

markedly socialistic cast and found such prominent Christian socialists as Harry F. Ward in dominant roles. With the other groups mentioned, the federation congresses supported the call for a national instrument.

All of these calls came to fruition in Philadelphia in December, 1908. A mass of church leaders organized the Federal Council of Churches. A doctrinal statement was given that stressed many good points but did not offer particular definition or interpretative structure. It would later be given the broadest possible meaning and the lack of definition meant that the meaning of words was in the ear of the hearer.

Many evangelicals were suspicious of the Council from the start. The particular areas of doubt included:

indefinite doctrinal statements

socialistic political ideology

uncertain direction and intention

And probably, knowing evangelicals as we do, there were some who were suspicious just because they had not thought of it first. Such weaknesses are common. But the problem of compromising the truth with error did not develop last year and many evangelicals, at the turn of the century, were keenly aware of the inroads of liberalism and fearful of what its impetus would mean for the Gospel.

(2) Organization of the Federal Council

The membership consisted, in 1917, of 28 denominations with a collected membership of 17,000,000.

The statement of purpose indicated (as given in the Organizational preamble) that the councils' work and being was:

--to display essential oneness of the Christian Church in America,

--to promote the spirit of fellowship, service, and cooperation.

Particular objectives were defined in the charter in a five-fold step:

--expression of fellowship and catholic unity of the Christian Church

--bringing of the Christian bodies in America to united service for Christ and the world.

--encouragement of devotional fellowship and mutual counsel concerning the spiritual and religious activities of the churches.