



Richard Franz Lovelace
1930 - 2020

Born in California, Richard Lovelace grew up in Albuquerque, NM, duck hunting along the Rio Grande, trout fishing in the Sangre de Christos. He read science fiction voraciously and developed a lifelong love and encyclopedic knowledge of classical music. Richard moved east and attended Yale, earning a BA in philosophy, read Thomas Merton and converted to Christianity. He earned a Master of Divinity at Westminster Seminary, followed by a Doctorate in Theology from Princeton.

Richard met his wife, Betty Lee Agar, at the Peniel Bible Conference in Lake Luzerne, NY. They married in 1958. He wrote his doctoral thesis on the Puritan cleric Cotton Mather while serving as youth pastor at Willow Grove (NJ) Presbyterian Church. He rode a motorcycle, delivered a sermon on "Rosemary's Baby," and played Dylan's "Desolation Row" for his young flock. At home he played Mahler and Beethoven while banging away on his typewriter. Richard began fighting the culturally insular, defensive attitudes baked into American evangelicalism. He believed the artistic flowering of the 1960's the harbinger of a much greater spiritual, and yes, Christian awakening.

Upon receiving his doctorate, Dr. Lovelace joined the faculty at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and moved his young family to Hamilton, Massachusetts.

He soon established as a leading scholar of Puritan history, an expert on Jonathan Edwards and the Great Awakening. He was a popular professor for generations of students, beloved for his metaphor laden lectures, striking reading lists (one set Ginsberg's "Howl" beside "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God"), and the tall tales of absent-minded adventure that grew up around him. He ran his fishing boat aground up and down the North Shore, almost drowned off Newburyport, somehow burnt the family station wagon, filled with his students' final exams, to the ground after running out of gas. He collected snakes – boas, anacondas, and pythons. He DJ'd the graveyard shift at a local classical radio station. And all the while he continued to write and pray for America's spiritual renewal.

Richard published his call for a broad religious and cultural awakening, *The Dynamics of Spiritual Life*, in 1979. *Dynamics* continues in print in numerous translations – a new edition was released just this year - and remains a touchstone and challenge to believers across the globe. He followed *Dynamics* with *Renewal as a way of Life*, and *Homosexuality and the Church*. Upon retirement, he and his wife moved to Northampton, Massachusetts, where he worked on a spiritual memoir, correspondence, and his own poetry. He fly-fished in Montana and Idaho, travelled by float plane into the Maine woods in search of brook trout, and fished for striped bass off Gloucester.

Richard insisted on beauty, sought the harmonies underlying God's and our own creations, a transcendence he termed 'inscape.' He loved John Calvin, Brahms and the Beach Boys. Like Whitman, he contained multitudes. He challenged his students, readers, and children to build the Kingdom of God right now, right here on earth. He dreamed and sketched for us, as best he knew how, the architecture of heaven. And now he's moved in.

Richard is survived by his three children, David, Peggy, and Jonathan, and his eight grandchildren. He is greatly loved and will be missed.

*What they undertook to do
They brought to pass;
All things hang like a drop of dew
Upon a blade of grass.*
-W.B. Yeats, "Gratitude to the Unknown Instructors"

(Written by David Lovelace)