd theory of state Churches, expressed in the phrase *cujus regio ejus religio*, or, when that theory quickly broke down, fell into mere denominationalism. Its endeavor to find in the New Testament the revealed form of the Visible Church, of course failed because it is not there.

It is clear then that the time is ripe for an attempt to restate the doctrine, or, I should prefer to say, the ideal of a Catholic Church. I am not unmindful of the fact that many such attempts have for some time been under way. The great emphasis laid upon the subject of Church Unity, the many gatherings for its discussion, the Conference on Faith and Order, are all signs of the times. But we have not yet achieved a philosophy of the Church that can command the allegiance of men of good will and of modern mind.

On this vast subject I desire to say this only:

The idea of the Church must relate itself to the

(10) Cf. Bryce: *The Holy Roman Empire*. Chap. VII.