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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

## O Ye Mountains High

1. O ye mountains high, where the clear blue sky  
 Arches over the vales of the free,  
 Where the pure breezes blow and the clear streamlets  
 flow,  
 How I've longed to your bosom to flee!  
 O Zion! dear Zion! land of the free,  
 Now my own mountain home, unto thee I have  
 come;  
 All my fond hopes are centered in thee.

2. Tho the great and the wise all thy beauties despise,  
 To the humble and pure thou art dear;  
 Tho the haughty may smile and the wicked revile,  
 Yet we love thy glad tidings to hear.  
 O Zion! dear Zion! home of the free,  
 Tho thou wert forced to fly to thy chambers on high,  
 Yet we'll share joy and sorrow with thee.

3. In thy mountain retreat, God will strengthen thy  
 feet;  
 Without fear of thy foes thou shalt tread;  
 And their silver and gold, as the prophets have told,  
 Shall be brought to adorn thy fair head.  
 O Zion! dear Zion! home of the free,  
 Soon thy towers shall shine with a splendor divine,  
 And eternal thy glory shall be.

4. Here our voices we'll raise, and we'll sing to thy  
 praise,  
 Sacred home of the prophets of God.  
 Thy deliv'rance is nigh; thy oppressors shall die;  
 And thy land shall be freedom's abode.  
 O Zion! dear Zion! land of the free,  
 In thy temples we'll bend; all thy rights we'll defend;  
 And our home shall be ever with thee.

MUSIC  
 H. S. Thompson, ca. 1852

TEXT

This is a song of appreciation for the home the saints found in the Rocky Mountains. The lines in the verses express a person's longing to be back where the saints have found peace and safety from the mobbings and killings in the states of Missouri and Illinois in the early days of the Church.

The verse starts by saying that the skies of Utah are clear blue above the valleys of those who found freedom there. The breezes are pure and the small streams (streamlets) flow. The singer is expressing a desire to return (to flee) to the heart (the bosom) of this beautiful place. Now that I have come to the mountains of Utah, all my hopes are centered in this place.

When the Saints first arrived in Utah, there was nothing here. Those who were most familiar with the land told the saints they wouldn't be able to grow anything, but they proved them wrong. So the verse starts out saying that those who are wise in the ways of the world despise the beauties of Utah, but to those who are humble and pure Utah is precious (dear). Even though those who are caught up in the ways of the world may give a smug smile, and those who are wicked may say things against us, we still love to hear the news, the glad tidings from our home in the mountains.

Oh Zion (referring to the members of the Church), you are in the home of the free, and though you were forced to flee to the mountain tops to be safe, we will gladly share in both your joys and your sorrows.

In our mountain home the Lord will give us strength to walk without fear of our enemies (foes). And, as the prophets have promised, their riches will bless us in the end.

Dear Utah (Zion), the land of the free and home of the Saints, the time soon will come when your buildings (towers) will shine with divine splendor and eternal glory.

Here in these mountains we will raise our voices and sing our praises for where we live. We live in the sacred home of the prophets of God. Soon we will be delivered from our enemies in this home of the free. In our temples we'll bend in worship and we will defend all the rights of our state, and we will forever live here.

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Charles W. Penrose, 1832-1925

SCRIPTURES

Isaiah 2:2-3, Doctrine and Covenants 64:41-43