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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

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Zion Stands with Hills Surrounded

1. Zion stands with hill surrounded--
Zion, kept by pow'r divine.
All her foes shall be confounded,
Though the world in arms combine.
Happy Zion, Happy Zion,
What a favored lot is thine!

The Church, the pure in heart, stand firm and strong, surrounded by the hills of the Rocky Mountains. Zion is protected by divine power, and even if all her enemies in the world combine against her, they will be confounded and fail. What a happy situation for Zion to be in!

2. Ev'ry human tie may perish,
Friend to friend unfaithful prove,
Mothers cease their own to cherish,
Heav'n and earth at last remove.
But no changes, But no changes
Can attend Jehovah's love.

Even if all our connections to all other humans are broken, and all our friends are unfaithful to us, even if mother stop loving their own children and heaven and earth are taken away, there will be no changes in Jehovah's (Christ's) love for us.

3. In the furnace God may prove thee,
Thence to bring thee forth more bright,
But can never cease to love thee;
Thou art precious in his sight.
God is with thee, God is with thee;
Thou shalt triumph in his might.

The furnace is the symbol of trials and difficulties. So even though God may send many difficulties upon us, it is to purify us as a people and, like ore that is refined in the fire, we will come out on the other side of our hardships better and more pure than when we started. His required trials don't mean that He stops loving us because we are precious to Him. In His strength, His might, we will triumph in the end.

MUSIC
A. C. Smyth, 1840-1909

TEXT
Thomas Kelly, 1769-1854

SCRIPTURES
1 Nephi 22:14-19, 1 Nephi 21:15, 1 Nephi 20:10