

The Mormon History Conspiracy

by Corbin Volluz | Sep 8, 2015 | Featured, General authorities, Honesty, Truth | 223 comments



For generations, the LDS Church has engaged in a well-orchestrated conspiracy to suppress troubling aspects of its history. With the advent of the Internet, however, more and more Mormons are finding these troubling facts and facing a faith crisis.

For many, worse than discovering these difficult truths is wrestling with the fact their Church has deceived them; that their leaders have hidden from them a good deal of important information while simultaneously requiring total commitment to the institution and to the leaders themselves; that while Church leaders have demanded complete honesty from members, the leaders have been playing by a different set of rules.

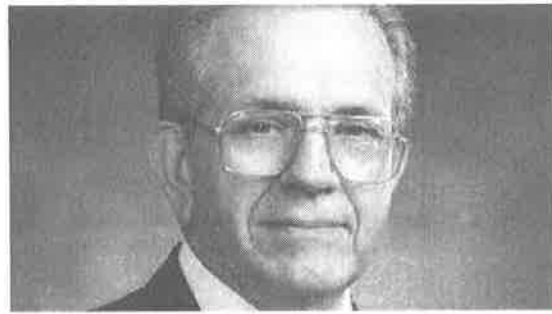
This has led to a mass disaffection from the Church, and has caused more than one member to exclaim, "I am not suffering from a faith crisis. The Church is suffering from a truth crisis."

Now that the cat is out of the bag, one might think Church leaders would take responsibility for their actions that have caused so much spiritual and emotional devastation.

But instead, we find Church leaders casting about to place the blame for their suppression of Church history on anyone and everyone but themselves. In order to avoid taking responsibility for their cover-up of Church history, leaders are now engaged in a second cover-up to hide their role in the first cover-up.

The Conspiracy Blueprint

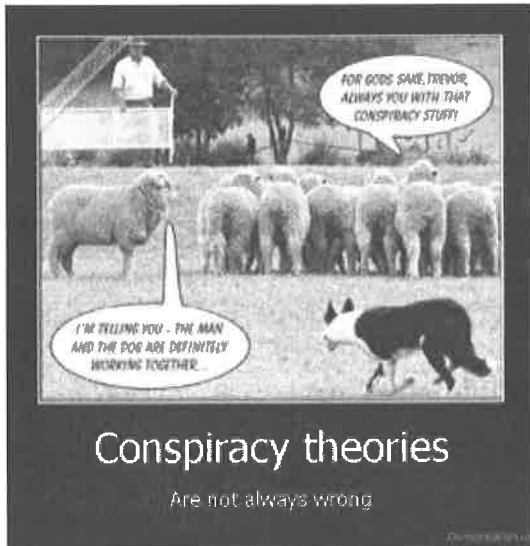
For proof certain the Church history cover-up came from top levels of the LDS Church, we need look no further than Elder Boyd K. Packer's address, *The Mantle is Far, Far Greater than the Intellect*.



The year is 1981. Elder Packer is addressing a large group of seminary teachers, institute instructors and BYU religion professors. He is also addressing Church scholars and historians. The subject is how to "properly" teach Church history.

Elder Packer is aware of recent publications revealing troubling aspects of Church history. Elder Packer expresses his familiarity with these inconvenient truths. He directs all Church teachers to engage in a conspiracy to tell only one side of Church history, and if they are researchers and writers, to write about only one side of Church history—the faith-promoting side.

Any troubling parts of the history are to be suppressed; they are not to be talked about nor written about. Elder Packer acknowledges that teaching troubling parts of the history will "destroy faith."



Elder Packer goes further. He threatens any who do not do as he says with eternal consequences. He also gently hints that those who disobey him may find themselves looking for a new job.

Elder Packer decries an unnamed historian who was admitted into the "restricted" section of Church archives, made notes about what he found there, and later published on it. Elder Packer does not explain why the archives have a "restricted" section containing troubling information, nor does he specify what was discovered.

Elder Packer admonishes historians to not publish something just because it is already in print. He says that the first publication may go out of print and if the information in the first publication is not printed elsewhere, it may be forgotten.

Elder Packer claims those who mention the troubling history are in league with "the adversary." In Elder Packer's world view, it is Satan who wants the whole story told and God who deals in half-truths.

Then there is the money quote:

There is a temptation for the writer or the teacher of Church history to want to tell everything, whether it is worthy or faith promoting or not. Some things that are true are not very useful.

The remarkable thing about this talk is not just what it contains, but that it was ever stated publicly by a top-leader of the LDS Church. It is apparent that only a person completely certain of the justness of his cause would go public with this blueprint for hiding Church history from the

members . . . and only a person completely oblivious to how it sounds to anyone else.

Regardless, there can be no question that the LDS Church has been involved in promoting and carrying out a conspiracy to suppress the truth from its members, and that this conspiracy emanates from top Church leadership. The leaders cannot avoid responsibility. Their fingerprints are all over it.

Church Manuals

Since 1981 when Elder Packer gave his address, the correlation program has kicked into high gear. The Church Correlation Committee is responsible for vetting any and all manuals used for teaching in church, seminary, institute and BYU religion classes. The CCC also reviews all articles in Church magazines and even General Conference talks to make sure they are doctrinally pure.

Church Public Affairs Head Michael Otterson recently stated that even “routine” news stories “cannot be posted without approval from Church Correlation, which has the responsibility to ensure that all Church communications are doctrinally sound and consistent.”



And who is in charge of the CCC? According to a current Church manual, “The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve oversee correlation in the Church.”

This conspiracy goes all the way to the top.

The manuals have long been devoted to presenting exclusively the whitewashed version of Church history dictated in 1981 by Elder Packer. Teachers are directed to use solely “Church approved” manuals. If teachers feel the need to go outside the manual, they should use only other “Church approved” materials.

In other words, teachers should use only correlated materials to supplement the correlated materials.

This procedure ensures compliance with Elder Packer’s protocol of suppressing troubling history from members.

Anti-Mormon Literature

Church leaders have historically discouraged members from reading “anti-Mormon” literature. Though Church leaders seldom address the criticisms themselves, they have assured members that such literature contains nothing but “slander and false declarations,” not to mention “malicious and ridiculous statements.”

The message was clear—Anti-Mormon literature was full of falsehoods and the leadership would not stoop to addressing them. Members should avoid anti-Mormon lies and listen only to Church leaders and their correlated curricula.

But fate has played out a strange reversal. Because the Internet has provided easy access to the troubling history the Church has tried so long to suppress, the Church has been dragged kicking



and screaming to the transparency table. As a direct result, the Church has been forced to post on its own website over the past two years a series of essays that largely admit the truth of what the anti-Mormons have been saying all along.

In retrospect, we can see the leadership's unwillingness to specifically mention any of the "malicious and ridiculous statements" contained in the anti-Mormon literature was likely due less to their distaste for contention, and more because the lion's share of the anti-Mormon "lies" were actually the truth the LDS Church sought to suppress.

And the Church has not been reticent about disciplining those who violated the Church's mandate to suppress its troubling history. This has led to the unusual circumstance that a number of scholars and historians have been excommunicated for publishing what the Church now admits is true.

Many Mormons confronted with anti-Mormon claims denounced them as lies. Of course they did. Their leaders told them they were lies. And they trusted their leaders. Now those same Mormons find out the anti-Mormon claims were not lies after all, but were actually true. And that the leaders of their church were the ones doing the deceiving.

It is little wonder this has led to the Church hemorrhaging members in record numbers.

The Blame Game

Now that members are increasingly discovering they have been deceived by their leaders, many feel betrayed. Some wonder what else the Church may be hiding.

So what does the Church do? Does the Church explain leaders were only doing what they thought best for members by keeping this information from them? Does the Church apologize and pledge never to do it again? Does the Church vow to be completely transparent in the future?

Well, actually no.

Instead, the Church is presently engaging in a second-cover up to hide the Church's involvement in the first cover-up. Instead of taking responsibility for their actions, Church leaders are blaming anyone and everyone they possibly can other than themselves. Here are a few examples.



Blaming the Victim

Blaming the victim is never a classy move. But it is apparently not beneath the Church.

Not long ago, members who violated the counsel to avoid anti-Mormon literature, and were disturbed by what they learned, were blamed for **reading too much**. Now that the Church has

admitted the truth of many anti-Mormon claims, members who are troubled are blamed for **not reading enough**.

I'm serious.

Elder D. Todd Christofferson said in 2013 that the "expanding access" we have to Church history raises "new questions," and that it is not "realistic" to expect answers to all of them. He then warns not to "form conclusions based on unexamined assertions or incomplete research," and admonishes, "Don't study Church history too little."

Here troubled members are subtly blamed for: (1) not being "realistic" in expecting answers to some questions; (2) coming to incorrect conclusions because they haven't examined their assertions or done enough research; and, (3) not studying Church history enough.

Offensive as this is, Elder Christofferson tops himself in a breathtaking sentence regarding members with issues about Church history:

"They sometimes accuse the Church of hiding something because they only recently found or heard about it."

Why on earth would anybody think the Church was hiding anything? Is it possibly because that is exactly what the Church has been doing for decades?



But note that Elder Christofferson doesn't actually **say** the Church has not been hiding anything. He just leaves that impression. Is this another in a long list of "carefully worded denials" by Church leaders?

Elder Christofferson also implies the fault is with the member who "only recently found or heard about" the troubling information. Clearly they didn't study enough.

But worst of all, Elder Christofferson blames members for finding the history Church leaders have hid from them. Something is very wrong with this picture.

Blaming Lack of Faith

A December 2014 Ensign article addresses doubts Latter-day Saints have from learning about Church history. But it doesn't attempt to answer the questions. At least not directly. Instead, it blames members for not having enough faith in God:

*"What do we do when doubt seeps into our hearts? Are there really answers to those hard questions? Yes, there are. In fact, all the answers—all the right answers—depend on the answer to just one question: **do I trust God above everyone else?**"*

An outsider reading this would wonder what on earth trusting God has to do with doubts about

Church history. But this is Mormon code-speak. When the article talks about trusting God, it really means trusting Church leaders. The unstated assumption understood by virtually all Mormons is that because Church leaders are prophets, they speak for God. They do what God tells them to do, and say what God tells them to say. Questioning leaders is therefore identical to questioning God. Not trusting leaders is tantamount to not trusting God.

So when the Ensign says there is just one question you have to answer in order to resolve all the other hard questions—"Do I trust God above everyone else?"—it really means, "Do I trust Church leaders above everyone else?" As long as you believe what current Church leaders tell you to believe, you don't have to be bothered with all those pesky questions about what happened in Church history. Your doubts will magically vanish.



More insidiously, this article again blames the members who have doubts and questions. Such Mormons don't trust God. Such Mormons don't have enough faith. And such Mormons may now be conveniently dismissed and marginalized without ever having to say a word about the Church history that is actually giving them the doubts in the first place.

Blaming Church Historians

We have seen that Church historians have been directed by Church leadership to suppress negative aspects of Church history and present only the "faith-promoting" side. By and large, that is exactly what they have done. Church historians work for the Church so they better do what they are told if they expect to keep their job. There are those who have not done so and ended up pounding the pavement.

It would be a strange thing if the Church turned around and blamed its own historians for hiding the history. Yes, it would be strange. But that is what is happening.

In what has come to be called The Swedish Rescue, Church historians Marlin Jensen and Richard Turley made an unprecedented trip to Sweden in 2010 to try to resolve concerns of an increasing number of members relating to Church history.

Several angry Mormon Swedes voiced their concerns. A common theme involved why the Church had deceived them by hiding information and intentionally misrepresenting historical events.

Richard Turley responded that "each generation retells the story according to their own circumstances." (Transcript, pp. 27-28; or 1:09 of the audio.)

This was met with the following question so trenchant its power survives the fact it was asked by a Swede for whom English is a second language:

"But we are led by revelation, the Church, so I mean, shouldn't, then, the leaders correct so that not people every generation change the story? Or can we say this for every subject in the



Church?"

Backed into a corner, Richard Turley incredibly threw himself and all other Church historians under the bus. He took a bullet for the prophet:

"Much of what you get about history comes from historians; from the people like me who do the best they can under the circumstances of their time. And then somebody else comes along later, with new discoveries, new documents, and they rewrite it, okay?"

*So it's—**Don't put the responsibility on the prophet; put it on ordinary people like me who do the best we know how to***

do it. But somebody will come along and do it better."

With answers like these, it is no wonder the Swedish Rescue was less than a rousing success. Richard Turley claims Church leaders shouldn't be blamed for hiding history. Instead, Church historians should be blamed for hiding history . . . the way Church leaders told them to.

Even though Church leaders were clearly responsible for the Church history cover-up, a second cover-up is under way to keep Mormons from finding out about the first cover-up.

Blaming Artists

In next month's Ensign, the Church will formally admit that Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon by placing a seer stone in a hat.

This raises a problem. For decades, the Church repeatedly published artwork and video of the Book of Mormon translation showing Joseph Smith studying the gold plates themselves. This in spite of the fact no witness describes the translation this way.

A picture is worth a thousand words, and an entire generation of Latter-day Saints has grown up and grown old believing the Church approved artwork and film was historically accurate. Now the Church is formally admitting this is not the case.

What to do? What to do?

Will the Church admit it intentionally misrepresented the translation process in art and film? Not bloody likely.



The Church knows its artistic misrepresentation of Mormon history is a problem for many members. (It was actually this very issue that led to the heated exchange at the Swedish Rescue quoted above.) That is why next month's Ensign addresses the issue, though perhaps less than convincingly. It blames the artists.

“Over the years, artists have sought to portray the Book of Mormon translation, showing the participants in many settings and poses with different material objects. **Each artistic interpretation is based upon its artist’s own views, research, and imagination, sometimes aided by input and direction from others.**”

But blaming the artists will not do. First, Michael Otterson has already made it clear the Correlation Committee makes sure anything published by the Church is “doctrinally sound and consistent.” Are we to think Church correlation applies to everything other than art and film?

And we seem to be dealing with yet another “carefully worded denial.” Note that the new Ensign article mentions the “artistic interpretation” is “sometimes aided by input and direction from others.”



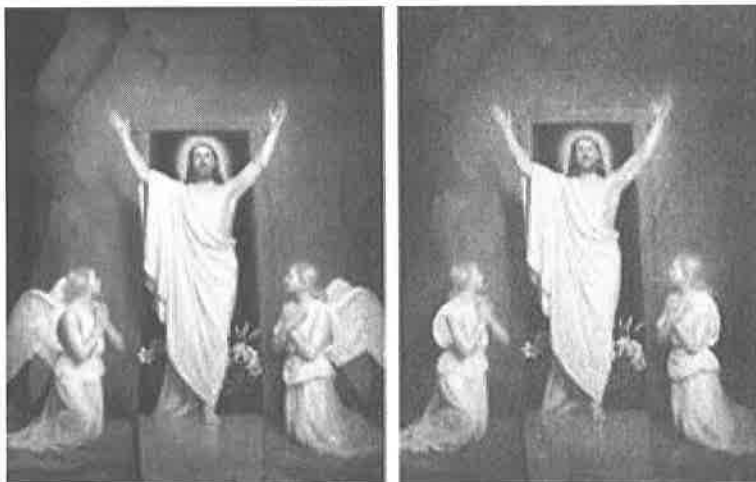
Who might these “others” be? We already know the answer is the Correlation Committee, though for some reason the article is bashful about saying so. And what might this “input and direction” consist of? Again the article doesn’t want to be precise, but we already know that the “input and direction” is given to make sure the official artwork is “doctrinally sound and consistent.”

In other words, any artwork contained in official Church publications is vetted to make sure it correctly represents the doctrinal position of the Church. And the vetting takes place under the direction of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve. With the result that nothing gets published without approval of top Church leadership.

It is therefore hard to see how anybody other than Church leaders can be blamed for false and misleading material being published by the Church, whether that material is expressed in word, art or film.

The new Ensign article includes a number of these familiar, if inaccurate, depictions of Joseph Smith translating the Book of Mormon; only now taking care to title each as “Artist’s rendition of . . .,” or “Artist’s portrayal of . . .,” or “Artist’s depiction of . . .”

And finally, we must not overlook the fact that Church Correlation will modify even classic pieces of art to conform to Mormon doctrine. When the Ensign published Carl Henrich Bloch’s masterpiece, “The Resurrection” in December, 2011, the Church removed the wings from the angels. The Church even went so far as to add shoulder caps to the angels’ tunics. Presumably this is



Can you spot the differences between the original and the Ensign version?

because they are female angels, and the Church added the shoulder caps to preserve their modesty. Jesus, on the other hand, gets away with showing a lot more skin.

The bottom line is this—Are we really expected to believe that the same Church that modifies famous pieces of art to conform to its notions of doctrinal correctness would allow depictions of Joseph Smith translating the Book of Mormon to be published in official Church venues without similar scrutiny?

How can the Church expect us to blame the artists when any depictions must go through the correlation sausage-grinder before seeing the light of day? It would make as much sense as blaming Carl Henreich Bloch for painting wingless angels.

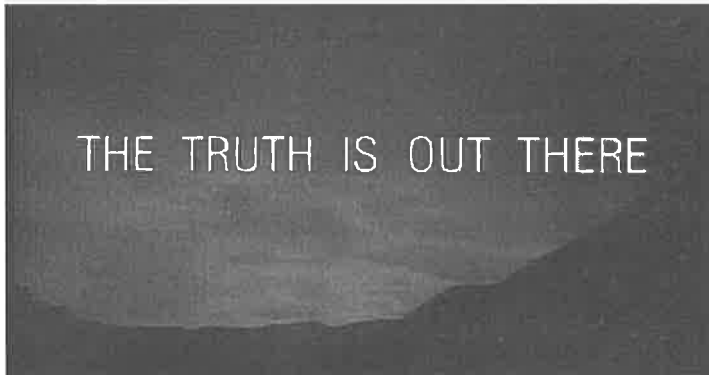
Conclusion

Church leaders are in a jam. But it is a jam of their own making. First they insisted that Church teachers and historians present a one-sided and sanitized version of Church history. Then Church leaders attempted to ensure members would hear nothing else by correlating the history and requiring teachers use only correlated materials.

Now that this first cover-up is blowing up, Church leaders have a decision to make. They could take responsibility for their cover-up of Church history, or they could engage in a second cover-up by seeking to blame others for the first cover-up.

Unfortunately, they have gone for option number two.

But Church leaders can't get out of this jam by blaming members for learning the history Church leaders tried to suppress. They can't get out of this jam by blaming Church historians for hiding the history Church leaders told them to hide. And they can't get out of this jam by blaming the artists



whose artwork Church leaders would never have published unless they approved it.

The only way Church leaders can get out of this jam is by doing what they should have done in the first place.

Do what you tell members to do.
Practice what you preach. Tell the

truth. Do what is right, let the consequence follow. Be honest in all your dealings.

It should not be too much to expect from men who claim to be apostles of Jesus Christ.

But I'm not holding my breath.

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Corbin Volluz lives in the beautiful foothills of the Cascade Mountains in western Washington state. He has been practicing law for 25-years with a focus on criminal defense and personal injury. Corbin joined the LDS Church in June of 1978, shortly after the lifting of the priesthood ban, and has been studying Mormonism ever since. He has been published in several venues, including the Journal of Book of Mormon Studies and BYU-Studies.

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This is spot on. I'm always miffed why what is good for the individual (honesty and integrity) is not good