

Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise

Walter Chalmers Smith · 1867 · Tune: St. Denio (Welsh hymn melody)

Meter: 11.11.11.11

Verse 1

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.

Verse 2

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.

Verse 3

To all 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.

Verse 4

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.

History

Free Church of Scotland minister Walter Chalmers Smith wrote the hymn in 1867 based on 1 Timothy 1:17. The tune 'St. Denio' is a traditional Welsh ballad melody adapted for hymn use in 1839. It is one of the few hymns in English that focuses entirely on the attributes of God Himself.

Scripture References (KJV)

1 Timothy 1:17

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

1 Timothy 6:16

Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.