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To Aunt Grace, Called to Sing for Funerals

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Song of the Publican, 1990s

by Mike Vanden Bosch

Lord cure this erring heart in me;
I now confess my bigotry;
I beat my breast and rue my hate
For those to whom I've shut my gate.

I can't stand dames who would be lords
Or preachers, straining at the cords
Of tried tradition, pushing past
Gladhanded men who'd serve us best.

I don't like women with mustaches,
Or those whose faces look like ashes;
I like the cheeks touched up with pink
And lashes darkened with black ink.

I'm not too fond of pacifists,
My ears can't handle hairlip lisps;
I scorn females with legs real hairy
Or males teeheeing like a fairy.

I don't like those too doctrinaire
Unless I see at heart they share
My views, for then of course they're right,
And wise like me have seen the light.

O Lord, I beat this erring breast
But find disgust and peevishness
Grow wild the older that I get;
So cure me Lord—but not just yet.

To Aunt Grace, Called to Sing for Funerals

by Mike Vanden Bosch

The phone rang—another request for Grace
to sing psalms at some stranger's funeral.

"It's nice of them to call," said husband Mace,
"And it's nice of you to sing, but what a pall
it casts on us—you sing each mournful psalm
until your life assumes each neighbor's grief.
We could be happy but you toll such gloom
you lately grieve at any falling leaf."

"I sing no gloom, though tears drip from my tune,
but with a psalm, nurse hope that God is love
and picture blood grief as a black cocoon
that time will nudge to faith in life above."

"I hear alone the toll and gloom of death."

"If I tolled death, I would not waste my breath."