

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. Erikson (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2021)

In *Real vs. Rumor*, Keith Erikson 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.

Erikson, 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 Erikson 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. Erikson 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?” Erikson 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 Erikson shares will help readers become better informed and more careful about what they share with others.

—Matthew B. Christensen