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Love Thy Neighbor?

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LOVE THY NEIGHBOR?

Who is this bitter old woman
with hate in her squinty eyes and
arms crossed over her chest
as if trying to hold in
all of the venom she contains
and not let a single drop
escape?

Why does she engage
in scandalous mischief,
befriending children
so she might gossip about
family secrets
innocently shared
with this grandmotherly
Judas?

Why does she spend her time
peeking behind curtains
listening to other peoples'
conversations
muttering curses
under her breath and
damning everyone to
hell?

Is she angry with her God
because her forty-year old
bachelor son is lazy
and pays her no mind
or, because her older son
had lost his arm in the
war?

Should I try harder
to love my neighbor
when our every meeting
results in glares,
accusations and
insults?

Today, twenty years
removed from
my neighbor's view,
I read her obituary
in the daily paper
and find that I am better able
to love my neighbor —
dead.

— *Robert L. Gockman*