

What is all the fuss about academic freedom at BYU?
An on-campus observer gives a no-holds-barred reaction.

“CLIPPED AND CONTROLLED” A CONTEMPORARY LOOK AT BYU

By Anonymous

Over the last few years, BYU has had well-documented conflicts over academic freedom—Evenson’s violent fiction, the Knowlton, Farr, and Houston firings. Many less-publicized stories of the policing of a theological correctness circulate around campus—faithful, tenure-track candidates being rejected for a past period of Church inactivity or for using Marxist, feminist, or postmodern methodologies; faculty being “called in” for statements made in public; other respected faculty being encouraged to leave the university because they don’t fit in with its direction. So it should come as no surprise that faculty and staff morale is low—even the university’s self-study and the Northwest Accreditation Association have recently commented on it.

People unfamiliar with these current conditions often ask if things really are all that different—after all, hasn’t BYU always had academic freedom problems? Well, while there have always been incidents of faculty censorship, the systematic nature of the current campaign is different and does seem designed to change the overall direction of the university—to one of super-orthodoxy without any tolerance for discussion of differing religious viewpoints. In the essay that follows, titled after the grounds crew mission statement charge to keep the campus “clipped and controlled,” one faculty member shares her/his perspective of how BYU is now doing the same to the faculty.

INTRODUCTION

“When I leave BYU, I wish to do so on my own terms.”

THREE TIMES IN THE PAST FIVE YEARS, FACULTY at Brigham Young University have found unannounced changes in their contracts:

- 1992 contracts required for the first time that “Faculty who are members of BYU’s sponsoring Church also accept the spiritual and temporal expectations of whole-hearted Church membership.”
- 1993 contracts tightened the requirement: “LDS faculty also accept as a condition of employment the standards of conduct consistent with qualifying for temple privileges.”

- On 8 February 1996, soon after taking office, BYU President Merrill Bateman announced that:

The commissioner [of Church Education] will annually write a letter to the ecclesiastical leader of each Church member employed at BYU and all other Church Educational System entities, asking whether the person is currently eligible for a recommend. As in the past, a reasonable but limited time may be allowed when needed to restore eligibility.

SUNSTONE recently reported on the response to the most recent change (“Annual Worthiness Review Now Required for All BYU Faculty, SUNSTONE, June 1996). Along with these successive changes in contracts, there have been other new documents codifying university procedures, including the “Statement on Academic Freedom at BYU April 1, 1993” (the date struck some as ominous), one section of which lays out things faculty are not free to do while employed at BYU:

REASONABLE LIMITATIONS: It follows that the exercise of individual and institutional academic freedom must be a matter of reasonable limitations. In general, at BYU a limitation is reasonable when the faculty behavior or expression SERIOUSLY AND ADVERSELY affects the University mission or the Church. . . . Examples would include expression with students or in public that:

- contradicts or opposes, rather than analyzes or discusses, fundamental Church doctrine or policy;
- deliberately attacks or derides the Church or its general leaders; or
- violates the Honor Code because the expression is dishonest, illegal, unchaste, profane, or unduly disrespectful of others.

. . . The ultimate responsibility to determine harm to the University mission or the Church, however, remains vested in the University’s governing bodies—including the University president and central administration and, finally, the Board of Trustees.

These changes in documents governing faculty belief and be-

havior at BYU are facts. Their positive and/or negative effect on the university is a matter of interpretation. What follows is a sketchy, anecdotal chronicle and commentary, a counterweight to the one-sided accounts BYU's office of public relations presents to the public. This by no means pretends to be an exhaustive chronicle of every incident, but it does provide a sense of the on-going culture wars at BYU. It is drawn from many sources, each of which has its own context, both broader and more specific than the one I provide. I am especially indebted to the work done by Bryan Waterman and Brian Kagel on BYU ("The Lord's University: Freedom and Authority at Brigham Young University, 1985-1995," book manuscript), to the many documents available on the web site of the BYU chapter of the American Association of University Professors (<http://acs1.BYU.edu/~rushforths/aaup.html>), to thoughtful analyses of the directions BYU is taking by Omar Kadar ("Free Expression: The LDS Church and Brigham Young University," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, 26:3 [fall 1993]), Scott Abbott ("One Lord, One Faith, Two Universities: Tensions Between Religion' and Thought' at BYU," *SUNSTONE*, Sept. 1992), Paul Richards ("Academic Freedom at BYU: An Administrator's Perspective," remarks delivered 16 September 1993 at a B. H. Roberts Society meeting in Salt Lake City), and others in the pages of *SUNSTONE*, *Dialogue*, *Student Review*, and elsewhere, and to interviews with many members of the BYU faculty and administration. I, too, am an employee of BYU. I write this critique out of a sense of loyalty and while feeling a profound loss. As late as four or five years ago, BYU was still moving steadily to fulfill its unique promise as a Mormon university. That momentum has been squandered. Because BYU's administration has been active in punishing the messengers who point out stages of the university's demise, I write anonymously, feeling both cowardly and wise as I do so (cowardly, because others at equal risk have spoken out publicly; wise, because when I leave BYU I wish to do so on my own terms).

A BIAS AGAINST WOMEN'S STUDIES

It's okay to teach about feminism but not to advocate it.

A UNIVERSITY is complex, and it is difficult to know where to begin this story. Perhaps the following document on the treatment of women at BYU, prepared by a committee of the BYU chapter of the AAUP during the winter semester of 1996 and available on its web site, presents the range of problems as well as anything else.

March 1996

LIMITATIONS ON THE ACADEMIC FREEDOM OF WOMEN AT BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

Brigham Young University has a history of suppressing scholarship and artistic expressions representing the experience of women. The following list provides examples of some of the ways in which university officials have acted over the past several years to silence women faculty and staff and suppress their scholarship.

In 1992 the administration refused to hire candidate Barbara Bishop for a faculty appointment in the English Department, although she was the choice of the section, [department] chair, and college dean for the position and had the full support of her local ecclesiastical leaders. At the time she even headed the Primary in her ward. The reason the administration gave for not approving her hire was that 17 faculty members in the English Department (of a faculty of 75) did not vote in favor of hiring her. Bishop's scholarship dealt with the works of African American writer Zora Neal Hurston and other American women writers.

In 1992, the LDS Church celebrated the sesquicentennial of the Relief Society. In conjunction with that celebration, Professor Marie Cornwall, then the head of the BYU Women's Research Institute, organized a scholarly conference on the Relief Society. Because speakers at that conference criticized as well as praised the Relief Society, Professor Cornwall was called in and censured by University Provost Bruce Hafen for planning this conference and carrying it out.

In 1992, the organizing committee of the BYU Women's Conference chose as the keynote speaker for the 1993 conference Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, faithful Mormon woman, recent Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard*, and winner of a MacArthur Grant. Brigham Young University's board of trustees did not approve Ulrich to be a speaker for the women's conference. Although both she and her ecclesiastical leaders tried to find out why she was not approved, she was never given a reason. Nonetheless, the Church Museum of Art and History continued to display a copy of Ulrich's Pulitzer Prize in its display on the Relief Society.

In 1993, the board of trustees fired the chair of the BYU women's conference, Carol Lee Hawkins, from her position, even though during the six years she directed the conference, attendance almost doubled and the conference received an approval rating from participants who completed the exit questionnaire of over 90 percent. To explain the firing, the Board suggested only that a change of assignment was a good thing from time to time, as if this position were a Church assignment rather than a paid university administrative position and Hawkins's employment. Just after Carol Lee Hawkins was fired, a group of women's studies faculty from across the university met with University Provost Bruce Hafen and asked him about that action. He answered that Hawkins had not been fired, that she had indicated that she wanted a change in assignment, and that she was just moving to another position in the university. Hafen did nothing to help Hawkins secure another position.

In the summer of 1993 Provost Bruce Hafen tried

to keep faithful Mormon woman and historian Claudia Bushman from speaking in a week-long faculty seminar sponsored by the Dean of Honors and General Education, although her husband Professor Richard Bushman was approved to speak. When Hafen learned that the Bushmans had both already been invited to participate, he required that Honors Dean Harold Miller only advertise Richard Bushman.

In 1993 the university terminated Professor Cecilia Konchar Farr after her third-year review. Konchar Farr is a feminist activist who worked to educate people about violence against women, who helped establish the feminist activist student club VOICE on campus, and who took a public pro-Choice position, although she also said in her speech that she did not favor abortion and fully supported the LDS First Presidency's position on abortion. She also had the full support of her bishop and stake president as a faithful Mormon, worthy to participate in all Church ordinances. At first the university tried to represent Konchar Farr as an inadequate scholar and teacher, switched to unsatisfactory citizenship after an ad-hoc academic freedom committee published a comparison of her publications with those of others who had recently been promoted, and finally, after the appeal hearing, reached an agreement by which both sides were to say only that there were "irreconcilable differences" between them.

In 1994 candidate Marian Bishop Mumford was selected by the English Department, with the full approval of the department chair and the dean of the College of Humanities, for hire to the faculty of the BYU English Department. Her Ph.D. dissertation was an examination of women's journals, including the journal of Anne Frank, to demonstrate that women construct themselves most authentically in their journals, because they consider themselves to be the sole audience. A part of that study was to examine the ways in which Anne Frank wrote about her body as a way to give herself identity at least in language, in a culture that literally erased her from existence. Acting under the instructions of Provost Bruce Hafen, Chair Neal Lambert told Bishop Mumford that she would be hired only if she agreed to discontinue her current scholarship. The candidate declined to come to

Brigham Young University under those circumstances.

In 1994 and 1995 Joni Clarke was selected from a large pool of applicants as one of the two best candidates for an American literature faculty position in the English Department. She had the full support of her bishop and stake president and also associate academic vice president Alan Wilkins, who called her and interviewed her for over an hour to determine her worthiness to teach at BYU. Her research deals with Native American texts, particularly those by women. Provost Bruce Hafen did not approve her to be considered for hire.

In 1995 Dorice Elliot was also selected from a large pool of applicants as one of the two best candidates for a British literature faculty position in the English Department. Her research deals with 19th century British literature by women. She is greatly admired by her ecclesiastical leaders because of her work as the Relief Society president in her congregation. Provost Bruce Hafen did not approve her to be considered for hire.

The administration does not give reasons for its actions, but we may perhaps look at this as part of the pattern of exclusion or silencing of those who want to study women's experience from women's perspective.

In 1995 Professors Karen E. Gerdes and Martha N. Beck were forbidden from publishing the results of their study of the experiences of Mormon women survivors

of childhood sexual abuse who asked for help from their Mormon ecclesiastical leaders. In the majority of cases, the advice these victims received was damaging rather than helpful. Both professors have since left the university; the study appeared in the Spring 1996 issue of *Affilia, Journal of Women and Social Work* (Vol. 11, No. 1).

In April 1996 Katherine Kennedy was chosen for an English Department faculty appointment in Romanticism, the unanimous choice of the later British literature section and with almost unanimous support from the department. Kennedy was supported for hire by the dean and even the general authority who interviewed her, as well as by her local ecclesiastical leaders. But the administration rejected her. Kennedy's research examines images of mother-

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hood, including breast-feeding, in British Romantic poetry by women. Regarding the decision not to hire Kennedy, University Academic Vice President Alan Wilkins explained to the Department Advisory Council that the English Department could assume there was something about Kennedy's feminism that the administration did not approve of.

There is only one university lecture named after a woman, the Alice Louise Reynolds lecture. Money was raised to endow this lecture by Helen Stark, a strong feminist and well-known member of the Mormon community. She herself contributed approximately \$15,000 to the endowment fund. Stark died two years ago at the age of 89. In 1995 the committee selected Elouise Bell, a prominent, woman full [BYU] professor to deliver that lecture. The administration not only rejected Bell as the speaker; it informed the committee that Roger R. Keller, a male associate professor from the Department of Religion, would be the speaker. In 1996 the Alice Louise Reynolds lecture was not held.

For several years women candidates for faculty employment at Brigham Young University have been asked this question by the academic vice president: "If a general authority asked you not to publish your research, what would you do?" It has been suggested to the candidates that they must agree not to publish in such a case. This condition of employment undermines the position of new women faculty members at Brigham Young University. To be hired, they apparently must agree to let male ecclesiastical leaders who are not trained in their disciplines have final authority over the publication of their scholarship. They are offered no review process to determine the fairness or accuracy of the authority's request. Again, women are instructed that they must suppress their own perspectives on their own experience or research if a male authority so directs them.

These accounts of women at BYU can be multiplied and amplified. In interviews with general authorities and BYU administrators, single women are being asked repeatedly and pointedly whether they are lesbians. Elder Boyd Packer, speaking to the All-Church Coordinating Council on 18 May 1993, made the position of women scholars at BYU doubly tenuous when he claimed that "There are three areas where members of the Church, influenced by social and political unrest, are being caught up and led away. . . . The dangers I speak of come from the gay-lesbian movement, the feminist movement (both of which are relatively new), and the ever-present challenge from the so-called scholars or intellectuals." Provost Bruce Hafen paternally declared the kind of feminism approved of by BYU as "equity feminism." President Merrill Bateman told a gathering of BYU women faculty that "perhaps we have gone too far in encouraging women with children to work outside the home." He explained to the women that it's okay to teach about feminism, but not to advocate feminism; and to help

them understand, he made an analogy to evolution, which he said is also okay to teach about at BYU but not to advocate.

ACTIONS AND REACTIONS

Protest letters, academic creeds, and resignations.

THIS general pattern of silencing and controlling women is part of a larger picture in which both women and men are finding it increasingly difficult to do the things they thought they were hired to do. The dismissal of Cecilia Konchar Farr coincided with that of David Knowlton, assistant professor of anthropology, also up for his third-year review, and, like Konchar Farr, an outspoken and popular teacher who wrote about Mormon topics for *SUNSTONE*. In response to both incidents, thirty-three members of the BYU faculty published a letter in the *Salt Lake Tribune* in which they pointed out that

When we find ourselves threatened by the voices and ideas of others, we must ask ourselves why we are threatened and scrutinize our own behaviors and motives. It is always appropriate to question and challenge opposing ideas. It is not appropriate to denigrate, attack or attempt to silence a person who holds alternative ideas. Such behavior threatens the very nature of our university, which requires diversity without rancor among scholars dedicated to faithful intellectual pursuit. (5 July 1993.)

A few months earlier, shortly after the First Presidency's 1991 statement encouraging members of the Church not to take part in symposia that sponsor discussion of Church doctrines, members of the BYU sociology department drafted a letter to President Rex Lee that detailed ways the prohibition would keep them from pursuing scholarly interests important to themselves and the Church:

We wish to express concern over the possibility that disciplinary action, whether through ecclesiastical or university channels, might be taken against BYU faculty members for scholarly discussion of Mormonism. . . .

Some social scientists who gave presentations at the last Sunstone Symposium have been called in by their stake presidents and questioned about their participation. One presently faces an interview with a general authority. . . . Such actions must be viewed as a constraint on academic freedom, especially for LDS Church members whose employment depends on church standing. (See "BYU Memo Highlights Academic Freedom Issue," *SUNSTONE*, Feb. 1992.)

The sociologists' concern about ecclesiastical intervention in university matters was heightened by rumors of a "hit list" of faculty whom a member or members of BYU's board of trustees wanted removed. Provost Bruce Hafen denied repeatedly that there was such a list ("Academic Hit List Rumors Untrue, Provost Assures," *Daily Universe*, 22 July 1992). Insiders later said he was splitting hairs, that he had been told on the phone to fire certain people but that he hadn't been given a *written*

list.

Omar Kadar, formerly at BYU, and Scott Abbott, a current faculty member, read papers at the 1992 Sunstone Symposium about BYU. Kadar was pessimistic about the possibilities of a Church university and suggested the Church divest itself of BYU. Abbott was more optimistic, although he detailed serious problems with the general intellectual climate generated by Church and university leaders. For his trouble, Abbott's stake president took his temple recommend and refused to issue another for nearly three years.

In a case illustrating board and administration intervention into what are normally department and college affairs, George Schoemaker, after two, one-year appointments in the English department, was recommended for a tenure-track position by the department but was turned down by Provost Hafen and Church Commissioner of Education Henry B. Eyring because of a letter one of Schoemaker's students wrote to a general authority about a book used in his class, Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing*, and because they disapproved of his avowed feminism, his speaking at Sunstone, and his involvement with the Ad-Hoc Committee on Academic Freedom that defended Konchar Farr and Knowlton. From this time on, as partially documented in the AAUP's report on women at BYU cited above, the English department has been in virtual receivership, with Hafen or an academic vice president or a member of the board of trustees making all the hiring decisions.

One of the least publicized changes at BYU during this time was the dismantling of Honors and General Education as the intellectual center of the university. Under Dean Harold Miller and several stellar associate deans, Honors and GE sponsored eclectic and well-attended concert and lecture series, funded innovative classes (most notably a growing set of classes that had students work for two semesters on some combination of the culture, history, language, geology, botany, etc. of a city or country, and then, funded by Honors and GE, travel to the place—Bolivia and Vienna were two early sites—to conduct additional research and/or to do a service project), and each summer hosted one or two guest lecturers for week-long faculty seminars on philosophy and history, people like Terr Eagleton, Richard Rorty, Martha Nussbaum, Alan Bloom, and Richard and Claudia Bushman. In 1993, a new dean, Paul Cox, was appointed, and Honors and GE underwent several debilitating changes. Funding was dropped for the summer capstone experiences of the two-semester classes. Service learning was declared undesirable at BYU. The concert and lecture series were discontinued in favor of Sunday firesides. The

faculty seminars went by the board, replaced several summers later only by nuts-and-bolts seminars on teaching. To complete the retrenchment, volunteers for *Student Review*, an independent student newspaper not controlled by the administration, were no longer allowed to meet in the Maeser Building (home of Honors and GE), copies of *Student Review* were removed from the Honors reading room, and the Honors Student Council was disbanded. Miller left the university to take a job as provost of Waterford School in Salt Lake City.

Several of these cases drew the attention of the academic community at large. Critical articles appeared in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, and LDS faculty at other universities recorded their displeasure. Tom Hales, for example, then a University of Chicago assistant professor of mathematics being courted by the BYU math department and son of a member of the BYU board of trustees, wrote to President Rex Lee about academic freedom at BYU:

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—TOM HALES

There is widespread recognition that the free search for truth and its free exposition are essential to the academic enterprise. My professional code of ethics calls for me to oppose any policy that endangers those freedoms. Professors should be accorded greater freedoms and protections than ordinary citizens. In return they accept a higher standard of conduct. To cast a teacher as an official spokesperson or representative of the Church of Jesus Christ is to betray a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of the academic profession.

The issues that I have raised here are not hypothetical. It has been amply documented . . . that there have been certain abuses of procedure in recent months. (3 May 1993.)

Largely because of his concerns about academic freedom, Hales decided not to come to BYU, part of a growing group of disillusioned Mormon scholars who are desperately needed at BYU to replace the large percentage of the faculty that retires this decade. And within BYU, morale was declining precipitously.

At the close of his 1993 Distinguished Faculty Lecture (“Mathematical Parables,” copy from the math department), for instance, J. W. Cannon, a BYU mathematician, turned to the situation at BYU:

Unfortunately, at BYU we occasionally find a large streak of fear towards those who are different, toward those who disagree with us, fear that they will corrupt us, fear that BYU will lose its uniqueness. We fear that

secular truth will destroy moral truth. . . .

Here is my personal academic creed:

I will act with courage and not from fear—fear of what others may expect or think, fear of my own inadequacies.

I will speak freely, openly, publicly. I will remember what we have all experienced, namely, that our knowledge of truth, even revealed truth, proceeds by approximation according to our ability and experience and that difficult issues can be understood and resolved only in an atmosphere where the evidence—physical, spiritual, or intellectual—can be freely and openly discussed.

I will learn from those who do not agree with me. In particular, I will not impute bad motives to those who do not agree with me. I will instead examine their evidence, their arguments, and their conclusions and weigh each thoughtfully and carefully. . . .

I will not presume that because I control someone's wage that I have bought their loyalty. I will remember that loyalty can be earned but not bought, and that a wage buys only a share in people's time and in their dedication to what is good and right. . . .

Discouraged faculty began to leave BYU in response to the changing climate, including:

- Martha Bradley, history
- Tomi-Ann Roberts, psychology (like Konchar Farr, a faculty sponsor of VOICE)
- William Davis, German (after defending Konchar Farr, Roberts, and VOICE in the media)
- Harold Miller, psychology and dean of Honors and General Education
- William Evenson, physics and dean of Math and Science, since returned to BYU
- Bonnie Mitchell, sociology
- Karen Gerdes, social work
- Martha Nibley Beck, sociology
- Stan Albrecht, sociology and former academic vice president

NEW CASES

Dismissals and intimidations.

IN retrospect, 1992 and 1993 were watershed years for BYU. Marked ideologically by Elder Packer's three-pronged attack on feminists, homosexuals, and intellectuals and his personal demands of BYU administrators and department chairs that they take specific action to enforce that ideology, these administrators saw not only the loss of important members of the faculty and decisions by others not to join the faculty but also that the demands involved immense amounts of time and energy and morale as supporters of the controversial measures were called on to defend the university's actions and critics sacrificed time and risked reputations in a loyal fight for a university worthy of the name. As university regulations and procedures, most specifically the routinely gentle, third-year,

tenure-track review, were used to mask and legitimate orders by members of the board of trustees, the already tenuous process of faculty review in hiring was called into question and became an exercise in futility for many departments. The new academic-freedom document was immediately proven a sham.

In 1994 and 1995, the general trend toward more administrative control over departments and individuals continued, sparking the reestablishment of a BYU chapter of the AAUP in late 1994. Perhaps the most notable attenuation of academic freedom during this time occurred in the case of Brian Evenson. The following account is largely taken from a report written by Evenson's father, William E. Evenson, professor of physics and former academic vice president and college dean, for an AAUP evaluation:

Brian Evenson joined the Brigham Young University English Department faculty in January, 1994 as assistant professor. In August, 1994, Evenson's book of short stories, *Altmann's Tongue*, was published by Alfred A. Knopf.

On October 4, 1994, an anonymous student wrote a letter of complaint to an LDS Church leader or leaders about the violent images in the book and their incompatibility (in her view) with the teachings of the LDS Church.

On November 15, 1994, the English Department Chair, C. Jay Fox, and the Creative Writing Section Head, Douglas H. Thayer, met with Evenson and asked him to respond to the anonymous letter by the end of the week. It later became known that this discussion was initiated as the result of a meeting with the LDS Church Commissioner of Education and LDS Church General Authority, Elder Henry B. Eyring.

[as evident in this portion of a memo from Fox to Academic Vice President Todd A. Britsch, January 16, 1995:

Accompanying this memo is Brian Evenson's summary of the meeting I held with him and Doug Thayer (the creative writing section head) on November 15, 1994, which you requested. I met with Brian just a few days following the meeting with Elder Eyring on Nov. 9. . . . The bottom line is that he knows that this book is unacceptable coming from a BYU faculty member and that further publications like it will bring repercussions. . . .]

In January, 1995, Evenson was called in by his LDS Church stake president at the behest of the LDS area president and asked about the book.

Representatives of BYU's AAUP Chapter, including several literary scholars, met with Rex Lee to discuss what they thought were misrepresentations of Evenson's book. They pointed out, for example, that the title story "Altmann's Tongue," about justifications of violence, referred to the name Klaus Barbie, the Nazi "Butcher of Lyon," hid under in South America. Members of the group say that Lee was surprised and seemed to understand; but he was quoted several weeks later in the *Daily*

Universe to the effect that Evenson's prose was violent and evil and unacceptable at BYU.

On March 6, 1995, Evenson, accompanied by his father, met with BYU President Rex E. Lee, Provost Bruce C. Hafen, Jones, and Fox. Hafen and the others in that meeting denied that the anonymous letter was the source of the problem; it was a broader issue of appropriateness. They also denied that there had been any concerns raised by Church leaders, asserting that all the concerns came from within the university. In that meeting, Hafen put Evenson "on notice" that his work was not appropriate for a Church university, even though he would not indicate in what way the work violated university policies.

When Evenson . . . found that nothing he could say would affect the uninformed judgment of his work that would control his opportunities at BYU, he chose to leave and took a position at Oklahoma State University in August, 1995.

AS Evenson's case was approaching its end, Larry Young, an assistant professor of sociology who was being evaluated for tenure and promotion, was called in by Associate Academic Vice President Alan Wilkins and questioned about a "pattern of behavior" that concerned the administration. In the initial meeting, Wilkins identified three specific issues: Young had spoken at Sunstone symposiums, he was said to have worn an earring, and his scholarship in the sociology of religion made it impossible to determine "where his heart was at" with respect to the LDS church. As an illustration of the final area of concern, Wilkins noted Young's chapter in the recently published book *Contemporary Mormonism: Social Science Perspectives* (University of Illinois). For example, Wilkins noted that while Young's reference to the hegemonic nature of Mormon authority might be factually correct, it placed the Church in a negative light.

Wilkins also charged Young with sloppy scholarship with respect to quantitative analysis in the chapter—suggesting that Young sought to misconstrue facts concerning international Church activity rates in an effort to raise controversy. Young noted that his work on the Roman Catholic clergy decline had given him prior experience with being charged with having a hidden agenda on politically sensitive religious issues but that the methodological rigor of his work had always held up under such attacks. Young strongly challenged Wilkins' assessment, asking for specific limitations of the analysis that had not been acknowledged in the text of the chapter, and for in-

accuracies in the findings presented or alternative strategies to more effectively address the issue discussed. The matter was dropped.

Not at issue was the quality of Young's scholarship. Indeed, BYU had actively recruited Young prior to his entering the job market from his Ph.D. program and he had turned down job offers from other universities during his early years at BYU. In addition, his work on contemporary Catholicism and social scientific theories of religion have been published by the leading journals in his discipline and by academic presses ranging from the University of Wisconsin and the University of Illinois to Routledge and Oxford Universities. When Young made it clear that he would not accept a year or two delay in the promotion and tenure decision, he was promoted to associate professor within a matter of a few days of the initial meeting with Wilkins, but without continuing status (tenure).

Also not at issue in Young's case was the support of his ecclesiastical leaders, who had been questioned by Wilkins during the week following the initial meeting with Young. Young's bishop voiced strong support and appreciation for Young's contributions to his ward and neighborhood.

Throughout the four-month investigation that ensued, Young was told that his job at BYU was hanging in the balance and the university community was uncertain as to whether it should make a long-term commitment to him. At the same time, the administration was not saying that Young had done anything wrong and would not cite any offenses. Nevertheless, Young was asked to write a memo justifying anything he had ever written for *SUNSTONE* or *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*.

During the next several weeks, Young met repeatedly with Wilkins in an effort to obtain a decision concerning tenure. At the same time, Young told representatives from the AAUP, of which he was a member, that he felt that, given university's animosity toward the BYU chapter, he would be more effective in mounting a defense of his "heart" by working independently of the AAUP. In addition, Young asked several reporters from local newspapers and television stations who approached him concerning the investigation to ignore the story while it was still unresolved.

Young's primary defense came from senior members of his department, the dean of his college (Clayne Pope) and individuals from the Research Information Division and Church Education System of the LDS church. (Young had provided volunteer consultation to individuals in the Research Information Division concerning ongoing research projects and had taught graduate seminars and served on graduate committees of several Church Education System employees who had come to

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BYU to earn their Ph.D.s in sociology.) In addition, while Young said that he felt extremely compromised when asked to exhibit his spirituality and testimony in order to secure employment, he gave the administration a copy of a sacrament meeting talk he had given on the previous Easter Sunday in an effort to give them a sense of his spirituality that was not tainted by the investigation. Finally, he said that during every meeting with the administrators he sought to communicate his love for Christ and his students.

When he asked the administration for clarification concerning how the investigation process related to university procedures and policy, he was told that the conversations being held with him and others, as well as the information collection process, stood outside of university policy—in large measure because nothing Young had done could be identified as violating the university's academic freedom document or other policies, and no complaints from students or faculty had ever been lodged against Young. Nevertheless, Young was repeatedly told that the university was unwilling to grant him tenure and that they might very well dismiss him.

At one point, Wilkins suggested to Young that one area of concern was Young's growing national stature in the sociology of religion. Young had recently been elected to the council of the sociology of religion section of the American Sociological Association, and he was frequently asked to comment on contemporary religious issues by local and national media. Wilkins indicated that one of the administration's concerns was that Young's academic stature gave him the legitimacy to discuss matters of religion in a secular fashion that could be misconstrued by the general public or manipulated and sensationalized by the press. In addition, Wilkins indicated that the administration was nervous about what the tone of Young's writings would be after he had obtained tenure.

Finally, in early August, separate interviews were scheduled with Academic Vice President Todd Britsch, Provost Bruce Hafen, and Commissioner and now Apostle Henry B. Eyring. Young reported that his session with Vice President Britsch went well. He said he shared his feelings of both sadness and grief over the process and his perceptions of the costs being inflicted on the university as a whole. At times, both Britsch and Young were in tears. During the hour with Provost Hafen, Young reported that he was asked seven different times if "knowing what you now know, do you feel like you still belong at BYU?" In addition, Young reported that he was asked a number of questions by Provost Hafen that he felt were inappropriate for anyone but an ecclesiastical leader to ask, especially given university procedures for contacting Church leaders. Nevertheless, Young felt compelled to treat Hafen as an ecclesiastical leader and provide answers since his job was hanging in the balance and the investigation clearly was focusing on Young's religious values and beliefs. Finally, Young reported that his interview with Elder Eyring was enjoyable and spirit-filled. For example, Young was reported to have said, "When I told him that I loved Christ and I loved my students, I believe that Elder Eyring felt the genuineness and sincerity of my words." The morning following Young's appoint-

ment with Elder Eyring, he was finally awarded tenure.

During this time, at least three senior professors were asked by Rex Lee or Merrill Bateman to resign from the BYU faculty, including Samuel Rushforth (Botany) and two others. They were all told that the university was taking a new direction and that they would no longer be happy at BYU. None of the three has, as yet, resigned.

IN June 1996, assistant professor of English Gail Turley Houston was denied promotion and tenure. This time, in contrast to the Konchar Farr and Knowlton cases three years earlier, the administration did not try to make a case against her scholarship but faulted her for politicizing the classroom and speaking against established Church doctrines:

The genesis of our grave concerns and ultimate recommendations to deny continuing faculty status and rank advancement was the number and severity of occasions when your actions and words on and off campus, even following your third-year review, were perceived as harmful to tenets held by the Church and the university. We feel that not only have these activities failed to strengthen the moral vigor of the university, they have enervated its very fiber.

The BYU chapter of the AAUP mounted a defense of Houston, most notably with the documents pertaining to the case they made public on their web site. In their annotated version of the letter denying tenure, they state:

As we see it, it is BYU's mission to encourage better and deeper thinking about matters crucial to us all, including how our culture supports and inhibits women as they construct their lives. The debates and discussions necessary for progress are impossible in an environment in which every sentence spoken by a faculty member is evaluated for doctrinal purity, in which fear becomes the major motivation, in which timidity becomes a virtue, in which risk and discovery are impossible. "Trust," President Hinckley said, "comes from the top down." And without trust, this university will not fulfill its mission.

Although Houston has accepted a position at the University of New Mexico, she is appealing her case. Unfortunately, under BYU regulations, the same administrators who denied tenure in the first place also hear the appeal.

IN fairness to now former Provost Bruce Hafen, who in so many accounts is the villain, it is important to recognize that in most of these cases he was simply following instructions (overt or implied). Associates of his report that a number of actions attributed to him were extremely painful for him, but his first loyalty was always to the Brethren over him. Reportedly, it is his belief that one can argue and defend a position, but that once the Brethren signal a different course, the only acceptable choice is to carry it out. Hafen was sustained as a seventy at the April 1996 general conference and left the university this summer to serve in an area presidency.

Considering the change in university presidents and Hafen's

departure, the persistence and escalation of religious scrutiny of current and prospective faculty makes it very clear that this campaign is directed from outside the university from individuals the faculty have no access to.

FIRST THINGS LAST

*Can one be a loyal general authority
and a good university president?*

I SHALL end this chronicle, a tragic story for those, like myself, who have spent their lives and careers in the service of our Church's university, with a selective account of Merrill Bateman's first seven months as president of the university.

In an early interview, President Bateman declared that at BYU there would be no room for "advocates for the adversary." In subsequent months, he has continued this kind of divisive, suspicious thinking, routinely asking his vice presidents, for example, when discussion turns to a member of the faculty: "Is s/he one of us?" Clearly, Bateman came to BYU with marching orders.

An instructive incident occurred during the week the university hosted a large group of prospective donors to the "Lighting the Way" capital campaign in early April 1996. On a Monday, the women's group VOICE hung its annual "Clothesline" in the garden court of the Wilkinson Center, part of a national art therapy campaign where victims of abuse express their private feelings in public. The display had rows of T-shirts bearing descriptions of violence done to women, statements of personal hurt, a few of which implicated bishops and stake presidents. According to the 4 August *Salt Lake Tribune*, one T-shirt said, "SUICIDE can seem better than living (?) through a temple marriage!" The project was approved at various levels by the appropriate administrators, who asked that several of the shirts not be included, and VOICE members complied. On Friday morning, the last day of the week-long exhibit, reportedly after a flood of protesting letters, calls, and faxes from the conservative Eagle Forum and the conservative student "Dittohead Club," Bateman burst into the courtyard and initially instructed faculty advisors Tim Heaton and Brandie Siegfried to have the exhibit taken down immediately. When Siegfried invited him to walk through the exhibit, he refused. Instead, he focused on two offending T-shirts, including the one quoted above. Siegfried asked him to try to understand their purpose. She pointed out the educational panels that explained the shirts and the reasons for the explicit language. She noted the group's stated support for the Church, even if they felt abused

by a leader exercising unrighteous dominion. Bateman, who had never met Siegfried before, told her that he could see through the scheme and that he knew what her real agenda was. Some of the women students began to cry. Alton Wade, Student Life vice president, drew Bateman aside. Finally, an agreement was reached to leave up the Clothesline for the few remaining hours, after removing all shirts referring to bishops and stake presidents. Several students and faculty members who were present or who heard about the incident second-hand wrote letters of protest to Bateman, accusing him of revisiting the same patriarchal violence on the women from which they were trying to heal. Siegfried will be up for her third-year review in 1996-97.

One of Bateman's recurring themes as he has spoken about BYU has been moral relativism. Although he has said such silly things as that moral relativism will bring us to the brink of chaos as it introduces "approximate spelling" and does away with college entrance exams (speech to the Provo/Orem Chamber of Commerce, reported in the *Daily Herald*, 8 June 1996), he has other issues as well, best illustrated perhaps in the address he gave at his inauguration, "Inaugural Response." One of the ironies of the speech is that during the very days his administration was deciding to fire Gail Houston for politicizing her classes as a feminist, Bateman gave a politically charged speech, one section of which is the following simple-minded and self-serving account of the complex web of twentieth-century thought:

The second concern is the moral relativism spreading throughout higher education both in America and abroad. Although higher education was secularized during the past century, there was still faith in reason and knowledge through the 1960s and into the 1970s. Absolute religious truths had been largely rejected by the world long before the 1970s, but scientific absolutes were still in vogue. During the past two decades, however, a

number of well-known educators have begun to denigrate truth, knowledge, and objectivity. The driving theory is a radical relativism and skepticism that rejects any idea of truth or knowledge. There is no God. There are no absolute truths—only that which is politically useful. Those associated with this movement refuse even to aspire to truth on the basis that it is unattainable and undesirable—the latter because the search for truth is assumed to be authoritarian and repressive by nature. The movement is a by-product of

"I WILL
learn from those
who disagree with
me. I will not
impute bad motives
to those who do not
agree with me.
I will remember
that loyalty can be
earned but not
bought."

—J. W. CANNON

the politicization process that began after World War II. The premise is no truth, no facts, no objectivity—only will and power. The slogan is that “everything is political” (Gertrude Himmelfarb, “A Call to Counterrevolution,” *First Things*, no. 59 [January 1996]:18). The result is characterized by Dostoyevsky’s Ivan Karamazov, who in effect said, “If God does not exist, everything is permitted.”

If university scholars reject the notion of “truth,” there is no basis for intellectual and moral integrity. Secularism becomes a creed that is no longer neutral but hostile to religion. The university becomes a politicized institution that is at the mercy and whims of various interest groups. Tolerance is encouraged unless one’s ideas are different. The word diversity is becoming a code word for uniformity. Universities are encouraged to be diverse from within but not from without.

Some may bristle at my calling this account “simple-minded” (the late Alan Bloom, for example, whose book *The Closing of the American Mind* blames all our societal ills on Nietzsche’s influence on our universities, or anti-intellectual right-wing Irving Kristol, or ex-college professor Newt Gingrich), but when an ex-CEO of Mars Candy Company becomes a university president and mouths reactionary slogans of the religious right, having never read the thought he so blithely and second-handedly dismisses, it is not simply simple minded, but destructive to our university.

A sadder irony, however, is that this section of Bateman’s speech quoted above is, to put it bluntly, plagiarized. It is not a word-for-word lifting of text, but it is a sequential summary of another person’s ideas and writing without attribution. While heaping scorn on the moral relativists who bring us approximate spelling and university politics, Bateman, in his inaugural address, disregarded one of the most fundamental tenets of academic life: proper attribution, something for which faculty at most universities are summarily dismissed. Although he carefully cited Eugene Bramhall, John Taylor, Ernest L. Wilkinson, Franklin S. Harris, J. Reuben Clark, and “the editor of a Catholic publication,” no reader of the printed version of the talk or member of the audience who heard it delivered could possibly know that Gertrude Himmelfarb was the author of the entire section on moral relativism. The printed version attributes the words “everything is political” to Himmelfarb, but Bateman failed to note that the rest of the discussion is her intellectual property as well. (For a detailed look, compare the parallels reproduced on this page between Himmelfarb’s address, given at the inauguration of Baylor University’s new president in September 1995, and Bateman’s.)

BYU’s “Academic Honesty Policy” states that:

Intentional plagiarism is a form of intellectual theft that is in violation of the Honor Code and may subject the student to appropriate disciplinary action. . . . Inadvertent plagiarism, while not in violation of the Honor Code, is nevertheless a form of intellectual carelessness which is unacceptable in the academic

Gertrude Himmelfarb: The Christian University: A Call to Counterrevolution	Merrill Bateman: “Inaugural Response”
Himmelfarb spends the first page of her four-page essay establishing that <i>the secularization of the university</i> that took place in this century was a product of culture and not science. (16)	<i>Although higher education was secularized during the past century</i>
<i>A quarter of a century ago, the sociologist Robert Nisbet wrote a book with the memorable title, The Degradation of the Academic Dogma. To readers fresh from the dramatic events of the sixties—the student uprisings at Berkeley and other universities—Nisbet reminded them of the “dogma,” as he called it, that had sustained the university for centuries: the “faith” (again, this was his word) in reason and knowledge, in the rational, dispassionate search for truth, and in the dissemination of knowledge for the sake of knowledge. (18)</i>	<i>there was still faith in reason and knowledge through the 1960s and into the 1970s.</i> <i>Absolute religious truths had been largely rejected by the world long before the 1970s, but scientific absolutes were still in vogue.</i>
<i>Today many eminent professors in some of our most esteemed universities disparage the ideas of truth, knowledge, and objectivity as naive or disingenuous at best, as fraudulent and despotic at worst. (18)</i>	<i>During the past two decades, however, a number of well-known educators have begun to denigrate truth, knowledge, and objectivity.</i>
<i>The animating spirit of postmodernism is a radical relativism and skepticism that rejects any idea of truth, knowledge, or objectivity. (18)</i>	<i>The driving theory is a radical relativism and skepticism that rejects any idea of truth or knowledge.</i> <i>There is no God. There are no absolute truths—only that which is politically useful.</i>
<i>More important, it [postmodernism] refuses even to aspire to such ideas, on the ground that they are not only unattainable but undesirable—that they are, by their very nature, authoritarian and repressive. (18)</i>	<i>Those associated with this movement refuse even to aspire to truth on the basis that it is unattainable and undesirable—the latter because the search for truth is assumed to be authoritarian and repressive by nature.</i>
<i>After World War II, with the vast increase in the student population and the infusion of large sums of government money, the university acquired new functions, among them the solving of society’s problems. . . . Thus the socially conscious university inevitably became a highly politicized one. (17)</i>	<i>The movement is a by-product of the politicization process that began after World War II.</i>

Gertrude Himmelfarb:	Merrill Bateman:
<i>If there is no truth, no facts, no objectivity, there is only will and power. (18)</i>	<i>The premise is no truth, no facts, no objectivity—only will and power.</i>
<i>"Everything is political," the popular slogan has it. (18)</i>	<i>The slogan is that "everything is political" (Gertrude Himmelfarb, "A Call to Counterrevolution," <i>First Things</i>, no. 59 [January 1996]:18).</i>
<i>"Nothing is true; everything is permitted"—that was Nietzsche's definition of freedom. (19)</i>	<i>The result is characterized by Dostoyevsky's Ivan Karamazov, who in effect said, "If God does not exist, everything is permitted" (see Fyodor Dostoyevsky, <i>The Brothers Karamazov</i>, Part 1, Book 2, Chapter 6).</i>
<i>"Intellectual honor," "moral life"—these expressions do not come trippingly to the tongue today. Yet these words and the ideas they signify—truth, knowledge, and objectivity—are the only guarantees of the intellectual and moral integrity of the university. (19)</i>	<i>If university scholars reject the notion of "truth," there is no basis for intellectual and moral integrity.</i>
<i>It is now not merely a secular institution but a secularist one, propagating secularism as a creed, a creed that is not neutral as among religions but is hostile to all religions, indeed to religion itself. (19)</i>	<i>Secularism becomes a creed that is no longer neutral but hostile to religion.</i>
<i>It is also a highly politicized institution; no longer subject to any religious authority, the university is at the mercy of the whims and wills of interest groups and ideologies. (19)</i>	<i>The university becomes a politicized institution that is at the mercy and whims of various interest groups.</i> <i>Tolerance is encouraged unless one's ideas are different. The word diversity is becoming a code word for uniformity. Universities are encouraged to be diverse from within but not from without.</i>
Bateman continues his speech with an awkward logical transition, drawing on two ideas from the article following Himmelfarb's in the January 1996 issue of <i>First Things</i> :	
<i>The faculty determines the character of the university. Ex Corde Ecclesiae says a majority of the faculty must be Catholic, but that hardly seems sufficient. (Richard John Neuhaus, "The Christian University: Eleven Theses," page 21)</i>	<i>A question arises. If the large majority of faculty at a religious university are of the same faith, is there enough internal diversity by the world's standards?</i>
<i>If the life of the mind is not understood as an integral part of Christian discipleship and mission, the term "Christian university" is indeed, as some claim, an oxymoron. (Neuhaus, 21)</i>	<i>For some educators, a religious university is a contradiction in terms.</i>

community. Plagiarism of any kind is completely contrary to the established practices of higher education where all members of the University are expected to acknowledge the original intellectual work of others that is included in one's own work.

It is possible to become outraged at this apparent flagrant violation of university policy. Undoubtedly, the public-relations apparatus of the university will explain it as an unfortunate oversight or as the mistake of an editor or as a computer glitch or as the result of mixed up notes (excuses that students invariably try when accused of plagiarism). The messenger, sadly SUNSTONE, will certainly be reviled. And in the process, students may learn a debilitating cynicism.

I don't want to blow this lapse of judgment out of proportion; nevertheless, it does seem emblematic of what is happening at the university. I am willing to accept that President Bateman's ethical breach was without malice, perhaps even innocent. Surely, such appropriation is done daily in his business world where executives, or their staff, routinely slap together talks for chamber-of-commerce type gatherings. But it is easier to excuse such innocent behavior in a college freshman than a university president. At any university, especially one which so consciously strives to meet the high standards of the Academy while maintaining its unique religious mission, it is surprising that its president is, at best, naive about a fundamental ethical tenet of both the academic and the religious communities. Such actions make me and many other faculty worried over the administration's ability to understand our concerns about the continuing vitality of intellectual life at BYU.

The following words, which ring so false as they were applied to Gail Houston, seem made for this case of plagiarism by our university president: "We feel that not only have these activities failed to strengthen the moral vigor of the university, they have enervated its very fiber." First things have been put last.

THE FUTURE

Some say that without vigilant care, BYU will follow other former religious universities on the path to secularism. But over-zealousness can also lead to the same result.

WE now have a university administration, led by a general authority, that is very competent in implementing the will of the board of trustees, but clumsy when it comes to the dynamics of a university where differing views must be hosted and tolerated and where academic standards are modeled and policed.

One of the most disturbing things about these recent events is that they are cumulative. A few years ago, BYU had reached a stature that allowed it to play on a relatively level field with the better universities in this country. One of the best measures of this was that we were no longer competing with second-rate state universities for the faculty we really wanted to hire, but with Chicago, Michigan, Yale, and Columbia. And, in many instances, when we went head-to-head with these institutions,

we won. I fear that that status is diminishing. A few years ago, some faculty could express dismay over restrictions on participating in "certain forums," but now there is a general pattern of intimidation for anything that does not reflect the full party line. If a faculty member can be "called in" because his name appears in the local newspaper in the context of defending a valued colleague who is being dismissed without apparent cause, or for commenting on a "creationist" speech given at a local Protestant church, or if one's work becomes an issue because of postmodern or feminist methodologies or content, then it is difficult to still qualify for the title "university." And if this intimidation is done primarily in the name of religion, then our religion becomes narrow and petty, suspicious and fearful, focusing on means instead of ends.

BYU wants to be a "religious university," a "Mormon university," but in over-stressing a narrow view of the religious and Mormon half, we may lose the university half. I can think of no better way to end my litany of despair than to turn to a *First Things* article that appeared with the spate of articles on the secularization of American universities so often cited by BYU administrators and members of the board of trustees—James Burtchael's "The Decline and Fall of the Christian College" (April 1991). Burtchael gives several reasons for Vanderbilt

University's gradual transformation from a Methodist-supported institution into the secular university it is today (cited also in Scott Abbott's article on BYU), words that feel prescient in light of the situation at BYU today:

There was a period of great intellectual turbulence, when fresh findings and methods and disciplines raised fearful philosophical challenges to theology. Spokesmen for the church's concerns, by a compound of incapacity and animosity, exacerbated the apparent hostility between the church and rigorous scholarship. . . .

The . . . angry General Conference . . . had narrowed its view of what it meant to be Methodist to things like a religious test for all faculty and disciplinary control over students. Absent any larger vision of Christian education, this program was unrelievedly negative, and assured the educational reformers that the church had no stomach for ambitious scholarship.

And finally, as a result, an effective bond to the Methodist Church instinctively evoked references to bigotry, exclusion, narrowness, sectarianism, and selfishness. ☐



THE LAST TIME

The last time is faint now
like carnival sounds, black and white TV,
perfume at a prom.
The details are everything,
since how they go together and where I come in
are gone.

On the screen a man with braided hair dances.
With the sound down he is so much puppet,
frantic mime waiting for godot.

I remember expecting this—
lacing all those Kool-aid days
for this one drink, looking at the end
from the beginning, leaving before I got here.
All the same, here I am
listening to the last cars
driving home from the Boulevard, the lights in town
just brighter than the stars, but fading.

The neon in the window seems to crackle with the breeze
as if someone walked there softly.
But even in this light, I know better than to look,
hoping to see ghosts.

—C. WADE BENTLEY