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Book Notice: *The Ancient Order of Things: Essays on the Mormon Temple; Why I Stay 2: The Challenges of Discipleship for Contemporary Latter-day Saints; Real vs. Rumor: How to Dispel Latter-Day Myths*

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Book Notice: *The Ancient Order of Things: Essays on the Mormon Temple; Why I Stay 2: The Challenges of Discipleship for Contemporary Latter-day Saints; Real vs. Rumor: How to Dispel Latter-Day Myths*

Authors

Brooke James; Roger Terry; Matthew B. Christensen; Christian Larsen, editor; Robert A. Rees, editor; and Keith A. Erikson

The Ancient Order of Things: Essays on the Mormon Temple, edited by Christian Larsen (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2019)

The Ancient Order of Things: Essays on the Mormon Temple presents a variety of academic discussions on different aspects of temples. In the introduction, the collection's editor, Christian Larsen, explains that the essays focus on historical perspectives of significant and "unique facets" (x) of temples of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The essays cover themes such as histories of ordinances, the role of temples beyond mainstream LDS tradition, and the position of temples within wider cultural contexts.

Devery S. Anderson's "The Anointed Quorum, 1842–45," traces the beginnings of the temple rites and rituals to early prayer meetings of anointed men and women in Nauvoo, examining the Anointed Quorum's changing members, practices, and primarily spiritual purposes. In the essay "Not to Be Ritten: The Mormon Temple Rite as Oral Canon," Kathleen Flake shows how the uniquely oral nature of the core temple canon augments the ritual's ability within the growing Church to maintain a cultural and theological cohesion while allowing for adaptability to changing times. Ryan G. Tobler's essay on "Mormon Sacramentalism, Mortality, and Baptism for the Dead" gives a detailed account of the history of proxy baptism, noting the power of its answers to prevalent questions of death and the role of the Saints in the work of saving others.

In "'The Upper Room': The Nature and Development of Latter-day Saint Temple Work, 1846–55," Richard E. Bennet gives long-due attention to the temple work done during the exodus from Nauvoo to the Salt Lake Valley, detailing how the Saints kept alive

the traditions of baptisms for the dead, endowments, and marriage and adoption sealings outside of formal temples during this transitional decade. Taking a different look at baptism for the dead, Tonya S. Reiter, in "Black Saviors on Mount Zion," focuses on the early history of Black members' roles in the ordinance despite their not being allowed to participate in other temple rites, using specific examples from the lives of Jane Manning James and others. In the essay "Come, Let Us Go Up to the Mountain of the Lord," Brian H. Stuy recreates the Salt Lake Temple dedication experience of April 6–23, 1893, and corresponding priesthood leadership meetings of April 19–20, 1893, through the journal accounts of various participants, presenting the occasions as a spiritual epoch for both individuals and the Church.

Examining "A Contest for 'Sacred Space,'" R. Jean Addams presents a thorough history of the cultural, doctrinal, and legal dealings between two different "Expressions of the Restoration," the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) and the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Community of Christ) over the holdings of the original temple lot in Independence, Missouri. Craft Mackay and Lachlan Mackay detail the Kirtland Temple's "Time of Transition," the forty-two years between the LDS exodus to Nauvoo in 1838 and the RLDS Church's securing of the title in 1880, years that were marked by different Mormon and other groups using the temple for various purposes. Continuing the theme of temples in other Restoration denominations, Melvin C. Johnson, in "'So We Build a Good Little Temple to Worship In': Mormonism on the Pedernales—Texas, 1847–51," examines the Lyman Wight colony's building of "the first functional, active Mormon temple west of the Mississippi" (216), describing the religious rites done

both inside and outside of the log edifice as compared to ordinances in the Utah LDS traditions of the time.

Tracing the evolution of one specific aspect of LDS temple ceremony, John-Charles Duffy's "'To Cover Your Nakedness': The Body, Sacred Secrecy, and Institutional Power in the Initiatory" looks at the history of the decline of nudity in the initiatory in light of LDS doctrines of the body and sacredness.

With different essays in the collection seeming to be aimed at different audiences—from those with personal and academic experience with LDS temples to those unfamiliar with basic LDS customs—there is plenty to learn for all types of readers who understand the scope of the book not as an introduction to temples but as deep dives into more niche topics. The essays range in scope from objective histories to subjective analyses, and readers can pick and choose readings that best suit their interests and scholarship. As a whole, this volume underscores the essential doctrinal and cultural roles of temples to the LDS tradition in past, present, and future days.

—Brooke James

Why I Stay 2: The Challenges of Discipleship for Contemporary Latter-day Saints, edited by Robert A. Rees (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2021).

This sequel to the original *Why I Stay* (2011) is a similar attempt to reach out to Latter-day Saints who, for any of a variety of reasons, are struggling with questions of faith and to offer them reasons to stay in the Church. The essays in this volume come from twenty contributors who are, as editor Robert Rees describes them in his introduction, "Latter-day Saints whose discipleship is magnified from the edge of the inside of Mormonism, 'with fear and trembling"

(Philip. 2:12), but also with even more love and faith" (x). Rees also says that these writers "are neither blindly nor blithely committed to the church, but are so with eyes and hearts wide open, aware of the issues that cause others to leave" (xi).

I found the essays in this second volume to be somewhat uneven in their appeal and in their relevance to my own particular situation, and this is likely intentional. Some of the essays did not speak to me at all, while others struck a sensitive chord in my heart. That is because my experiences with the Church, its members, and its theology are very much my own, and I recognize that the essays that did not appeal to me might touch someone whose experiences are far different from my own.

The essayists in this volume are Philip L. Barlow, Susan Hinckley, Kimberly Applewhite Teitter, Eric Samuelson, Camilla Miner Smith, Charles Shirō Inouye, Russell M. Frandsen, Jennifer Finlayson-Fife, Carol Lynn Pearson, Mitch Mayne, Emma Lou Thyne, Ronda Roberts-Callister, Dan Wotherpoon, Kathleen Cattani, Curt Bench, Jody England Hansen, Alan D. Eastman, Gloria Pak, H. Parker Blount, and editor Robert A. Rees.

One of the reasons Rees decided to publish a sequel is that "the landscape of Mormonism has changed dramatically since the first volume of *Why I Stay* was published in 2011, and that changed landscape introduces both urgency and complexity to the question of why people stay or don't stay in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" (vii). I found the result useful and insightful. In my own case, the essays by Philip Barlow, Eric Samuelson, Kathleen Cattani, and Curt Bench echoed my own thoughts and feelings. But each essay offers valuable insights that will appeal to Church members who deal with different questions

and issues than I do. All in all, I would recommend this book to anyone who is struggling with the question of why they should stay in the Church.

—Roger Terry

Real vs. Rumor: How to Dispel Latter-Day Myths, by Keith A. Erekson (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2021)

In *Real vs. Rumor*, Keith Erekson equips readers with the analytical tools to examine a wide variety of topics relating to Church history. His purpose is to help readers distinguish, as indicated in the title of the book, what is real and what is rumor and to dispel old, new, and forthcoming myths that persist in Sunday School lessons and sacrament meeting talks. He does so in an engaging way that will appeal to a broad audience, from teenagers and recently returned missionaries to anyone who has ever given a talk or lesson—or will ever.

Erekson, who has a PhD in history, was the director of the Church History Library of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City from 2014 to 2021. He is currently the director of Historical Outreach and Partnerships for the LDS Church.

The book is divided into three parts with chapters providing further details about each part. The first part is “The Myths within Us.” As the author puts it, “We think we know everything, we don’t ask for evidence, we assume, we fail to see the interpretations made by others, we limit our options, and we get distracted by insignificant details” (3). The second part, “How to Investigate,” draws on what was learned in part one “to investigate three meanings of the English word *history*” (4; emphasis original). Part

three “extends the investigative skills and habits [from parts one and two] into personal efforts to dispel the rumors and myths around us.” As Erekson puts it, “We are responsible to learn all that we can, quote responsibly, help others who struggle, and understand God’s dealings” (4). The ebook version contains a bonus chapter, “Investigate the Rumors in Your Family Tree,” prior to the epilogue.

Throughout the book, the reader will find informative vignettes and examples to help illustrate the dilemmas and issues Latter-day Saints often confront in dealing with matters of Church history. Erekson also uses shaded call-out text boxes with ideas on how to apply the lessons the reader is being taught. They contain quotations from Church leaders, suggested resources for the reader to investigate, and summaries of key concepts found within the chapter.

In one such box, under the heading “Will Learning Church History Harm Your Testimony?” Erekson shares a personal example. He relates that people sometimes ask him if studying Church history has harmed or hurt his testimony of the Restoration. He responds by saying, “This is a puzzling question to me because I did not receive a testimony *from* Church history. I gained my testimony the way that everyone must gain a testimony—by receiving a message in my mind and heart that I recognized as heavenly communication. . . . If Church history does not give testimony, then it should not be able to take testimony away” (216–17, emphasis in original).

Real vs. Rumor is a fun and engaging read. The tools Erekson shares will help readers become better informed and more careful about what they share with others.

—Matthew B. Christensen