

Introduction:

Richard Lloyd Anderson, An Appreciation

Stephen D. Ricks

Richard Lloyd Anderson is a scholars' scholar. Among Latter-day Saints, he is dean and master of two separate fields of academic study: the New Testament and early LDS Church history. His passion for history has profoundly influenced his scholarly career; his passion for order and system has shaped his missionary work and directed him into studying law; and his love for Brigham Young University and loyalty to its mission and destiny have, in sometimes unusual ways, guided his academic path.

On both sides of his family, Richard is descended of hardy pioneer stock. His paternal grandfather, Ernest Anderson, who was born in Sweden and immigrated to Utah as a young man, owned and cultivated apple orchards and irrigated crops, setting an example of the value of honest labor. From his parents, Lloyd and Agnes Ricks Anderson, Richard learned the prime importance of integrity. His father was an advertising manager at several daily newspapers, and his mother was a grade-school teacher who played the violin and piano. Her intensive reading to him was the foundation of a lifetime of intellectual and aesthetic interests. An enthusiasm for discovery and joy in the hunt infected Richard early in life. The northeast foothills and city dump were above his home in the avenues of Salt Lake City, where he was born in 1926. Remarkably, his mother indulged his passion for roaming and sometimes searching at the dump, which netted tires and similar objects, although it also netted him a sturdy needle in his knee that required a physician's skills to remove.

Richard also had a zeal for studying history, which he was able to feed through extensive reading on the subject while a student. His high school career was punctuated by two moves. He began high school in Provo just before the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941. He later studied at Pocatello (Idaho) High School and Ogden (Utah) High School, where he graduated in 1944. In the last two schools he was able to study Latin from exceptionally gifted instructors.

As was the case in the later years of the war, graduation from high school was followed by military service. Because an overbite and gum occlusion disqualified him from being a pilot, he was trained in and served as an aviation radioman in the navy. Even while in the military, Richard was able to continue to study church literature, reading the Bible in its entirety and taking courses in the New Testament from BYU by correspondence. Once, when Richard was in the hospital being treated for pneumonia and believing that he had the right to convalesce—though under the supervision of a zealous nurse who wanted him to roll bandages—he was still able to borrow afternoons for reading in a large shower room while the nurse unsuccessfully searched for him.

During military service, Richard made a hobby of talking to returned missionaries and asking them what methods of teaching investigators were successful, even going with local missionaries to visit their contacts. After an honorable discharge from the military, he was immediately called to serve in the Northwestern States Mission and given latitude to develop a logical system of teaching the gospel. Because it was successful, President Joel Richards, brother of Elder LeGrand Richards, asked him to write out "A Plan for Effective Missionary Work." It led to a remarkable increase in the number of converts in the Northwestern States Mission and found wide acceptance elsewhere. About 1950 Richard and others who developed missionary teaching plans were interviewed by Gordon B. Hinckley, who was then a general authority assistant in charge of publicity and mission literature. Those interviews resulted in the basic missionary discussions that are still in use.

Following his release as a missionary, Richard began his university studies in earnest, starting in the spring of 1949 at Weber College, in Ogden, Utah, where he lived. With a scholarship in debate and a promise of tutorials in Greek from his high school teacher, Richard planned to continue there that fall. But he was asked to come to BYU by Sidney B. Sperry and Hugh W. Nibley, who wrote to him that debate went out “with the coonskin coat and the bulldog.” Richard has remained associated with BYU ever since, studying Greek and Early Christian History under Nibley (who took Richard and his classmates through Hefele’s *Konzilgeschichte* [*Conciliar History*] in a single term), and Latin under the tutelage of J. Reuben Clark III and M. Carl Gibson.

In 1951 Richard took his bride of three months, the former Carma de Jong of Provo, with him to Cambridge, Massachusetts, to study law at Harvard. Study of the law helped to sharpen his organized and logical mind and to hone his ability to think sequentially, but his love for history remained unabated. In the tedious final year of study at Harvard Law School (a joke current among those studying the law is that they “scare you to death” the first year, they “work you to death” the second year, and they “bore you to death” the third and final year of law school), Richard was permitted to study Greek history at Harvard and had already been accepted into their program in ancient history had not financial necessity and a sudden invitation from William E. Berrett to teach church education classes in Cedar City intervened. The one-year interlude in southern Utah helped Richard gain a greater appreciation of Mormon pioneer history and also allowed Carma, a watercolorist, to study under an outstanding artist there.

In 1955 Richard was back again at BYU teaching religion full time, at the same time working on his degree in Greek. He completed this in two years, writing his thesis on “*Euangelion*—A Study in New Testament Context: The New Testament Definition of the Gospel.” He left BYU in 1957 for Berkeley to study ancient history as a Danforth and Wilson Fellow. His dissertation, “The Rise and Fall of Middle-Class Loyalty to the Roman Empire: A Social Study of Velleius Paterculus and Ammianus Marcellinus”—a gem of systematic thought, reasoned argumentation, and lucid and logical expression—has unfortunately never been published. During the final year of his doctoral program at UC Berkeley (1960–61), Richard taught as lecturer in classical rhetoric and was invited and encouraged to join the faculty, with promises of tenure in only a few short years, but he declined, sensing that his destiny was at BYU.

In the 1960s Richard taught Religious Education courses at BYU, including New Testament Greek and graduate courses in New Testament and early Christian history, together with handling sections of Roman and Greek history and world civilization for the Department of History. After graduate work in religion at the university was dismantled, he concentrated on teaching undergraduate New Testament courses and in later years began a class on the witnesses of the Book of Mormon, which is the only class he offered in early LDS Church history, despite his well-deserved reputation as a master in that field.

Richard has written widely; his five books—*Joseph Smith’s New England Heritage* (1971), *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses* (1981), *Understanding Paul* (1983), *Guide to the Life of Christ* (1999), and *Guide to Acts and the Apostle’s Letters* (1999)—retain their value, and more than 125 articles authored by him have appeared in scholarly journals and LDS publications. He has also garnered many academic honors: he received a “Best Historical Article Award” from the Mormon History Association in 1969, was named LDS Commissioner’s Research Fellow from 1974 to 1975 and Honors Professor of the Year in 1978, and received the Phi Kappa Phi Faculty Award for Scholarship and Citizenship in 1988. In addition, the “Richard L. Anderson Research Award” was established by Religious Education at BYU in 1998.

Still, his greatest pleasure derives from seeing his students develop their talents, from being a parent to his four children and eight grandchildren, from a close spiritual and intellectual partnership with his wife—who holds a doctorate in Historic Costume and consults in nineteenth-century Mormon costume, and from serving as an active and devoted Latter-day Saint. We dedicate this volume to Richard Lloyd Anderson for his careful, methodical, painstaking scholarship and for his contributions to the BYU community as teacher and scholar. Finally—and most important—we dedicate this volume to him for his example as witness of the restoration and for his devotion to his family and the kingdom of God.

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—*Stephen D. Ricks*