Ruth Rouse: Binding and Re-binding the World Student Christian Federation

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Halfway through her 1948 history of the first thirty years of the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF), 1895 to 1925, Ruth Rouse asserted that the Lake Mohonk Conference held June 2-8, 1913, marked the end of the “pioneer stage.” “Frontier after frontier had been crossed, until there remained no considerable student field un-entered by the Federation, and no field of any kind with which it had not formed some link.”1 One of the primary purposes of the Lake Mohonk Conference was to begin “to interpret the different national student groups to each other.”2

Ruth Rouse not only wrote an important early history of the WSCF, but she was also a participant—one of the pioneers—in the history she was writing about. An Englishwoman and new graduate of Girton College, Cambridge, she met John Mott, the key founder of the WSCF, at a conference in Keswick, England in 1894, the year before the WSCF came into existence. For most of the next ten years, she worked as a travelling secretary—their term for community organizer—for either the British or American member movements of the WSCF. Then, in 1905, she was hired directly by the WSCF as the international travelling secretary charged with bringing women into the movement but in reality working with both women in men, working in collaboration with John Mott, the General Secretary. Another WSCF leader, Suzanne de Dietrich described the working relationship between John Mott and Ruth Rouse this way: “Ruth Rouse prepared the way, established the first bridgeheads; then came Mott to strike the decisive blow through a

2 Ibid.171-172.
campaign of speeches. Afterward Ruth Rouse tied up the loose ends and consolidated the work which had been begun. Afterward, she worked to establish national Student Christian Movement (SCM) chapters in sixty-five different countries. From 1921 to 1924, she was secretary to the executive committee at a particularly critical time in the organization’s history. She resigned in 1924.

Later in her life, in advance of writing the WSCF history in 1948, Ruth Rouse spent a number of years working in the WSCF archives at Yale, curating the historical record, before writing her book based on that record. For that reason, some degree of caution is in order in accepting her analysis on face value. It is also the case that because the Yale archives closed last March because of the pandemic, I was unable to access those archives. Very recently, when the staff was able to return to the library in person, one of them was kind enough to scan and send some of Rouse’s notes from the wartime era, but the documents I was most interested in—a series of memos Rouse wrote, From Mohonk to Beatenberg, and a M.A. thesis done in 1938 by Wilmina Rowland at Yale based in part on oral interviews with Rouse, are missing. Since the time that thesis was done, correspondence between Rouse and her mother during the time she was international travelling secretary has also gone missing.

Given the absence at the moment of material that might yield unedited insight into this transitional period and what light it might shed on the tension between nationalism and internationalism, what I am going to do instead in this paper is to consider what Rouse reports she actually did or

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5 Ruth Franzen, Ruth Rouse Among Students: Global, Missiological and Ecumenical Perspectives (Uppsala, Sweden: Studia Missionalia Svecana CV, 2008).. All biographical information about Rouse’s life comes from Franzen’s comprehensive biography of her.
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had a hand in coordinating the action of others in the pioneer phase to bind the WSCF community together, then after the war, to rebind them.

The Pioneer Phase

The purpose of the WSCF when it was founded in 1895 was to bring students to Christ and bind them together into a global Christian community for the evangelization of the world. Students, asserted John Mott echoing the imperialistic language of the day, were “strategic points in the world’s conquest” for Christ. Participants at the founding meeting in Vadstena, Sweden represented student Christian associations in North America, Great Britain, Germany, Sweden, and Norway, plus a representative of the Student Christian Movement in Mission Lands. The institutional backing for three of the six men present was a student Christian association affiliated with the YMCA.

The constitution formulated in Vadstena made clear the objective of the WSCF was to lead students to become “disciples of Jesus Christ as only Saviour and as God,” a phrase taken directly from the YMCA’s Paris Basis formulated in 1855, to deepen their spiritual lives, and to put them to work extending the Kingdom of Christ throughout the world. Like the YMCA and YWCA, the WSCF was lay-led and non-denominational. Their concerns were the living of Christian lives. They were not churches. Members also were supposed to be members of evangelical churches. The methods, then, that WSCF secretaries used to organize students were essentially the same ones Y secretaries used: setting up Bible studies and prayer groups. Something called Morning Watch—setting aside a time in the morning for devotional times with God—was particularly important. When Ruth Rouse travelled to different places to try to establish student Christian associations among women students during the Pioneer phase, these are essentially the methods she uses. In addition, she would give scheduled talks to groups of students.

and set aside times for “personal work”—one-on-one conversations with students about the state of their souls and their spiritual journeys, just like famous evangelist and YMCA leader Dwight Moody did in both the United States and Great Britain, inspiring others to do the same.

It would not be wrong, then, to say that not only John Mott and Ruth Rouse, but also numerous other leaders in theWSCF from the Pioneer era were basically products of an Anglo-American Revival Evangelical culture that the organizations they founded and led extended by passing it along to others. Looked at this way, it is this culture that bound the WSCF together. They did, however, have obstacles of multiple languages and ethnicities they had to overcome that working in the English-speaking, Anglo-American evangelical monoculture did not. And, as Ruth Rouse repeatedly pointed out in her WSCF history, in the European universities there was an enormous amount of anti-Christian and even anti-religious hostility that had to be overcome.

All the while this work was being done, an infrastructure of foyers, camps, conference centers, and training centers was being constructed around the world. The stronger and better organized they got, the more they pushed outside of the comfort zone. The 1907 General Committee meeting was held in Tokyo; in 1911, it was held in Constantinople, center of Eastern Orthodox Christianity. Of the Constantinople conference, Ruth Rouse wrote: “Every private talk was a conference in itself.....Every new friendship [was] a revelation and often a revolution.” These personal stories are central to what the WSCF accomplished over these pioneering years. Individuals had encounters with people different than themselves that led to awakenings that changed their own point-of-views and their lives. Multiply those experiences across tens of thousands of students—tens of thousands—across the world. Incrementally “tribal” identities—national, ethnic, denominational—were challenged in ways that opened students to people different than themselves.

7 Ibid.29
Relationship-by-relationship, these experiences seemed to be the building blocks of an international Christian fellowship.

In planning the WSCF General Committee meetings at Lake Mohonk in 1913, careful attention was given to what today we would call “diversity and inclusion.” It was held at a Quaker hotel north of New York City that would accept participants of all races. Included in the American delegation were eight-eight white Americans, thirteen Negro, and five Indians as well as thirty-eight Orientals and Latin Americans studying in American universities. Advance planning assured that every delegate would be received on equal terms. Even table assignments at dinner were drawn by lots.8 Also at the Lake Mohonk conference, one of the leaders, Charles Grauss, general secretary of the French Student Christian Movement, summed up the position of the WSCF on international relations:

> Each of our conferences clearly proves that we consider all nations, the smallest as well as the largest, as necessary to universal harmony; that God has a purpose for each national genius; and that the Federation must tend, not to secure the superiority of one nation or one race over the others, but, on the contrary, to facilitate the simultaneous development of all. Thus, the Federation consciously becomes the useful worker of the society of nations of the future, whose glorious and fruitful prefigurement it already is.\(^{(Conference \ Report, \ 137)}\)  

A year later, days after World War I began on July 28, 1914, Grauss was at the front, a French soldier. On August 29, 1918, six weeks before the Armistice, he was one of the last of the nine million, including huge numbers of the SCM leaders, killed in battle.

World War I: Unbound

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8 Ibid.174.  
Without the missing contemporaneous document, *From Mohonk to Beatenberg*, that Ruth Rouse wrote to summarize what had transpired over the course of the war and its impact on the WSCF plus any recommendations she might have made at the time, I am reluctant to take the assessment of the 1948 book at face value. Clearly, assumptions about the strength of the WSCF’s global Christian student community made at Lake Mohonk had been wrong. The binds of students with each other, on the evidence, did not withstand pressures from their countries to take up arms against each other. Yet again, on the evidence, the WSCF did come back together again.

In a January, 1916 letter to British SCM head Tissington Tatlow quoted by Rouse, one chaplain at the front wrote: “The Federation was—is—the most catholic thing in the world—however small its beginnings. It has at least a hold upon all that this war has challenged and found wanting and all that the war’s sacrifice and sufferings will heighten in value and consecrate.”¹⁰ Rouse begins her chapter on the St. Beatenberg meeting by citing the deeper love for the Federation indicated by the volume of mail that poured in from leaders in countries on both sides full of ideas about post-war problems and how to move forward. But what would it amount to? What could and would bind the Federation together again, better and stronger this time?

Rebinding the Federation

At the next General Committee meeting in St. Beatenberg, Switzerland on July 30 to August 7, 1920, twelve of the thirteen member movements represented on the General Committee were present (Russia, post-Revolution, being the exception). Thirty-five nationalities were represented at the Round Table Conference held simultaneously. The groups combined for many sessions throughout the week. Ultimately, it was decided to expand the General Committee structure permanently. Although large numbers of

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younger SCM leaders had died, older ones stayed on and newer ones, including more women, had come to the fore. Other structural changes were made. The Women’s Subcommittee was abolished and one of two vice-chairs was set aside for a woman. Michi Kawai of Japan was selected to fill it. Two new “Aims” were added to the original three largely evangelistic ones in the Federation constitution. The first one added defined an international objective as drawing students of all countries together and leading them, through the application of the principles of Jesus Christ, to draw nations together, too. The second one affirmed efforts to care for the welfare of students—body, mind, and spirit—consistent with Christian purpose.\footnote{Ibid. 222-226}

Given the quest for a unifying vision, perhaps the most consequential moment of the St. Beatenberg meeting for the future direction of the organization was occasioned by a German delegate questioning “whether we were all preaching the same Christ, and, in particular, whether we all believed in and proclaimed the absolute importance of Christ’s sacrificial death on the Cross.” The WSCF, like the YMCA and YWCA, had historically avoided doctrine and focused on living a Christian life. Was that going to have to change to re-bind the Federation now? A year earlier the Cambridge Inter-collegiate Christian Union (CCIU), the nucleus of what would become the rival organization Inter-varsity Christian Fellowship (IVF), had separated from the British SCM on exactly this point, although the strains between the two factions had been evident for years. One evangelical leader wrote that “the SCM refused to ‘consider the atoning blood of Jesus Christ as the central point of their message’, and therefore ‘had not maintained its original witness to the truth of God’s Word’ and so, ‘as a movement it had apostasised from the truths on which it had been founded, and the CICCUC must remain absolutely separate’.”\footnote{Robin Boyd,\textit{ The Witness of the Student Christian Movement : ‘Church Ahead of the Church’} (London: SPCK, 2007).26.} For the breakaway group, the Atonement was the \textit{exclusive} orthodoxy that served as their “plumb line” against which they...
could measure truth. It was understood literally and defined who was in and who was out. For the British SCM, it was central but not understood literally. This is what was at issue in this question at St. Beatenburg: what unifying rock was the WSCF going to cling to at this uncertain time? Did it have to be doctrine?

Rouse describes what followed the question as “an unhurried and searching discussion when nearly all members took the occasion to voice their deepest convictions” which revealed “that this central point of the Christian faith was held by the Federation leaders with more earnestness, if possible, than ever before.” But by really listening to each other the group was able to both admit differences—Rouse does not say they all agreed about the exclusive importance of Christ’s sacrifice over, for example, God’s love or other elements of the Christian faith—and to find unity again. The historic session ended with the hymn, “When I survey the wondrous cross.” Summing up the significance of the exchange later in an article in Student World, William Paton wrote: “The only path of progress lies in fearless facing of differences and believing in a truth which transcends them.” [italics added]

But the differences that were likely to emerge as they began to grapple with what it meant to be Christian in the postwar world were more complicated than anything they had ever faced before. Acknowledging this in his opening remarks, John Mott built a solid foundation and set the course for WSCF life going forward. The fundamental principles he articulated were planted deep in Gospel soil but revolutionary in international relations: Every human being was made in the image of God and was of infinite worth,

13 Rouse, The World’s Student Christian Federation: A History of the First Thirty Years.231
deserving of protection and the opportunities for living an abundant life. People belong to each other, however, and have responsibilities to each other for their common life. Nations, too, have a special purpose in the divine plan for people. People, economic actors, and nations should neither dominate nor exploit. Rather, they need to communicate frequently and cooperate with each other in partnership across boundaries of difference in order to find and further God’s plan. He addressed the questions of right social relations, right international relations, and right racial relations that were so much on the minds of the students. Mott then posed the question: What does all this involve for the life of the World’s Student Christian Federation? Answering his own question, he lists practices that can be summarized as devotion and deliberation, study and service as ways student groups might begin to discern what “right relations” in each of these areas might mean at that complicated historical moment.16 Throughout the interwar period, SCM-formed people fleshed out exactly what these practices looked like in the evolving life of the movement and used them to struggle together to figure out what God was calling them to do. Significant beginnings on all four were made at St. Beatenberg. Everything the Federation and the Ecumenical Movement became afterwards can be understood in terms of these four practices.

Study. Bible and mission study had been part of the SCM from the beginning. Social study had followed not long behind. John Mott made a habit, because much of his world travel in the early years had to be done by ship, of taking trunk loads of books with him to read on these long journeys, then sending recommended reading lists to Federation members. The Federation also published their own books such as those on interracial relations mentioned earlier. But during the war, as Ruth Rouse pointedly notes,

...international education, begun, perhaps, at some summer conference was continued in every quarter of the globe: in the trenches, on warships, in aeroplanes or lying under their bombs, in hospitals, tramping the roads of flight with the refugees, or behind barbed wire in prison or internment camps. Hundreds of thousands of students learnt in their own bodies and souls what broken international relationships mean to humanity. What they did not learn in war, they learnt in its hideous aftermath, and in the difficulties of making peace.  

The war had made deeper study of other countries and other cultures imperative in an effort to rebuild those broken relationships and try to make peace.

In his 1920 book, John Mott strongly encouraged not only the study of books and the invitation of specialists as speakers, as the Federation had always done, but also student and faculty exchanges, the internationalization of national conferences, the dissemination of facts having to do with international questions, all with particular attention to issues subject to the most distortion, particularly the weaknesses or blind spots in their own countries. The British SCM, for example, produced two books—*India through Indian Eyes* and *China through Chinese Eyes* by Indian and Chinese authors. Greater understanding, however, turned out to sometimes demand action. For example, a conference on relations between Europe and America with Africa and Asia, held in Glasgow in 1921,happened shortly after the Amristar shooting in the Punjab in India in 1919. Hundreds of unarmed Indians had been massacred by the British in one of their holiest cities on one of their most sacred days. Distrust was so high that it took a great deal of effort to even get Indian students to attend the Glasgow conference. Afterwards, against Federation policy barring political partisanship, and breaking with their government, the British SCM sent a message to their...
counterparts in India, Burma and Ceylon that “utterly repudiated” what had occurred at Amristar. It read, in part: “We sympathize with your aspirations for a self-governing India, and we earnestly hope that the reforms now initiated may lead surely and rapidly to the attainment of that goal.” This may have been the first SCM statement on a controversial public issue. It is notable that it takes the side of a colony against the students' own government.  

Service. The adoption of the second new “aim” at St. Beatenberg—caring for the welfare of students—made possible the creation of European Student Relief (ESR). On a visit to Vienna in January, 1920, Ruth Rouse discovered that the students there were literally homeless, starving, nearly naked, and diseased. Evidence quickly mounted of similar emergencies in other countries of Eastern Europe. Reinhold Niebuhr, who visited Germany as part of the American Seminar, reported that “the Ruhr cities are the closest thing to hell I have ever seen.” In the book she wrote about ESR in 1925, *Rebuilding Europe*, Rouse captures the essence of the effort in the titles of her first two chapters: “Half the Student World in Ruins” and “The Other Half Wakes to Action.” She dispatched an appeal to the entire Federation and relief poured in. Willem Visser t’Hooft, later general secretary of the WSCF and the World Council of Churches but then a Dutch student, showed up in the life of the Federation for the first time with five train cars full of sugar, dried fish, potatoes, cocoa, cheese, and clothing—donations from industrialists and merchants—for ESR to distribute in Austria. “Next to the founding of the Federation, the starting of European Student Relief was our...

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23 Potter and Wieser, *Seeking and Serving the Truth: The First Hundred Years of the World Student Christian Federation*.63
mightiest adventure of faith and courage,” Rouse wrote later. Relief workers met at Beatenberg before the conference to put together a proposal to the General Committee for authorization and financial support, which, after long debate, was granted. Principles of operation included sound financial management, support of self-help, cooperation with existing agencies, and administration of support without regard to any factor other than human need. In five years, close to $30.5 million (in 2020 dollars) was raised from forty-one national movements and distributed throughout the most heavily devastated student populations. It is an astonishing and largely unknown chapter in the development of global humanitarian relief. Service unified, Rouse concluded. It demonstrated care and brotherhood for former enemies. It helped counter aggressively antagonistic nationalist rhetoric in those devastated countries. It showed the unity of the gospel of service and gospel of salvation by helping students to actually see their deepest ideals so recently re-articulated by John Mott, made concrete and visible. Loving the people God loves means caring for them, no matter who they are.

Devotion. Suzanne de Diétrich attended the St. Beatenberg conference as a representative of the French SCM, nicknamed Fédé. It was her first international WSCF conference but within a few years she succeeded Michi Kawai as vice-chair; then in 1935, she went on staff. Trained as an engineer, not as a Bible scholar or theologian or liturgist, she nevertheless became an important creative force behind the spiritual regeneration of the WSCF after World War I. From the beginning, the Bible had been central to the life of the Federation but mostly used as a devotional guide stressing prayerful reading.

of select passages, usually from the New Testament, as in the typical Morning Watch. At group meetings, experts would give Bible-inspired devotional talks. Worship was Protestant and revivalist, consistent with the radical rejection of ritual during the sixteenth century Reformation and with the piety of Moody and his generation. It was filled with free prayers and ignored the traditional liturgies of the Christian churches even though many of the member movements, like the Russian SCM, were largely made up of students from liturgical traditions, either Orthodox or Roman Catholic or some combination.27

During the war, de Diétrich began a probing study of the Old Testament on her own and led Bible studies with a women’s group. Separately, she was meeting with the Russian SCM-in-exile (who were Russian Orthodox) in an ecumenical study circle. In her study of the prophets she had discovered this: “The word of God is a concrete word, addressed to concrete people.” It was necessary, she thought, to enter into those stories and to get to know those people in order to claim the living word of the living God as one’s own.28 Long before the recent sociological work on the narrative construction of identity that suggests people, individually and collectively, come to know who they are through the stories they tell,29 de Diétrich seemed to intuit that the Bible, if approached as the story of “God’s Unfolding Purpose,” as she was to title a later book, could have the power to center and re-shape the life of the WSCF. For this to happen, however, the Federation’s approach to Bible study was going to have to be changed to immerse students in the Biblical stories but also to get them completely familiar with the narrative methodology. It also needed to become part of the

broader Federation culture so that it would be a point of connection and shared point of reference.

A month before St. Beatenberg, de Diétrich published an article in Fédé’s magazine outlining a Bible study program that would create and anchor a spiritual community able to enact the texts in life. Most of all, it would be participatory. To facilitate that kind of study, de Diétrich specified that groups should have no more than twelve to fifteen people. Beginners’ groups should include the barest minimum of interpretation. She wanted participants to let the words, particularly those of individual Biblical actors, make their own impact. Any necessary background information should be included in a preparatory outline or brief introduction. The leader’s role would be to keep the discussion focused on the texts. Her conviction was this: that this kind of participatory engagement with Bible texts was an entre into not only intimate sharing and lasting friendships but also a stronger and deeper faith and faith community.\(^{30}\) That could help rebuild the Federation. The next year de Diétrich shared her approach to the Bible with the larger WSCF community at a consultation on Bible study in the Netherlands. After that, preparing study outlines that laid out the background of the text under consideration and some relevant questions—something entirely new in the 1920s--was her principle occupation. She soon began to use her parents' home at Mouterhouse, north of Strasbourg, for summer Bible study camps, laying the groundwork for a Federation-wide Bible renewal in the 1930s.\(^{31}\)

The first step was also taken at St. Beatenberg toward the creation of an ecumenical worship tradition. Suzanne Bidgrain, an academically trained theologian also of the French Fédé who was about to take over as traveling secretary from Ruth Rouse, was asked to assemble a Federation hymnbook. Two years later, in time for the meeting at High Leigh in 1924, she produced *Cantate Domino*, which went through countless editions and became beloved

\(^{31}\) Ibid.60
of SCM members the world over.\textsuperscript{32} At the most basic level, this decision was an affirmation that shared song would have the power to “produce solidarity without consensus.”\textsuperscript{33} It also was a baby step towards the creation of a liturgical life that could hold all of the different parts of the Federation together. More steps would soon follow.

**Deliberation.** How is it that SCM people who survived the war were able to learn to be together again? The approach adopted by the WSCF was to foster direct encounters. “Meet at the friction point” was the motto adopted by the Federation. What that meant in practice was that Crisis Groups—small group encounters across barriers of not just difference but disagreement—and International Discussion Conferences became a priority. They were the training ground for both Willem Visser t’Hooft and Francis Pickens Miller, who would become the WSCF’s top leaders in the 1930s. They helped lead these conferences that shaped the rising generation of young people in the movement. Ruth Rouse, in her history of the Federation, includes two full pages on “meetings in intimate Christian fellowship” in the Far East, Near East, Southeastern Europe and Northern Europe where students representing “cross-sections of political, economic, confessional and racial confusions and combats” encountered each other and leaned over backwards to understand the point of view of those in the opposite camp. She admits that on the subject of the war, the best that might be achieved was not agreement but simple recognition that there was another side and that it was incumbent on a Christian “to understand it and to approach it with sympathy.”\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{34} Rouse, *The World’s Student Christian Federation: A History of the First Thirty Years*.265-267
at the friction point” was very hard. For example, Georg Michaelis, president of the German Student Christian Movement from 1913 to 1927, vociferously protested the war guilt clause of the treaty in ways Rouse found hurtful. She and others struggled, successfully, to work with Michaelis anyway through this period. Listening to their former enemies was not a simple task, however. Other historians have judged one of Michi Kawai’s post-war speeches to show deep-seated prejudice against the Chinese. Overcoming partiality was hardly possible,” wrote Franzen. “Staying in touch in spite of all partiality was difficult enough.”

The WSCF, from its earliest days, had been a community of practice organized around their shared evangelical faith. At St. Beatenberg, they affirmed that that would continue to be the case, but these new practices—study and service, devotion and deliberation—gave them ways to deal with the fragmentation and brokenness left by the war as well as their own increasing diversity as the WSCF grew to include a geographically, religiously, and culturally wider range of students. It gave them an alternate framework to the traditional “West-to-the-rest” way of thinking. Their work together had become, in reality, two-way traffic, everyone going everywhere, everyone teaching, everyone learning. It gave them a context in which to begin to think about unjust power. That, and so much else they were facing, was new to them, but the genius of these practices is that they are open to, and a way of processing, new information together with others. John Mott urged the SCM community to “open-minded teachableness, humility, and receptiveness to new visions” grounded in faithfulness in prayer,” thereby

36 Franzen, Ruth Rouse Among Students: Global, Missiological and Ecumenical Perspectives.326-329
37 Potter and Wieser, Seeking and Serving the Truth: The First Hundred Years of the World Student Christian Federation.89-90
doing himself exactly what he was urging them to do. Ideas that might flow from that process of discernment—the “prayerful search for God’s will, facing the Gospel truth to find an interpretation for our time,” as Suzanne de Diétrich put it—were unbounded. It is the way they began to figure out what might constitute right action towards furthering right relations for their time. Ultimately, world-changing “new visions” did emerge from the commitment of the SCM community to living this way after the war. In the meetings after St. Beatenberg, students began to use these tools and they began to take on fuller form. The road forward, however, was a bumpy one.

The next Federation meeting was in Peking in 1922, a time and place fiercely anti-Western and anti-Christian given what had transpired in Paris. Its hopeful motto was “One Family Under Heaven.” Its task was to wrestle with the use of force in relations between nations, in other words, war. Divisions on that question, and on most other questions, remained strong. A “forum method” was introduced. “The discussions,” reported Rouse, “were searching in their fierce honesty, heartrending in their intensity.”

Outside of the formal meetings students from countries in conflict—Chinese and Japanese: Koreans and Japanese; Americans and Filipinos; British and Indians; French and Germans; and British, French, and Chinese—met in ongoing, if informal, “crisis groups.” A British student, R. O. Hall, reported afterwards in Student World about the “agony of disagreement” and the terror that the Federation was “wrecked.” “We doubted each other’s sincerity, even Christianity. Many of us even doubted our own. Prayer appeared to fail. We were too honest to be hypnotized into seeing a solution which did not exist. Instead, with his wisdom, God sent most of us to bed….” In the end, they were able to make several affirmations in the

40 Potter and Wieser, Seeking and Serving the Truth: The First Hundred Years of the World Student Christian Federation. 70
41 Ibid. 73
Peking Resolutions. They were able to formally declare what the petitioners to the Paris Peace Conference so desperately wanted to hear—the fundamental equality of all races and nations and the Christian vocation to express that in all of life. They remanded to the national movements the question of war and pacifism. And, they affirmed that unity was to be found, not in agreement, but in the fellowship of the Federation.

“Multiply the number of gatherings,” John Mott commanded after Peking. And so they did. The next General Committee meeting was at High Leigh in 1924. By then, people had begun to understand that by choosing inclusion, they had chosen tensions and that tensions would be a permanent part of Federation life, but they were also beginning to learn to live with them, particularly by listening—really listening—to others. "[T]he realization of a larger synthesis leading to a faith having far wider and richer content came through the intimate fellowship of talks in garden nooks or prolonged far into the midnight hours, when, surmounting the barriers of language, men hammered out for each other what they really meant." The two things that had held them together, Rouse concluded, were that they all still agreed on one of the principle aims of the Federation—to lead students to become disciples of Jesus Christ—and that they had actually had experiences, however brief, of unity. *Cantate Domino*, the Federation hymnbook, was used for the first time and a companion book of devotions (which would become *Venite Adoremus*) was authorized. Something like spiritual solidarity and a renewed faith began to emerge. In the words of one student Rouse quotes, "He was here, a very present help in the midst of us. And his message to us was ‘Work on. Pray on. Trust on.’"
The American Francis Pickens Miller, who, before the war, as an undergraduate led a discussion group at Washington & Lee on race, and who participated in International Discussion Conferences afterwards, came to the fore as a WSCF leader at High Leigh. He went on staff in 1927 then served as Chairman, succeeding John Mott, from 1928 to 1938. The Federation’s motto “Ut Omnes Unum Sint”—that All Should be One—captured his imagination as expressive of the moral and spiritual goal of the human race. He saw a Church Universal containing all of humanity’s riotous difference and thought that students, through the Federation, could begin to make it visible. The way they would do this is to simply act as if they were already members of it in the way they lived their life together.\textsuperscript{46} In their book, \textit{Ritual and Its Consequences: An Essay on the Limits of Sincerity}, Adam Seligman and his co-authors compare the as if shared world of ritual with the as is shared world unified by sincere conviction. Doing things together over and over again, as the WSCF did with its growing repertoire of shared practices, creates a world that can contain ambiguity and difference and can offer a “potential space within which cultural creativity” can take place. The “sincere mode”, by contrast, aims to unify by eliminating ambiguity and difference. This is what Inter-Varsity was trying to achieve by their requirement that members adopt a strict orthodox theology.\textsuperscript{47} For the WSCF, Miller’s vision of an as if Universal Church and the continued evolution and consistent use of the ritualized spiritual practices of study, service, devotion, and deliberation held people—even people who vehemently disagreed with each other—together. Their life together became the engine that powered the creation of a new moral universe that shaped and anchored their communal life going forward.

\textbf{Future Research}

The High Leigh conference in 1924 was Ruth Rouse’s last as a member of the staff. Since 1921, she had been the secretary to the Executive Committee. During this time, the WSCF was without a General Secretary. John Mott had left that position and become President at St. Beatenberg. It can be argued that during this period, Ruth Rouse essentially functioned as the General Secretary. It is also quite likely that much of the planning for St. Beatenberg and the actualization of the plans made there were shepherded by her, too. But that is not a question that she, in her capacity as a historian seems interested in pursuing. The only case where the record of her individual leadership is crystal clear is in the creation and operations of European Student Relief. That is because she wrote a book about it at the time and John Mott wrote an introduction giving her full credit. Future research needs to untangle her role as a historian and her role as a leader.

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