

7th March 2024

Visible

**"Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God,
be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen."**

Bible, 1 Timothy 1:17

Rev Walter C Smith DD was born and educated in Aberdeen in the 19th century. Following a call to the Christian ministry, he studied theology in Edinburgh, was ordained in the "Scottish Church" in Chadwell Street in Islington in 1850, and, nearly three decades later, was minister of the prestigious Free High Kirk in Edinburgh.

Smith was also a hymn writer. His best-known hymn *Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise*, was first published in his *Hymns of Christ and the Christian Life* in 1867. Originally it had six verses, but, in current usage, the original verse four has been omitted and an alternative included, made up from the opening couplets of Smith's original verses five and six.

But it's the opening couplet of the opening verse – based, Smith tells us, on Paul's words to Timothy quoted above – which is on my mind today.

*Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
In light inaccessible, hid from our eyes.*

That is where we are with our God, or with any divine entity in a belief system representing "the other". I've touched on "immortal" and "wise" before in different ways, and doubtless shall do so again. But "invisible"? What's the point of worshipping something that is "invisible", an entity we cannot see or quantify? I can only answer that from my own experience, a combination of learning and believing, of headspace and heart-space, of knowing and not knowing. I can grasp the concept of the invisible because I know it to be essential. How do I know it to be essential? I have no idea. But a spiritual dimension to my life is essential for me.

In the much-beloved book, *The Little Prince*, Antoine De Saint-Exupéry has the fox offer us this wisdom:

It is only in the heart that one can see rightly, what is essential is invisible to the eye. What this means is that the true nature of things can only be seen and understood if one perceives it with feeling.

Invisible? I'm with Paul, Timothy, Walter C Smith *and* Antoine De Saint-Exupéry ... If the invisible is essential, that's visible enough for me.

A prayer for today

Invisible God? How can that be, when you make yourself visible to me? Amen

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