

HELLFIRE AND DAMNATION

Not the blasting blaze eternal
Telling sinners, "You are wrong!"
Not the emptiness infernal
Where no human souls belong;
Not the wailing, gnashing anger,
As they wrestle and rebel,
Form the plight of ageless languor
For inhabitants of hell.

No, the flames that lick the darkness
Are a last attempt to teach. . . .
And the naked span of starkness?
Final mercy meant to reach
Into self-inflicted curses
Clutched intently with a groan,
As the damning thought rehearses
In each mind, "I am my own!"

What decrees the dark damnation?
Wills in conflict with the light!
Pride can freeze imagination
Into thinking, "I am right,"
While the facts are fixed forever
To deny the sinner's claim,
Ever stubborn, yielding never,
Even firm against the flame.

No, the torment is a blessing:
Pain says, "Hell is not your place!"
God awaits the voice confessing,
"I repent, Lord, grant me grace."
God's not willing one should perish—
Love still wants the lost to learn.
Can they change the choice they cherish
That has fueled the fires to burn?

— *David L. Hatton, 4/1/1992*