

NEGRO POETRY

JIS' BLUE

JIS' blue, God,
jis' blue.
Ain't prayin' exactly jis' now, —
tear blind, I guess,
cain't see my way through.
You know those things
I ast for so many times, —
maybe I hadn't orter repeated like the Pharisees do;
but I ain't stood in no market-place,
it's jis' 'tween me and you.
And you said, "Ast," . . .
somehow I ain't astin' now,
and I hardly know whut to do.
Hope jis' sorter left, but Faith's still here, —
Faith ain't gone, too . . .
I know how 'tis, — a thousand years
is as a single day with you.
And I ain't meanin' to tempt you with, "If you be —"
and I ain't doubtin' you.
But I ain't prayin' to-night, God, —
jis' blue.

— *Etta Baldwin Oldham*

HELL FIRE

SINNER, I's heah dis mawnin' ter say
Hell fire is a-burnin' fo' you,
An' it won' be long befo' de Jedgegment Day,
An' Hell fire a-burnin' fo' you.
An' lessen you repent you of yo' sin,
You can knock at Heaven's gate but yuh won' get in,
You'll jes' turn around an' see de Debbil grin,
An' Hell fire a-burnin' fo' you!

*Dat's de trufe, good Lawd, I knows it, good Lawd,
Hell fire is a-burnin' fo' me!*

Dem fires is a-blazin' green an' red,
Sinner, dey's a-cracklin' fo' you,
De flames dey leap up higher dan yo' head,
Sinner, dey's a-cracklin' fo' you!
Dey'll burn off yo' fingers an' dey'll burn off yo' toes,
Dey'll burn off yo' years an' dey'll burn off yo' nose,
Oh sinner, I smells de scorchin' of yo' clo'es,
Fo' dem fires is a-cracklin' fo' you!

*Ob brudder, dey's a-cracklin', sister, dey's a-cracklin',
Dem fires is a-cracklin' fo' me!*

Sinner, you'll burn forever an' a day,
Dem fires is a-cracklin' fo' you,
An' den dey'll rake yuh out an' th'ow yun away,
An' dem fires is a-cracklin' fo' you.
You gwine ter be de soot in Hell's smoke-stack,
You gwine ter be a cinder on de angels' track,
Oh brudder, can yuh hear me an' not turn back,
W'en dem fires is a-cracklin' fo' you!

*Dey's a-cracklin', good Lawd, I hears 'em, good Lawd,
Dem fires is a-cracklin' fo' me!*

So sinner, I's said whut I come heah ter say,
Hell fire is a-burnin' fo' you,
An' it won' be long befo' de Judgment Day,
An' Hell fire a-burnin' fo' you!
Sinner, you chooses de way you goes,
An' why you choose de wrong way, no one knows,
But remember, in Hell dere ain't no fire hose,
An' dem fires is a-burnin' fo' you!

— *Julia Johnson Davis*