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Mormonbasics.com is humbled to bring you a commentary on the hymns published by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This commentary is presented in a two-column format. The original text, as presented in the hymnbook published by the LDS Church, is in the left column. The comments on the right are provided by mormonbasics.com. We have even changed the color of the text so there won't be any question as to who wrote what.

**Personal note from the commentator:**

The hymns of the Church are sacred text. The Lord has made it very clear to us through his prophets that the singing of hymns is a form of prayer, and as such is sacred communication. Much of the sacred Spirit and reverence we experience in our meetings, especially Sacrament Meeting, comes from the Spirit that accompanies the singing of the hymns.

The hymns are written in poetic form, and as such are able to take certain licenses and liberties with the English language that cannot normally be expressed in any other way. It is certainly not the aim of this commentary to improve on the beauty of the poetic expressions found in our sacred hymns. As a teacher of English to those who speak other languages, I have found that many of the hymns have expressions that are difficult for some people to understand.

Because hymns are written to fit a set rhythmic pattern or meter, often the expression has to be condensed to fit in a small space, but still convey its intended meaning. It is the combination of the rhythm, text, and music that create such a powerful Spiritual experience when singing the hymns. My attempts to explain some of the meaning behind the text should not detract from the original meaning, nor should it replace the original meaning. Hymns, like parables, take on different meanings as the circumstances of our lives change. My commentary is only a starting point for (hopefully) a better understanding of the overall meaning of the hymn in this work. Anyone else writing this same commentary would have different perspectives and points to make. That is the nature of a commentary. I pray that what I say will, in some way, help in your understanding of this hymn. Since this is a personal study of the hymns, I will sometimes use the first person when writing the commentary.

Kelly P. Merrill

## Oh God, Our Help in Ages Past

1. O God, our help in ages past,  
Our hope for years to come,  
Our shelter from the stormy blast,  
And our eternal home.

God, who has helped us throughout the past ages of time, and who is our hope for all the years to come in the future, is our place of safety from the storms of life. He is our eternal home. The place where we can be safe forever.

2. Within the shadow of thy throne,  
Still may we dwell secure.  
Sufficient is thine arm alone,  
And our defense is sure.

As long as we stay close to Him we will always be safe. We do not need anyone else to defend or protect us. His power is sufficient to care for us.

3. Before the hills in order stood,  
Or earth received her frame,  
From everlasting thou art God,  
To endless years the same.

God was God before the earth was formed, and because he is everlasting or eternal, he will still be God for an endless number of years to come.

4. O God, our help in ages past,  
Our hope for years to come,  
Be thou our guide while life shall last,  
And our eternal home.

As God has been our help in the past, and is our hope for the future, we ask him to be our guide for as long as our lives last, and ask (again) for him to be our eternal home.

### MUSIC

William Croft, 1677-1727

### TEXT

Isaac Watts, 1674-1748. Included in the first LDS hymnbook, 1835.

### SCRIPTURES

Psalm 90:1-2, Psalm 91:1-2, Psalm 48:14