

N E W S

BYU BANS RODIN NUDES

BYU IS once again engaged in a debate over allowing classroom-appropriate material to be accessible to the general public.

Over a decade ago, the BYU administration agreed to change its policy at the campus's Varsity Theater from running only G-rated fare suitable for faculty children to running adult films targeted at college students. One of the first films shown under the new policy was *Lion in Winter*, which coincidentally ran during the annual Women's Conference. Its openness about the homosexuality of a future British king outraged some of the female visitors on campus and threatened the new policy.

Three years ago BYU made national news when administrators refused to show *Schindler's List* because producer/director Steven Spielberg would not allow the violence and nudity to be edited out of the acclaimed film about one Nazi's rescuing Jews from Polish death camps.

And now, this past fall, the Lord's university drew national and local media derision when school administrators decided to ban from campus four sculptures of a touring exhibition of Rodin. The traveling collection had been requested, authorized, and paid for by BYU about eighteen months ago, but the decision to censor parts of the exhibit was made over the two months preceding the exhibition's opening on 27 October. The censored

pieces will remain in crates through the exhibition's 24 January 1998 closing at the BYU Museum of Art.

"We knew we were going to get attention for this, and on the surface it seems like an unusual decision," admitted museum director Campbell Gray to the *Salt Lake Tribune*.

CENSORED SCULPTURES

Four male nudes left in crates.

Francois August Rene Rodin (1840–1917), a French sculptor, is most famous for his piece "The Thinker." This sublime piece depicts a nude male in contemplation; it is not included in the exhibit, "The Hands of Rodin, a Tribute to B. Gerald Cantor." But another of Rodin's more famous works, "The Kiss," is included in the exhibit and was one of the pieces BYU refuses to display.

"The Kiss" is an erotic piece depicting a nude man and woman in embrace. The marble sculpture is considered to be one of Rodin's most moving and passionate pieces. Other banned pieces in the exhibit are "The Prodigal Son," "Monument to Balzac," and "Saint John The Baptist Preaching."

"Monument to Balzac" was described by BYU President Merrill J. Bateman as a "nude male in the act of self-gratification," according to an Associated Press story. Honore Balzac was an early nineteenth-century French author and



philosopher. Other people have offered alternate interpretations of "Monument to Balzac" than Bateman's. Some have simply described this Rodin piece as an unflattering, obese portrayal of Balzac, without any mention of "self-gratification."

The other two sculptures left in crates are also of nude males. "Saint John The Baptist Preaching" depicts the prophet walking naked in the desert and is often thought to be showing the prophet's mortality. Gray told the AP that, "Everyone knows the prophet is mortal. . . . [b]ut this conception of [John the Baptist] is made less than what we would regard as reverent or honorable. It doesn't show the prophet side of the man at all."

About fifty other Rodin sculptures in the exhibition are on display at the BYU Museum of Art.

ANNOUNCING THE BAN

University's action surprises many.

"The Hands of Rodin" exhibition had been seen in many different venues across North America before its arrival at BYU. But at no other venue, including other religiously affiliated schools, had any piece of the collection been censored.

On 27 October, opening day of the exhibition, the decision

to ban certain works of Rodin was made public. An AP story, which was picked up nationally by newspapers such as *USA Today*, quoted Gray as saying, "We have felt that the nature of those works are such that the viewer will be concentrating on them in a way that is not good for us."

That same day the Church-owned *Deseret News* further quoted Gray as saying that the excluded pieces did not convey a positive message about either Rodin or the exhibition. "Nudity isn't the issue, it's more the latter [lack of dignity]."

The *Salt Lake Tribune* also quoted the museum director in an enigmatic statement: [The decision to exclude] "is more a process of trying to ensure that the integrity of the exhibit is maintained."

The *Tribune* also noted that Gray denied that censorship is occurring and quoted him further: "Censorship connotes a sense of fear. If we had a sense of fear, we wouldn't do this because of the media attention we are drawing."

AFTERMATH

Exhibit's owners cringe; students protest.

Rachel Blackburn, curator for the Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Foundation, which owns the exhibition's contents, was quoted in the AP story as saying, "We

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haven't had any other institutions that felt the need to not exhibit any pieces by Rodin. I can't say that we weren't surprised. We were."

The foundation's spokesperson, Jeffrey W. Schneider, told the *Tribune*, "We're not interested in getting into a position of criticizing BYU. We just think it is unfortunate that they made this decision."

Others, however, felt fine about criticizing the decision. News stories, letters to editors, and the Internet were filled with attacks and defenses of the policy.

Some feminists noted that the university felt uncomfortable about male nudes but let Rodin's female nudes remain in the exhibit.

Others ironically noted that the museum gift shop sells books that contain photographs of the banned statues and that BYU humanities and art courses discuss the statues. Official and unofficial defenders countered that it wasn't BYU students who were being protected by the ban but children who frequently visit the museum, often in school field trips, who might unknowingly stumble upon the nudes.

The *Tribune* noted that Clare Vincent, national art expert and associate curator of European sculpture for New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, is mystified by the BYU decision. "I wouldn't have thought that it was still very controversial. There are a great many things that are more shocking on television."

Some BYU students are likewise mystified. Justin Jones applied for a permit to stage in front of the Abraham Smoot Administration Building a student demonstration against the banning. Jones was told that his permit request would take a minimum of five days to process, and, since he had already planned the demonstration for a few days sooner, he and his group demonstrated sans permit. Campus police were present but did not intervene.

"Don't ban Rodin," was the chant de jour for the estimated

two hundred, demonstrating BYU students. Placards they carried voiced the messages "Would we have to put shorts on the David [by Michelangelo]?" and "We can protect ourselves," according to the *News*.

University administrators meanwhile passed out fliers describing how they had offered to meet with the protest's organizers to discuss the situation, but their offer had been rebuffed. The *News* reported that Academic Vice President Alan Wilkins promised students an "opportunity to air their concerns before administrators in a meeting large enough to accommodate all who desire to attend."

According to an anonymous source who was present, the demonstration lost momentum when one person, not affiliated with the organizers nor apparently in their camp, started to yell the "f-word" and threatened to strip. By then, the demonstrating students had voiced their opinions about Rodin's nudity and seemed uninterested in the real thing.

MAKING THE DECISION *Bateman reveals the details.*

Wilkins's promised meeting took shape on 13 November 1997, in the form of a question-and-answer session with President Bateman. While the session was open to any and all student questions, it was specifically devoted to concerns about the exhibition ban.

In the Q-&-A session, Bateman confirmed that even before the exhibition arrived at BYU, university administrators had considered censoring it. Bateman elaborated upon the decision-making process. Reportedly, museum director Gray had warned



Bateman two months in advance that certain pieces might be inappropriate. However, Bateman and other administrators waited until the statues actually arrived on campus in October before finalizing their decision to exclude the specific Rodin works.

Gray had earlier been quoted in the university's student newspaper, the *Daily Universe*, as saying, "This has been a process that has taken some months to consider."

"There have been various people in the university administration, the Board of Trustees, all meeting together on a regular basis looking at it. And that's the standard process, not that people are involved that extensively, in a lot of cases."

Still, after letting Gray defend and explain the decision for the initial, firey day, Bateman, in his meeting with students, at last took final responsibility for the decision to ban. "In the end, a decision was taken in which I was involved and ultimately responsible for, to take those pieces out and keep them crated. That was what we did," the *Tribune* quoted.

And in the *Universe* report, Bateman criticized those students who had publicly demonstrated, but he simultaneously validated their disagreement. "We expect different views, we'd be disappointed if you did not have dif-

ferent views, but the way we resolve the difference is not a protest."

Bateman also admitted to error in the process. "This [the Rodin exhibition] came through without adequate screening," Bateman said, adding that the university will avoid such problems in the future by simply refusing to contract with any such exhibitions that may contain questionable materials.

PRESIDENTIAL CENSURE *Church leader disagrees with student actions.*

Nine days before Bateman's session with students, LDS Church President Gordon B. Hinckley addressed twenty-two thousand students in the university's Marriott Center. While gearing his remarks toward Church-sponsored education in general, Hinckley obliquely referred to the BYU student demonstrators: "Sometimes I wish we could support a dozen institutions such as this, then I pick up the paper and I'm glad we're not." The prophet also said that many students with whom he had recently visited at Utah State University were as worthy of celestial blessings as were BYU students. "They were much better behaved than some of you I saw on the television the other night," the *Tribune* quoted

UPDATE

FARMS AND BYU UNITE

THE FOUNDATION for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS), an organization dedicated to scholarly Mormon scripture research, has long had a de facto association with BYU. But in October 1997, President Gordon B. Hinckley and the BYU board of trustees invited FARMS to associate de jure with BYU.

President Hinckley said FARMS "began modestly many years ago and represents the efforts of sincere and dedicated scholars. It has grown to provide strong support and defense of the Church on a professional basis. . . . [with] salutary effects both in addressing the Church's critics and in bolstering members who may be wavering. . . . I see a bright future for this effort now through the University."

The FARMS board voted to accept the invitation and begin negotiating the relationship. Privately, however, some FARMS members are not happy about joining BYU and fear their research will be censored.

FARMS began in California eighteen years ago under the leadership of John W. Welch. But when Welch became a law professor at BYU, FARMS moved with him to Provo. Since then, FARMS has had "a fruitful relationship" with BYU. FARMS staff has largely been BYU faculty or employees, and BYU once provided space on campus for the group. Still, the recent invitation culminated years of friction between official BYU institutions—especially Religious Education—and the independent FARMS, whose scholarship often rivaled that of authorized Church researchers and instructors. Several years ago, FARMS and BYU agreed to a formal protocol outlining their relationship; now that relationship is made a marriage.

Under the new arrangement, FARMS will receive financial and institutional benefits of being under the BYU umbrella, although it will continue its own fundraising. FARMS will not be placed under any existing university department or college, and the FARMS board and president will report directly to the BYU vice president for research. BYU President Merrill Bateman said, "Bringing FARMS into the University will give both entities more visibility. I am excited about the work that we will be able to do together."

BYU officials have promised not to interfere with FARMS' editorial policies or administration, but the *Salt Lake Tribune* reports that some concern remains. "FARMS has often had a polemical edge and we are curious to see how or whether that will be accommodated," said Daniel Peterson, FARMS chair and BYU professor of Islamic studies and Arabic. "The minute I write something offensive, we'll see if I get a call." Nevertheless, Peterson is "cautiously optimistic" and adds that BYU sponsorship "will open up interesting possibilities."

CHURCH BREAKS GROUND FOR NEW GENERAL CONFERENCE MEETING HALL

ON JULY 24, President Gordon B. Hinckley broke ground for a new assembly building on the block immediately north of Temple Square. The square already includes two meeting buildings—the smaller Assembly Hall, which is still used for some Salt Lake stake conferences, and the larger Tabernacle, which seats six thousand and has housed general conferences since its completion in 1867.

The new, stone and glass building with landscaped rooftop terraces will house a twenty-one-thousand-seat auditorium, with orchestra, mezzanine, and balcony levels. It will also house a one-thousand-seat theater for dramatic productions like those previ-

ously staged in the Promised Valley Playhouse. Four levels of underground parking will lie below the auditoriums, and a utility tunnel will connect the building to Temple Square. In addition to general conferences, the assembly building will host religious pageants, theatrical productions, cultural performances, and other Church conferences, such as regional and area conferences and special firesides. It is projected to be in use for April general conference in 2000.

The *Salt Lake Tribune* reported that the estimated cost of the building is nearly \$250 million. A similar, nineteen-thousand-seat structure was considered for the same city block in 1940 by then-Church President Heber J. Grant, but it was rejected because of expense and because Church growth made even such a building too small. While the Church hasn't yet settled on an official name for the structure, President Hinckley jokingly referred to the Romans' killing of Christians and said it would not be called a coliseum. Some Salt Lake City wags have nick-named it the Supernacle.

CHURCH REACHES TEN MILLION

GROWING FROM an original six members in 1830, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints topped the ten-million mark sometime during the first week of November 1997, according to Church statisticians. The Church took 117 years to reach the one-million-member mark, but the latest million took just three years, according to the *Deseret News*. The Church is now officially in 160 countries, and with only 4,890,000 members in the United States, more than half of all Saints reside elsewhere.

CHURCH MAY HELP LATIN AMERICA GROUP PROMOTE HEALTH

THE PAN AMERICAN Health Organization recently invited the Church to consider becoming its partner on disease prevention and health promotion. In August 1997, George A. O. Alleyne, director of the health agency, visited Church leaders and urged them to use their existing structures to help address severe health problems in Latin America, where the Church has a strong presence. He told the *Deseret News* that it is unusual for his organization to partner with churches, "but we have come to the conclusion that if we want to make a permanent impact . . . we will need partners." The organization has also extended invitations to Catholic and Jewish leaders.

Alleyne said the First Presidency expressed interest and asked him to come up with specific proposals. Isaac C. Ferguson, director of LDS Humanitarian Services, said the Church's emphasis on family health and literacy fit with Alleyne's desire to work with existing programs. The Church has twenty thousand missionaries in Latin America. The Pan American Health Organization hopes to tackle basic sanitation and adolescent health issues, among others. "We like to think if we put our hands and souls and hearts together, we can make some difference for health in the Americas," Alleyne told the *News*.

CHURCH HELPS FUND STUDY

SALT LAKE CITY Mayor DeeDee Corradini—who in times past has been accused of unethically using her position to coerce business leaders into contributing money toward her personal debts—once again had her back against the wall, needing to come up with

\$600,000. This time, she asked the LDS church for the money.

However, no one will accuse Corradini of padding her own fortunes with Church money. The city's redevelopment agency was contributing \$1 million toward a study of a light-rail line between the Salt Lake International Airport and the University of Utah, passing by the LDS church headquarters. But the city had to raise another \$600,000 in order for the federal government to put up the remainder of the study's \$8 million price tag.

"When I described the dilemma [of the study] and said we needed some immediate help, they were quick to respond," Corradini told the *Deseret News*. The Church pledged its gift on 14 November 1997.

The Church, which is neutral on the light-rail issue, donated the money through its Deseret Management Corporation, which oversees the Church's profit-making enterprises and its Salt Lake real estate holdings. "The gift will include no tithing monies," said Rodney H. Brady, president of the corporation.

With the study now under way, the rail line could conceivably be completed by the year 2002, when Salt Lake City will host the Winter Olympics. The Church's contribution to the study is being praised by many Utahns, both Mormon and non-Mormon.

"It means a lot that the church would see the wisdom of promoting transit in our region and that we should move along with studies on sensible planning for alternatives," said Roger Borgenicht, a non-Mormon director of the planning group Assist, Inc. "A nod from the church is important."

BYU FORMS FAMILY VOICE

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY'S J. Reuben Clark Law School and David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies have formed Family Voice, a non-governmental organization (NGO) to promote family issues around the world. Family Voice has articulated a three-part mission.

First, the group advocates family causes before international governmental bodies. Family Voice has applied for accreditation to lobby U.N. conferences. According to the *Deseret News*, Family Voice monitors United Nations documents for anti-family language, including policies that are pro-same-sex marriage and that pit women against men or children against their parents. According to the *News*, BYU law professor Richard G. Wilkins said that some organizations that lobby the U.N. believe that families oppress children and should be replaced by governments. Family Voice co-director Cory Leonard said many nations "are surprised that there are academics from a university in the United States who stand up" for the traditional family.

Second, Family Voice educates people about the importance of the family and the dangers of its enemies. This informational mission may include hosting academic conferences, scholarly exchanges, and a family-law training center. Recently, Wilkins, Leonard, and law school Dean H. Reese Hansen spent ten days discussing with Romanian officials ways that BYU can help eastern European families.

Third, Family Voice facilitates outreach programs for direct assistance to the world's families. "We're not just going to stand around and say, 'We ought to have stronger families,' and leave it to platitudes," Wilkins told the *News*. The organization will coordinate projects between BYU's Ezra Taft Benson Agriculture and Food Institute and the

Church's humanitarian NGO organization, LDS Charities.

Family Voice is guided by the "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve.

CARTER SAYS MORMONS ARE CHRISTIANS

DISAGREEING WITH the leadership of his own church, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), former U.S. President Jimmy Carter said, when questioned by a *Deseret News* reporter, that Mormons are indeed Christians.

"I think that . . . among the worst things we can do, as believers in Christ, is to spend our time condemning others, who profess faith in Christ and try to have a very narrow definition of who is and who is not an acceptable believer and a child of God.

"I think this is one of the main reasons that Christ not only said once, but repeated on other occasions, that we should not judge others, we should let God be the judge of the sincerity of a human mind or heart, and let us spend our time trying to alleviate suffering. . . ."

Next summer, SBC will hold its annual conference in Salt Lake City, and fifteen thousand Baptists will flood Utah. Door-to-door witnessing is expected to be part of the program. Carter feels a personal mandate to share Jesus with those who don't know about him. But as for proselytizing other Christians, Carter's attitude is in line with his own congregation which, while more liberal than the SBC norm, would "have no interest in . . . trying to convert Mormons to be good old Baptists like me," he said.

POP DIVA FINDS DIVINE IN MORMONISM

GLADYS KNIGHT, of " . . . and the Pips" fame (she's been a solo act since 1989), has recently released her memoir, *Between Each Line of Pain and Glory: My Life Story* (Hyperion, \$24.95). The *San Jose Mercury News* (Cal.) reported that Knight's third husband filed for divorce just before the book went to press, and Knight had to rewrite the final chapter. Knight said that through this divorce, "Heavenly Father's seen fit to bless me to get to him, his light."

Knight joined the LDS church in August 1997, after having previously been a Baptist, a Catholic, and a member of the Church of God in Christ. *Between Each Line of Pain and Glory* does not contain an account of Knight's conversion to Mormonism, although according to the *News*, she wears her Mormon "affiliation on her sleeve as brazenly as she does that nail color."

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St. Louis Temple, as seen from next door.

FALSE WITNESS

MARK TWAIN said, "There are 869 forms of lying, but only one of them has been squarely forbidden. 'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.'"

WE HAVE MET THE ENEMY . . .

NOT LONG AGO, syndicated sports columnist Michael Wilbon wrote about the Chicago Bulls' Dennis Rodman and his trashing of Mormons, but Wilbon's column took a surprising detour and quoted lengthy excerpts from 2 Nephi 5:21-24 to show a racist side of Mormon doctrine. When the *Washington Post* ran the column, two Mormons came to our aid. Michael Barrett defended the faith in his usual style by raking muck the Brethren want kept on the bottom. (An earlier act got him excommunicated, see SUNSTONE 17:2[Sept. 1994].) But Les Crue's racist defense of our anti-racism defies all logic:

"Wilbon takes special exception to a scripture . . . that seems racially insensitive to him. By quoting out of context, he implies that Mormons are racists. We certainly are not. In the parts that Wilbon does not quote, the verses explain that the people called the Lamanites received the blackness of skin because they disobeyed God. This was done to keep them from affecting the Nephite people.

"Another verse that Wilbon doesn't quote explains the 'cursing' that would ensue from interfaith and mixed-race marriages. Even today such marriages are much more difficult, and as a result, end in divorce more often. I don't know if that's the definition of 'cursing,' but I imagine it's a good example.

"In the future, I would ask Wilbon to quote fully and directly . . ."

ORRIN BETTER ROCK WELL

THE BEATLES had George Martin. The Velvet Underground had Andy Warhol. And The Free Agency had Orrin Hatch. That's right, Orrin Hatch. Before his tenure as a U.S. senator from Utah, Hatch had a brief stint as rock band manager. Called The Free Agency, the group was comprised of "former drug users who became converts to

the LDS Church," Hatch told a senate committee holding a hearing on copyright law. Hatch said the group, who sought his financial backing and legal assistance when he was an attorney in Utah, "wrote gospel lyrics to a moderate beat. . . . They could have made it, if they[d] had a better impresario." Hatch's disclosure came as he questioned the Eagles' lead singer, Don Henley. Interestingly enough, Henley did not seek Hatch's help, legal or otherwise, for the Eagles.

OXYMORMONS

