
FORGIVENESS

See: Remission of Sins

FOX, RUTH MAY

Ruth May Fox (1853–1958) devoted many years to the Young Ladies' Mutual Improvement Association (YWMIA; in 1977 *YOUNG WOMEN*), serving as president from 1929 to 1937, following her tenure as first counselor to President Martha Horne Tingley from 1905 to 1929. Vibrant and spirited, Ruth May Fox was a woman of great strength and refined features. A poet and songwriter, she wrote the text to "Carry On," a hymn traditionally associated with the Mutual Improvement Association; it was introduced and featured at that association's June conference in 1930. She was an advocate of



Ruth May Fox (1853–1958), third general president of the Young Ladies' Mutual Improvement Association, served from 1929 to 1937. From the Utah State Historical Society collection. Courtesy Nelson Wadsworth.

woman suffrage and education, evidenced in part by her sponsorship of the Traveling Library Program and her focus on self-education.

Ruth May Fox was born November 16, 1853, in Westbury, Wiltshire, England, the daughter of Mary Ann Harding and James May. Five months later, her parents joined the LDS Church. After her mother's death in 1855, her father was called to be a traveling elder for the Church, causing her to live with various LDS families and relatives until she was approximately eight years old, when her father took her to Yorkshire, where he was employed. Around 1865 he emigrated to America, where Ruth joined him a few months later, and soon after, he remarried. The family lived in the Philadelphia area for two years, during which time she worked in factories to earn enough money to help finance their journey to Utah.

In July 1867 the Mays started for Utah, first traveling to North Platte, Nebraska. After securing supplies for their journey, they had only enough money to buy one yoke of cattle, so they shared a wagon with another family and walked most of the way to Utah.

Ruth worked in the Deseret (Salt Lake City) and Ogden Woolen Mills, where her father was a carder, and used her earnings to help purchase the family home. She then attended John Morgan's College in Salt Lake City for four months, which ended her formal education. When her father returned to Salt Lake City and started his own mill, she helped him operate the heavy equipment.

On May 8, 1873, when she was nineteen and he was twenty, she married Jesse Williams Fox, Jr.; they were blessed with twelve children. Ruth and Jesse prospered in the early years of their marriage, but met financial difficulties around 1888. Soon after, Jesse took a second wife, without any forewarning to Ruth. He eventually lost his business, accumulated large debts, and lost the family home. The two families lived separately, and as Jesse lived with the other household, Ruth was largely left to her own resources to survive. In 1900 she and her children ran the Saint Omer Boarding House to supplement their income; in 1914 she began work as a typist for the YWMIA. She lived with her children from 1914 until her death in 1958, resuming housekeeping only to nurse her husband through illnesses in 1921 and from 1927 until his death in 1928.

Among Ruth May Fox's lifelong beliefs was a strong commitment to suffrage for women. She

was active in the Utah Woman Suffrage Association and the Republican party and helped draft the suffrage clause of the Utah Constitution. She served as president of the Utah Woman's Press Club, treasurer of the Utah Woman Suffrage Association, chairman of the Salt Lake County Second Precinct Ladies' Republican Club, and board member of the Deseret Agricultural and Manufacturing Society and of Traveler's Aid Society. She died on April 12, 1958, in Salt Lake City at the age of 104.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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FREEDOM

The gospel of Jesus Christ does not represent freedom merely as a philosophic concept or abstract possibility, but establishes it at the foundations of the creation of the world and as the fundamental condition of God's dealings with his children. As a general expression the word "freedom" refers to AGENCY, liberty, independence, and autonomy. Freedom, or the genuine possibility of choosing, necessarily defines the most basic condition of human beings in the temporal world.

Latter-day Saint scriptures teach that the pre-mortal life was an environment of choice in which God proposed to his spirit children a PLAN OF SALVATION for their growth and advancement (see Job 38:6–7; 2 Ne. 2:17; D&C 29:36; Abr. 3:22–28). In earth life, with bodies of flesh and bone and vast new possibilities of action, God's children would be free to make choices within the whole spectrum of good and evil. They would also experience the necessary consequences of those choices. "And we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell; And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them" (Abr. 3:24–25).

God promised those who would do his will that they would be redeemed from their errors and

sins and gain eternal life. Satan opposed the Father's plan, aware that this more extensive freedom involved the risk of spiritual death, where some would be separated from the Father by their sins, would not repent, and thus could not return to dwell in his kingdom. To avert such a separation, Satan proposed an environment without freedom and hence without sin. Consequently, all would return to the Father, but without moral improvement or advancement (*see* DEVIL). The "honor" for their return would belong to Satan (Isa. 14:13; Moses 4:1).

A majority of God's spirit children joyfully elected freedom over bondage, knowledge over ignorance, advancement over stagnation, and even danger over security; so the temporal world was created, with freedom as its unconditional ground. The temporal world is an environment of choices and thus of moral action and ACCOUNTABILITY as people are summoned to do the will of God. Men and women may not evade or escape their freedom, for reality always appears as a set of choices informed by some kind of understanding of good, the outcome of which defines in some measure the course of human events. The Book of Mormon says of this decision,

Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself [2 Ne. 2:27].

FREEDOM AND HUMAN CHOICE. Latter-day Saints understand, however, that not all of God's children will find themselves in situations of equal freedom. All people are born into a world created by the acts and beliefs of those who lived before them. These differences are preserved in the traditions, institutions, and practices that have been handed down. While God gives everyone the LIGHT OF CHRIST that draws each to the good, the traditions and practices into which some are born may conceal the truth and lead such people into harmful and sinful acts. For these, God will have mercy (Alma 9:15–16).

Still others are born into situations where the truth is widely known and the opportunity to do good is broadly available. Yet they do evil in the