

= O 'er the Gloomy Hills of Darkness =

" O 'er the Gloomy Hills of Darkness " , also titled " O 'er Those Gloomy Hills of Darkness " , is a Welsh Christian hymn by William Williams Pantycelyn written in 1772 . The hymn was written as a missionary hymn ; there are conflicting accounts of why the hymn was written . The hymn was later published in 374 hymnals worldwide , though it was censored and altered in the United States by slaveholders for evangelising to slaves . The hymn later fell out of favour with hymn book editors in the 1960s .

= = History = =

There are conflicting accounts of why the hymn was written . According to one account , George Bowen was converted to Christianity through hearing a Welsh girl singing hymns . He later went to stay at Llwyn @-@ Gwair Manor at the same time that the Welsh Methodist Association were there . While there , he met Williams and asked him to compose some verse about the Preseli Hills . " O 'er the Gloomy Hills of Darkness " was written as a result of these requests . Though it is possible that this story may be correct as Llwyn @-@ Gwair Manor and Williams ' bedroom at the manor did overlook Carn Igli , in the 19th century an alternative story arose . In this version , Williams was travelling to Pontrhydyfen and composing a new missionary hymn as part of a commission from Selina Hastings , Countess of Huntingdon . Upon passing the ruins of an old Cistercian abbey and seeing the mountains he would have to cross on a stormy night , the view inspired him to write " O 'er the Gloomy Hills of Darkness " for the Countess . The hymn was first written in Welsh as English was not Williams ' first language so it was later translated into English by another person . This was because Williams did not know enough English to fully express the intent of the original Welsh verses in translation .

In 1836 , " O 'er the Gloomy hills of Darkness " was reviewed in an issue of The Eclectic Review . In a remarkably snide review , the hymn , among many others , is criticised for a lack of grammatical correctness as well as a lack of rhyme in the first verse , " ... inane verbiage preferred by worthy people to the noblest compositions of sanctified genius ; and to blot it out from our hymn @-@ books would be a species of sacrilege " . This was attributed to Williams ' lack of English as a native language gave rise to " a stiffness apparent " in the hymn . The New York Times stated it had gained popularity because of Williams ' " ease and sweetness " in his hymn writing .

= = Controversy = =

The second verse of the hymn begins with the lines " Let the Indian , let the negro , Let the rude barbarian see " . Williams included this after hearing stories of promising missionary contact with Cherokee tribes and with slaves in the Province of Georgia . When the hymn became established in the United States , slave owners changed the line referencing " Indian " and " negro " to " Let the dark benighted pagan " . The abolitionist Ebenezer Davies claimed ? The altered reading , I learned , prevails universally in America , except in the original version used by the Welsh congregations . Slave @-@ holders , and the abettors of that horrid system which makes it a crime to teach a negro to read the Word of God , felt perhaps that they could not devoutly and consistently sing " Let the Indian , let the negro ... see ? .

In the 1850s , the Baptist Union of Great Britain dropped the hymn from usage . The reason published in the Baptist Magazine stated " But the verses are too rude and unfinished to be generally accepted in modern day " . In later years in the 19th century churches , including the Church of England , started to publish the hymn replacing the second verse with the American slave owner 's amended version . In the early 1900s , the second verse would often be omitted altogether from hymnals .

= = Hymnals = =

" O 'er the Gloomy Hills of Darkness " first appeared in published hymnals in 1792 . Jeffrey Richards states that " William Williams 's O 'er the Gloomy Hills of Darkness of 1772 (sung variously to Thomas Clark 's Calcutta , by Baptists ; to Henry Gauntlett 's Triumph , in The Scottish Hymnal ; to Edwin Moss 's Ulpha , in the 1982 Presbyterian Church Praise) did not make it into Hymns Ancient and Modern , but it was in Bickersteth 's Christian Psalmody in 1833 and was still to be found complete in the 1933 Baptist Hymnal ? This very much set the tone for missionary hymns . " After being published in 374 hymnals throughout history , in the 1960s the hymn stopped being published in all Christian hymnals . The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints retained the hymn in their hymnals from 1927 until dropping it in 1985 . This was because its members in modern times felt that the hymn connected Native Americans and black people with barbarians . The hymn 's lyrical style set the tone for future missionary hymns . " O 'er the Gloomy Hills of Darkness " inspired the founder of Methodism , Charles Wesley , to write " Sun of Unclouded Righteousness " for missionaries working with " Mahometans " .

= = Lyrics = =

The lyrics of " O 'er the Gloomy Hills of Darkness " as published in Gloria in Excelsis : or hymns of praise to God and the lamb in 1772 .

1 .

O 'er those gloomy Hills of Darkness
Look my Soul , be still and gaze ,
All the Promises do travel
On a glorious Day of Grace ,
Blessed Jubil , & c .
Let thy glorious Morning dawn .

2 .

Let the Indian , let the Negro ,
Let the rude Barbarian see
That divine and glorious Conquest
Once obtain 'd on Calvary ;
Let the Gospel , & c .
Word resound from Pole to Pole .

3 .

Kingdoms wide that sit in Darkness ,
Let them have the glorious Light ,
And from Eastern Coast to Western
May the Morning chase the Night ,
And Redemption , & c .
Freely purchas 'd win the Day .

4 .

May the glorious Days approaching ,
From eternal Darkness dawn ,
And the everlasting Gospel
Spread abroad thy holy Name .
Thousand Years , & c .
Soon appear , make no Delay .

5 .

Lord , I long to see that Morning ,
When thy Gospel shall abound ,
And thy Grace get full Possession
Of the happy promis 'd Ground ;
All the Borders , & c .
Of the great Immanuel 's Land .

6 .

Fly abroad , eternal Gospel ,
Win and conquer , never cease ;
May thy eternal wide Dominions
Multiply , and still increase ;
May thy Scepter , & c .
Sway th 'enlight 'ned World around .

7 .

O let Moab yield and tremble ,
Let Philistia never boast ,
And let India proud be scatt 'red
With their numerable Host ;
And the Glory , & c .
Jesus only be to thee .