The Methodist Federation for Social Service and the Social Creed

by Donald K. Gorrell

In the field of church social action the significant role of the Social Creed and of the Methodist Federation for Social Service have long been recognized, but the specific relationship of the two has not yet been studied seriously. William Warren Sweet was correct when he wrote: "Through the labor of this Federation for Social Service the General Conference of 1908 formulated a definite declaration on social questions, which after slight modifications was adopted by the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America as the Social Creed of the Churches." But he gave no indication of how this happened. Charles Howard Hopkins provided more data and evidenced a much more thorough knowledge of the relationship but also did not describe the way the Social Creed was produced largely by the direct efforts of members and friends of the Methodist Federation for Social Service. More recent studies of the Federation and the Creed by Richard Cameron, Walter Muelder, and Robert Moats Miller presumed the relationship rather than provided understanding of the cause-and-effect way it was achieved. Consequently, it is the purpose of this paper to study the changing role and contribution of the Methodist Federation for Social Service in the evolution of the Social Creed in its Methodist and Federal Council recensions in the years from 1907 through 1912.

As the traditional accounts tell us, the Methodist Federation for Social Service was organized at Washington, D. C., on December 3, 1907. That meeting was the result of a slowly developing general

3 Cameron drew heavily on Milton J. Huber, "A History of the Methodist Federation for Social Action" (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Boston University, 1949) and provided interesting additional information but did not deal with the problem as I have posed it. Richard M. Cameron, Methodism and Society in Historical Perspective (New York, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1961), pp. 318-25.
conviction of several persons in the Methodist Episcopal Church, but more specifically of the concern, correspondence, and occasional meeting of five men employed in diverse phases of the church's ministry. The five were: Frank Mason North, corresponding secretary (executive officer) of the New York City Evangelization Union; Worth M. Tippy, pastor of the prestigious Epworth Memorial Church in downtown Cleveland; Harry F. Ward, pastor of the Union Avenue Church in the labor class Stockyards area of Chicago; Herbert Welch, president of Ohio Wesleyan University; and Elbert Robb Zaring, assistant editor of the Western Christian Advocate published at Cincinnati.

Initial interest in an organization to promote thought and action on social problems was expressed in the winter of 1906-7 in a natural correspondence between Worth Tippy and Robb Zaring, who had been roommates and classmates at DePauw University. The recently established Wesleyan Methodist Union for Social Service in England offered a possible model and Herbert Welch, who had spent a year of study at Oxford University a few years before assuming the presidency of Ohio Wesleyan in 1905, was brought into the correspondence. When a wealthy friend offered to pay Tippy's expenses for a three-month trip to Europe and England, and his congregation gave him a leave from May to July, 1907, he agreed to use the opportunity to study the Wesleyan Methodist Union for Social Service in more detail. On his return he stopped in New York to visit Frank Mason North, a long-time friend of Welch through mutual social concern as members of the New York East Conference. Tippy learned that North and Harry F. Ward, who knew each other through common involvement in the Open and Institutional Church League, also had corresponded about the need of a Methodist organization for social service in this country. Thus, a bridge was established between interested parties. 7

A meeting of the five men was scheduled for mid-September of 1907 8 at Epworth Memorial Church in Cleveland, but only Welch, North, and Tippy were present. It was decided by them to call a conference of representative ministers and laymen of the church who were interested in social service. For convenience the conference was planned at Washington, D. C., on December 3-4, just before


8 Tippy's own dating is confusing for he recorded "September 13" in the official "Minutes," p. 1, but said "Friday, September 16" in an address he delivered several times in 1908, "The Methodist Federation for Social Service," loc. cit., p. 2.
the annual meeting of North’s National City Evangelization Union because of an assumed common interest for many persons. Most of the preparations were accomplished through lengthy correspondence among the five, but Tippy, Ward, and Welch bore the burden of planning responsibilities. The nature, purpose, and strategy of the planners for the new organization were evident in the letter of invitation, which was a product of several exchanges of letters and expressed the combined thinking of the five who convened the meeting. The letter in full read as follows:

Dear Sir and Brother:

We write as an informal committee to invite you, with fifty other ministers and laymen of the Methodist Episcopal Church, to meet in Washington, D. C., on Tuesday and Wednesday, December second and third, in the Ebbitt House, to consider the organization of a Methodist League for Social Service.

The Committee has in mind the formation of a society to stimulate a wide study of social questions by the church, side by side with practical social service, and to bring the church into touch with neglected social groups. It is an effort to apply the sane and fervent spirit of Methodism to the social needs of our time.

The plan to organize such a League, while suggested by the phenomenal success of the Wesleyan Methodist Union for Social Service in England, and by movements of a similar character in the Protestant Episcopal and Presbyterian churches in this country, has its force in the need for the League in the Methodist Episcopal Church.

The suggested league is not in the interest of any social theory. On the contrary its purpose is to bring together for social study and service men holding divergent opinions, leaving each uncompromised by the opinions of the others. The men who are being invited to this first conference are representative business and professional laymen, pastors, educators and statesmen, who are understood to be interested in its purposes. The following gentlemen have already expressed their approval of the plan, have allowed the use of their names and will be present where possible at the meeting in Washington: Bishop W. F. McDowell, Bishop Luther B. Wilson, Governor J. Frank Hanly of Indiana, Professor Edward T. Devine, New York; Dean George E. Vincent, Chicago; President Edward [Edmund] James, Bloomington, Ill.; Professor John R. Commons, Madison; Judge Ben B. Lindsey, Denver; Homer Folks, New York; Charles E. Guthrie, Washington; Levi Gilbert, Cincinnati; Geo. [sic] P. Eckman, New York; J. W. Magruder, Baltimore; J. N. Gamble, Cincinnati; Robert Watchorn, New York.

9 Letters from North to Tippy, September 25, October 3, 7, November 1, 25, 1907; Welch to Tippy, October 11, 12, November 5, 1907; Zaring to Tippy, October 21, 1907; Ward to Tippy, October 22, 1907. The Tippy Papers.
A list of topics is in hand, but the committee invites additional suggestions for the discussions. Announcements will be made in ample time before the meeting.

May we urge you most earnestly to make the necessary sacrifices to attend the conference, and to give your influence to the success of the movement. The committee will appreciate an early reply addressed to the secretary, Rev. Worth M. Tippy, Epworth Memorial Church Office, Cleveland, O. [sic].

Faithfully yours,

Frank Mason Worth [North],
Corresponding Secretary, National City Evangelization Union, New York

Worth M. Tippy,
Pastor Epworth Memorial Church,
Cleveland

Harry F. Ward,
Pastor Union Avenue Church, Chicago.

Herbert Welch,
President Ohio Wesleyan University,
Delaware.

Elbert Robb Zaring,
Assistant Editor, Western Christian Advocate, Cincinnati.

Twenty-five of the fifty-one persons who responded favorably to the invitation attended the conference at the Ebbitt House in Washington. With Welch serving as temporary chairman and Tippy as temporary secretary, the sessions were carried on with "a singular unity of purpose" and "a spirit of earnest comradeship." Current social needs were addressed, precedents by other denominations were reviewed, and seventeen alternative names for the organization were discussed before the name was decided and a constitution adopted. Before the group was officially presented to President Theodore Roosevelt at the White House on December 4 two program priorities were established: to begin a series of pamphlet publications and to make plans to influence the forthcoming General Conference at Baltimore in May, 1908.11

In light of our interest in the relation of the Methodist Federation for Social Service to the Social Creed, four actions by the Washington-

---

10 Undated printed letter. A second printed letter, dated November 27, 1907, was sent to correct the erroneous dates in the first one and to indicate the starting and ending times. The Tippy Papers.

11 “Minutes,” December 3, 4, 1907, pp. 1-16; Western Christian Advocate (Cincinnati), December 18, 1907, pp. 20-21.
ton conference need to be noted. First, "On motion of F. M. North, the Executive Committee was asked to prepare a statement for the use of Bishop Goodsell in drawing up the Bishop's address for the ensuing General Conference, this statement to cover that which, in the judgment of the Executive Committee, is the church's obligation and opportunity in relation to social service." 12 Second, "the Executive Committee was also requested to bring the matter of Social Service before the General Conference." 13 Third, "it was taken by common consent, after debate, that the Federation shall be kept wholly unofficial in its relation to the General Conference, and to other official societies of Methodism." 14 And, fourth, since so much was entrusted to the Executive Committee for action, those elected were to serve an important function: president, Herbert Welch; 1st vice-president, John Williams, Commissioner of Labor, Albany, N. Y.; 2nd vice-president, Harry F. Ward; Secretary-Treasurer, Worth M. Tippy; and three members-at-large, Frank Mason North, J. W. Magruder of Federated Charities, Baltimore, and E. J. Helms of Morgan Memorial Chapel, Boston. 15

Immediately following the Washington conference the executive office of the Federation was established at the Epworth Memorial Church in Cleveland. On December 19-20, 1907, the Executive Committee met there, with Welch, Ward, and Tippy present, to plan the publications emphasis. According to plan the Constitution was printed in February and shortly after that two pamphlets, "What Is It?" and "How to Organize," were published. Thus, by April three pieces of literature explaining the purpose, form, and method of the new Federation were available. To gain wider exposure "A Statement to the Church" appeared in the official and independent church press in March, 1908, and bore the names of laymen and ministers in addition to those of the Executive Committee and more honorific General Council. This Statement and names, plus the Constitution, simple plans for local branches and individuals, and an introductory bibliography comprised the contents of the "What Is It?" pamphlet that was distributed to interested delegates at the General Conference in May.16

In explaining its unofficial but Methodist origin and purpose, the Statement to the Church referred to the growing social conviction evident in the various memorials and resolutions adopted by church

12 "Minutes," December 3, 1907, p. 12.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid., December 4, 1907, p. 13.
16 Ibid., December 19-20, 1907, pp. 18-19: "What Is It?"; "How to Organize." Federation Publications, No. 3 (n.p., n.d.); "What Has It Done?" Federation Leaflets, No. 2 (n.p., n.d.), pp. 5-7; Central Christian Advocate (Kansas City), March 18, 1908, pp. 6-7.
groups, the increasing number of church committees on social betterment, and the sending of delegates from ministerial meetings to labor union meetings. Brief reference was made to the need for righteousness and justice in the political, industrial, commercial, and social conditions of the day. The work of social regeneration, it was noted, started with the Old Testament prophets, was present in the ministry and teachings of Jesus Christ, was revived by the Wesleys in England, and was “of paramount importance and national interest” in 1908. The Methodist Federation for Social Service, drawing on the experience of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of England and the Presbyterian, Protestant Episcopal, and Congregational churches of America, was created to facilitate church social ministry.

It can gather information, point out needs and opportunities, stimulate energies, suggest and direct forms of service; it can afford a vital and vivifying center for the social spirit of the church. Adding as little machinery as possible, it can work through existing agencies, seeking to diffuse the love of social service through the entire congregation of Christ. . . . It proposes a study that is practical and will result in action, and a service that is effective because informed. . . .

With such a rationale it urged Methodists to join in “the social awakening of the Church.”

While they trusted the power of persuasion and propaganda, the leaders of the Federation were also political realists and made other plans to influence the 1908 General Conference. On March 24, President Welch met with Tippy at Cleveland and they decided to call a meeting of the Executive Committee in conjunction with the General Conference, and to arrange a large public meeting at which social concerns might be presented to interested delegates. It was arranged that members of the Executive Committee who were not delegates would attend the Conference at their own expense to help achieve the purposes of the Federation. Since North was the only delegate from their ranks, and he was to have major responsibilities otherwise as chairman of the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension, this commitment brought Welch, Tippy, Ward, Helms, and Magruder to Baltimore to work for the social service cause.

Of these persons Herbert Welch and Harry Ward played the most important roles at the General Conference. Indeed, it was at this

---

17 “What Is It?”, passim. The quotation is on p. 7.
18 Ibid., p. 8.
19 “Minutes,” March 24, 1908, p. 20.
point that Ward began to exercise his long-time influence and direction in the Methodist Federation. The two men contributed directly to the writing of the report on The Church and Social Problems presented to the Conference by the Committee on the State of the Church. That report contained what was soon to be called "The Social Creed of Methodism." Their involvement in that work occurred in an interesting but not accidental way for both Daniel J. Dorchester, Jr., the Pittsburgh pastor who served as chairman of the Committee on the State of the Church, and Levi Gilbert, editor of the *Western Christian Advocate*, who was chairman of the sub-committee preparing The Church and Social Problems report, were among those who had publicly endorsed the Methodist Federation for Social Service. And the names of at least three of the other six members of the sub-committee also were associated with the organization.\(^{21}\)

A flood of memorials to the General Conference led to the sub-committee report. It was a memorial on the relation of the church to social problems submitted by Nebraska Conference early in the General Conference that initiated the process. William M. Balch, a pastor at Lincoln, Nebraska, with a strong sympathy for workers, had written the memorial, presented it to the Conference, and was appointed secretary of the sub-committee to which it and similar memorials were referred by the Committee on the State of the Church.\(^{22}\) The Federation leaders had decided to endorse the printed Nebraska memorial and this resulted in at least four other annual conferences presenting the same memorial, usually by just crossing out Nebraska and inserting their own name.\(^{23}\) Numerous other memorials also were submitted by annual conferences and ministerial groups, and most were referred to the Committee on the State of the Church.\(^{24}\) An obvious evidence of the involvement of the Federation in this memorial process was clear when Frank Mason North presented a memorial from Herbert Welch and twenty-nine others from New York East Conference.\(^{25}\) A less obvious instance involved the memorial from Rock River Conference, which was written by Harry F. Ward, and apparently by plan was referred to the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension chaired

\(^{21}\) "What Is It?", p. 9; "What Has It Done?", p. 6; *Western Christian Advocate*, May 27, 1908, p. 6.

\(^{22}\) *Journal of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1908* (New York: Eaton & Mains, [1908]), pp. 195, 204-5. Hereafter cited as *JGC*.


\(^{24}\) *JGC*, 1908, pp. 198, 210, 219, 230, 234, 236, 258, 266, 286, 309, 310, 319, 320, 326.

by Frank Mason North. This referral seemed to be a safeguard to assure consideration of the issue at General Conference, for after the report on The Church and Social Problems was officially adopted then North reported that no action be taken on the Rock River memorial because the subject had been entrusted to the Federation for Social Service. With careful attention to the submission and referral of memorials to this General Conference the Federation and other interested persons were able to use the Nebraska memorial as the basis for action by the Methodist Episcopal Church. A comparison of manuscript memorials in the General Conference files at Drew University showed ironically that the same Nebraska memorial had produced a recommendation for "no action" by the Committee on the State of the Church at the 1904 General Conference.

The work of Welch and Ward in the writing of The Church and Social Problems report was informal and unofficial but not secret. Levi Gilbert reported to his readers in the Western Christian Advocate concerning the work of his sub-committee before the vote was taken and indicated that Welch and Ward "have collaborated long and patiently." And the "Minutes" of the Federation stated that Gilbert and Balch met with the Federation's Executive Committee when it held its meeting on May 13, during the Conference. At that session lengthy discussion of the Nebraska memorial request to have General Conference create a Commission on Labor led eventually to a decision to have this request referred instead to the Methodist Federation for Social Service, which should receive unofficial recognition and have three bishops appointed to its membership. At that point "the Executive Committee was requested to draw up a form embodying these ideas to be given to Mr. Balch in the forenoon of the succeeding day." Welch, Ward, Tippy, and Magruder labored late on the assignment but Ward performed the major work. "To him more than to any other man, was due the substance and phrasing of our group contribution to the General Conference committee," Welch later acknowledged. And Tippy noted both Ward's composition and conferences with the leaders of

---

26 Ibid., pp. 210, 445, 582; Central Christian Advocate, March 18, 1908, p. 7.
28 Western Christian Advocate, May 27, 1908, p. 6.
29 "Minutes," May 13, 1908, p. 21. On May 8 Balch also had presented resolutions which contained the essence of the Nebraska Conference memorial, but differed slightly in wording, and this also was referred to the sub-committee. Since those resolutions were printed in JGC, p. 204, they can be compared to the final report, JGC, p. 548, and the effect of the compromise at the May 13 meeting can be understood.
30 Welch, op. cit., p. 55.
the larger General Conference committee in the Federation’s records.\textsuperscript{31}

While these behind-the-scenes preparations were going on in committee the Federation leaders also were interested in influencing the mood of the delegates. One of the strategies voted at the Washington conference the preceding December was to prepare a statement on “the church’s obligation and opportunity in relation to social service” to offer the bishops for use in preparing the Episcopal Address. In Methodist practice one bishop is selected by the Board of Bishops to prepare the quadrennial Episcopal Address and it amounts to a state of the church report. Bishop Daniel A. Goodsell’s Address in 1908 set the emphasis desired by the Federation. A quarter of it was devoted to social issues, and nearly half of that portion was devoted to matters concerning child labor, working men, and unions. Reforms and civic righteousness also were discussed along with comments on temperance, divorce, polygamy, and peace.\textsuperscript{32} A correlation between the remarks on labor in the Episcopal Address and in The Church and Social Problems report seems obvious, and the Federation made wide use of the Address later, but direct evidence of Federation influence upon Goodsell has not been found. Delegate response to Goodsell’s Address was favorable.\textsuperscript{33}

A more direct strategy to influence delegates was to sponsor a public meeting to deal with the interests of the Methodist Federation for Social Service. The mass meeting was held in the Conference hall on Thursday, May 21, and was well attended. Herbert Welch presided and directly appealed for interest in the needs of large cities. Edward T. Devine, Professor of Social Economics at Columbia University and General Secretary of the New York Charity Organization Society, presented an address on charity and reform work. And Governor Hoch of Kansas gave the challenging closing speech. The “What Is It?” pamphlet was distributed to the more than one thousand persons in attendance. A reporter observed that the several memorials pending before the General Conference concerning the church’s relation to social and industrial questions of the time added interest to the session. Tippy recorded in his minutes that “it was generally agreed that the meeting was a real success.”\textsuperscript{34}

On Saturday, May 23, Report No. 5 The Church and Social Problems of the Committee on the State of the Church was printed for

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{31} “Minutes,” p. 26.
\item \textsuperscript{32} The Episcopal Address was on pp. 121-150, and the social sections were on pp. 130-7, of JGC, 1908.
\item \textsuperscript{33} The Daily Christian Advocate, May 8, 1908, p. 1; Western Christian Advocate, May 13, 1908, p. 10.
\item \textsuperscript{34} “Minutes,” p. 28; The Daily Christian Advocate, May 19, 1908, p. 1; May 23, 1908, p. 2.
\end{itemize}
the delegates in The Daily Christian Advocate. At that point all the strategies of the Methodist Federation for Social Service had been implemented: members of the Executive Committee had been present for personal and group impact, the memorial process and work with the sub-committee and larger committee was over, the Episcopal Address and the Federation-sponsored public meeting with its speeches and pamphlet distribution had brought the issues and the organization to the consciousness of the General Conference. It took a week for the report to come to the floor but on the evening of the twenty-second day of the Conference, Saturday, May 30, the report was presented for action. A supplementary report regarding certain deletions to be made when printed in the Discipline, and a floor amendment to include the Methodist Brotherhood with other organizations listed, were approved, and the report was adopted.

The Church and Social Problems report began with a simple theological affirmation: "We believe that in the teachings of the New Testament will be found the ultimate solution of all the problems of our social order." The remainder of the report attempted to show a practical application of these ethics for the church collectively and its members individually. Such specific industrial problems as the exploitation of child labor, dangers for workers, and chronic warfare between employers and employed were listed, but positive signs were noted also. The labor movement was recognized and praised as inherently ethical in its fundamental purpose and thus deserving of the support of Christians. Although admitting the good industrialists do, the report declared a "primary interest" in the conditions of workers. Improved relations between employers and employed through arbitration and conciliation were praised and Methodists in both groups were urged to promote "the principles of industrial peace and human brotherhood." There was a recommendation that the church as an employer should exemplify the principles stated in the report. Then followed the section that soon was designated "The Social Creed of Methodism," which read as follows:

The Methodist Episcopal Church stands:

For equal rights and complete justice for all men in all stations of life.

For the principles of conciliation and arbitration in industrial dis-sensations.
For the protection of the worker from dangerous machinery, occupational diseases, injuries, and mortality.

For the abolition of child labor.

For such regulation of the conditions of labor for women as shall safeguard the physical and moral health of the community.

For the suppression of the 'sweating system.'

For the gradual and reasonable reduction of the hours of labor to the lowest practical point, with work for all; and for that degree of leisure for all which is the condition of the highest human life.

For a release for [from] employment one day in seven.

For a living wage in every industry.

For the highest wage that each industry can afford, and for the most equitable division of the products of industry that can ultimately be devised.

For the recognition of the Golden Rule and the mind of Christ as the supreme law of society and the sure remedy for all social ills.

In the last portion the report praised the growing sense of responsibility evidenced by the Christian Church. "Our own Church in particular, historically and traditionally in close sympathy with the common people and ever diligent for their welfare, does not fail to recognize the greatness of its own opportunity in the present crisis and the consequent urgency of its duty." The Episcopal Address and numerous memorials to this General Conference were regarded as "signs of encouragement." The organization of the Methodist Federation for Social Service was noted with satisfaction, its purpose was quoted, its work was encouraged, and its goal to employ a field secretary was praised. A request from the Federation to the Board of Bishops to appoint three of its members to the General Council of the organization was recommended. And the Federation was asked to study and submit answers to the General Conference of 1912 concerning four questions:

1. What principles and measures of social reform are so evidently righteous and Christian as to demand the specific approval and support of the Church?

2. How can the agencies of the Methodist Episcopal Church be wisely used or altered with a view to promoting the principles and measures thus approved?

3. How can we best cooperate in this behalf with other Christian denominations?

4. How can our courses of ministerial study in seminaries and Conferences be modified with a view to the better preparation of our preachers for efficiency in social reform?

A final paragraph summoned the Methodist Episcopal Church "to continue and increase its works of social service" at all levels of its ministry, agencies, and organizations, and through every individual
member, so that Methodists shall "seek that kingdom in which God's will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven."

What was the significance of this Church and Social Problems report? What had been accomplished by the diligent efforts of the Methodist Federation for Social Service? What impact had been made? The immediate reaction was mixed. The official *Daily Christian Advocate* in summarizing the outstanding events of the General Conference made no mention of it. But summaries in the *Central Christian Advocate* and *Western Christian Advocate* saw it as far more important. The editor of the former declared that "the Church moved to a front place on questions of labor and capital. The cry of the toiler is in her ears." And Levi Gilbert's resumé in the latter declared:

The Federation for Social Service was recognized as an unofficial Methodist organization. . . . This is a new departure for the Church. Through it the Church may hope to keep in touch with all the delicate problems relating to social problems and industrialism. All matters relating to the social welfare of the community will come under the view of this Federation. The Conference adopted a ringing preamble and resolutions which made a Methodist platform on social problems.

In short, General Conference approval of the report meant two things: recognition of the Methodist Federation for Social Service as "an unofficial Methodist organization" and provision of "a Methodist platform on social problems." The concerted efforts of leaders of the Federation resulted in an improved position for their organization as well as a platform on which to base their organization's future work. Consciously evaluating the influence of the report at the end of the summer, the Federation leadership found that it had "aroused a new interest throughout the church in social questions," and had favorably impressed the labor press and leading religious and sociological periodicals, which led to this conclusion: "The great Methodist Church, with its heritage from the Wesleys, is awakening to the urgent needs of this day, and with the Wesleyans in England, is pressing into the battle lines of the Social Crisis."

During the next several months the Federation broadcast The Church and Social Problems report and Episcopal Address in pam-
phlet form, distributed its other literature, campaigned for new members, addressed annual conferences, created branch federations, cooperated with the Methodist Brotherhood, sought unsuccessfully to raise funds to employ a field secretary, and held a Conference of Methodist Social Workers at St. Louis, November 17-19, 1908. At the latter meeting it was decided not to hire a salaried secretary, and to functionally restructure the Executive Committee of the Federation in order to carry on the work. This not only rearranged duties but also brought new persons into leadership roles. The new Executive Committee included the following: Herbert Welch, president; Worth M. Tippy, 1st vice-president; John Williams, 2nd vice-president; William M. Balch, secretary; Harry F. Ward, editorial secretary; Harris Franklin Rall, treasurer; three members-at-large, William H. Crawford, J. W. Magruder, Levi Gilbert; and the chairmen of four newly created committees: Frank Mason North, committee on social studies; Fred E. Tasker, committee on the church and labor; Mary E. McDowell, committee on social centers; and William Balch, committee on General Conference reference. At St. Louis it was announced that Harry F. Ward had started preparation of a “Handbook for Social Service,” but it would be delayed because he left Chicago on October 1 to spend nine months abroad. It was during Ward’s absence that the next decisive step was taken with regard to the Social Creed, and, in contrast to the planning for the General Conference, the new move was made not by the Federation itself but by one of its members, Frank Mason North.

In order to understand how this happened it is necessary to introduce another strand of historical development, the blossoming of the slowly evolving ecumenical movement. A great Inter-Church Conference on Federation had met at Carnegie Hall, New York, in November, 1905, and had brought together those who had been active in a variety of small cooperative organizations to meet with denominational representatives. That conference was important itself as the first officially delegated body representing the denominations of American Protestantism, but it had added significance when it recommended a plan calling for the creation of a new Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America. The plan was endorsed by the required two-thirds of the bodies and in November, 1907, the temporary Executive Committee issued a “Call”

---

44 “What Has It Done?”, pp. 3, 7-15; “Minutes,” July 10, 1908, p. 28; November 17-19, 1908, pp. 31-43.
to the churches to assemble at Philadelphia in December, 1908, to officially create the Federal Council of Churches.\textsuperscript{46}

Frank Mason North was vice-chairman of the Committee on Arrangements for that organizational meeting, as he had been for the 1905 conference, and he bore heavy responsibilities for its planning, but this was not surprising for he had been active in several earlier ecumenical bodies and was committed to a cooperative Christian approach to face the social problems of his day.\textsuperscript{47} At the Inter-Church Conference of 1905 in an address on “The Evangelization of American Cities,” he declared that a new civilization was being born in the early years of the twentieth century and, while creating a crisis for the individual and society, it marked a great epoch. The city would be the center of the new society for there the problems were most acute, but there too the opportunities for solution were most feasible. “If the new civilization is to be mastered by Christ, the city must be taken for Him,” said North, and he challenged the united churches of America to achieve that end through vigorous evangelization.\textsuperscript{48} Later he argued in a sermon that the church casts a shadow in the world that influences “industries, the intellectual pursuits, the social ideals, the ethical standards and the spiritual aspirations of men” because the persons who exercise dominant influence politically, economically, and socially were part of the church’s constituency. But the significance of the church’s shadow was still unrealized for it did not yet embody the principles or organism for expressing the higher life. “Why,” he asked,

\begin{quote}

is the agitation for the redemption of children from industrial oppression necessary, and for the most part outside the organized church? Why is the agitation against starvation, and hunger and destitution not a part of the church’s enterprise? Why is the church’s effort for the securing and employment of just laws confined principally to spasmodic pulpit declamation which entertains many but sets no one in motion? . . . \textsuperscript{49}

\end{quote}

When North approached the December, 1908, organizational meeting of the Federal Council he was able to combine his social passion with his ecumenical commitment in a document that embodied the

\textsuperscript{46} “To the Churches of Christ in America,” Western Christian Advocate, November 27, 1907, p. 24.


\textsuperscript{49} “The Shadow of the Church” (Unpublished manuscript sermon, January 17, 1906. The Frank Mason North Papers, Rose Memorial Library, Drew University, Madison, N. J.).
Christian principles and organism for social betterment that he had earlier envisioned. As chairman of the Committee on the Church and Modern Industry, he was one of sixteen persons whom the Committee on Arrangements had asked to present papers to be read at the assembly. Actually the committee never met, for the procedure was for the designated writer to prepare his paper and a set of resolutions which were then circulated to the committee members for their suggestions, thus producing a product of several minds although primarily the formulation of one. North had the opportunity to do the paper because of his years of work in the ecumenical groups, and he had the benefit of the growing social concern and understanding resulting from his involvement in the Methodist Federation for Social Service as well as his work with the New York City Evangelization Union. Also he had the new Social Creed of Methodism to draw upon.

Even a quick appraisal of North’s The Church and Modern Industry report made it obvious that it differed from the previous Methodist document for it was eighteen pages in contrast to the latter’s three-and-a-half pages. However, the report was more than a padded version of the earlier statement: in tone and content it was a creative blend of several dominant concerns in North’s social and ecumenical ministry. For example, while he obviously utilized the Methodist Social Creed he nevertheless put his personal stamp on his report by both adding and deleting from those principles. And when he employed the social and industrial analysis portions of the General Conference report with no essential change in approach and meaning he still set the points in his own order and larger context for presentation. The greatest differences were in two areas: 1) the clear appeal to ecumenical Protestantism as the best means to confront the problems of the social order, and 2) the theological framework in which he couched his report.

Theologically, the Methodist report’s simple assertion that “the ultimate solution of all the problems of our social order” will be found in the teachings of the New Testament and spirit of Jesus was transformed by The Church and Modern Industry report into an extensive Christ-centered basis for church social service. Placing primary emphasis on the redemptive work and authority of Jesus,

---

50 Sanford, Federal Council, “Foreword,” pp. v-vi. One member of North’s committee was George P. Eckman, Methodist pastor in New York City who had served on the General Conference sub-committee on The Church and Social Problems and had early endorsed the Methodist Federation.

51 Ibid., pp. 226-43.

52 A difference in page type made the differential not quite as great as first appeared. The Methodist report had 48 lines to the page and 62-66 spaces to the line; the Federal Council report had 38 lines to the page and 55-60 spaces to the line.
as well as on New Testament teachings, North declared that “Christ’s mission is not merely to reform society but to save it. He is more than the world’s Re-adjustor. He is its Redeemer.” On this conviction he based several premises. First, in contrast to all other organizations for human well-being, the church was motivated by a “two-world theory of life” which saw the kingdom of God instituted on earth but finding its fulfilment in heaven. Second, the gospel of Christ was not a class gospel; it should be preached to all men as men and not as laborers or capitalists, rich or poor. Third, the church did not exist as an end in itself: “Through it is revealed the meaning of righteousness, of justice, of salvation, not for its own sake, but that sinners may be redeemed and that these ideals may be worked into the lives of men and become the principles of the new social order.” And, fourth, as the representative of Christ the church was appointed to establish the kingdom of God on earth, and therefore it should be less concerned with the services of the church and more concerned with the church’s services to men.

As he used his ecumenical vision to apply these premises, North told the assembled delegates that it was their primary task as representatives of the churches of Christ in America to establish Christ’s kingdom in the United States. “It is the Church of America which must deal with the social and industrial problems of America.” Unfortunately the American church had been hampered too much by sectarian divisions in the past, which had forced Christians to work through voluntary reform societies or through denominations which created their own individual agencies. Praiseworthy as these efforts were, said North, “nowhere has there been formulation of principles, or statement of aims which represents in an authoritative sense the attitude of American Protestantism toward the tremendous problems of our industrial and social order.” Speaking in behalf of the Committee on the Church and Modern Industry he then appealed to the Federal Council of Churches to express “its convictions touching the industrial conditions which concern the multitude” and to extend greetings of sympathy, confidence, and assurance “to all the toilers of our country” in the name of the “Son of the Carpenter.” A ten point statement was recommended for ecumenical approval, and in item 9 was the list of principles which became known as the “Social Creed of the Churches.”

The Social Creed proposed by Frank Mason North followed the basic pattern of the earlier Methodist version, but he inserted four additional clauses, deleted a clause and a phrase, and rearranged the sentence structure at another place. In overall effect North’s version seemed almost identical to Ward’s version, but in fact it added rights for workers and urged the removal of poverty. When the changed theological and ecumenical context are considered it is
clear that the so-called "Social Creed of the Churches" was a distinct second statement that incorporated most of the prior Methodist Creed and included additional clauses. It stated:

9. We deem it the duty of all Christian people to concern themselves directly with certain practical industrial problems. To us it seems that the churches must stand—

For equal rights and complete justice for all men in all stations of life.

*For the rights of all men to the opportunity for self-maintenance, a right ever to be wisely and strongly safeguarded against encroachments of every kind.*

*For the right of workers to some protection against the hardships often resulting from the swift crises of industrial change.*

*For the principle of conciliation and arbitration in industrial dissensions.*

*For the protection of the worker from dangerous machinery, occupational disease, injuries and mortality.*

*For the abolition of child labor.*

*For such regulation of the conditions of toil for women as shall safeguard the physical and moral health of the community.*

*For the suppression of the 'sweating system.'*

*For the gradual and reasonable reduction of the hours of labor to the lowest practicable point, ["with work for all" deleted] and for that degree of leisure for all which is a condition of the highest human life.*

*For a release from employment one day in seven.*

*For a living wage as a minimum in every industry and for the highest wage that each industry can afford. [Sentences here and in next point are rearranged.]*

*For the most equitable division of the products of industry that can ultimately be devised.*

*For suitable provision for the old age of the workers and for those incapacitated by injury.*

*For the abatement of poverty.*

["For the recognition of the Golden Rule . . ." clause deleted] 53

A series of five recommendations to the Christian bodies represented in the Federal Council suggested ways the churches could improve understanding and action with regard to the industrial and social order. But more significant was a sixth recommendation that the Federal Council create a Commission on The Church and Social Service, which was
to co-operate with similar church organizations already in operation, to study social conditions and ascertain the essential facts, to act for

53 The additional clauses are italicized, the deleted clause and phrase noted, and the rearranged sentences indicated by way of comparison with the General Conference version previously quoted. Ibid., pp. 238-9.
the Council, under such restrictions as the Executive Committee, to which it shall from time to time report, may determine, and in general, to afford by its action and utterance an expression of the purpose of the Churches of Christ in the United States, to recognize the import of present social movements and industrial conditions, and to co-operate in all practicable ways to promote in the churches the development of the spirit and practice of social service and especially to secure a better understanding and a more natural relationship between workingmen and the Church.\(^\text{54}\)

This recommendation has been quoted at length because when the report on The Church and Modern Industry was unanimously adopted on Friday afternoon, December 4, 1908,\(^\text{55}\) it authorized the creation of the ecumenical commission with this job description, and that commission became a central component in the Protestant social gospel in the years to come. And in this new Commission on the Church and Social Service the Methodist Federation for Social Service would find not only camaraderie but also a means to extend its own influence and work. Indeed, the Methodist Federation and Methodist leaders would assume one of the leading roles in the Commission. Thus, any study of the Methodist Federation and the Social Creed must take this ecumenical agency into its scope for in it and through it much of Methodism’s witness and program was expressed during the next generation.

The enlarged dimensions implied in the potential for the new Commission were inherent in the social and ecumenical vision that Frank Mason North incorporated into his report on The Church and Modern Industry. This Methodist spokesman apparently acted unilaterally rather than through the Methodist Federation for no word of his plan appeared in the organization’s minutes. But what he did was compatible with the Federation’s purposes and plans. What North did was broaden the Methodist goals so as to serve ecumenical Protestantism, and at the same time to gain united strength for the church as it faced the industrial and social problems of the time. By sharing and expanding Methodism’s new Social Creed, North was able to gain more general allegiance to the principles expressed in it and also to expand the Methodist Federation’s potential for study and action by bringing it into partnership with socially concerned leaders of other denominations.

Persons at the time grasped the importance of The Church and Modern Industry report. After North had read the address and presented the resolutions to the delegates several persons praised it

\(^{54}\) Ibid., p. 242.
\(^{55}\) Ibid., p. 68.
\(^{56}\) Ibid., pp. 68-76.
lavishly, but none with more importance than Charles Stelzle, the respected leader of the Presbyterian Department of the Church and Labor, who declared that North's statement was "the greatest paper on this subject that I have ever heard or read." On the following Sunday afternoon a mass meeting was held which was attended by the delegates and representatives of labor unions. A union spokesman read the Social Creed section to all and said it showed "keen insight into social and industrial conditions" and was so sympathetic to the objects and mission of trade unions that it read "like measures passed in a convention of the American Federation of Labor." The church press was generally favorable but the view of Lyman Abbott's *The Outlook* was especially impressive: the "resolutions concerning the relation of the Church to modern industry, in fact, to the whole social order of the day . . . may be said to constitute a charter, a bill of rights, which the Protestant Churches of America recognize on behalf not only of those who toil but also of society." Three columns in the *Central Christian Advocate* were devoted to the report which was termed a "masterly pronouncement." With obvious pride the editor wrote: "... This first formal deliverance of federated Christian sentiment in America as to the place of the Church in the seething industrial world as it lies about us to-day, a deliverance representing the position of eighteen million people, was prepared by a Methodist."

Some of the glamour associated with the adoption of the Social Creed in 1908 was marred later by Methodist in-fighting over who wrote it. The effect of this can be briefly illustrated, rather than elaborated, by noting that two of the writers of the four volume study of *Methodism and Society* openly differed on the authorship, Richard Cameron crediting Harry F. Ward and Walter Muelder affirming Frank Mason North. The basis for this disparity can be comprehended when it is understood that two Social Creeds were adopted in 1908. My research has shown clearly that the Social Creed of Methodism was part of a jointly prepared sub-committee report in which large credit for authorship was given to Harry F. Ward, but this credit was not widely announced or recognized. In that work North had little, if any, part, for he was otherwise busily engaged as a delegate and major committee chairman during the General Conference. With regard to the authorship of the Social Creed of the Churches there is little reason to dispute that North wrote it and the report of which it was a part. His name appeared openly on the report, it expressed ideas he had held for years, and

---

56 Ibid., pp. 100, 442-61, 550. The quotations are on p. 443.
57 *The Outlook* (New York), December 19, 1908, pp. 849-50.
58 *Central Christian Advocate*, December 16, 1908, pp. 5-7,11.
59 Cameron, op. cit., p. 323; Muelder, op. cit., p. 50.
the committee associated with it did not meet and merely provided readers who may have proposed some modifications. Moreover, North's name was publicly associated with the report in the Federal Council minutes and the religious press. Ward laid no claim to writing this version since he was overseas at the time. Milton Huber in his doctoral dissertation did the substantial work that supported Ward's primary authorship of the Methodist version and Creighton Lacy in his biography of North did the best analysis of the rival claims and concluded that Ward wrote the General Conference version and North the Federal Council version. Behind the conflict lies a matter of interpretation as well as data. If one assumes a single version of the Social Creed then the data indicates that Ward was the first author. But there were enough differences in content, as well as in theological and ecumenical context, to justify viewing North's version as a second Social Creed. Thus, my research supports Lacy's conclusion. Perhaps in mute testimony to the controversy is the folder titled "The Social Creed" in the Frank Mason North Papers at Drew University: it contains only materials relating to The Church and Modern Industry report. Though the conflict of authorship was evident already in those nascent years, North and Ward worked side by side for many years on both the Executive Committee of the Methodist Federation and in the Federal Council's Commission on the Church and Social Service.

Despite the notable achievement of creating the Federal Council and of having the widely acclaimed Social Creed as the first great federated action taken by that ecumenical body, it would be incorrect to ascribe too much power and importance to either immediately. In the next three years their significance was more largely symbolic than functional because the member denominations failed to provide the needed funds to back up their glowing words and paper organization. The Council's executive secretary was frequently in ill-health and operated out of a small office which contained little more than a constitution and a typewriter. The only active department was the Commission on the Church and Social Service, partly because that was so new an area that such activities did not conflict with established programs of the member denominations, partly because social service was sustained by the prevailing reformist mood in the nation, and partly because a small

---

61 Huber, op. cit., p. 355.
63 The folder contains several copies of the printed address and a number of newspaper clippings concerning its adoption in December, 1908.
64 Central Christian Advocate, December 12, 1912, p. 230.
core of dedicated leaders in that area were willing to cooperate in developing the new field of church social service. A combination of circumstances made the Federal Council of Churches a sort of marriage of the ideas of social service and interdenominational cooperation,\(^66\) and despite its slow start that union was to prove fruitful in future years.

Thus far in our effort to understand the relationship of the Methodist Federation for Social Service to the Social Creed we have seen that the first step involved the formation of the Methodist Federation, the second step achieved the adoption of the Social Creed of Methodism at the General Conference in May, 1908, and the third step expanded both the perspective and participation and resulted in the Social Creed of the Churches approved by the first meeting of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America in December, 1908. A fourth step unfolded more slowly and complexly during the years from 1909 through 1912. During that time Methodist social gospel leaders struggled to develop and extend the work of their own Federation and also labored to establish the program of the new ecumenical Commission on the Church and Social Service. A large degree of interaction occurred between these two developing strands but they need to be briefly examined separately in order to comprehend what happened. This fourth step culminated in a two-fold achievement: 1) the hiring by five denominations of secretaries of social service who provided professional leadership and stability to the movement, and 2) the adoption of a revised and expanded third Social Creed.

Turning first to the Methodist Federation for Social Service, during 1909 and 1910 a decision was made to continue to stress a "mission of education and inspiration rather than to undertake executive functions" until the organization was able to employ a salaried secretary. This resulted in a program of publication that produced three books, seven pamphlets, six leaflets, and a course of social studies for preachers by the 1912 General Conference. Also a program of information furnished social service materials to denominational periodicals and supplied speakers for church gatherings. A *Social Service Bulletin* started publication in January, 1911. Later that year Harry F. Ward was engaged for part-time service as a salaried secretary, after William Balch had served voluntarily as secretary for three years.\(^67\) With this change the tempo and scope

---


of the work increased significantly. Ward's opportunities to edit the Bulletin and to enlarge the Methodist social service work coincided with developments in the Federal Council's Commission on the Church and Social Service.

In May, 1911, Charles S. Macfarland, a Congregationalist, was employed as full-time secretary of the Federal Council's Social Service Commission. Prior to that time Frank Mason North had been chairman of the Commission and its Committee on Direction had been headed by Presbyterian Charles Stelzle, who gave a large amount of time to the cooperative work. A dual program of publication and of investigation of problems of national scope, such as the steel strike at South Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, had been started but most of the work was carried out through committees meeting occasionally. In light of the momentum of the work, however, the Federal Council's Executive Committee early in 1911 authorized money for a salaried executive, and after North refused the position Macfarland accepted the responsibilities. One of his first actions was to add new members to the Commission, and Harry F. Ward was included along with such persons as Washington Gladden and Henry Atkinson. Methodist Federation representatives then included Ward and North in addition to Herbert Welch and Levi Gilbert who had been elected to membership earlier. By his experience as Editorial Secretary of the Methodist Federation it was natural that Ward was appointed to the vital Committee on Literature where he served with Walter Rauschenbusch, Graham Taylor, Jacob Riis, Samuel Z. Batten, and Macfarland. One product of this cooperative effort was The Social Creed of the Churches edited by Harry F. Ward with the help of Batten and Henry Atkinson. It was a book of essays by different writers on clauses of the Social Creed.

With professional direction the Federal Council Commission began to build a more substantial program, but its main contribution was to provide a clearinghouse and cooperative leadership to coordinate what others were doing. In addition to its planning for publications, two interdenominational conferences were held during 1911, at Boston in June and at Chicago in November. The Boston

---


meeting was held in conjunction with the National Conference of Charities and Corrections, a type of liaison that became typical of Federal Council cooperation with national organizations for social betterment. A more vital coordination was carried out in relation to denominational social service departments and agencies. During 1908 and succeeding years several major church bodies had responded to the cries of "social crisis" by creating such departments, or at least committees, in a pattern that paralleled the development of the Methodist Federation for Social Service except for its ability to remain semi-official. Under Macfarland's stimulus an interrelated work between denominations emerged that provided economies and reduced unnecessary duplication of effort and publication.71

A Council of Secretaries emerged from this cooperation as several denominations found sufficient finances by 1912 to provide salaried secretaries for social service. In this Secretarial Council Methodist Harry F. Ward served with Henry A. Atkinson, Secretary of the Congregational Brotherhood; Samuel Z. Batten, Secretary of the Baptist Department of Social Service and Brotherhood; Frank M. Crouch, Field Secretary of the Protestant Episcopal Joint Commission on Social Service; Charles Stelzle, Superintendent of the Presbyterian Bureau of Social Service; and Warren Wilson, Superintendent of the Presbyterian Department of the Church and Country Life. Each of these persons was elected as Associate Secretary of the Commission on the Church and Social Service, which enabled that organization to continue with strength even as Macfarland had to assume increasing administrative duties for the entire Federal Council when sickness felled its executive.72 He became its General Secretary by 1913, but by then a workable pattern had developed and continued to guide the Protestant social service program until 1917 when another salaried secretary for the Commission was hired, Methodist Worth M. Tippy.

Most important of the actions of the Secretarial Council for the purposes of this paper was the recommendation in 1912 to revise the Social Creed of the Churches. As the major Protestant denominations began to express a growing social concern following the adoption of the Federal Council Social Creed in 1908, they not only created social service agencies but also approved the Social Creed as their own church platform. In doing so the Congregational, Presbyterian, Northern Baptist, and Unitarian general leg-

72 Macfarland, "The Kingdoms of This World . . . ," pp. 159-62.
islative bodies added slight additions or whole clauses of their own. Thus, a plethora of Social Creeds came into being. In light of this condition the Council of Secretaries decided that it was better to have one common Social Creed which all member denominations affirmed. Consequently, the professional social service staff took the revisions into consideration and recommended a revised and expanded Social Creed of the Churches to the second quadrennial session of the Federal Council of Churches meeting at Chicago, December 4-9, 1912.\textsuperscript{73}

It was ironic, in light of the goal to simplify and unify, that the process for adoption resulted for a time in a confusing multiplicity of texts, especially for Methodists. The revised text was presented to the Methodist General Conference of 1912 in the report of the Methodist Federation for Social Service "as the best form of what has come to be called the Social Creed of the Churches."\textsuperscript{74} In Report 11, The Church and Social Relations of the Committee on the State of the Church, two modifications were made and the report was adopted in that altered form.\textsuperscript{75} For some unknown reason the Methodist publishers provided a different format by rearranging the order of the creedal items into five prose paragraphs when they printed \textit{The Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1912.}\textsuperscript{76} By these several actions the official records of the Methodist Episcopal Church alone contained three different wordings of the revised 1912 creed.

Charles Macfarland took consultation with the Methodists seriously and his report for the Commission on the Church and Social Service recommended the revised Social Creed in the altered form that had been adopted unanimously by the Methodist General Conference. He noted the enlarged scope of the new edition, which moved beyond strictly industrial concerns to include statements about family life, children's development, liquor traffic, and health, and explained that the church understood these problems better currently than four years earlier.\textsuperscript{77} Surprisingly, the delegates to the Federal Council meeting also had expanded their vision and voted to further enlarge the statement: two additional items on the rights of both employees and employers to organize and on the

\textsuperscript{73} A concise presentation of the various denominational additions and the revised Social Creed of 1912, as well as the earlier Methodist and Federal Council versions of 1908, appeared in Harry F. Ward, \textit{A Year of The Church and Social Service in the United States (New York: Missionary Education Movement of the United States and Canada, 1916)}, pp. 197-201.

\textsuperscript{74} JGC, 1912, pp. 1324-5.

\textsuperscript{75} Item 7 had been dropped and item 11 was rewritten as item 10, \textit{The Daily Christian Advocate}, May 22, 1912, pp. 546-8, 550-1. Report 11 was adopted May 29, 1912, JGC, 1912, pp. 636-8.

\textsuperscript{76} Paragraph 564, "The Church and Social Problems," pp. 512-3.

\textsuperscript{77} "The Kingdoms of This World . . . ," pp. 175-7.
acquisition and use of property were proposed from the floor and adopted. With the Federal Council version added to the three forms of the Methodists there were at least four recensions of the 1912 Social Creed of the Churches and the casual researcher can easily assume any one of them was the accepted form since it appeared in an official report or publication. One consequence of this variety was that Methodist Episcopal Church records contained incomplete versions of the Social Creed of 1912 until the 1916 General Conference made the necessary corrections and had them printed. Fortunately the bulk of the revision remained constant and only a few items were affected, but to avoid confusion over details only the final recension published by the Federal Council is quoted here.

The Churches must stand:

For equal rights and complete justice for all men in all stations of life.

For the protection of the family, by the single standard of purity, uniform divorce laws, proper regulation of marriage, and proper housing.

For the fullest possible development for every child, especially by the provision of proper education and recreation.

For the abolition of child labor.

For such regulation of the conditions of toil for women as shall safeguard the physical and moral health of the community.

For the abatement and prevention of poverty.

For the protection of the individual and society from the social economic, and moral waste of the liquor traffic.

For the conservation of health.

For the protection of the worker from dangerous machinery, occupational diseases, and mortality.

For the right of all men to the opportunity for self-maintenance, for safeguarding this right against encroachments of every kind, and for the protection of workers from the hardships of enforced unemployment. [This consolidates two points in North's 1908 version and adds more.]

For suitable provision for the old age of the workers, and for those incapacitated by injury.

For the right of employees and employers alike to organize and for adequate means of conciliation and arbitration in industrial disputes.

For a release from employment one day in seven.

For the gradual and reasonable reduction of the hours of labor to

---

78 The Outlook, December 21, 1912, p. 851.
the lowest practicable point, and for that degree of leisure for all which is a condition of the highest human life.

For a living wage as a minimum in every industry, and for the highest wage that each industry can afford.

For a new emphasis on the application of Christian principles to the acquisition and use of property, and for the most equitable division of the product of industry that can ultimately be devised.\(^{80}\)

After this flurry of changes produced the third Social Creed, the statement remained unchanged for twenty years. While it was still based on the two earlier creeds of 1908, the new version had certain distinct qualities. First, it was the product of cooperative ecumenical thinking and planning. Whereas earlier Frank Mason North on his own had brought an expanded Methodist Social Creed with an ecumenical rationale to the Federal Council, it was now an ecumenical council of social service secretaries who proposed the enlarged third edition of the Social Creed to the Federal Council. Methodists continued to take a leading part in this version through Ward's part in the Secretarial Council, North's role in the Council of Direction, and of those two plus Welch and Gilbert as members of the Commission on the Church and Social Service, but at this point the Methodists shared as equals in changes proposed cooperatively. Second, this revised Social Creed demonstrated a larger social perspective that moved beyond industrial problems to incorporate ideas about the family, child development, health, liquor traffic, and property. The platform of social Christianity had expanded to include social as well as economic concerns and recognized the interrelatedness of them. And third, the Social Creed of 1912 existed on its own. No longer was it a part of a larger report which provided a rationale for understanding why and how it was to be interpreted and implemented by the churches. On the one hand, this was a sign that the recently created social service agencies were doing what had earlier required verbal explanation. On the other hand, the churches had progressed beyond the initial stages of social awakening when they needed to be convinced to a time when they needed only a concise statement to symbolize their united work. Macfarland recognized these distinctions when he recommended the adoption of the revised creed: "That we should thus make an advance is called for by the fact that the problems which face us, while probably not greater, are more plainly seen by us than they were four years ago." \(^{81}\)

\(^{80}\) Additional clauses and phrases are italicized and other changes indicated. The clause "For the suppression of the 'Sweating System'" was the only complete deletion. Macfarland, "The Kingdoms of This World . . . ;" pp. 175-7; Harry F. Ward, The Social Creed of the Churches (New York, Nashville: The Abingdon Press, 1914), p. 7.

\(^{81}\) Macfarland, "The Kingdoms of This World . . . ;" p. 177.
Actually these changed conditions affected the whole nation and not just the Federal Council. In a stirring address on "The Social Revival," Walter Rauschenbusch described the change and its implications for the delegates:

.... The positions taken in 1908 marked a brave stand. It is not so brave anymore. The whole country has been catching up. The trusts are adopting our welfare measures. Some sections of the Progressive Party Platform read very much like the Social Creed of the Federal Council, and if you knew the inside facts, you would realize that the similarity is not accidental. They simply adopted the Federal Council platform. And when political parties are sitting down on its coat-skirts, it is time for the Church of Christ to move on.

In 1908 we lodged our protest against the outstanding inhumanities of our social life, against child labor, excessive female labor, the sweating system, a seven-day working week, wholesale mutilation by industrial accidents, old age left helpless, and a wage on which men can not live like men. That was the voice of Christian mercy, and it was a just and holy protest. God in heaven seems to have heard it. But it was not the last word of the Christian Church on our industrial questions. To demand a living wage is not incisive enough for those who speak in the name of Jesus Christ. A living wage is not yet a just wage. It will serve as a minimum, but only as a starter. ....

.... We want not only mercy, but justice; not only social service, but social repentance, social shame, social conversion, social regeneration. Thousands of people are now passing through these religious experiences, feeling the pangs of social contrition and coming out into the gladness of a new surrender and peace. We are having a revival of religion. .... On the scroll of the everlasting Gospel, God is today writing a flaming message of social righteousness, and you and I must learn to read it. 82

The revised Social Creed was part of that revival and its enlarged scope was a natural expression of churches that had moved from a mood of "social crisis" in 1908 to a hopeful commitment to the "Christianizing of the social order" in 1912. 83

Earlier in the proceedings of the Federal Council a newly elected Methodist bishop, Francis J. McConnell, had testified that cooperative Protestantism had made gains in its approach to social questions but needed to do more. Stressing the need to mold a "social climate," he urged the united churches to be the determinative force in shaping public opinion. "That is the power of this Federal Council in

82 Christian Unity at Work, op. cit., pp. 205-6.
what is known as Social Service, and it has been a tremendous power.” This first national appearance of Francis McConnell as a new Methodist voice for the Methodist Federation for Social Service was itself indicative of the changes in 1912. By General Conference action that year the Methodist Federation was recognized “as the executive agency to rally the forces of the Church,” its program was endorsed, its cooperation with the Commission on the Church and Social Service of the Federal Council was affirmed, and three bishops were appointed to its membership. Bishop McConnell was elected as president of the Federation for the new quadrennium.

In October, 1912, the Federation expanded its work and Harry F. Ward was employed as full-time secretary. Thus, a new team of leaders was formed and Ward and McConnell were to influence Methodist, and Protestant, social action for many years. Although Ward joined the faculty of Boston University School of Theology in 1913, it was a joint appointment that enabled him to devote concentrated energy to developing social ideology while still directing the program of the Federation. He became a prolific author and moved to the front rank of social gospel leadership, where he was aided and supported by Bishop McConnell. At the 1916 General Conference Charles Macfarland praised Harry Ward as “the man regarded by the denominations of the Federal Council as the greatest social prophet to-day, in our Christian Churches, of our social order. . . .” Macfarland also hailed the personal contribution of Frank Mason North as chairman of the Executive Committee of the Council. In those acknowledgements lay an important change: Ward had risen to new heights following 1912 while North had continued to contribute as he had previously. The authors of two versions of the Social Creed both made vital contributions to the Methodist Federation and to the social gospel movement, but their relative leadership roles shifted after 1912. At that time North’s local and national responsibilities in city evangelization were absorbed into the Board of Home Missions and Church Extension and he was elected to new work as a corresponding secretary in the Board of Foreign Missions. His ecumenical ties and continued residence in the New York area provided his main vehicles for social service thereafter. Worth Tippy rightly saw North’s primary contributions to shaping Protestant social policies occurring between

85 JGC, 1912, pp. 636-7. The officers listed for the 1912-16 quadrennium were: President, Bishop McConnell; Secretary, Harry F. Ward; Treasurer, Harris Franklin Rall, president of Iliff School of Theology, Denver, Colorado, The Methodist Year Book, 1913, p. 148.
1892 and 1912. After 1912 the leadership was increasingly and publicly exercised by Ward who, with McConnell, stabilized and extended the work and influence of the Methodist Federation for Social Service.

With recognized status and stability both the Methodist Federation and the Social Creed were securely established parts of institutional church organization after 1912. In the five years of its existence since December 3, 1907, the Federation had consciously shared in first creating the Social Creed and then in broadening the scope and range of the statement. There was a definite relation of the Federation to the Creed, and both were products of the organized church. As Harry Ward correctly understood, adoption of the Social Creed marked "the deliberate and conscious entrance of the Church upon the field of social service." That action in 1908 constituted "the first crystallization into concrete demands of the common conviction of the Protestant churches concerning their duty in the field of social and industrial relations." The Social Creed became the symbol of that institutional commitment.

In common understanding the Social Creed still conveys that symbolic meaning and generally there is no difficulty in such usage. But this paper has shown that in actuality there were three Social Creeds adopted between May, 1908, and December, 1912. Admittedly, they were similar in tone and wording, yet the content of each was distinctive and so was the purpose and method of composition and revision. A comparison of the texts of the three shows that the number of points varied from eleven to fourteen to sixteen. Furthermore, the second and third revisions sometimes combined and rewrote some of the planks so that even those increasing numbers do not convey the true picture. Remarkably, seven points remained constant through the revisions, while only two items were completely dropped. The "For the suppression of the 'Sweating System'" clause lasted through the first two versions and was omitted because regulation and improvement of the problem was in process by 1912. Deletion of the "For the recognition of the Golden Rule . . ." clause from the original Methodist recension may be attributed to the larger theological framework in which North set the Social Creed recommended to the Federal Council of Churches in 1908. For the rest, one feature of the early Social Creeds was their steady expansion of perspective and application. The second version added four clauses and the third added six clauses and several phrases. Inclusion of social as well as industrial

---


concerns in the third recension was also a notable broadening of scope that represented the growing vision of the social gospel in 1912. Obviously, the term "Social Creed," while conveying the implication of simple oneness, really covered a growing variety of content.

Probably it was not accidental that social gospel leaders chose to convey an implied oneness in the Social Creed, for its value as a symbol required that. The Creed was intended to symbolize the positive response and program of the institutional church to industrial and social problems of the time. Ecumenical Protestantism in its divided state needed a symbol of its unity and the Social Creed provided that. At first it served as a bill of rights around which to rally church support, and then it became a platform of practical objectives to motivate Christian action. The creedal symbolism survived not because of its unvarying uniformity, like the Nicene Creed, but because of its capacity to expand and change amid a social order in flux. The next revision in 1932 was necessary when the statement became rigid and twenty years out of date.

In the final analysis, the evolution of the Social Creed through three recensions between 1908 and 1912 occurred because of the leadership of interested persons in the Methodist Federation for Social Service who labored to arouse the support of institutional Methodism and Protestantism. The official recognition of both the Federation and the Creed, at first nominally and then whole-heartedly, reflected the growing influence and final acceptance of the social gospel movement in American Protestantism. The role of both in this larger movement has long been accepted. As a result of this study, hopefully the more detailed cause-and-effect way the Federation and Creed were related in the field of church social action can now be better appreciated.