

In 1801, an elaborate "Plan of Union" was formed between the General Assembly of the American Presbyterian Church and the General Association of the Congregationalists of Connecticut. The history and results of the "Plan" are instructive. It was arranged that if a Congregational church called a Presbyterian minister, its affairs were still to be conducted on its old principles. If a difficulty arose with the minister, the matter might be referred to Presbytery if both parties consented; if not, to a Council. If a Presbyterian church called a Congregational minister, he was to be amenable to the Association, or to a Council formed "half-and-half." The scheme had elaborate provisions in it for minorities, and majorities, and all sorts of difficulties. But the result was, that it was soon felt to be an intolerable nuisance, a gateway for strife, schism, heresy and backsliding. It dragged on a painful existence until 1837, when it was abrogated under Old School ascendancy. It was, however, readopted by the New School, immediately after the great division.

We must now come to the sad era of strife and schism. The Presbyterian Church in the United States was from the first eminently orthodox. It has been true to the great evangelical doctrines, while Congregationalism has become thoroughly poisoned with neology. The great Edwards laid down some erroneous philosophical principles, which led to much mischief when his disciples applied them in the realm of Theology. The errors referred to made rapid progress among the Congregationalists, and the "Plan of Union" led to the tainting of a large section of the Presbyterian Church. Thus arose an "Old School" and a "New School" in the General Assembly. The character and operations of two large societies were also elements in the strife. These were "The American Home Missionary Society" and the "Education" Society. These institutions were a propaganda of Congregationalism, and a large portion of Presbyterian Church strongly objected to supporting either the one or the other. The "New Theology" made havoc among

the Congregationalists, and so far as the Presbyterians kept up a sort of ecclesiastical connection with them they would themselves be tainted.

In at least four Synods, Congregationalists were allowed to sit and vote in Presbyteries, and even to be sent as delegates to the General Assembly.

In 1837 an attempt was made at effecting a friendly separation, but it failed. Albert Barnes was tried for heresy and was acquitted. "Elective Affinity" Presbyteries were erected in Pennsylvania, men being allowed to join the Presbyteries where their own doctrine would be unmolested. But all these healing measures would not do. The disruption came in 1838. All the Presbyteries and Synods that had in them a mixture of Congregationalists were cut off. This is what led to the crisis. The majority on the Old School side was not large, but it sufficed. The New School tried to obtain all the property of the body—Princeton Seminary among the rest—but it failed.

The division was not justifiable on sound ecclesiastical principles. In the words of Dr. Hodge:—"It is the almost universally recognized doctrine, that no man, or set of men, is authorized to abandon the church and set up another communion, unless prevented from preaching the truth, or forced to profess error. So long as the standards are left sound, and full liberty of speech is allowed, all are bound to adhere to the church in the hope to reform it. Had the evangelical party in the Church of Scotland abandoned the church when the Moderates were in the ascendancy, they would have given up all its property, prerogatives and prestige to their opponents, which would have been a grievous breach of trust. To secede from a body, ecclesiastical or civil, because an opposing party gains ascendancy, and passes what are regarded as unjust or unconstitutional laws, would destroy all stability and unity."

The experience of thirty years has proved to the Presbyterians that they should not have divided. The New School became weary of the "Plan of Union" with Congregationalists. It has been growing less