



Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

1 Tim 1:17 (KJV)

Immortal, invisible, God only wise

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 life thou givest, to both great and small;
in all life thou livest, the true life of all;
we blossom and flourish, like leaves on the tree,
then wither and perish; but nought changeth thee.

Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,
thine angels adore thee, all veiling their sight;
all laud we would render: O help us to see
'tis only the splendor of light hideth thee.

The technical merits of both words and music (Welsh tune - Denio) combine to lift this hymn to heights far above those of the common plane of life. The words were written by Walter Chalmers Smith in 1867. This hymn rises to the level of a prayer of praise to the Most High God. There is no hint of the sensuality increasingly associated with corrupt modern church 'songs'. The words are reverent, majestic, and deeply touching. Basil Cole, in his excellent book - *Music & Morals* - says: "*The soul is distracted from the meaning of a song when it is sung merely to arouse pleasure. But when one sings out of devotion, he pays more attention to the content and meaning, both because he lingers more on the words, and because, as Augustine says, 'each affection of our spirit, according to its variety,*

has its own appropriate measure in the voice and singing, by some hidden correspondence wherewith it is stirred. The same is true of the hearers, for even if they do not understand what is sung, they understand WHY it is sung, namely for God's honor, and this is enough to arouse their devotion.' " This hymn perfectly matches, in its tonal qualities, as well as its truth, the high standard of a hymn to God. I cannot imagine remaining seated while this great classical hymn is being played.

This hymn strikes out with immediate dispatch to rest its every word upon the Scripture proofs that underpin its whole:

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.

The exalted symbols and metaphors of this hymn are all revealed in many parts of Holy Writ and call to our memories the Immutability and Majesty of God in all ways and above all things. Yes, God is Immortal and Invisible. "*No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.*" (John 1:18) Man does not have the eye to behold such a powerful Visage as God, but he has done so in the Visage of His only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ! God is Spirit and Light - so much so that to behold His Face would blind and destroy the mortal eye. "*God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*" (John 4:24) *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.*" (1 John 1:5) See, my friends, we have only gone over the first two lines and have discovered three Bible verses that support its truth. There are, of course many more that we could mention if time and space permitted. That is the strength of the classical hymn - to present the beauty of God's Word and Doctrine in such form as to evoke love and reverence for it.

Since God is the very Source and Storehouse of blessings, He it is who is most greatly blessed. There is none who can approach His Glory. He is the Ancient of Days - Eternally existent for all time , past, present, and future. Daniel the prophet makes somber reference to the Ancient of Days: "*I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of Days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.*" (Dan 7:9-10) Of course, Daniel did not behold God in real time, but in a vision. God is Almighty for there is NONE besides Him. "*Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all. "* (1 Chron 29:11) The victory of every battle belongs to the Lord. *Salvation belongeth unto the LORD: thy blessing is upon thy people.*" (Psalms 3:8)

Please consider how full of biblical truth and inspiration are the classic hymns of the Church - not the pabulum and sterility of so-called modern church songs. It is for this reason that the only singing we do in our Anglican tradition is of those hymns which glorify and praise God rather than man.

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.

Light, having no observable material mass, is silent in its coming and in the revelation it makes to mankind. Light does not haste because its speed is the only constant in the Universe. Light never rests, but continues its course to the infinities of space. God, as Light, does not waste a single breath but accomplishes all by His Word that He intends. "*So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.*" (Isaiah 55:11) God, unlike the kings of the world, does not rule out of political consideration, but out of infinite might and power. The Mountains of the Lord are heights of Justice, but also of Grace and Mercy unlike the courts of law in the world. His clouds are, alike, fountains of mercy to all - both good and evil: "*That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.*" (Matt 5:45)

You can see easily the abundance of Scripture presented in true hymns. I have only mentioned a few in the first verse of this hymn, but there are many other biblical truths that can be supported by Scripture therein. Once my youth inquired as to why we sang the old hymns rather than the new ditties played in other churches such as "God is so God?" I said to them: "Let us examine the difference together." So I made a power-point of The 1908 Kindergarten song, "God is so Good" and the classical hymn, "O Worship the King." Only one biblical 'idea' could be wrung from the first, and twenty-two Bible verses could be discovered in the latter when we stopped looking. They got the point! Yes, God is love, but do we not need to know much more than that? He is love to those who will love Him.

To all life thou givest, to both great and small;
in all life thou livest, the true life of all;
we blossom and flourish, like leaves on the tree,
then wither and perish; but nought changeth thee.

The first two lines of the third stanza literally vibrate with profound Gospel Truth! "*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*" (John 14:6) All Light and Life comes from God, our Maker. "*That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.*" (John 1:9) If we live our lives, basking in the heavenly sunlight of God, we shall blossom and flourish as roses on the meadowland, and our leaves will provide the nutrients of the fruit of our branches. We shall wither as the desert flower in the hot and dry winds of the plain, but only our visible clay beings shall so wither; for our countenance shall be changed in an instant from this mortal coil to new creatures in Christ - at the twinkling of an eye. But God undergoes no such change for He is immutable and unchanging. "*For I am the LORD, I change not.*" (Mal 3:6) "*Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.*" (Heb 13:8) What a blessing to have a Friend that sticks closer than a brother and who does not change with the same fickle abandon of our worldly friends!

Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,
thine angels adore thee, all veiling their sight;
all laud we would render: O help us to see
'tis only the splendor of light hideth thee.

As we have been told in 1 John 1:5, "*God is Light.*" There is no Light beside that Light of God for He is the Generator of ALL Light! He is, in fact, the Father of Lights! "*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father*

of Lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." (James 1:17) The angels before the Throne of God adore Him but shield their faces from the brilliant Light of His appearance. See how their prayers praise and glorify God: "*And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.*" (Rev 7:11-12) Note how this marvelous hymn relates the beauty of this truth! Since God is Light, we must know that our Lord Jesus Christ is also Light: "*I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."* (John 8:12) That Light of Life owned by the elect in Christ have the reflected Light of Christ to light their way. As the moon borrows her light from the Sun, the Christian borrows his Light from the SON. *Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people. "* (Romans 15:11) - *We laud and magnify His Holy Name.*

It is the Light of God that enables us to see and know, else we walk in darkness. Just as the brilliant SUN cannot be looked upon with the naked eye, so God cannot be visible for His spiritual brilliance to the naked soul. Do you have that LIGHT, of is God hidden from you in your darkness?

My dear friends, if I were to be cast in a cold prison without Bible or note, I would yet have His Word preserved in my heart by way of the classical hymns of the Church.