

IMMORTAL, INVISIBLE, GOD ONLY WISE<sup>1</sup>

(words by **Walter Chalmers Smith** (1824-1908))

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,  
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,  
Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,  
Almighty, victorious, Thy great name we praise.

Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,  
Nor wanting, nor wasting, Thou rulest in might;  
Thy justice like mountains high soaring above  
Thy clouds which are fountains of goodness and love.

To all,<sup>2</sup> life Thou givest, to both great and small;  
In all life Thou livest, the true life of all;  
We blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree,  
And wither and perish—but naught changeth Thee.

Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,  
Thine angels adore Thee, all veiling their sight;  
All laud<sup>3</sup> we would render: O help us to see  
'Tis only the splendor of light hideth Thee.<sup>4</sup>

**REFERENCES:**

- **Hymns Ancient & Modern Revised**. London: William Clowes and Sons Ltd. 1972.
- *The Church Hymnary* Revision Committee. **The Church Hymnary** (with Music), 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. London: Oxford University Press. 1973.
- Congregational Church in England and Wales, **Congregational Praise**. London: Independent Press Ltd. 1980.
- Richard Watson and Kenneth Trickett (editors), **Companion to Hymns & Psalms**. Peterborough, England: Methodist Publishing House. 1988.
- **BBC Songs of Praise**. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- **Hymns and Psalms**. Peterborough, England: Methodist Publishing House. 2004.
- Gabriel C. S. Chi (editor). **New Songs of Praise**. Hong Kong: Baptist Press. 1976.

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<sup>1</sup> In W. C. Smith's *Hymns of Christ and the Christian Life* published in 1867, the original of the hymn contained six verses based on *1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 1:17*.

<sup>2</sup> In verse 3 line 1, there was a comma after '**To all**' in some of the earlier versions of the hymn. That perhaps helped clarify the intended sense.

<sup>3</sup> In some hymn books, the modern word '**praise**' is used instead of '**laud**' in verse 4 line 3.

<sup>4</sup> Verse 4 was formed by placing together the first couplets of the last two verses of the original while the second couplets were omitted. This alteration has been widely adopted in most hymn books.

- The Cyber Hymnal. **IMMORTAL, INVISIBLE, GOD ONLY WISE**. available at <http://www.hymntime.com/tch/htm/i/i/iigowise.htm>
- Timeless Truths Publications. **Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise**. available at <http://songsandhymns.org/hymns/detail/immortal-invisible-god-only-wise>
- WeddingGuideUK.com. **Immortal Invisible God Only Wise**. available at <http://www.weddingguideuk.com/articles/wordsmusic/hymns/Hymn-ImmortalInvisibleGodOnlyWise.asp>

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