

3. There is, however, an intermediate position which has been assumed by some writers of ability, and which is involved in the reasonings of others who do not avow it. They hold the Romish idea of the Church as an external visible society made up of all sorts of men, and yet they admit, with Protestants, that the visible Church is divided, and needs to be re-united. Dr. Döllinger, of Munich, who writes so ably on the re-union of Christendom, evidently occupies this peculiar ground. In his lectures, without formal discussion, he everywhere assumes the Romish idea of the Church as an external visible organization, with very mixed moral elements in its membership; but somehow this Church, to which the promises pertain, has become divided, and must be re-united, before it can successfully achieve its mission in the world. Tractarians occupy the same ground; they can accept Bellarmine's definition of the Church, with the exception of the last clause, which requires submission to the Roman Pontiff. They even teach that the undivided Church was infallible, or practically infallible, until it became fallible by committing ecclesiastical suicide, when it divided itself into its Eastern and Western sections. There are also not a few Protestants who, when they deal with the re-union of Christendom, appear to halt between two opinions. They see clearly that the Church is no longer to be found in any one visible organization. The visible Church is divided. But when they reason about re-union, they seem insensibly to slide into the Romish conception of the Church, and argue as if the body, which is divided, is identical with that whose unity is proclaimed in the Word of God, to which pertain the promises. The varying conceptions of the Church and its unity, affect very directly the views which we cherish in reference to Church unions.

## II. CHURCH UNIONS IN RELATION TO THE IDEA OF THE CHURCH.

1. The Romish idea of the Church clearly bars, so far as Roman Catholics are concerned, all thought of union with