

formation of the Federation of Churches and Christian Workers of New York City in 1895. This group was obviously somewhat local in its constituency but it gave a call for a larger body or a federal type of organization that could be representative on a more national level.

Independent of this, to a large extent, was the Religious Education Association of 1903. It came to existence under the leadership of liberally minded scholars with W.R. Harper, a noted Hebraist, as one of the founders. The aim of the body was to help in the curriculum development of better teaching materials for churches. It gave its support to the general call of the New York body for a national instrument.

At the same time, the National Federation of Churches and Christian Workers in America was formed in 1900. It joined in 1905 in calling for a unity effort in this sort of representation.

Meanwhile, two federation congresses were held, the first in Philadelphia in 1901 and the second in Washington, D.C., in 1902. These congresses featured a 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 this action 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 interpretive strictures. 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 leanings...

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 yesterday 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...particularly with an undefined superstructure.