

## THE SINKING SHIP

How sturdy when it started out to sea!  
Its sails were white, deck clean, and timbers strong.  
So built, this vessel and Eternity  
Would seem to hold a friendship ever long. . .  
Had not its sailors been a sorry lot,  
Who, often drunk, would labor carelessly  
Until at last the ship began to rot!

Too soon the salty sea began to seep  
Into the hull, in through both bow and stern,  
While crew did merry make or groggy sleep  
And left the care of sailing no concern.  
Upon the warping deck the drunken sprawled,  
As there came gnawing from the briny deep  
The tiny animals that clung and crawled.

At last, the order given for reform,  
The sailors bailed and painted, some in fear,  
For Heaven clouded to portend a storm,  
And seas that once were blue and sparkling clear  
Now blackened coldly in a purple gloom,  
Where splashed a slimy, writhing, worm-like swarm  
Of serpents from the deep and icy tomb.

Amid the frantic salvaging, the crew  
Looked up to see a Shining Ship appear,  
Whose bright sails brought her to a closer view.  
Her Captain's Voice cried out when she was near:  
"The tempest soon will sink this wreck you own!  
Come board our deck to sail your course anew!  
Salvation, safety, peace are here alone!"

A few dropped hammers, pails and brushes down  
And fled with lifeboats to the other Ship.  
Not one fell down into the depths to drown,  
But all met greeting hands with sturdy grip.  
The others laughing waved and raved with pride.  
Those painting on the scaffolds gave a frown.  
"Our quick repair will save us all," they cried.

But then the Captain sadly turned His head;  
The stable Vessel sailed away without  
The rest who mocked the frightened ones that fled.  
Their rehabilitating left no doubt  
To them that safe arrival home was sure.  
The helmsman pulled upon the wheel—instead,  
The rudder broke, the seas began to stir.

Regret now gripped the hearts of those who stayed,  
As waves, like monster's claws, assailed the bow.  
“No use! Too late!” so many cried, dismayed,  
For their mistake was manifested now.  
The stopped-up holes that leaked leaked all the more,  
The paint on rotting wood began to fade,  
And wind the patched-up sails with fury tore.

The darkness gathered thickly, then a slash  
Of fire from Heaven split a blackened cloud  
And struck the mast which tumbled with a crash!  
The seamen wild with terror screamed aloud,  
But blasting torrents drowned their deathly yell.  
The keel was severed by another flash  
And gnashing blackness swallowed them to Hell.

— *David L. Hatton, 4/21/1970*