

*Alzheimer's Afflicts The Preacher Because
The Face Of God Is Too Great To Bear*

Dad's pulpit weathered confessions
muttered in unison for years.

I grew up singing. Processions
traipsed down seasons. Our hymns rang clear.

Broken chromosomes now plunder
sanctuary. In that blood-vault
organ pipes no longer thunder
preludes to Creation and salt.

Dad has lost his benedictions.
Smiling, Dad masks his affliction,
hiding it from his long-gone flock.
His brain cells break down his fictions.
The body fails. The spirit balks.
His gospel writes my world in chalk.

from MY FATHER, THE PREACHER, APPROACHES GLORY

Receiving Dementia

Dad doesn't know he's dying. His brain won't fire
on all cylinders, his memory so clogged
with plaque. News of cancer grinds gears then expires
inside a minute among his gummed-up cogs.

Dad remembers World War II just fine and flogs
our asses with the same damn story he told
two minutes ago. He doesn't know he's dogged
us to memorize tales seven decades old.

“Is that me?” he asks each time he catches hold
of our conversation, lymphoma, hospice,
his voice rising like a boy's. Who has extolled
victory, (*O death, where is thy sting?*), shall piss

blood then lie down in joy. And I shall carry
stories until my forgetting buries them.

from MY FATHER, THE PREACHER, APPROACHES GLORY