

When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

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“When I Survey the Wondrous Cross”

Isaac Watts first published “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross” in his *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* (1707). Designated a communion hymn, it appeared under the heading “Crucifixion to the World by the Cross of Christ; Gal. 6:14.” One of the first English-language hymns to use the word “I” and to focus directly on personal religious experience, “When I Survey” holds an important place in the history of hymnody. It offers an example of how Watts, sometimes called the father of English hymnody, enlarged the boundaries of English sacred song beyond the metrical psalms to include freer verse that readily lent itself to new musical settings. Watts fused two traditions of sacred song that had been developing side-by-side—metrical psalms and hymns—in texts characterized by unusual clarity and force in the choice of words.

The son of a Congregationalist minister, Watts was born in 1674 in Southampton, England. He followed his father into the ministry, accepting appointment to Mark Lane Chapel in London in 1702. His health broke soon after, forcing Watts to retire from public life. Until his death in 1748, he fulfilled ministerial duties as possible and devoted much time to study and writing. His books gained him wide repute, but Watts regarded his hymns as his most enduring contribution to the church. “When I Survey” is generally cited as the best these, though others remain in use as well.

In its first publication in 1707, “When I Survey” had five stanzas. Its second line originally read “Where the young Prince of Glory died.” In an enlarged edition of the hymnal in 1709, Watts changed the second line to the familiar “On which the Prince of Glory died” and bracketed the fourth stanza for optional use:

His dying Crimson, like a Robe,
Spreads o’er his Body on the Tree;
Then am I dead to all the Globe
And all the Globe is dead to me.

In 1757, George Whitefield included “When I Survey” in the Supplement to his popular *Collection of Hymns*. The next year, “When I Survey” first appeared in a hymnal published in the United States—*The Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs of the Old and New Testament* (1758). Since then, it has been found in the hymnals of American denominations as varied as traditional Protestants, Roman Catholics, Mormons, Unitarians and the Assemblies of God. Widely acclaimed by hymnologists, “When I Survey” is seldom altered beyond omitting Watts’ fourth stanza (considered too gory) or making a few minor changes such as stanza 2, line 2 “Save in the Cross”; stanza 3, line 2

“Love flow mingled”; stanza 4, line 2 “That were a tribute” or “That were an offering.”

The inclusion of “When I Survey” in the milestone British hymnal, *Hymns Ancient and Modern* (1861) cemented its marriage in British usage to the tune ROCKINGHAM (also known as COMMUNION and CATON). The hymn had first appeared to ROCKINGHAM in 1833. ROCKINGHAM derived from an earlier tune named TUNBRIDGE, published anonymously in 1778 in *Supplement to Psalmody in Miniature*, a collection edited by Aaron Williams. Organist Edward Miller arranged ROCKINGHAM for use in his *The Psalms of David for the Use of Parish Churches* (1790). Miller named his tune for his friend and patron, the Marquis of Rockingham—a three-time Whig prime minister. In American hymnals, “When I Survey” is generally set to an arrangement of HAMBURG, a tune adapted from an old Gregorian Chant by the prominent 19th-century American music educator, Lowell Mason.

Alfred V. Fedak

Alfred V. Fedak, noted organist and composer, is Director of Music at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Albany, New York, having held previous church positions in New Jersey and Michigan. He is active in the Hymn Society in the United States and Canada and in the American Guild of Organists, having served from 1995–2000 as Director of the national Certification Committee. To date he has published nearly 100 individual compositions including anthems, mass settings, vocal solos, and organ music. He has also composed over 75 hymn tunes which appear in various collections and denominational hymnals, including *The Alfred V. Fedak Hymnary*, published in 1990, and *Sing to the Lord No Threadbare Song: Hymns of Alfred V. Fedak*, published in 2000.

Fedak was born July 4, 1953 in Elizabeth, New Jersey. He earned B.A. and B.M. degrees from Hope College, and an M.A. from Montclair State University. A Fellow of the American Guild of Organists he also holds the Guild’s Choirmaster Certificate. He is the recipient of numerous prizes in organ performance and composition, including the A.G.O.’s S. Lewis Elmer Award for national high score on Guild exams.

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When I Survey The Wondrous Cross

Two-part Mixed Choir and Keyboard
with opt. Treble inst. (Violin or Clarinet) and opt. Cong.

Isaac Watts, 1707

ROCKINGHAM, Edward Miller, 1790;
setting by Alfred. V. Fedak

With warmth and confidence (♩ = ca. 76)

Treble inst. *mf*

Kybd. II *mp*

cresc.

mf

The musical score is arranged in three systems. Each system consists of a Treble instrument staff (Violin or Clarinet) and a Keyboard staff (piano). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The first system (measures 1-5) features a treble instrument part starting with a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic and a keyboard part starting with mezzo-piano (mp). The second system (measures 6-11) includes a crescendo (cresc.) marking. The third system (measures 12-15) features a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic. A large diagonal watermark 'FOR REVIEW ONLY' is overlaid across the middle of the page.

*Play cue-sized notes only in the absence of a treble instrument.

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4
18

Choir and Cong. *mf*

When I sur - vey the won - drous cross on

24

which the Prince of Glo - ry died my rich - est

29

gain I count but loss, and pour con - tempt on

The musical score is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of three systems of music. Each system includes a vocal line for 'Choir and Cong.' and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: 'When I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of glory died my richest gain I count but loss, and pour contempt on'. The score includes dynamic markings such as *mf* and *f*, and various musical notations like rests, slurs, and ornaments.

34

f *mf*

All male voices *mf*

all — my pride. For - bid — it,

40

Lord, that I should boast, save in the cross of

45

mf All treble voices

Christ — my God: — all the vain things that charm — me

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6

50

All voices

most, I sac - ri - fice them to his blood. *div.*

55

S.A. *p*

— See from his head, his hands, his feet,

T.B. *p*

— See from his head, his hands, his feet,

Man. *p*

The musical score is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It features a piano accompaniment and vocal parts for Soprano Alto (S.A.), Tenor Bass (T.B.), and a Male Soloist (Man.). The score is divided into two systems. The first system covers measures 50-54, and the second system covers measures 55-59. The lyrics are: 'most, I sacrifice them to his blood.' followed by 'See from his head, his hands, his feet,' in both vocal parts. The piano accompaniment provides harmonic support with chords and melodic lines. A 'div.' (divisi) marking is present at the end of the first system. A 'Man.' marking is present at the beginning of the second system. A diagonal watermark 'FOR REVIEW ONLY' is visible across the score.

60

sor - row and love flow min - gled down! — Did e'er such

— sor - row and love flow down! Did e'er such

Ped.

65

love — and sor - row meet, — or thorns com - pose so

love and sor - row meet, — or thorns com - pose so

cresc.

cresc.

cresc.

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8

70

f

rich a crown?

rich a crown?

74

mf

cresc.

The musical score is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The piano part includes dynamic markings such as *f*, *mf*, and *cresc.*. The lyrics are: "rich a crown?"

79 *poco rall.* Broadly, *a tempo*

Choir Sopranos *f*

Were the whole realm of na - ture

A.T.B. and Cong. *f*

Were the whole realm of na - ture

poco rall.

83

mine, that were a pres - ent far too

mine, that were a pres - ent far too small; love

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10

88

small; love so di - vine de -

so a - maz - ing, so di - vine de -

92

rall. al fine

mands my soul, my life, my all.

mands my soul, my life, my all.

rall. al fine