Amazing Grace!

from BLIND *to* FREE

by Lloyd Larson

Narration by Mark Cabaniss

Orchestrations by Ed Hogan

Performance time: Approximately 45 minutes

Also available:

JMG1513..... Listening CD
JMG1514..... InstruTrax CD
JMG1515.....Orchestration CD
JMG1516.....RehearsalTrax CDs

Orchestration Instrumentation:

Flute 1 & 2; Oboe; Clarinet 1 & 2, Bassoon; Horn 1 & 2; Trumpet 1, 2, & 3; Trombone 1 & 2; Bass Trombone; Percussion; Harp; Piano; Violin 1 & 2; Viola; Cello; Bass.

Substitute Parts: Soprano Sax/Clarinet (Sub. for Oboe); Bass Clarinet (Sub. for Bassoon); Baritone TC (Sub. for either Trombone); Synthesizer String Reduction

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NARRATION 1

(Music for "A Tapestry of Grace" begins)

JOHN: *(beginning at m. 9)* My name is John Newton. And even if you don't know my name, you know my song. I am humbled and amazed that song has touched millions around the world. Everyone has a story, and mine is filled with rebellion, strife, and storms. But mostly, it is filled with grace.

("A Tapestry of Grace" continues and concludes)

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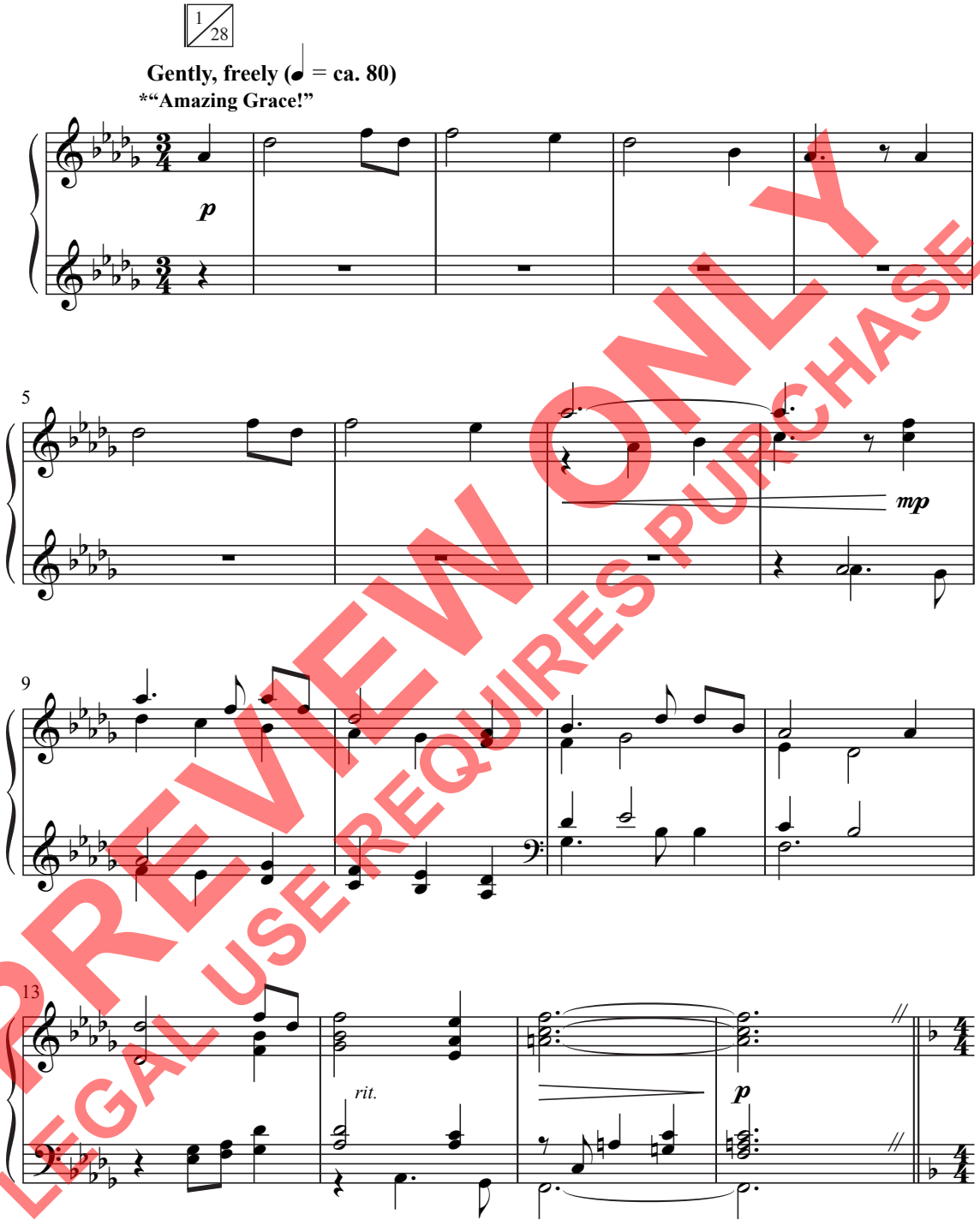
A TAPESTRY OF GRACE

Arranged by **LLOYD LARSON**



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*Tune: **NEW BRITAIN** from *Virginia Harmony*, 1831; adapt. **EDWIN O. EXCELL,** 1900

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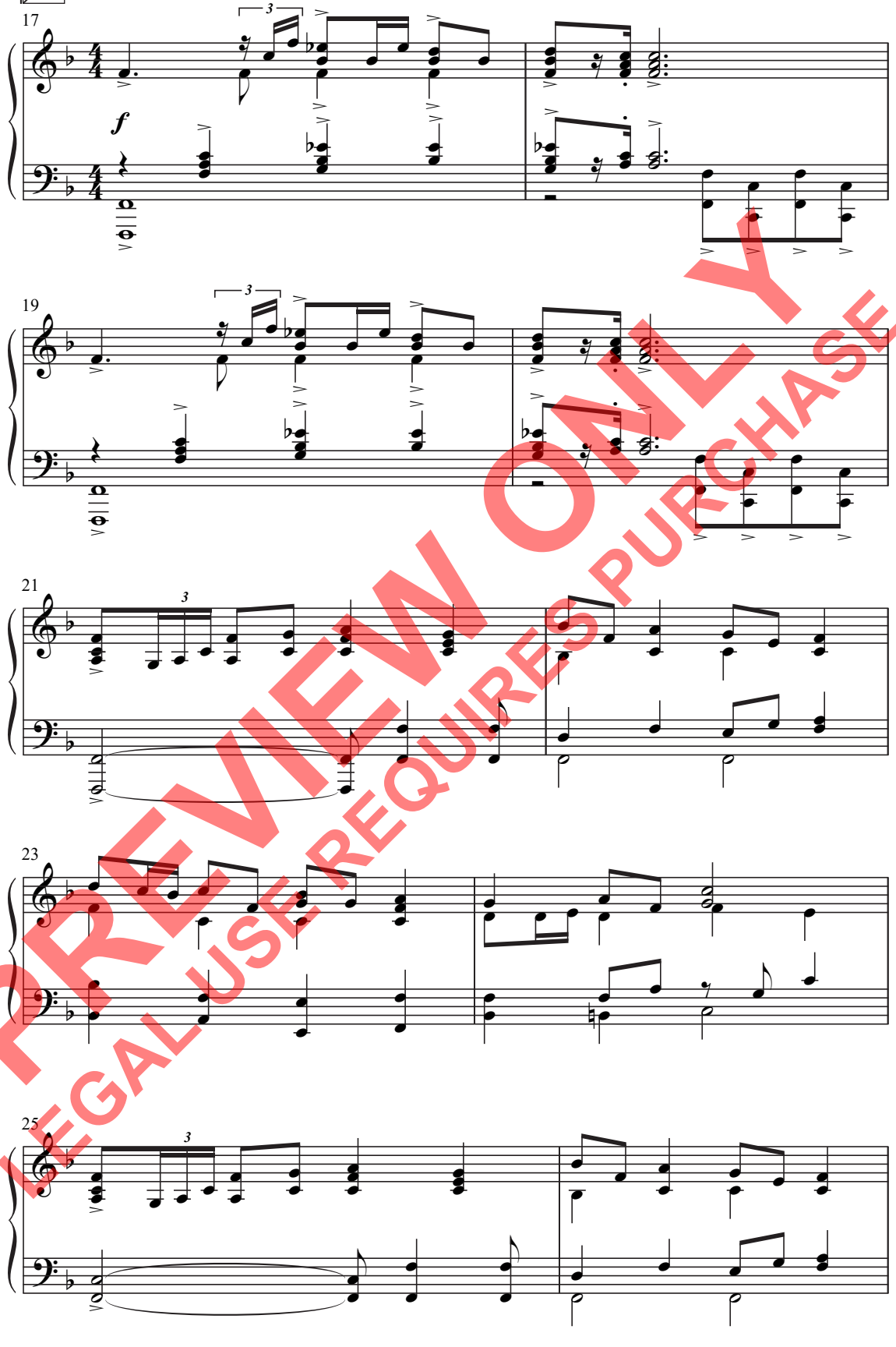
2/29

Regally (♩ = ca. 88)

***"Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken"**



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*Tune: **AUSTRIAN HYMN** by **FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN**, 1797

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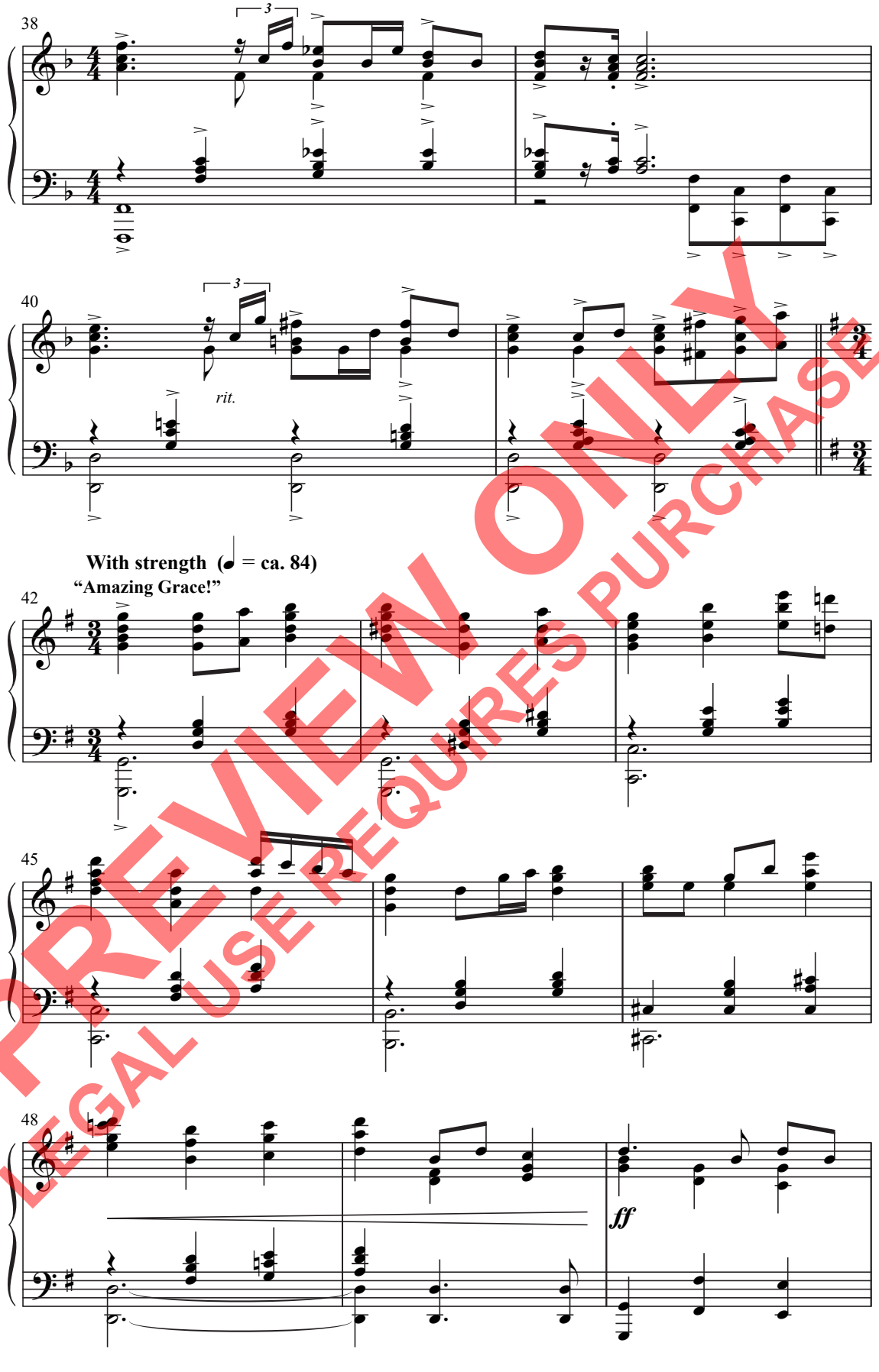

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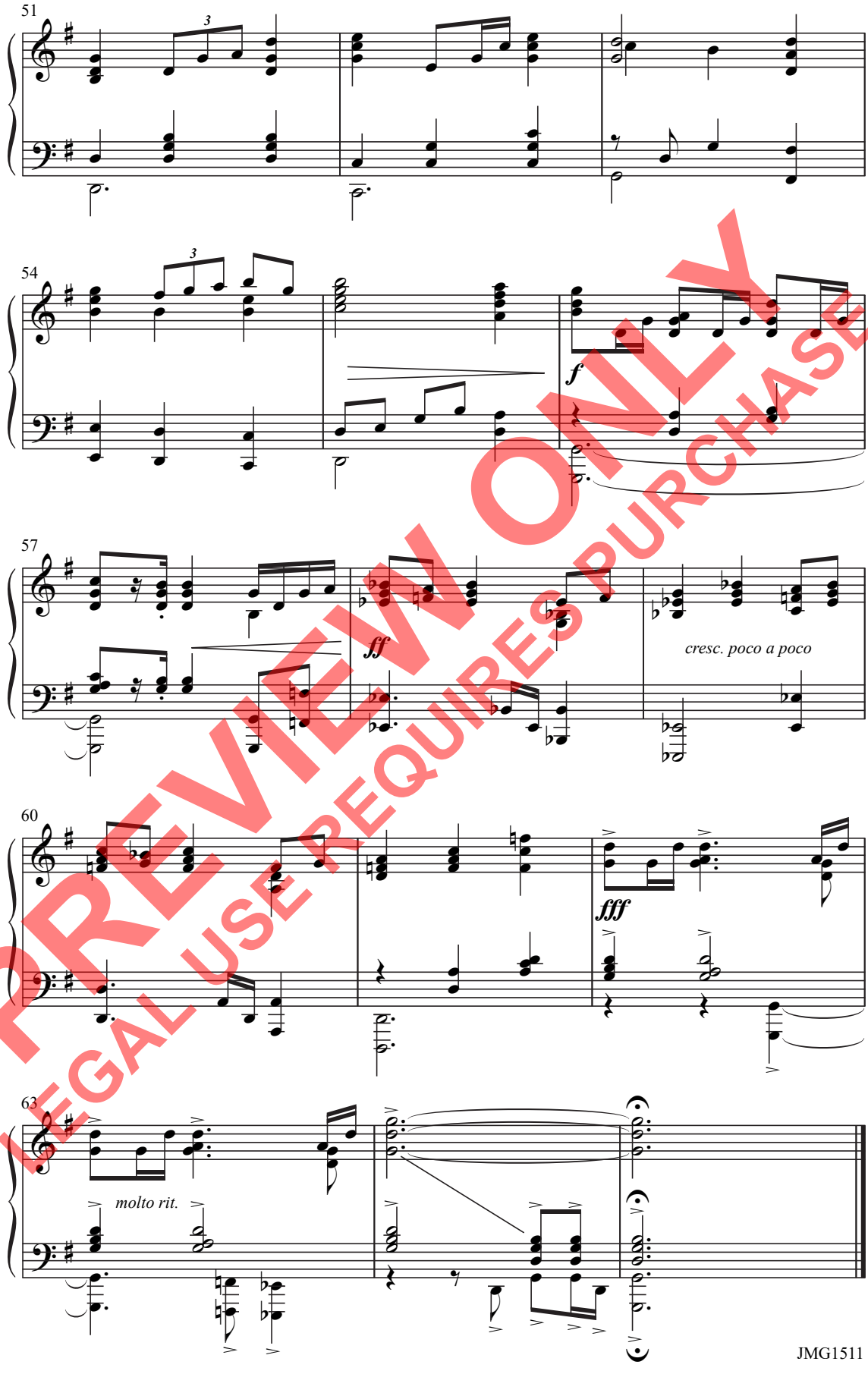

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NARRATION 2

NARRATOR: We now travel to London, and the year is 1725. There, John Newton was born to a seafaring captain and a mother who dedicated herself to a Christian upbringing of her only son.

JOHN: Tell me, Mother. Tell me about grace.

NARRATOR: She told him: Grace, my son, is a gift. It is not earned. It is not deserved. But it will always find you—if only you let it.

JOHN: Thank you, Mother.

NARRATOR: But grace was not the only early lesson John Newton would learn. Grief soon followed. His mother, his gentle guide, died before he was seven.

JOHN: I love you, Mother. I believe we will live again together even thousands of years into the future.

NARRATOR: John showed an uncanny ability to read, think, and recall facts from the earliest of years. The spiritual foundations to which he was exposed by his mother, along with his critical-thinking abilities, influenced his hymn lyrics years later, as he was able to grasp and articulate the truths of his faith at a profound level.

JOHN: Perhaps no hymn better reflects that than "Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken," where I wrote about the eternal nature of a believer's faith in a loving and powerful God.

(Music for "Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken" begins)

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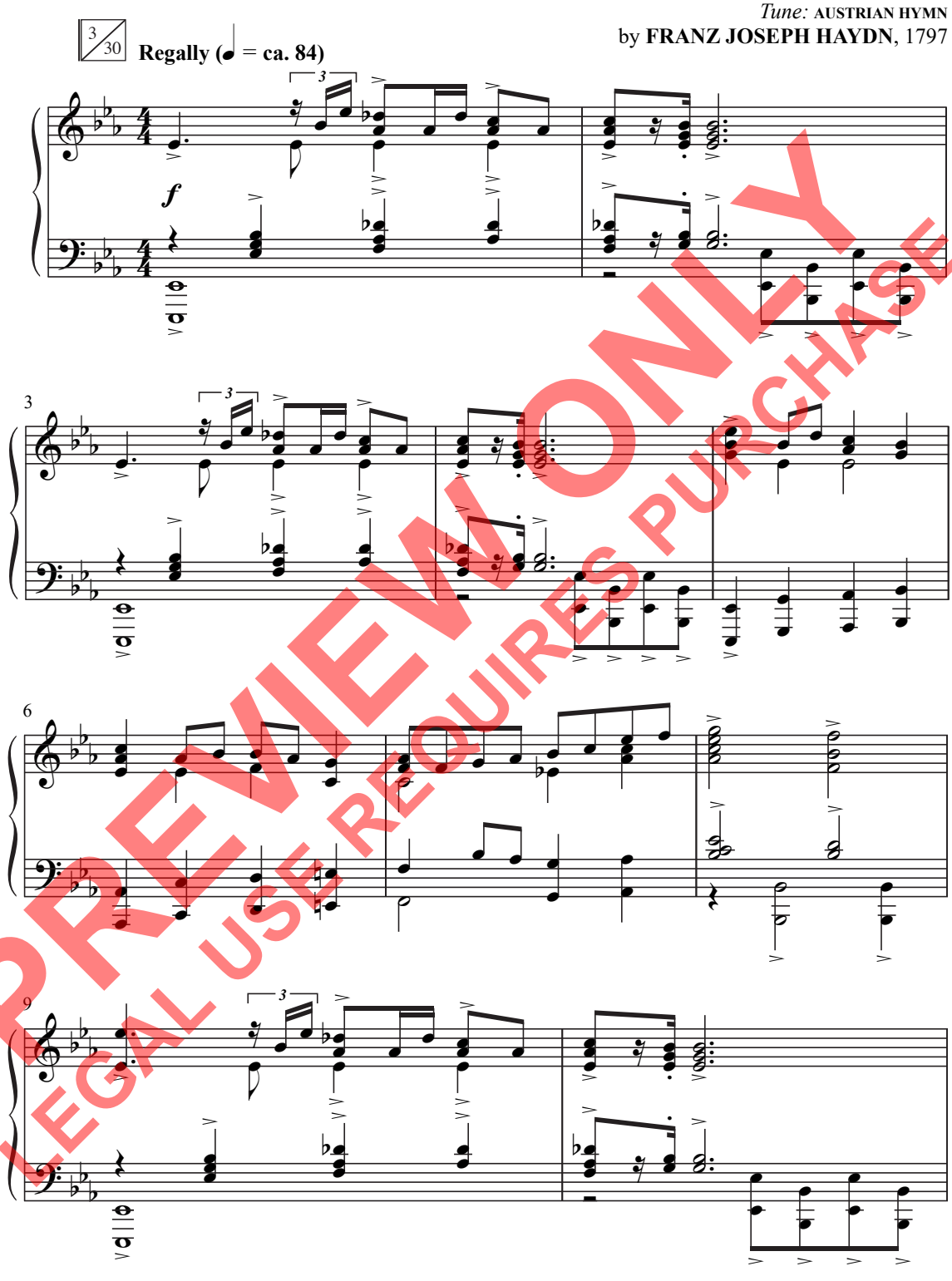
GLORIOUS THINGS OF THEE ARE SPOKEN

Words by **JOHN NEWTON**, 1779

Arranged by **LLOYD LARSON**
Tune: **AUSTRIAN HYMN**
by **FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN**, 1797



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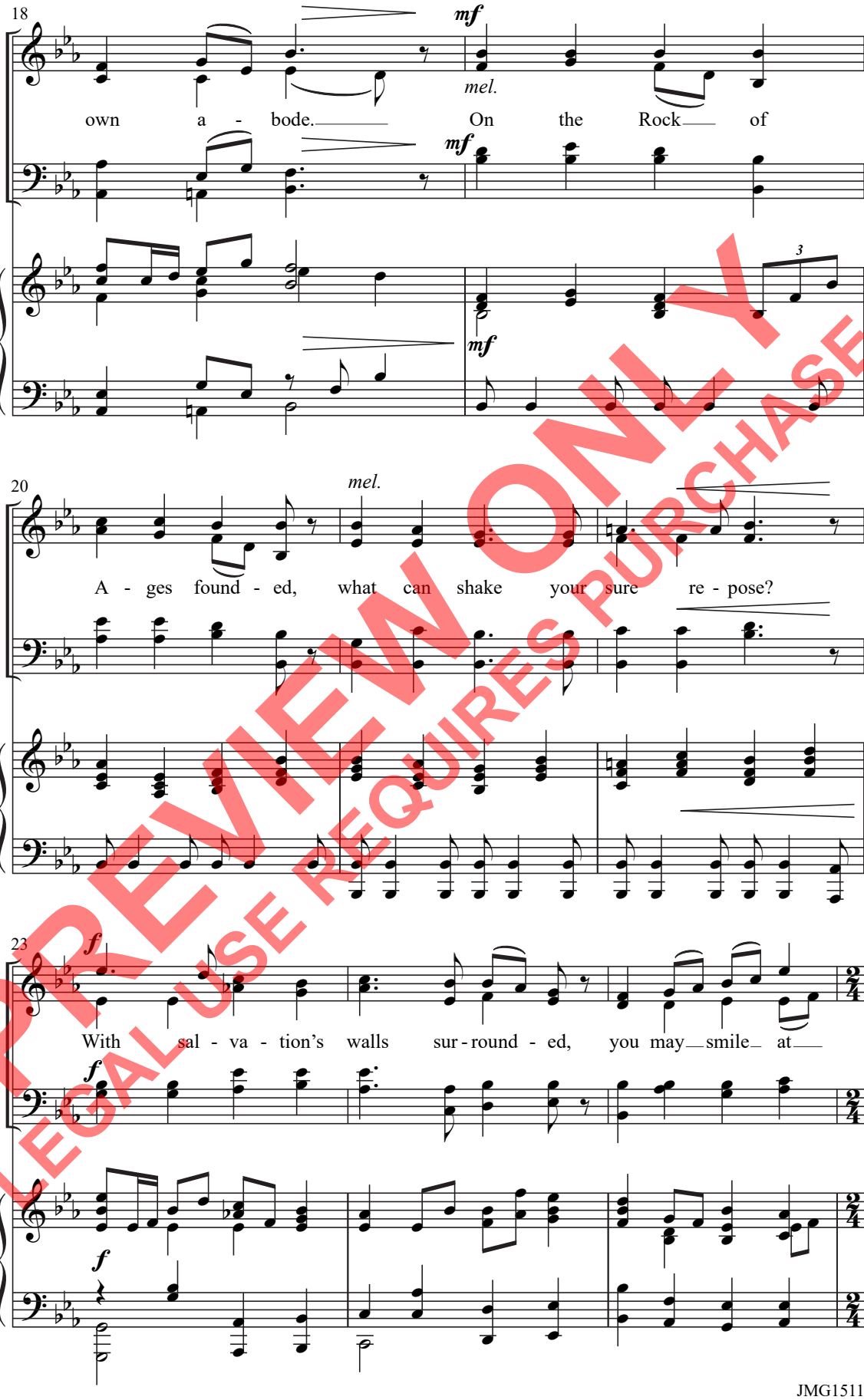

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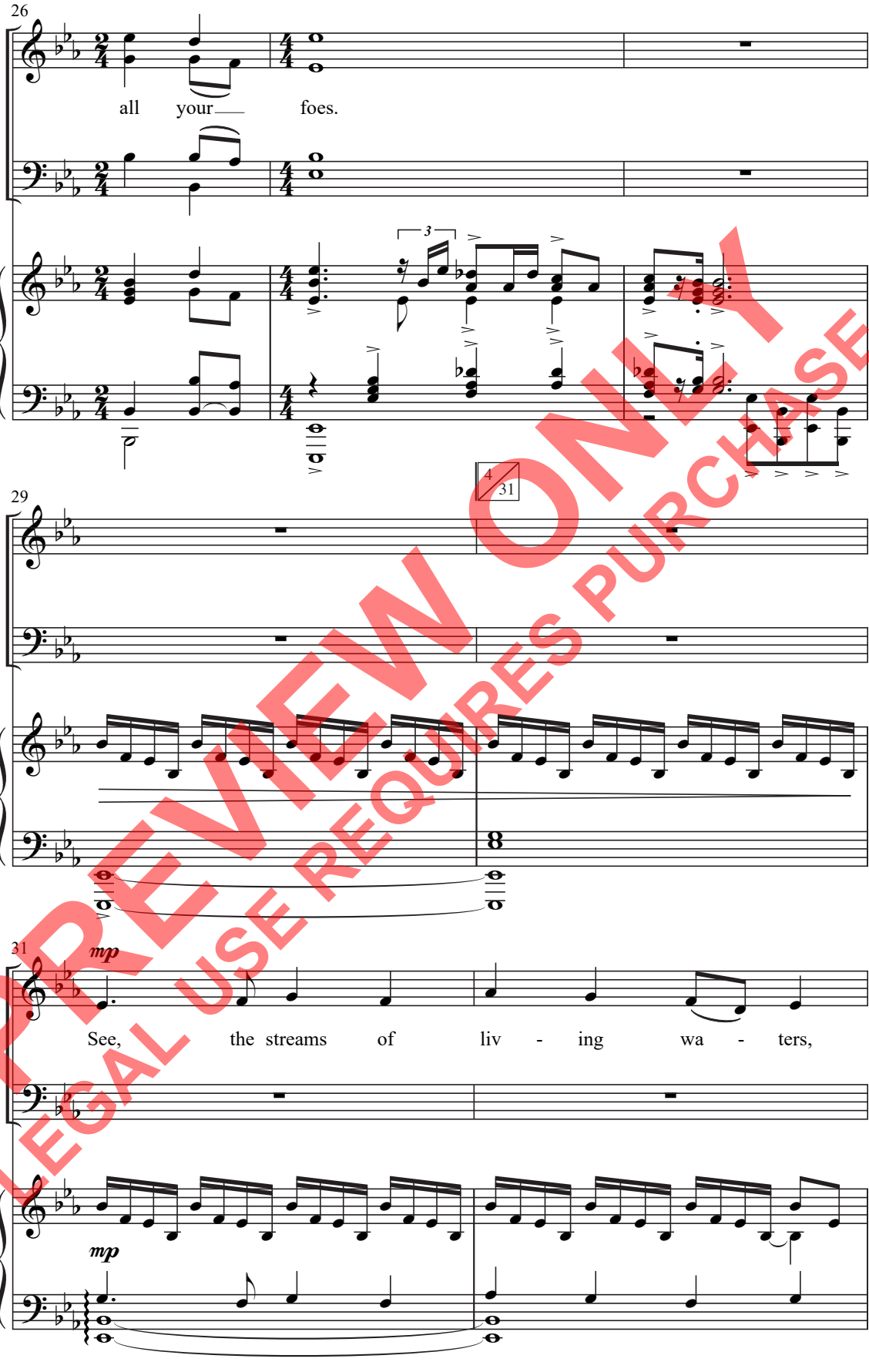

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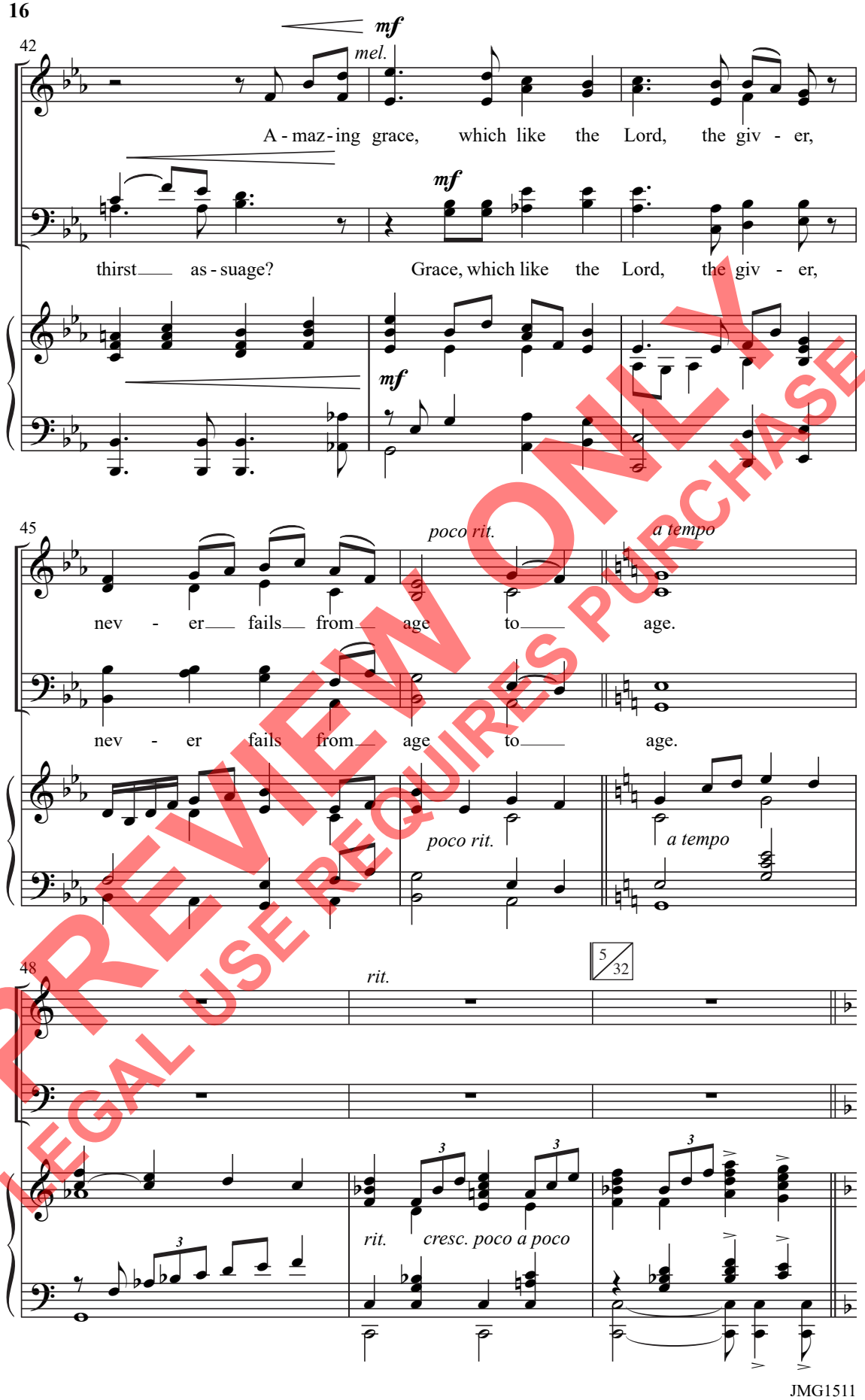

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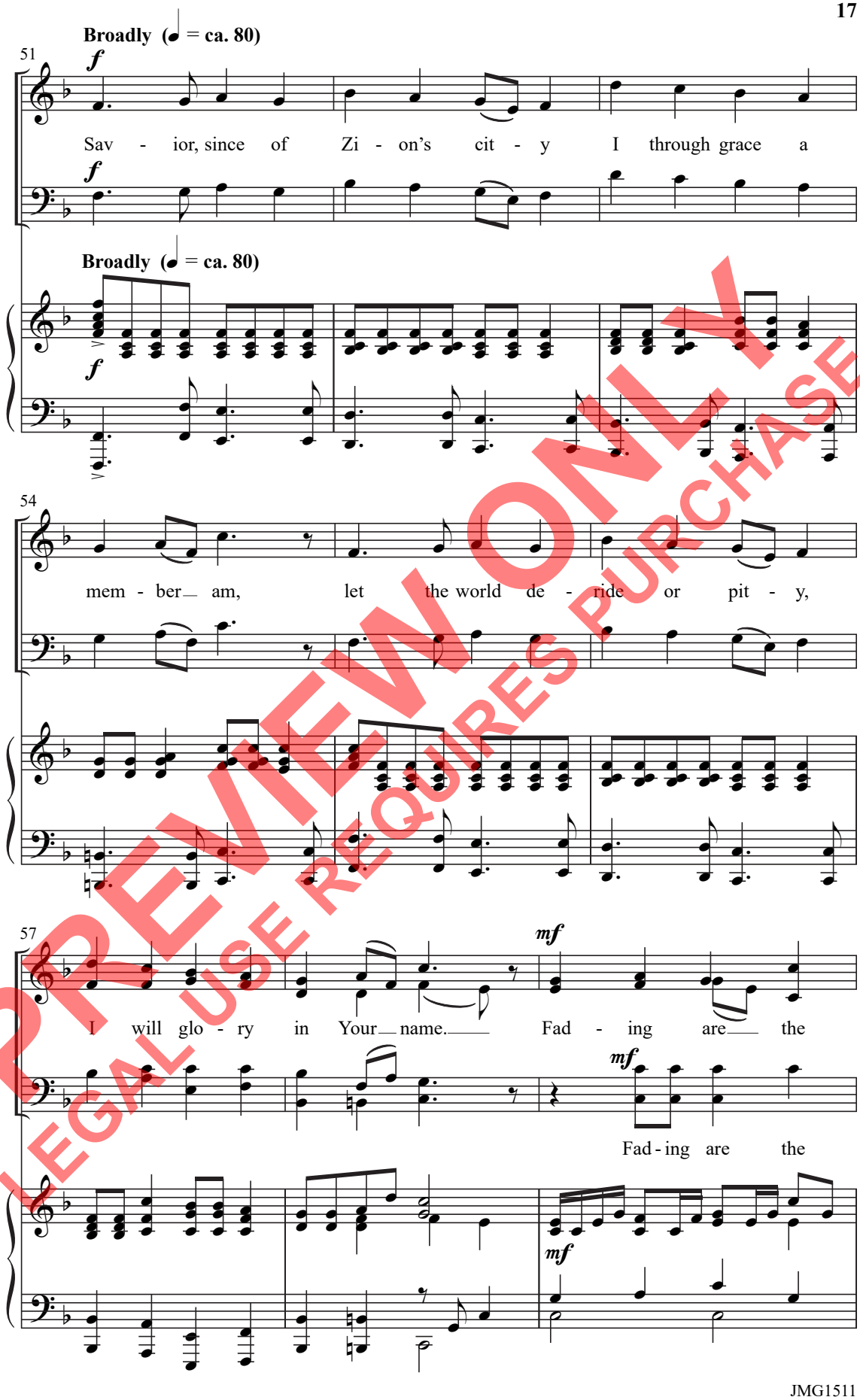

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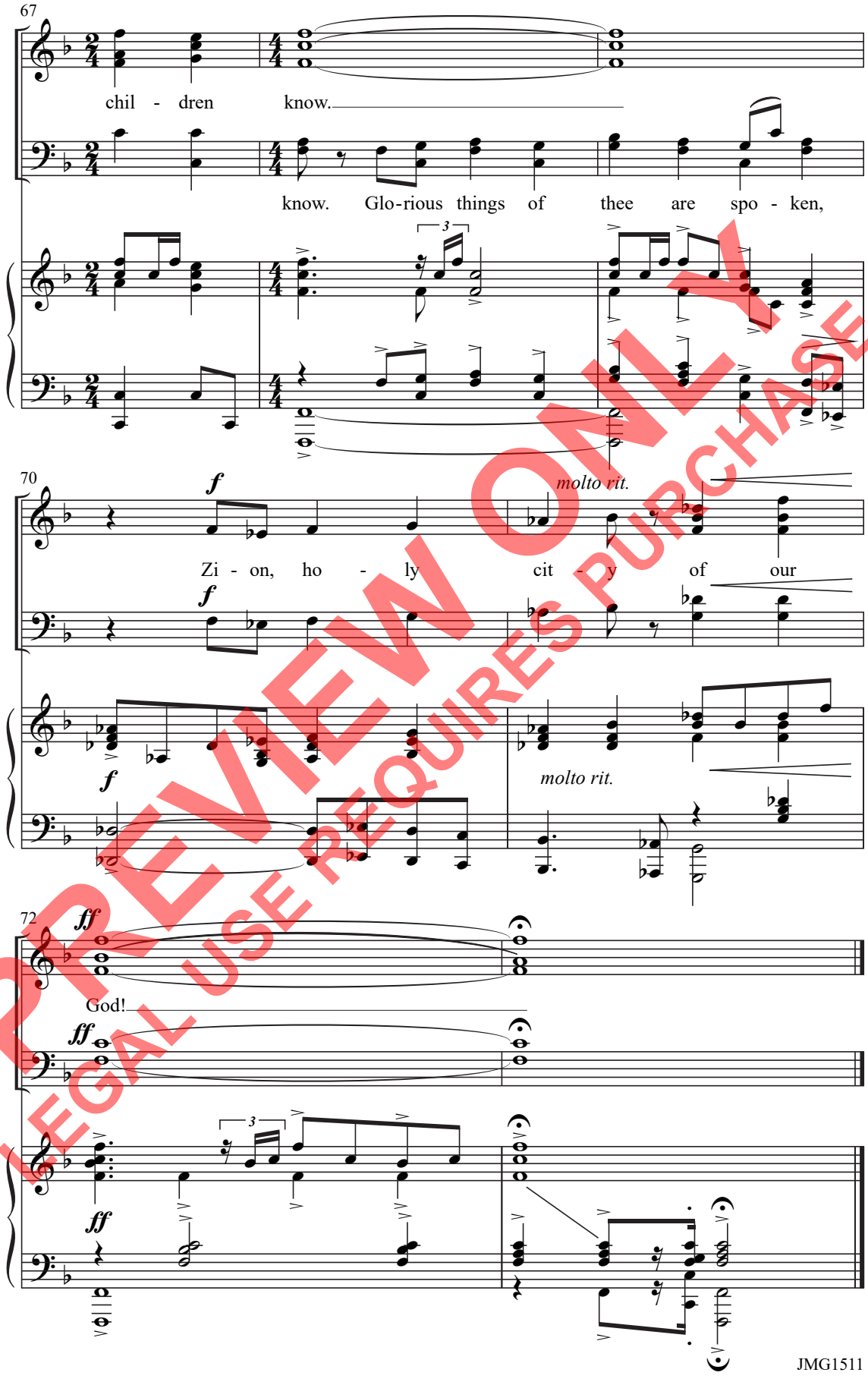

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NARRATION 3

NARRATOR: John's life changed dramatically after the death of his mother. His father quickly remarried, had additional children with his new wife, and young John was left to navigate life on his own much of the time.

JOHN: *(defiantly)* I want more than your life, Father. The sea may be yours, but it will never be mine.

NARRATOR: But the sea had already claimed John. At eleven, he was aboard his first ship. And soon, its wildness matched his own. He kept bad company, ran wild in the streets, and was often heard swearing or blaspheming. But, as if to balance these tendencies, he would often bury himself in religious books, hearkening back to the faith teachings of his mother.

JOHN: There were many times in my life when I sensed God's hand of protection, such as when I was a teenager, and some of my rowdy buddies boarded a small dinghy before I could join them. I was late getting there because I had been at church, and the sermon ran long that Sunday.

Those boys were yelling and raising a ruckus as they boarded that little craft. They were so angry that I missed the boat. But then, something terrible happened. As I watched them get farther out to sea, the boat suddenly capsized from a powerful wave! Every one of them drowned.

(Music for "Sheltered In God's Hand" begins)

NARRATOR: John realized God's providence prevented him from boarding the dinghy that day. In that moment, and many others to follow over the course of his life, he gained a sense that God's protective hand was guiding and sheltering him for a greater purpose.

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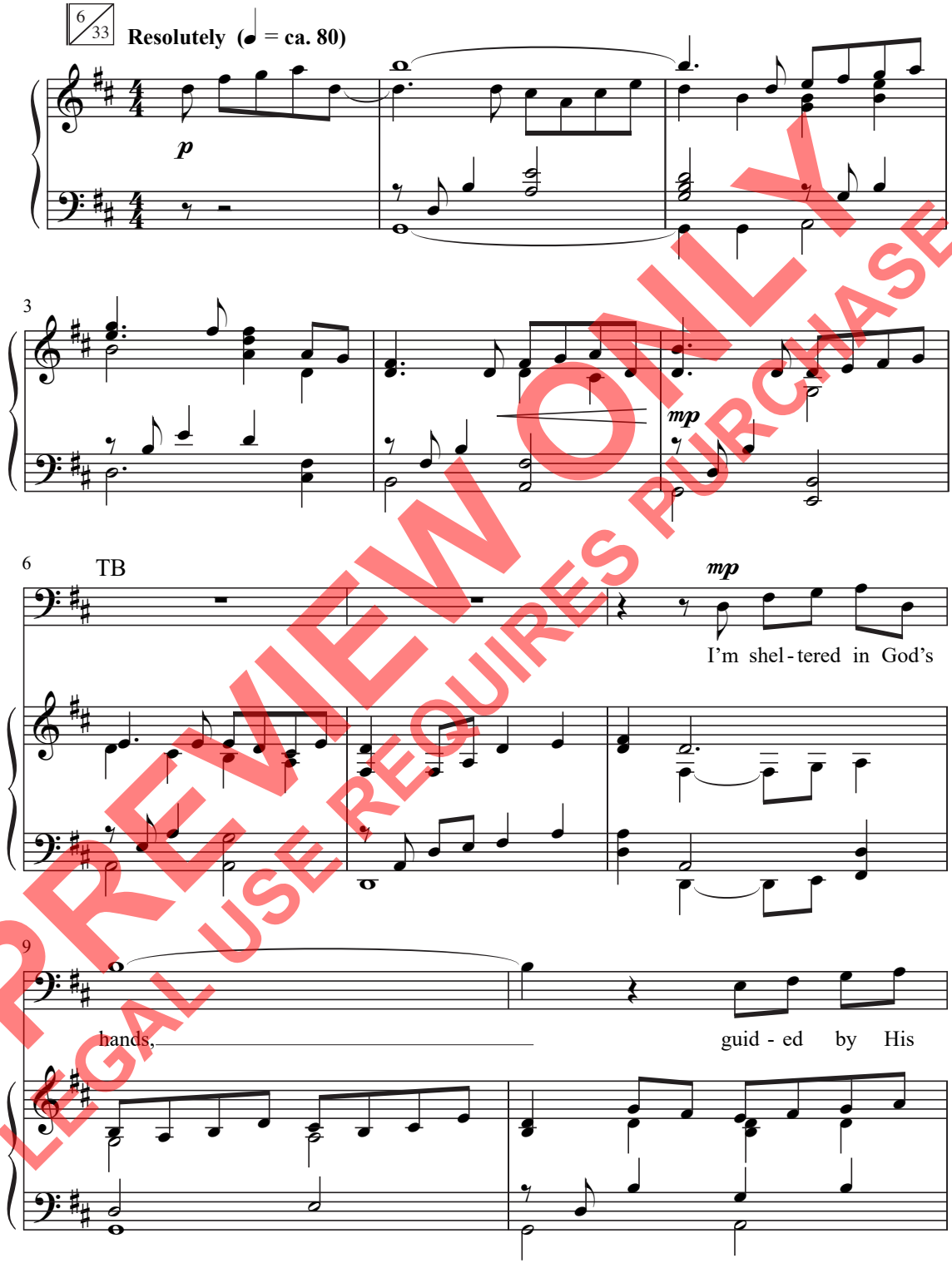
SHELTERED IN GOD'S HANDS

Words by **LLOYD LARSON** and
JOSEPH H. GILMORE, 1862

Music by **LLOYD LARSON**
Incorporating **HE LEADETH ME**
by **WILLIAM BRADBURY**, 1864



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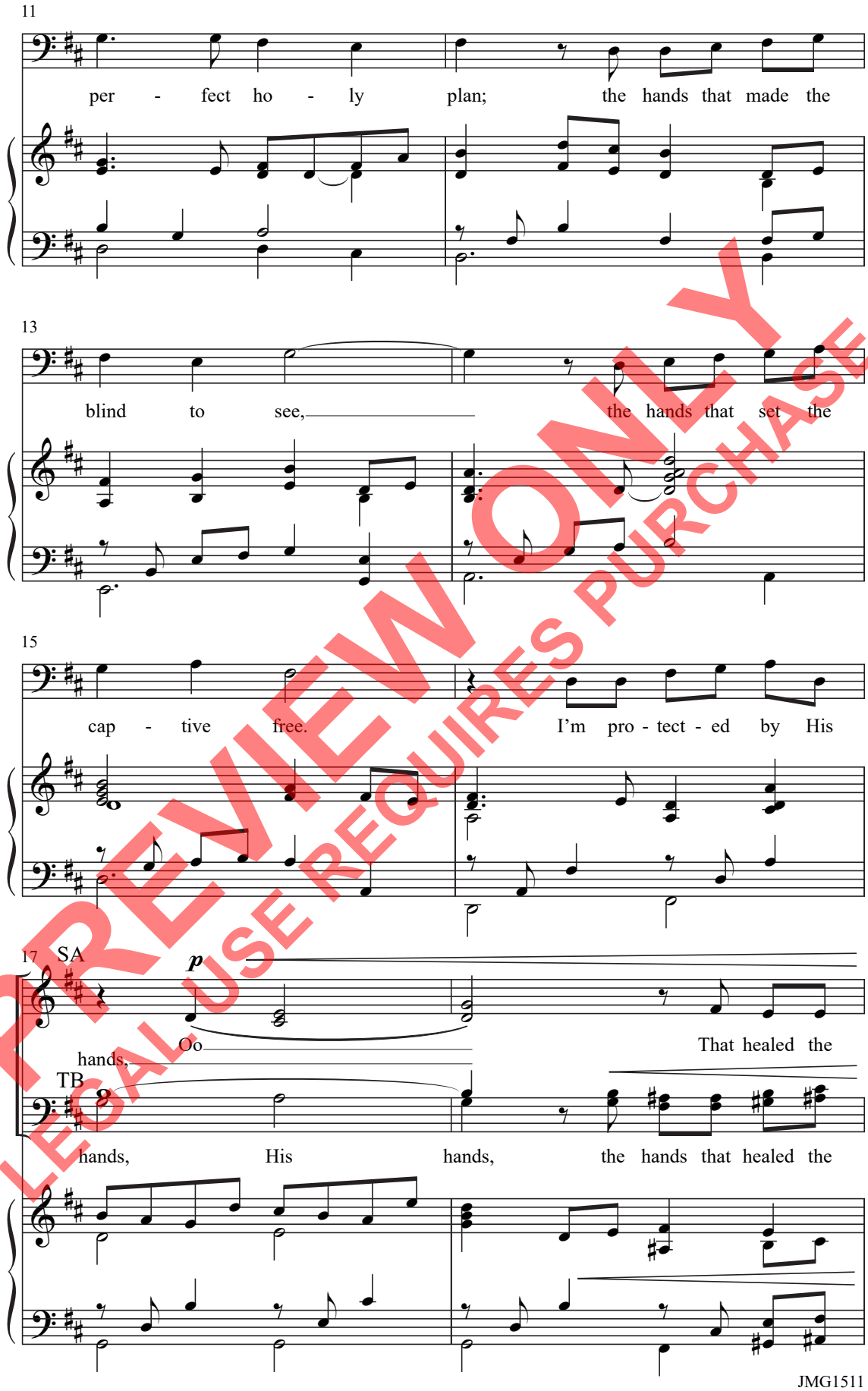

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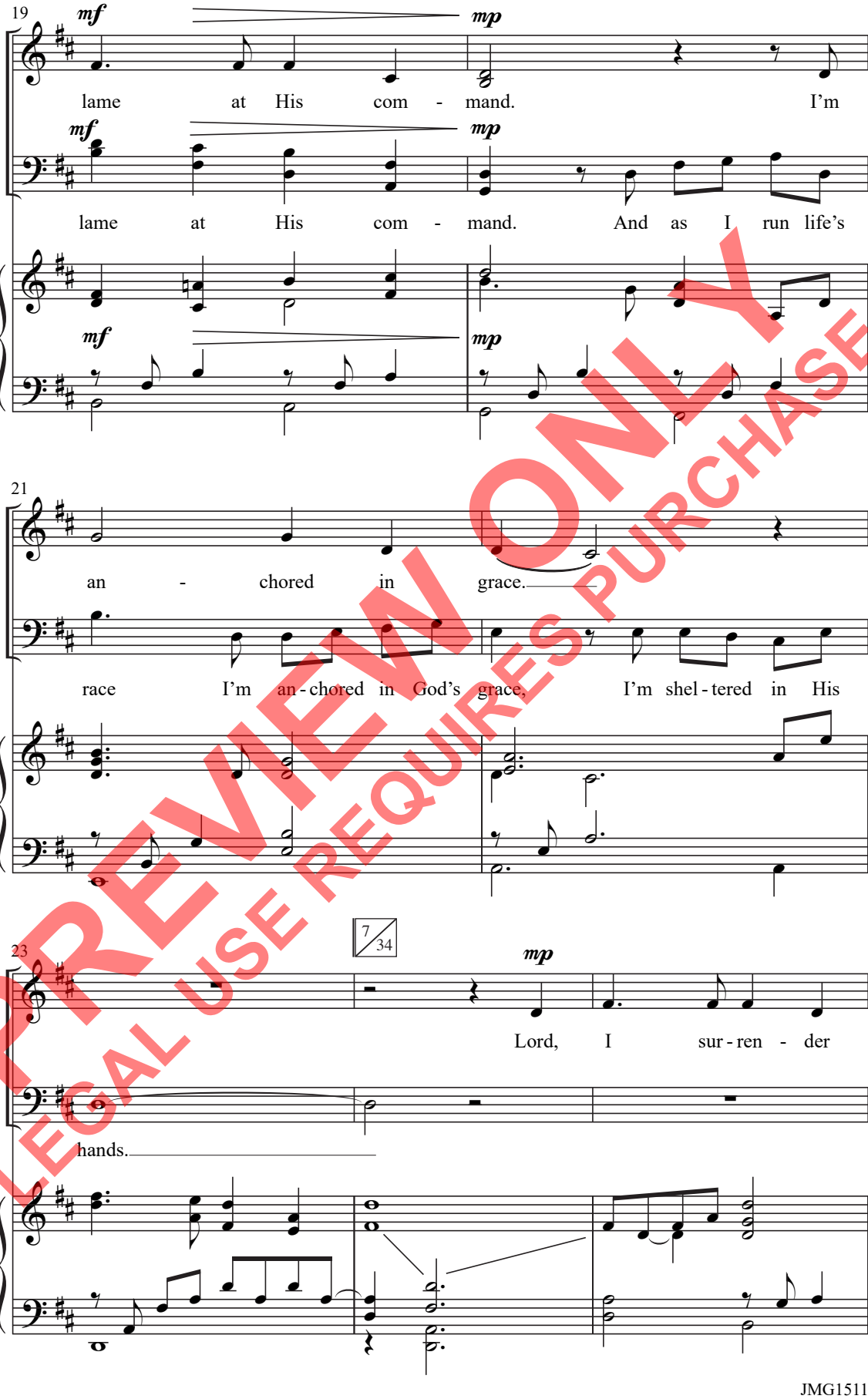

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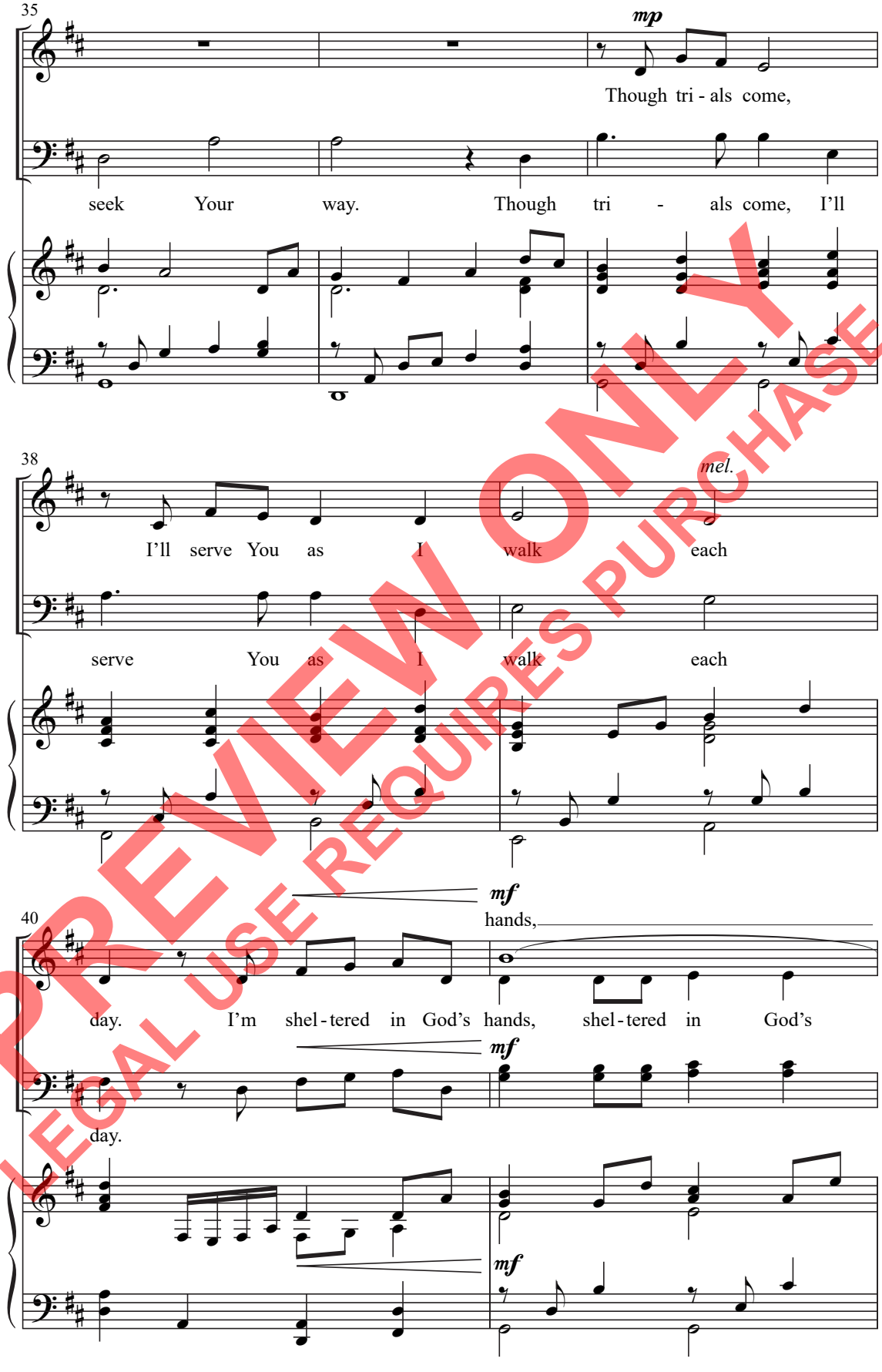

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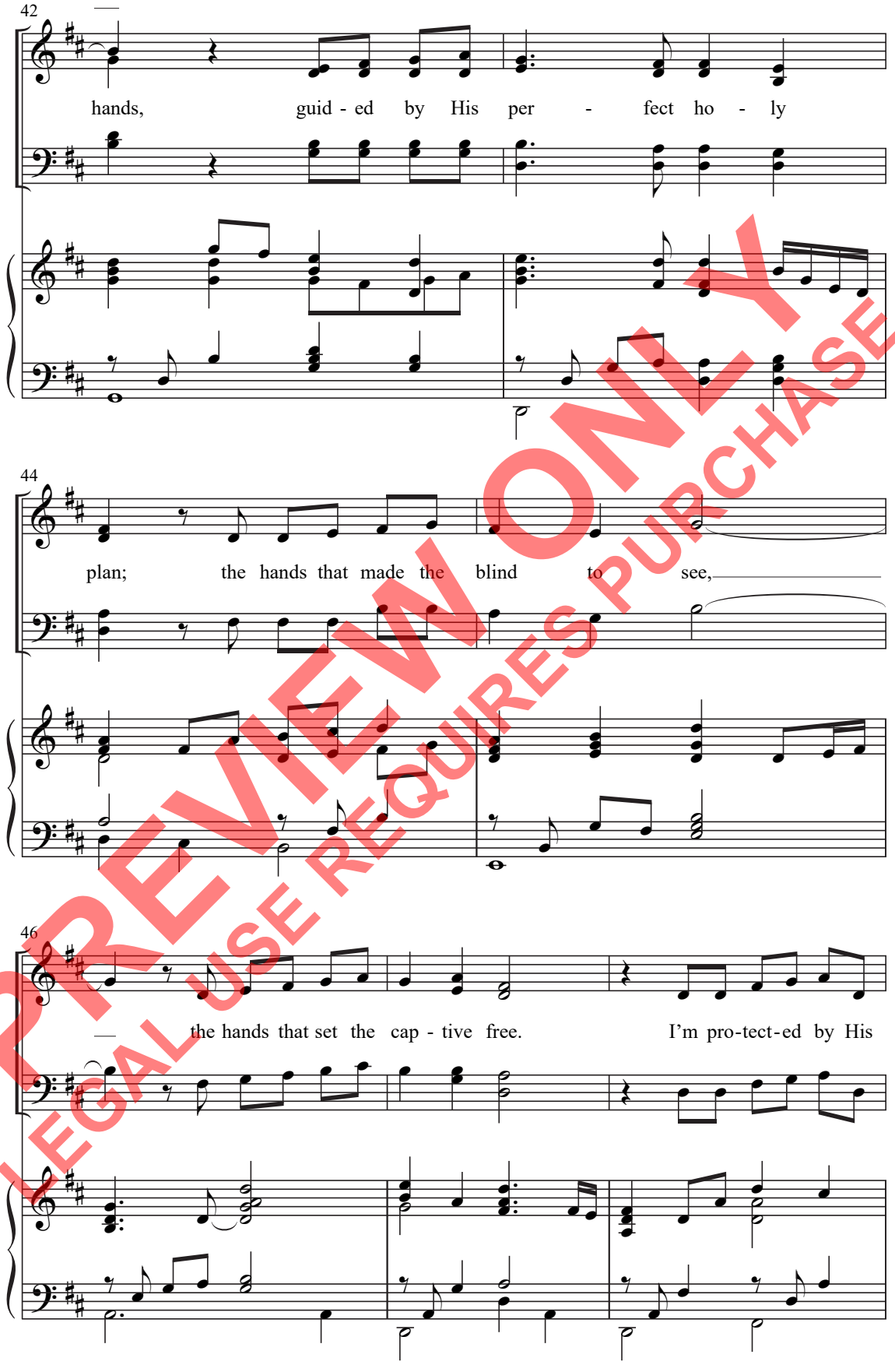

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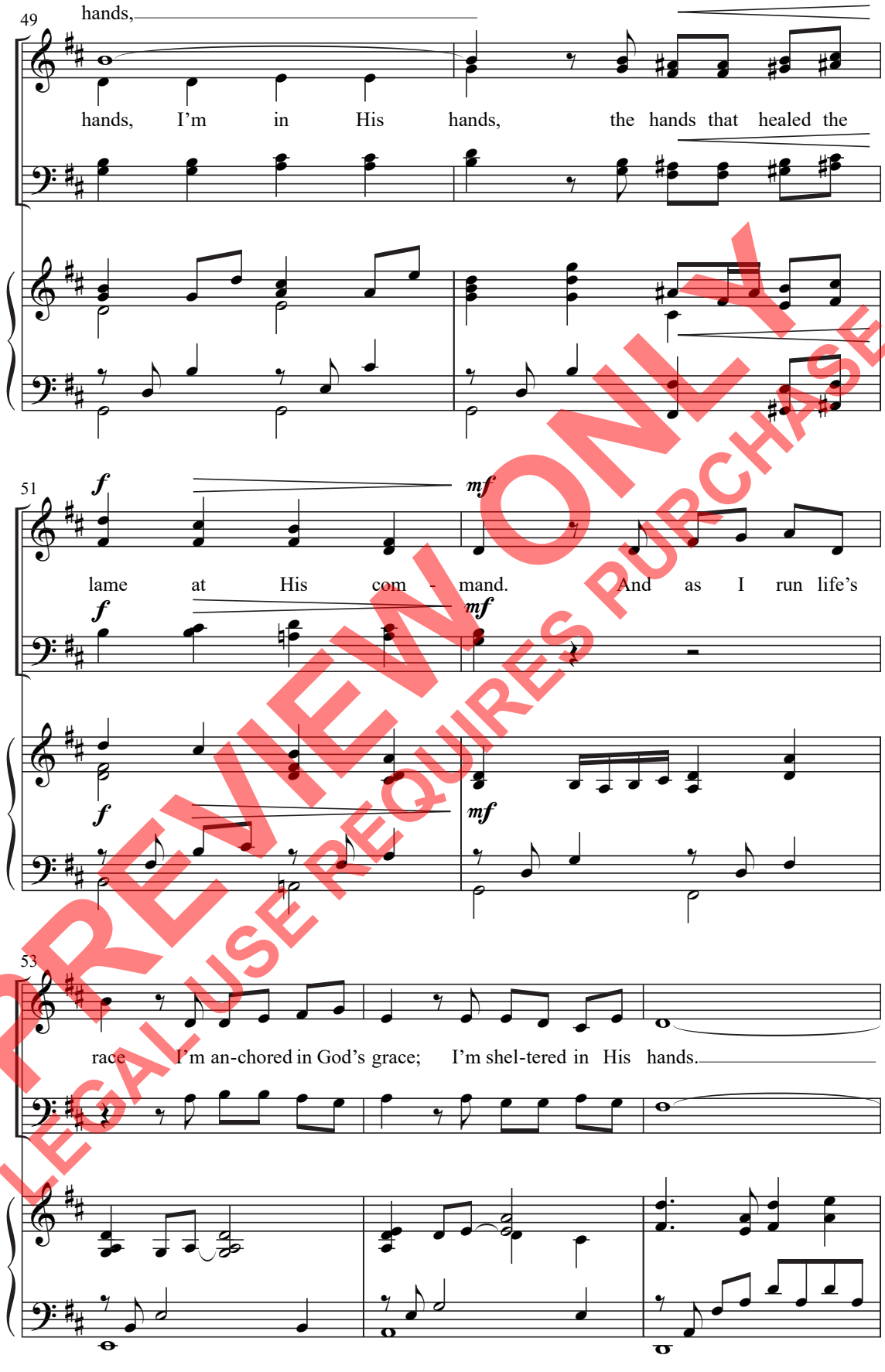

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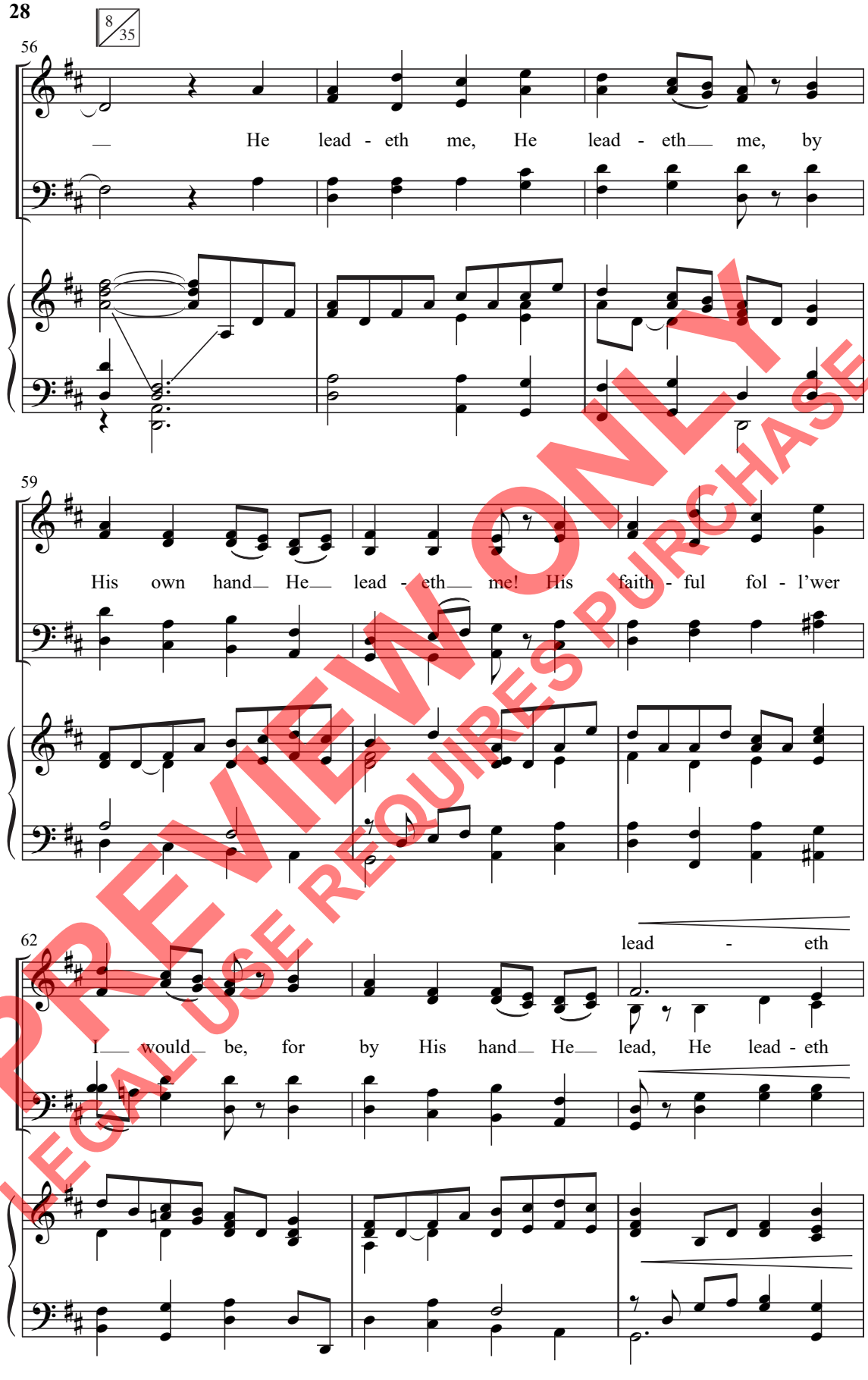

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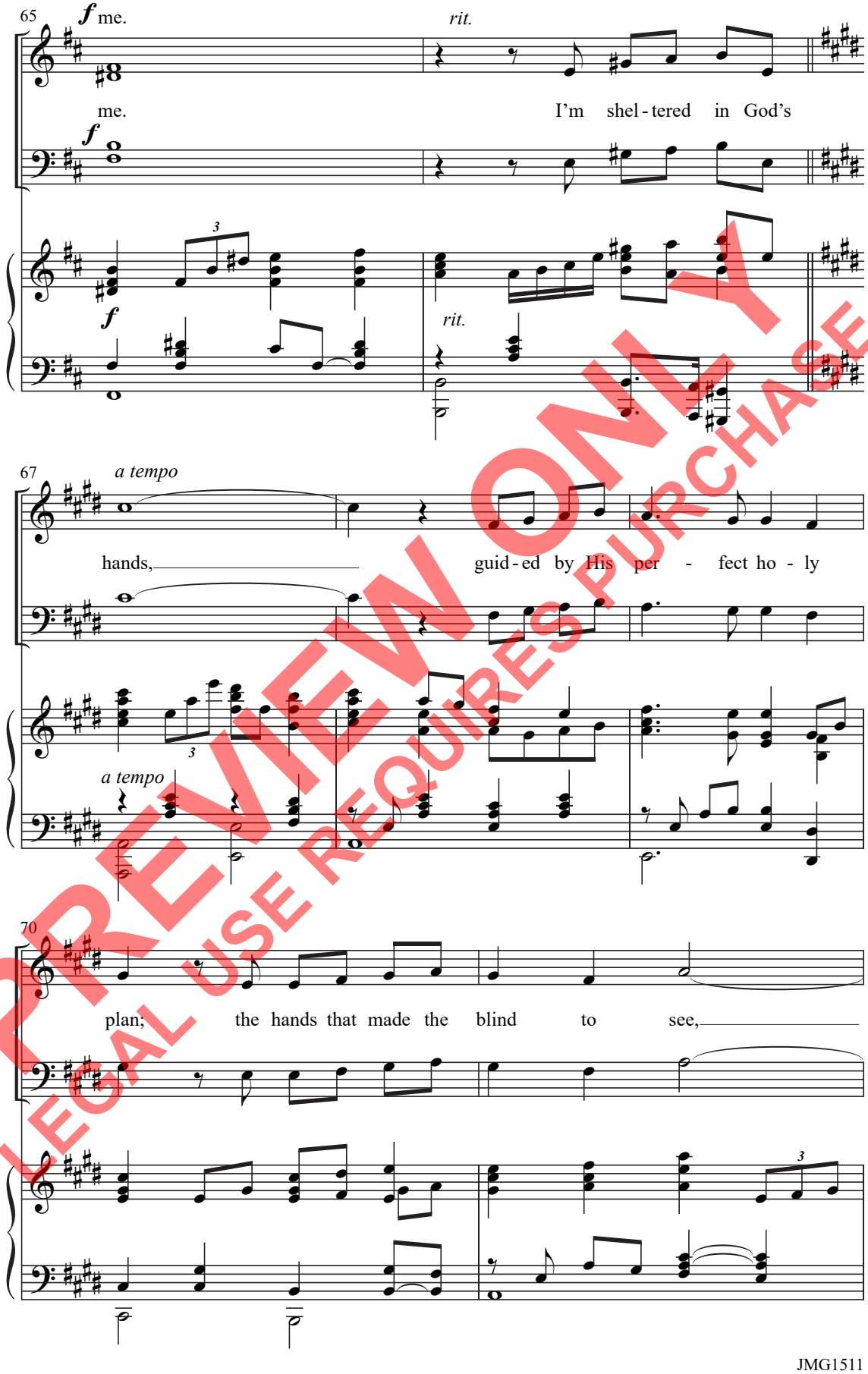

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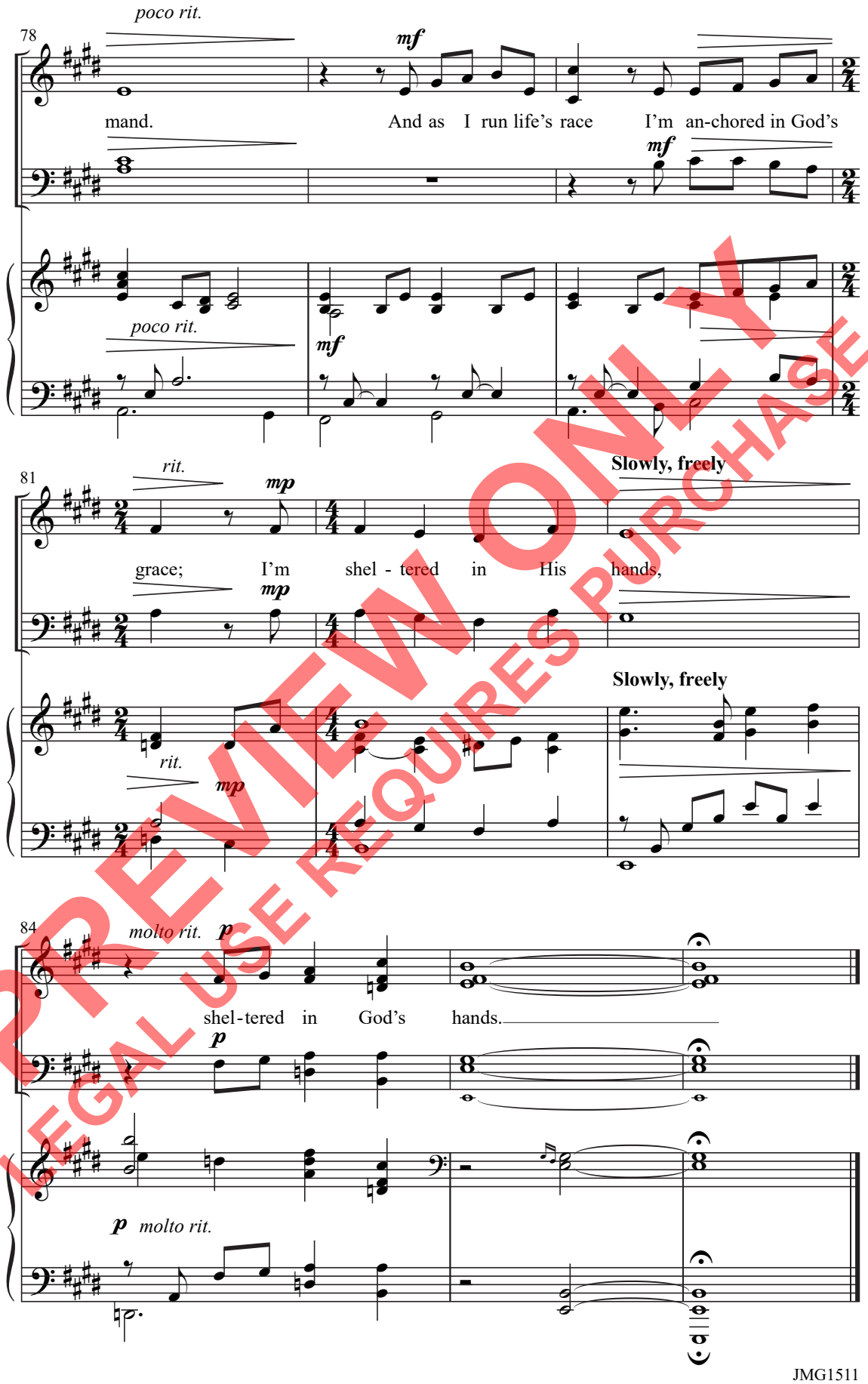

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NARRATION 4

NARRATOR: As John continued to mature, he often found himself at odds with his father. Despite a strained relationship with him, John became enamored with the worldly and often wicked lifestyles of the crew aboard his father's ship. Then, at age nineteen, John was drafted to serve on a British military ship. But because of his bad attitude, he was soon traded to serve on another ship, and then another. It was during this time that John was introduced to the financially lucrative possibilities of slave trading. He became a "slaver," a man who blindly profited from suffering.

JOHN: It was aboard the ship *Pegasus* where I first saw the western coast of Africa. For the next two years, I was involved in capturing West African natives to be sold as slaves to markets around the world.

NARRATOR: But because of John's wild, rebellious, and angry nature, things didn't go well with him and the captain and crew.

JOHN: You call me rude, Captain! You make false charges! You say the calamities of this ship are my fault?

NARRATOR: *(angrily)* Yes, John Newton, you are like Jonah! And you are guilty of desertion. You will be flogged in front of your crew!

JOHN: Never! With God as my witness, I will take this ship down with me!

(Music for "They Called Him Jonah" begins)

NARRATOR: In moments such as these, one wonders if John could have somehow heard the voice of his deceased mother beckoning to him about the mercy of a loving God. But the pull of his dark side and his brutal and untamed spirit were far beyond her past influence. His fate seemed to be sealed.

JOHN: *(scornfully)* You call me Jonah, Captain! I'll show you who's the captain of his fate!

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THEY CALLED HIM JONAH

Words by **LLOYD LARSON**

Music by **LLOYD LARSON**
Incorporating **NEW BRITAIN**
from *Virginia Harmony,* 1831,
adapt. **EDWIN O. EXCELL**, 1900

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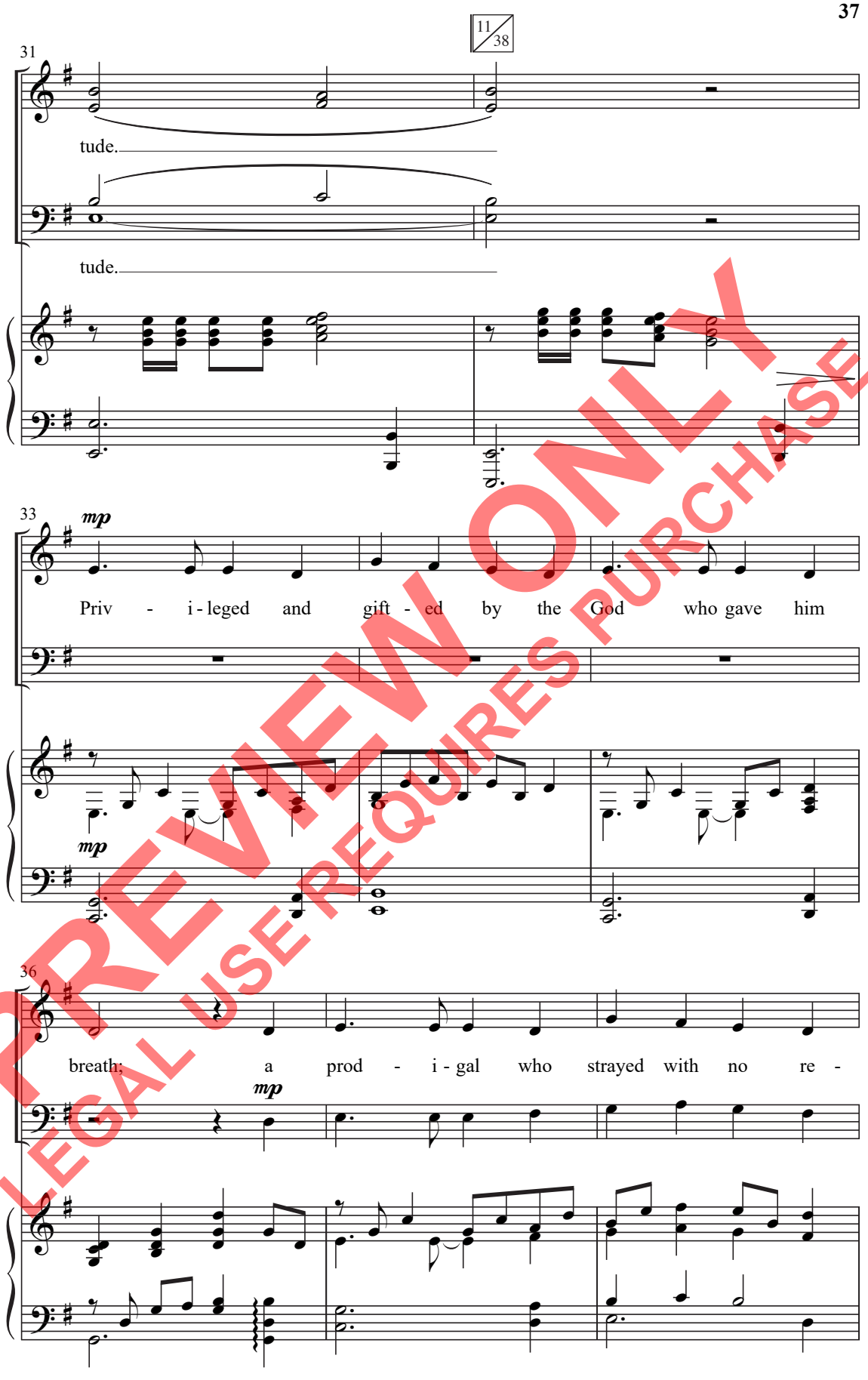

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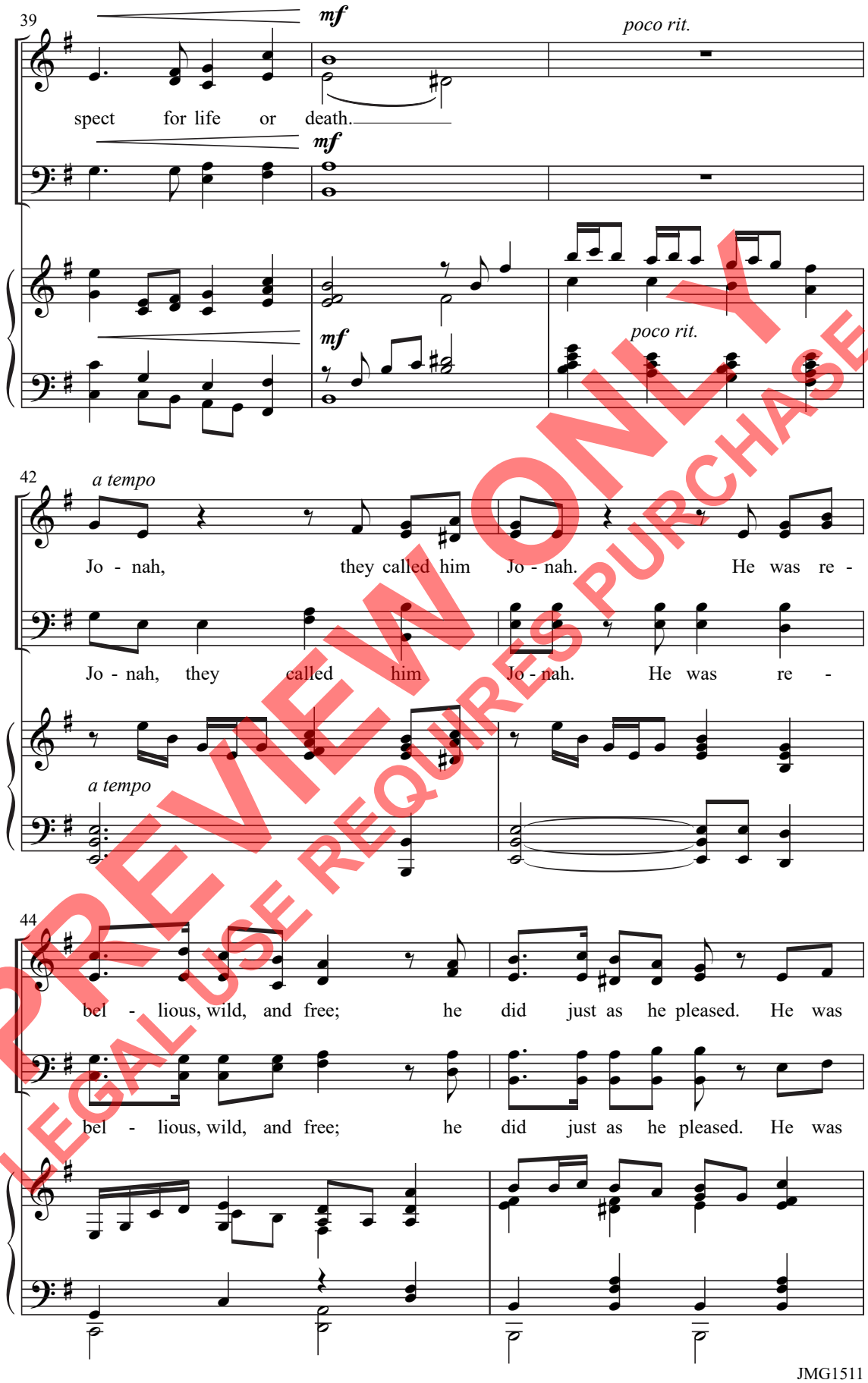

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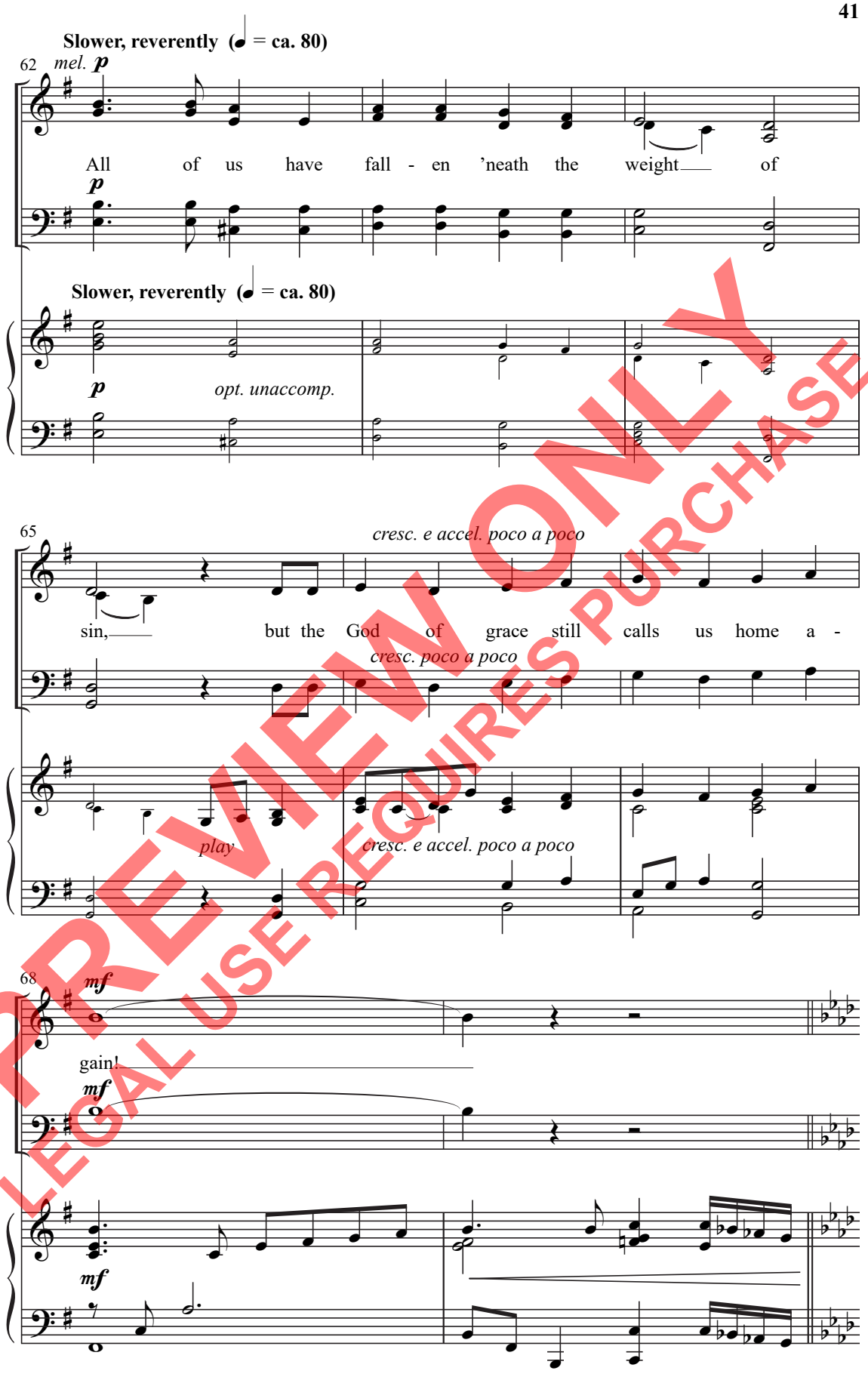

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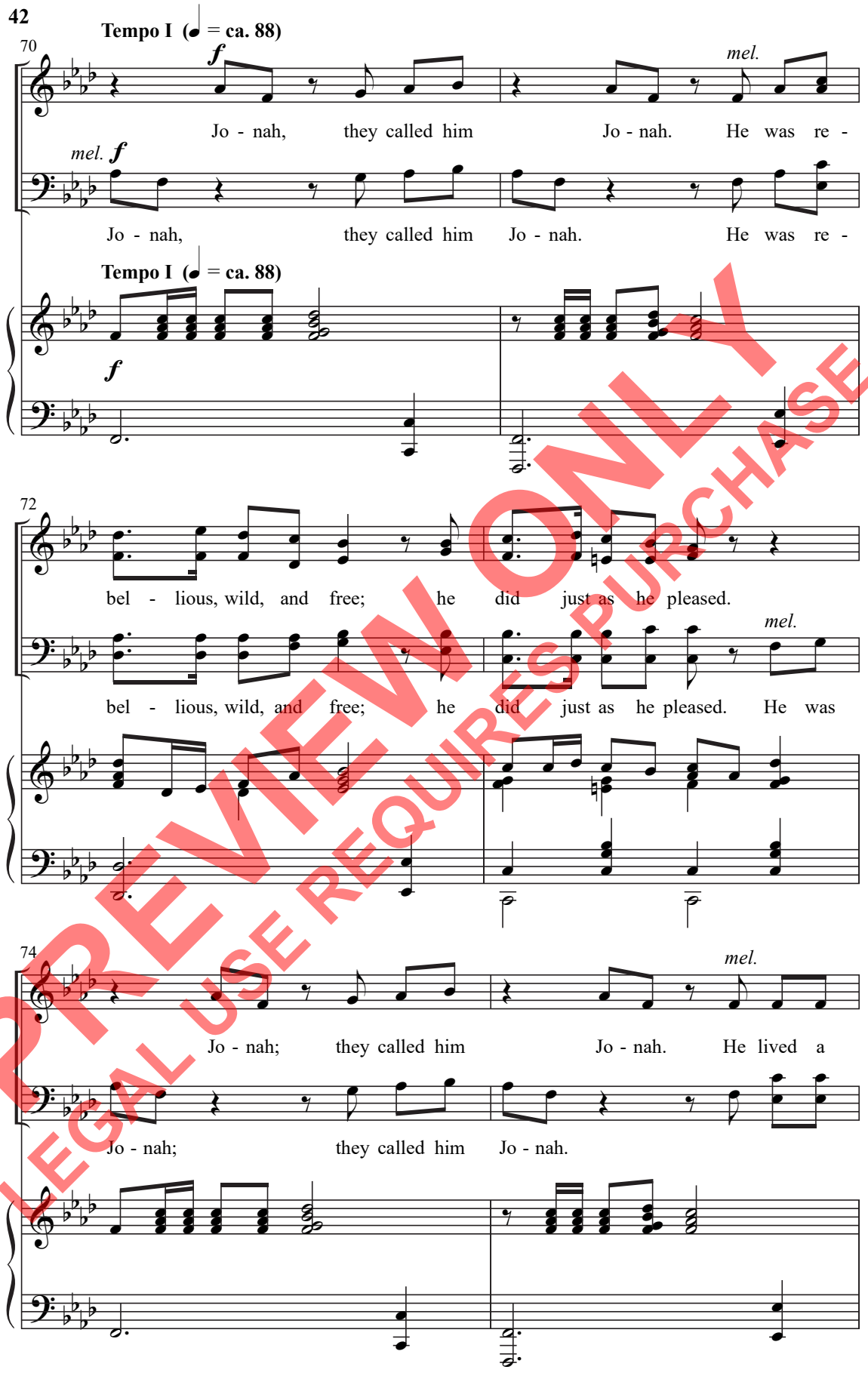

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NARRATION 5

NARRATOR: Despite John's very turbulent life on the sea, there was a ray of hope that tugged on his heart. And that hope was a girl whom he had met in childhood, Mary Polly Catlett. But after his mother's death, John and Polly were separated. As life unfolded, John never forgot Polly, and Polly never forgot John.

JOHN: By now, I had lost my faith and become deaf to God's mercy. But my affection for Polly was always the same, and despite the misery and wickedness I experienced, she was always on my mind.

NARRATOR: Duty called, and it was the top of the tide once again for John. A new sea captain approached John to set sail west on a ship named *Greyhound*. Greater wealth was promised through more slave trading. So John signed on and was soon shoving off on what became the voyage of his life, with hopes of a new day.

(Music for "Lord, Have Mercy on Me" begins)

NARRATOR: *(beginning at m. 18)* But it didn't take long for John's mood to turn dark once again. The captain was troubled by John's excessive drinking, bad influence on the crew, and constant profanity.

JOHN: Anyone who calls himself a Christian has my immediate hatred!

NARRATOR: Suddenly, one of the crew yelled "Storm!" And soon, John and his mates were desperately trying to make repairs, dumping water that was pouring in, and trying to keep the ship afloat as the violent storm prevailed. As the storm climaxed, the sailors frantically gave last-ditch efforts to survive what seemed to be their imminent death.

JOHN: We must keep the broken section of the bow high out of the water!

NARRATOR: Then, words came out of John's mouth that surprised even him:

JOHN: If this will not help us stay afloat, may the Lord have mercy on us!

NARRATOR: John stumbled across the deck and wondered: might part of him still believe in a God of true grace?

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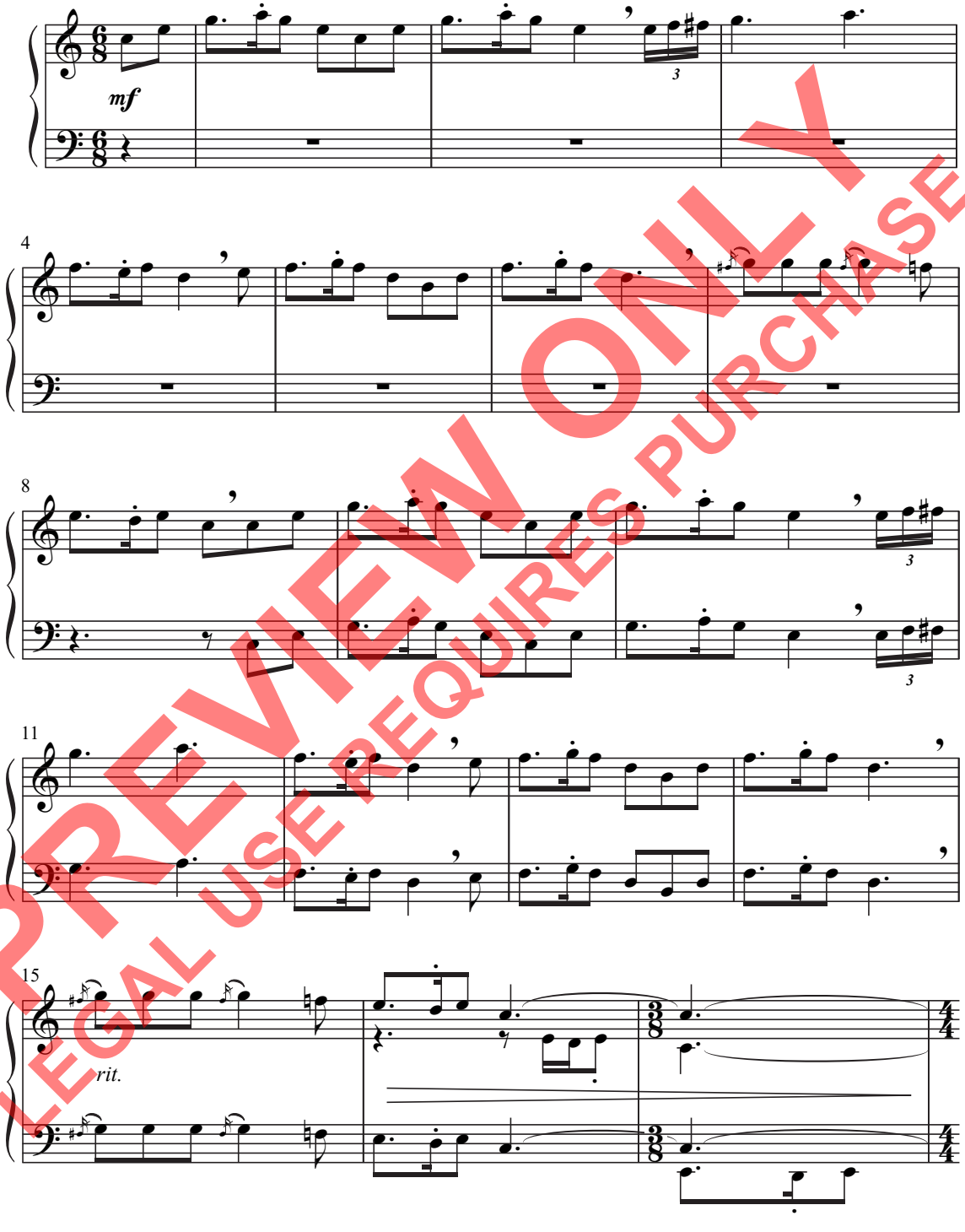
LORD, HAVE MERCY ON ME

Words by **JOHN NEWTON**, 1779,
and **LLOYD LARSON**

Music by **LLOYD LARSON**
Quoting **BLOW THE MAN DOWN**
Traditional Sea Shanty

13/40

Humorously (♩. = ca. 66)



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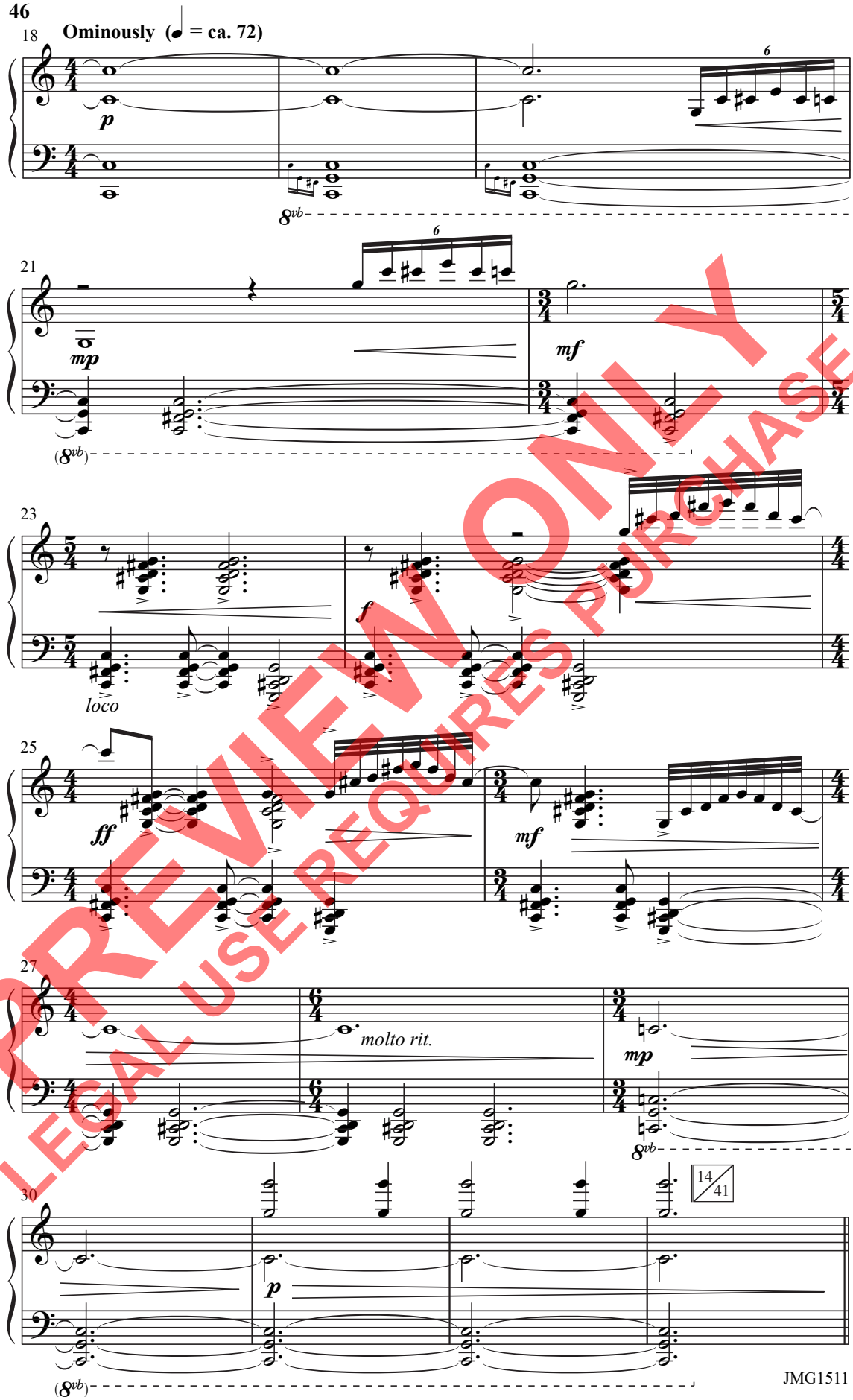

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*Kyrie eleison (KEE-ree-eh eh-LEH-ee-zohn) means *Lord, have mercy.*

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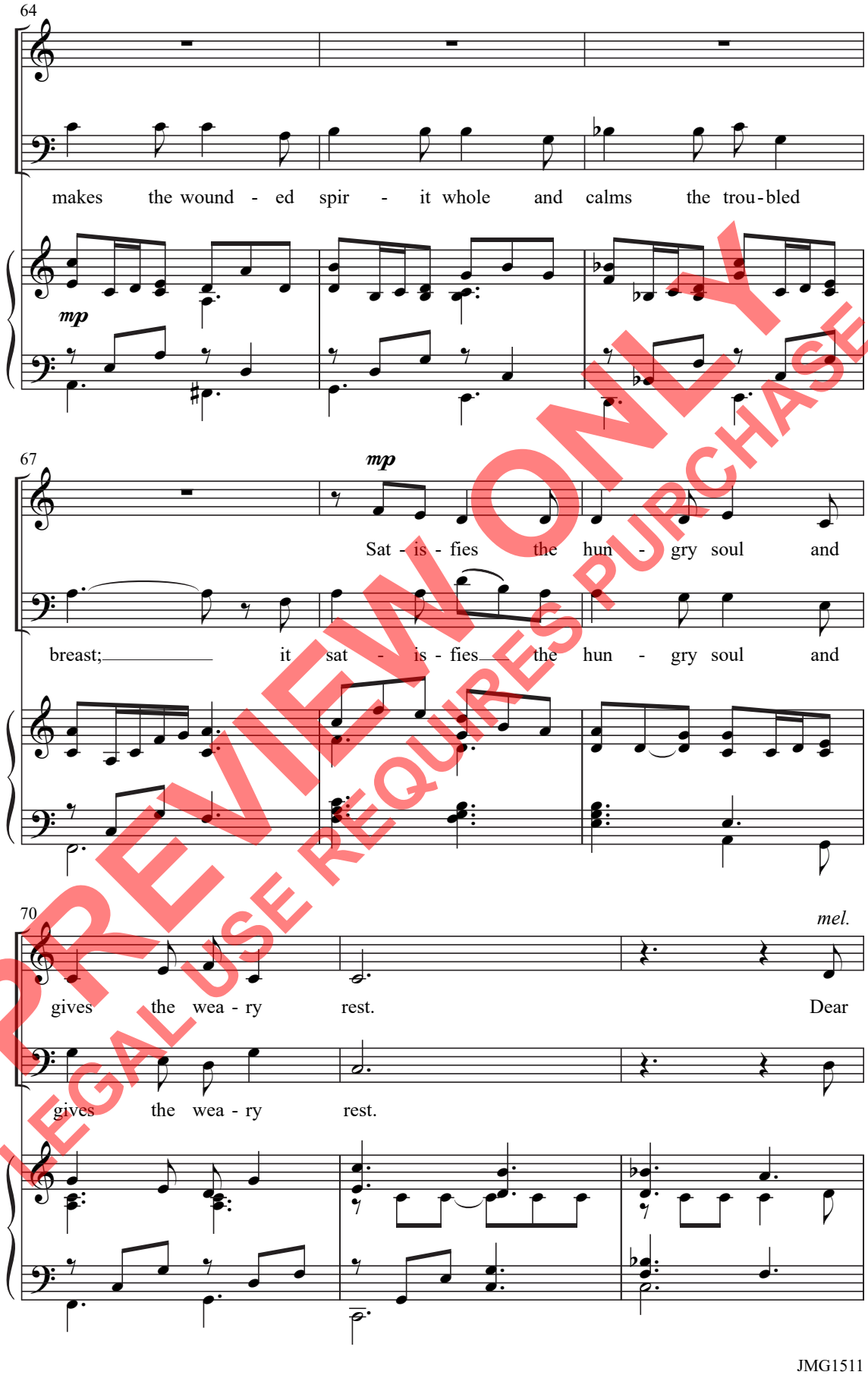

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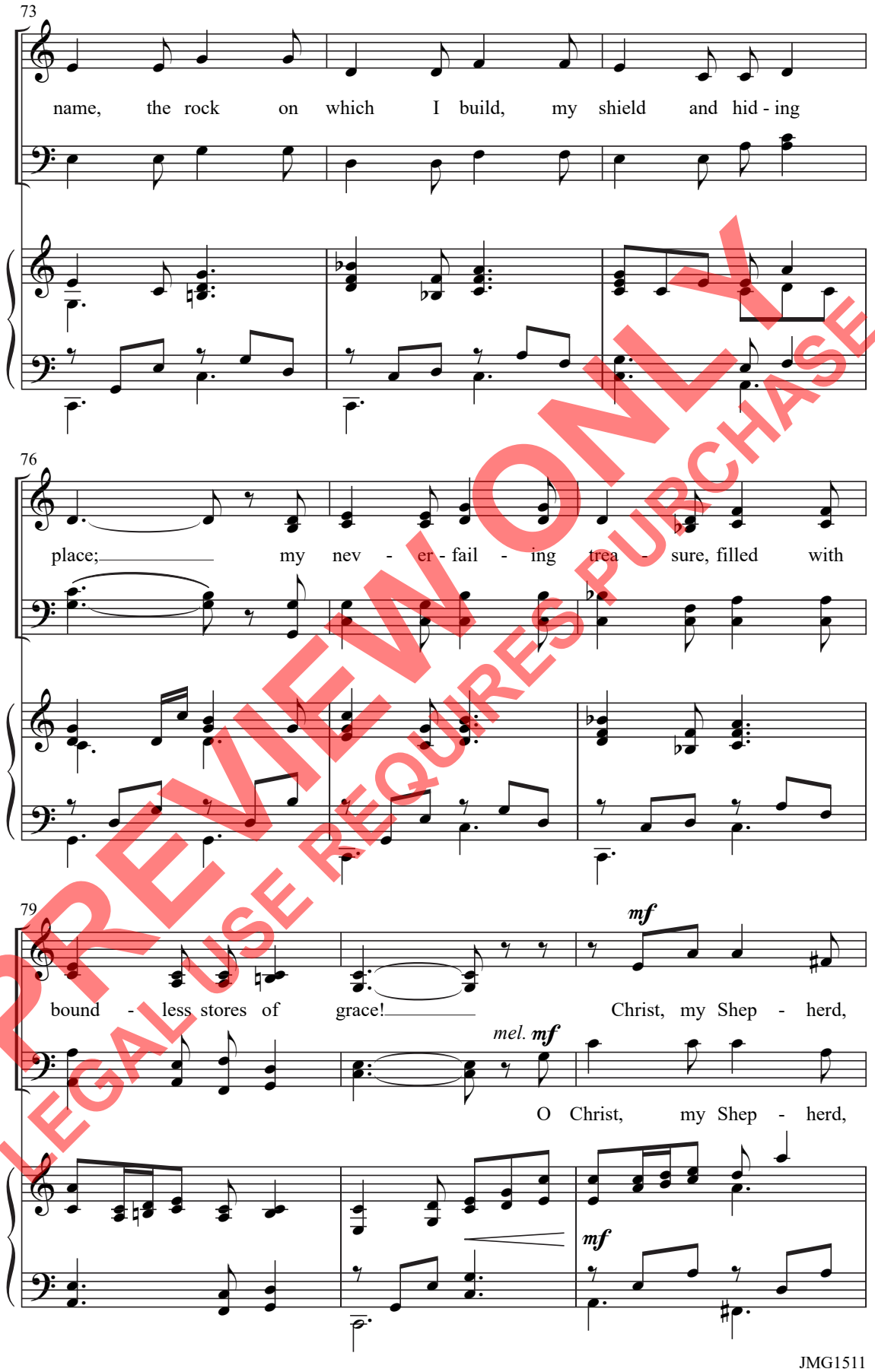

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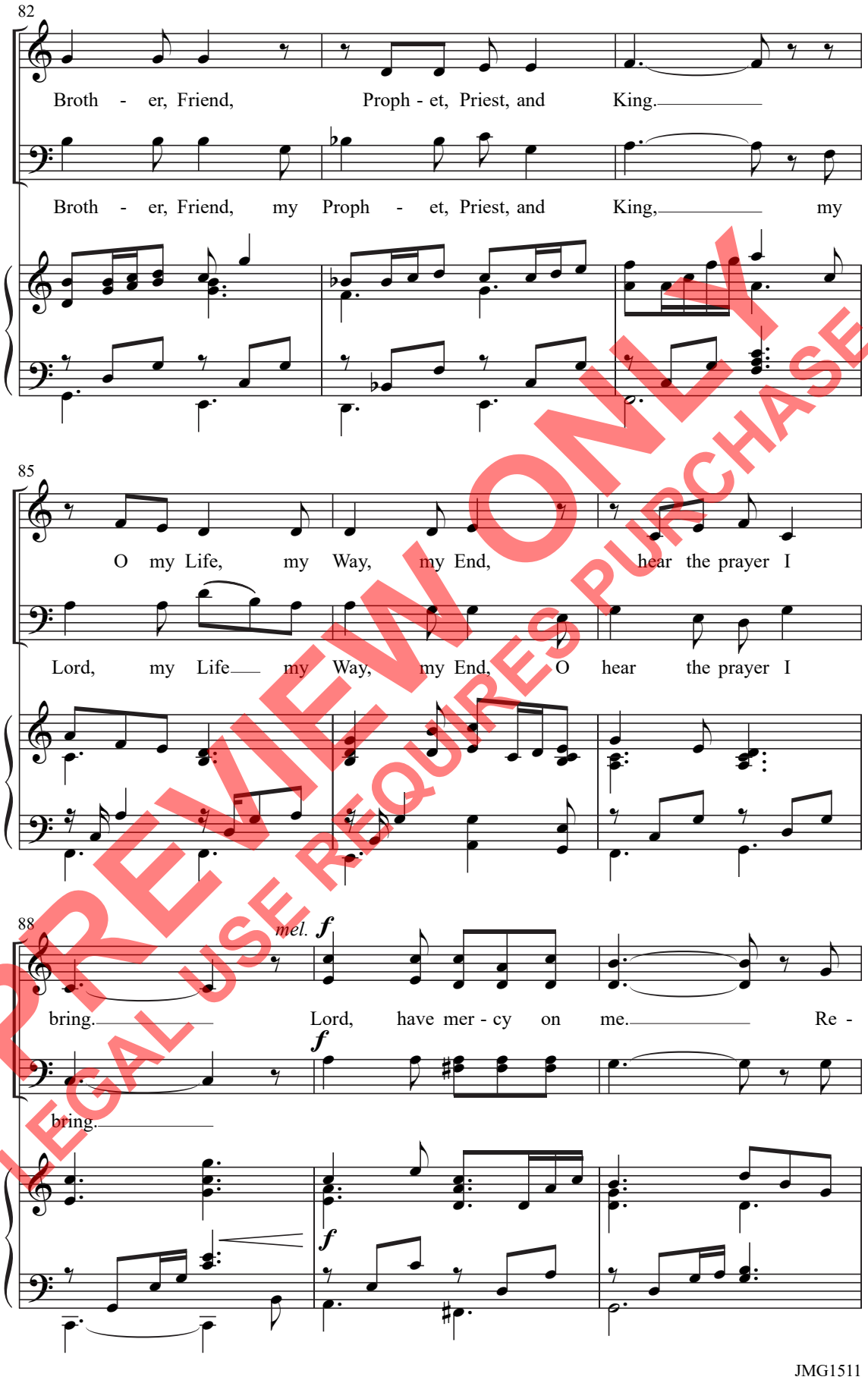

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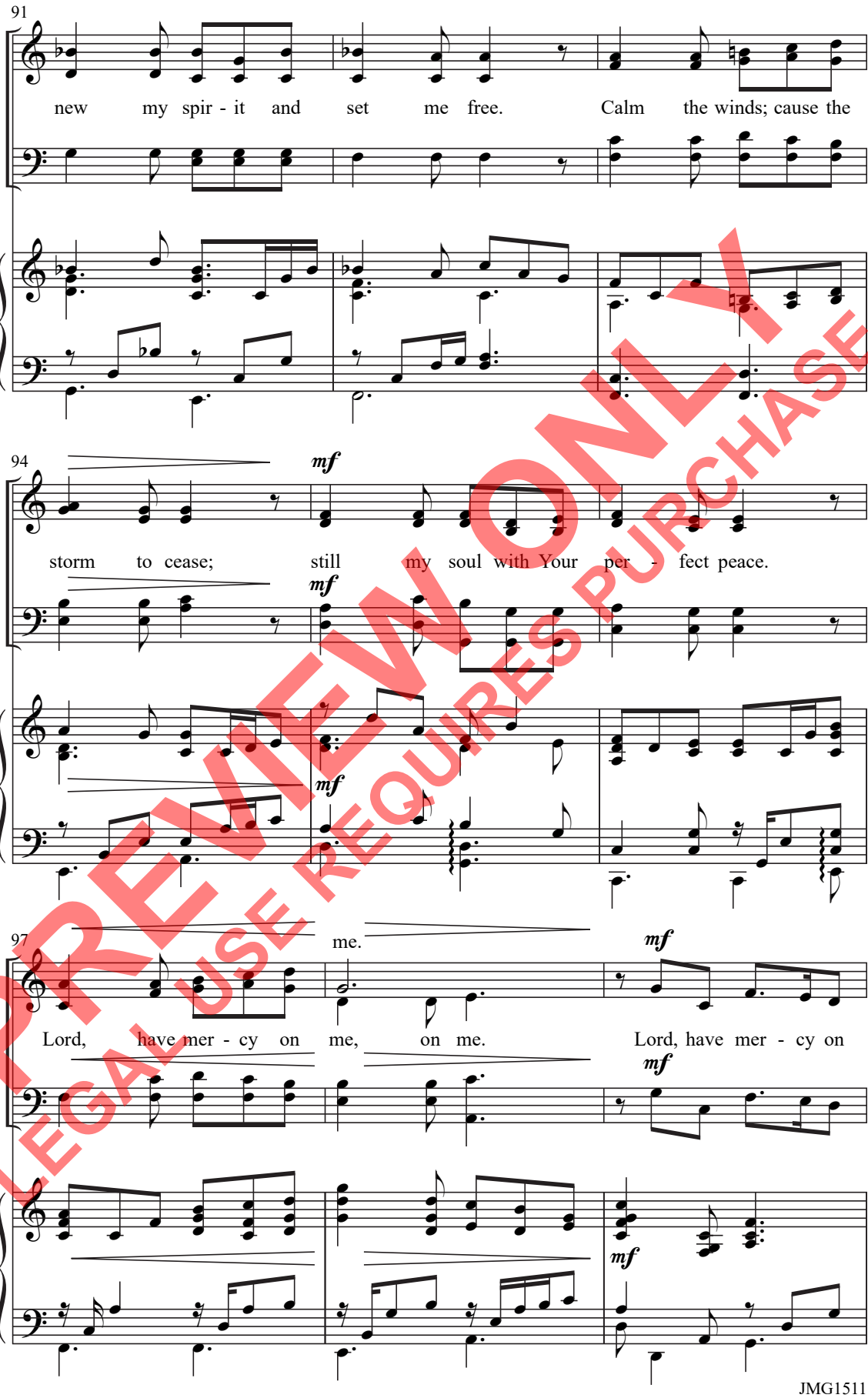

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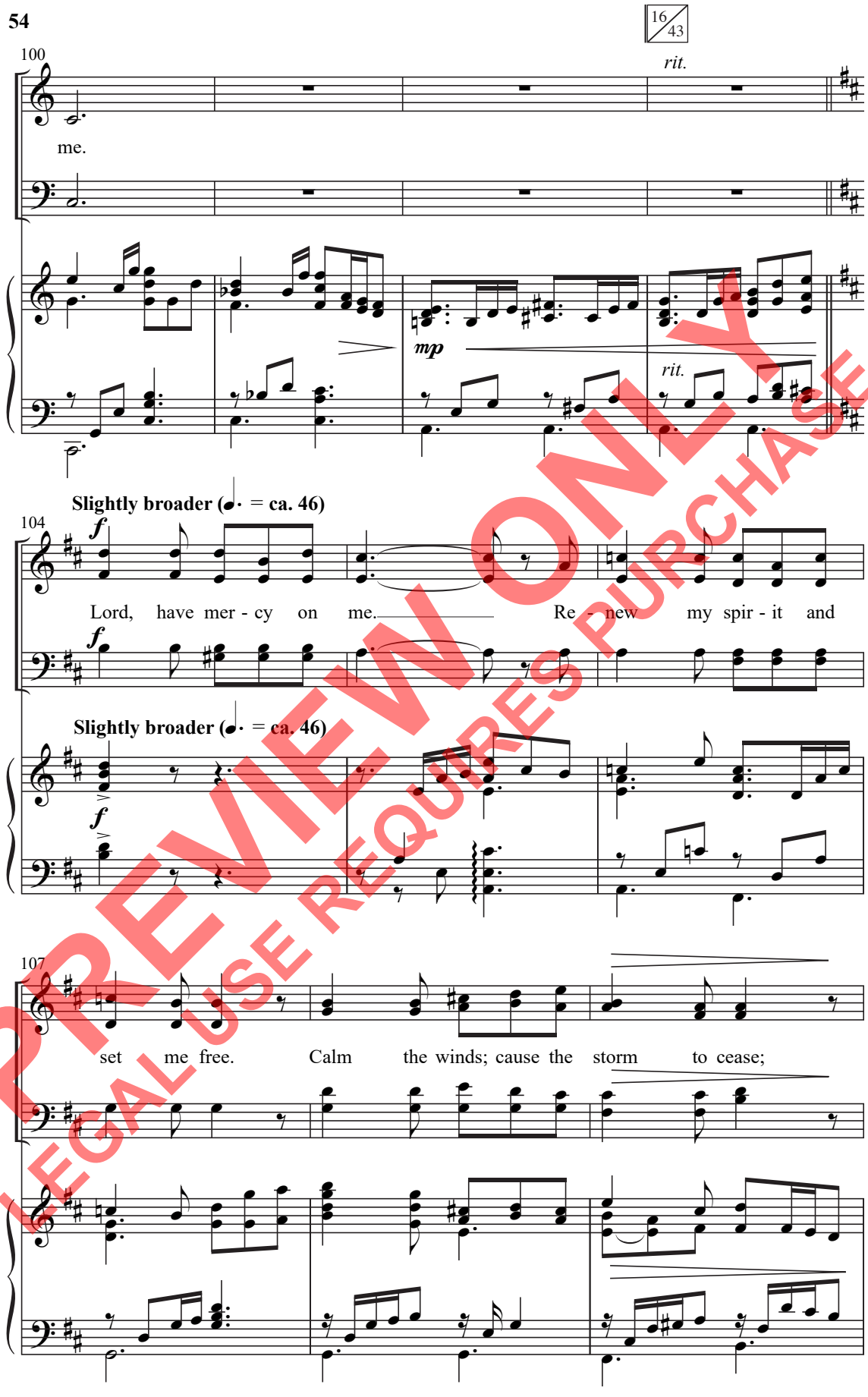

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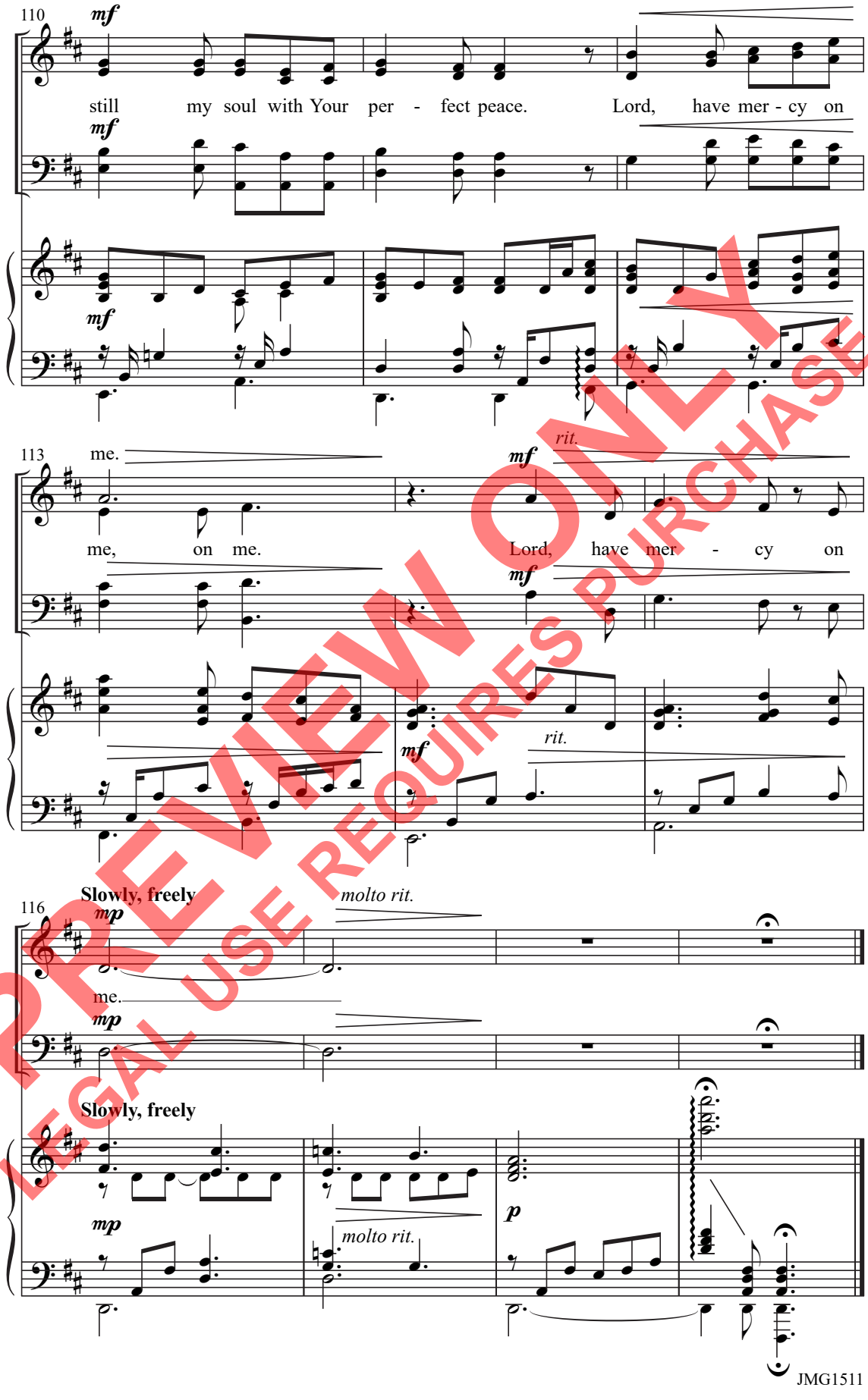

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NARRATION 6

NARRATOR: The storm-ravaged *Greyhound* eventually made it into port, and John was able to navigate his way home. The successful return of the ship was due in large part to John's long hours at the helm, steering the damaged vessel through the worst of the storm with skill and courage.

JOHN: But most importantly, I had experienced an awakening, the first step back to my faith in a loving and merciful God.

NARRATOR: But change didn't come quickly for this prodigal Jonah. John's lack of misgivings about the slave trade merely showed that he was a young man of his time, and that he accepted the prevailing standards and attitudes of mid-18th century England. It was a perspective in which the interests of commerce drowned the voices of humanity and good conscience.

JOHN: Due to the storm, a spark had reignited my faith. I started attending church while in port and reading the Bible. And yes…I started praying again.

NARRATOR: His weeks and months at sea were now used to read extensively, pray, study, grow in his faith, and write letters to Polly Catlett.

JOHN: Dear Polly, I love you and miss you. And as I wrote in my last letter, almost every day when we're ashore, I retreat into the woods and fields… to taste the sweets of communion with God through prayer and praise. Yet, I frequently spend the evenings in corrupt and worthless company. Still, I feel a growing relationship with God.

NARRATOR: Back in port for several months, John continued to work on his spiritual growth with reading, prayer, and listening to many ministers. His prayer life was steadily growing and becoming central to his life. And his love for Polly resulted in their marriage.

JOHN: I then became the captain of a ship and required the crew to attend Sunday services where I spoke. Yes, I became a preacher of the Gospel! But I found the language of *The Book of Common Prayer* was sometimes too much for average people to easily understand. So I adapted the order of worship and began writing my own prayers. This helped me realize I was most happy, it seemed, when I was attempting the part of minister.

NARRATOR: In preparing for his fourth slave ship assignment as captain on a brand-new boat, John was struck unexpectedly with an illness, paralyzed by a mysterious seizure. In retrospect, John saw his medical crisis as an answer to prayer. During his last few weeks on shore he had been wrestling with his role in the slave trade. Financially it was an attractive business, but he was deeply troubled by growing doubts over the inhumane and unconscionable aspects of his duties. God's providential hand was once again at work in the life of John Newton.

JOHN: At the age of 39, I realized I could no longer resist the call I was feeling deep in my heart to preach the Gospel. I closed all my deliberations on this subject with a solemn, unreserved, and unconditional surrender of myself to the Lord. God's grace was the new rebellion in my heart.

(Music for "In Answer to the Call!" begins)

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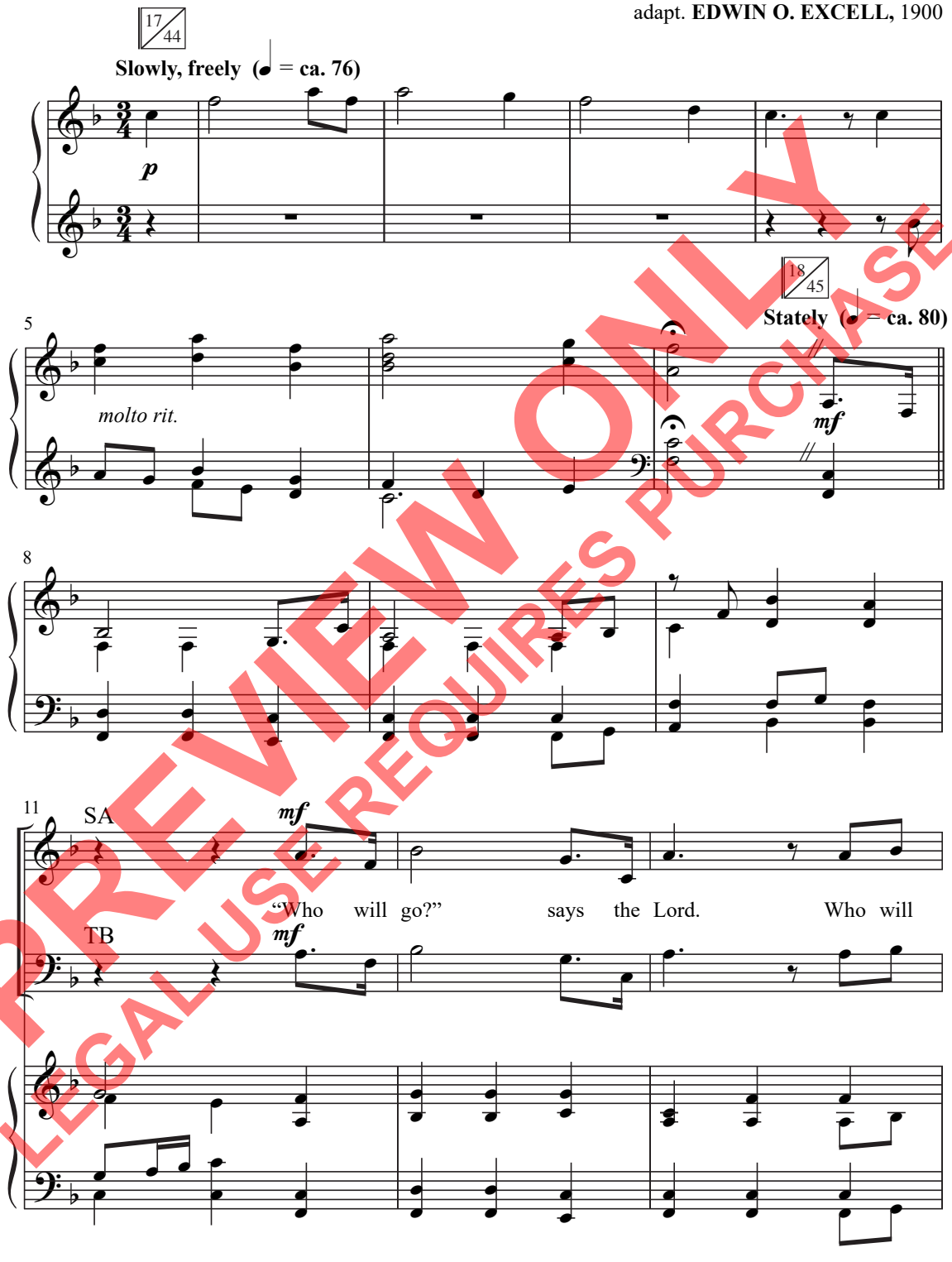
IN ANSWER TO THE CALL!

Words by **LLOYD LARSON**
based on **Isaiah 6:8** and **Micah 6:8**,
and **FRANCES R. HAVERGAL**, 1874

Music by **LLOYD LARSON**
Quoting: **NEW BRITAIN**
from *Virginia Harmony*, 1831;
adapt. **EDWIN O. EXCELL,** 1900



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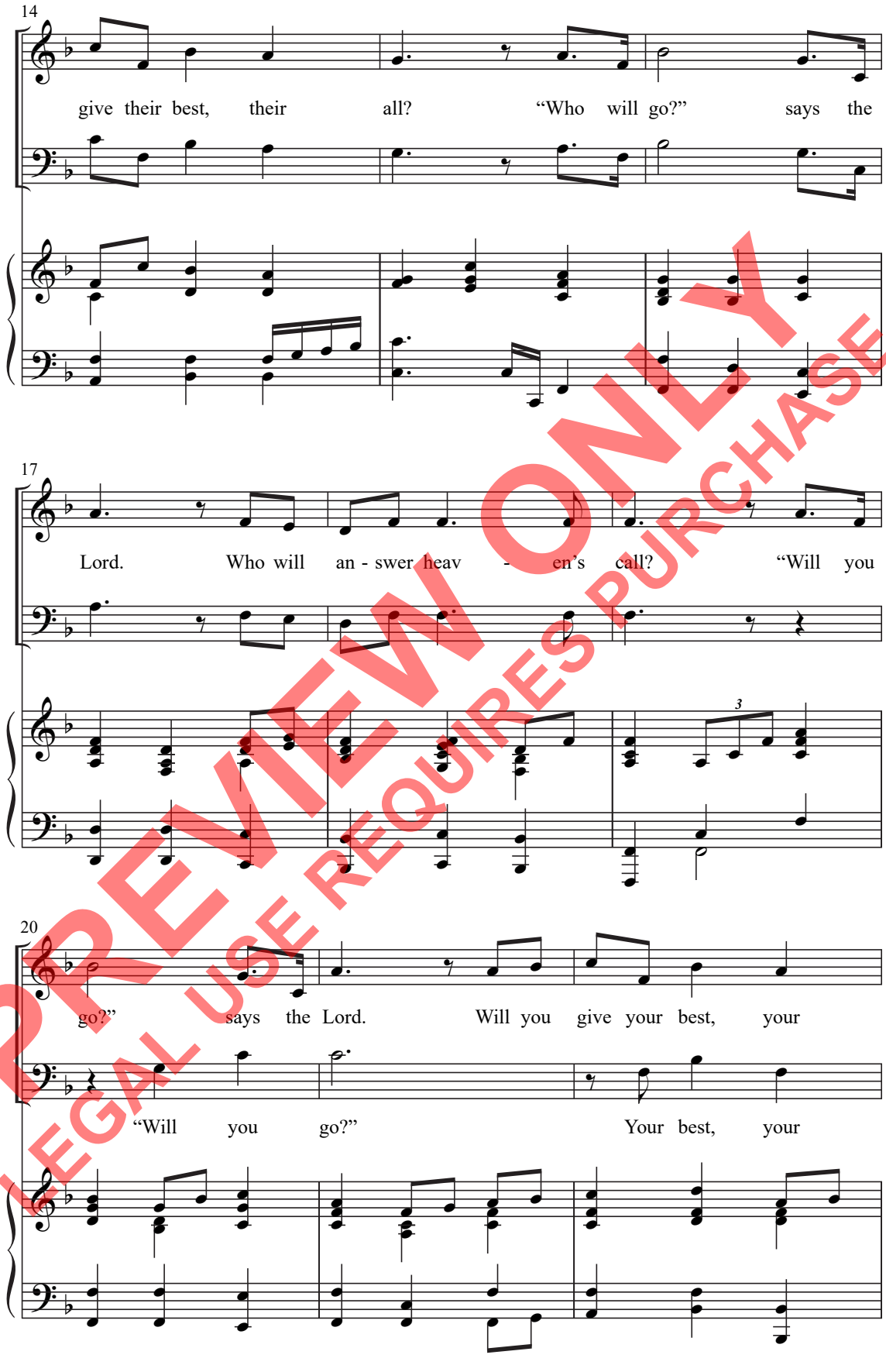

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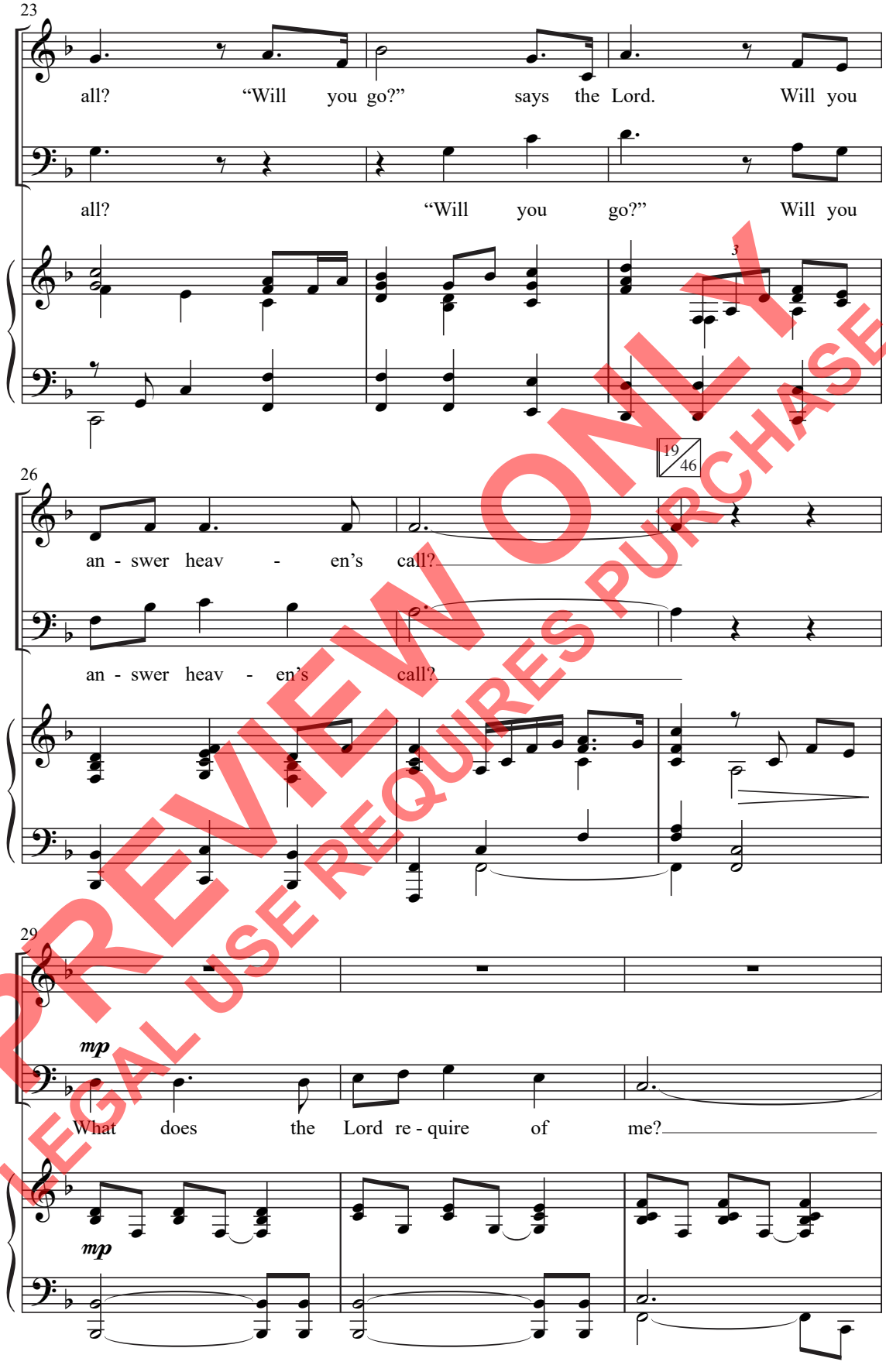

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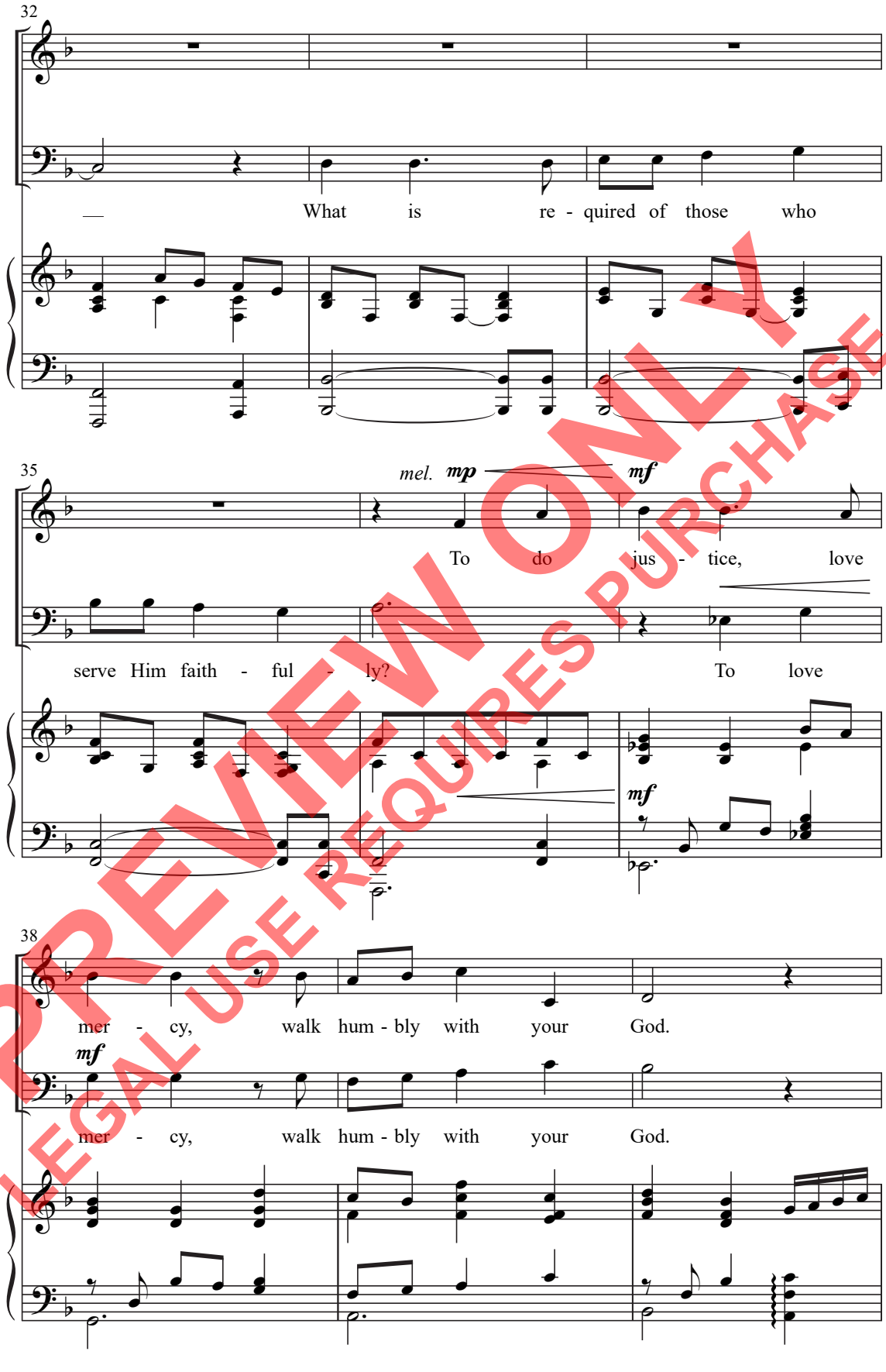

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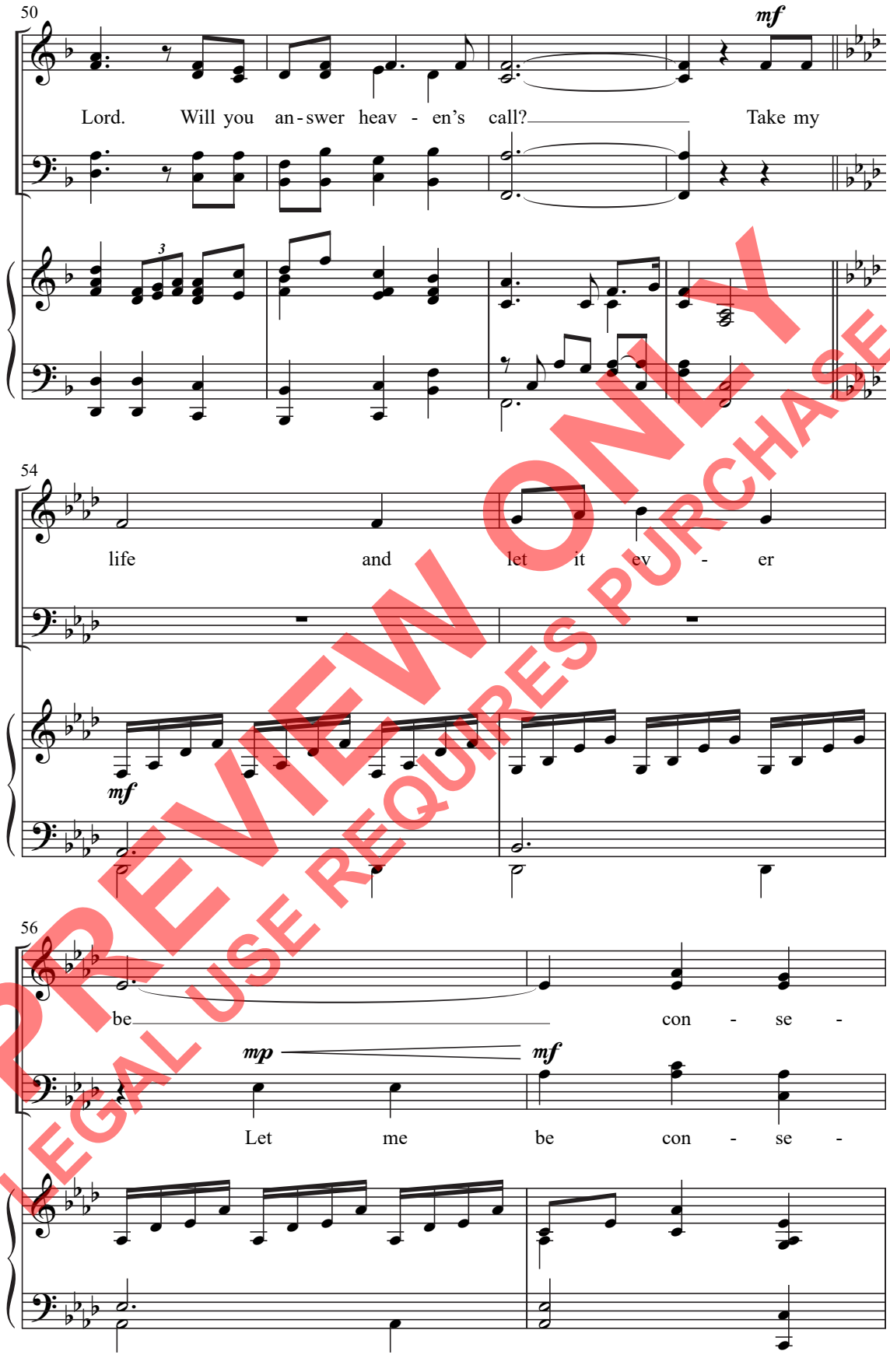

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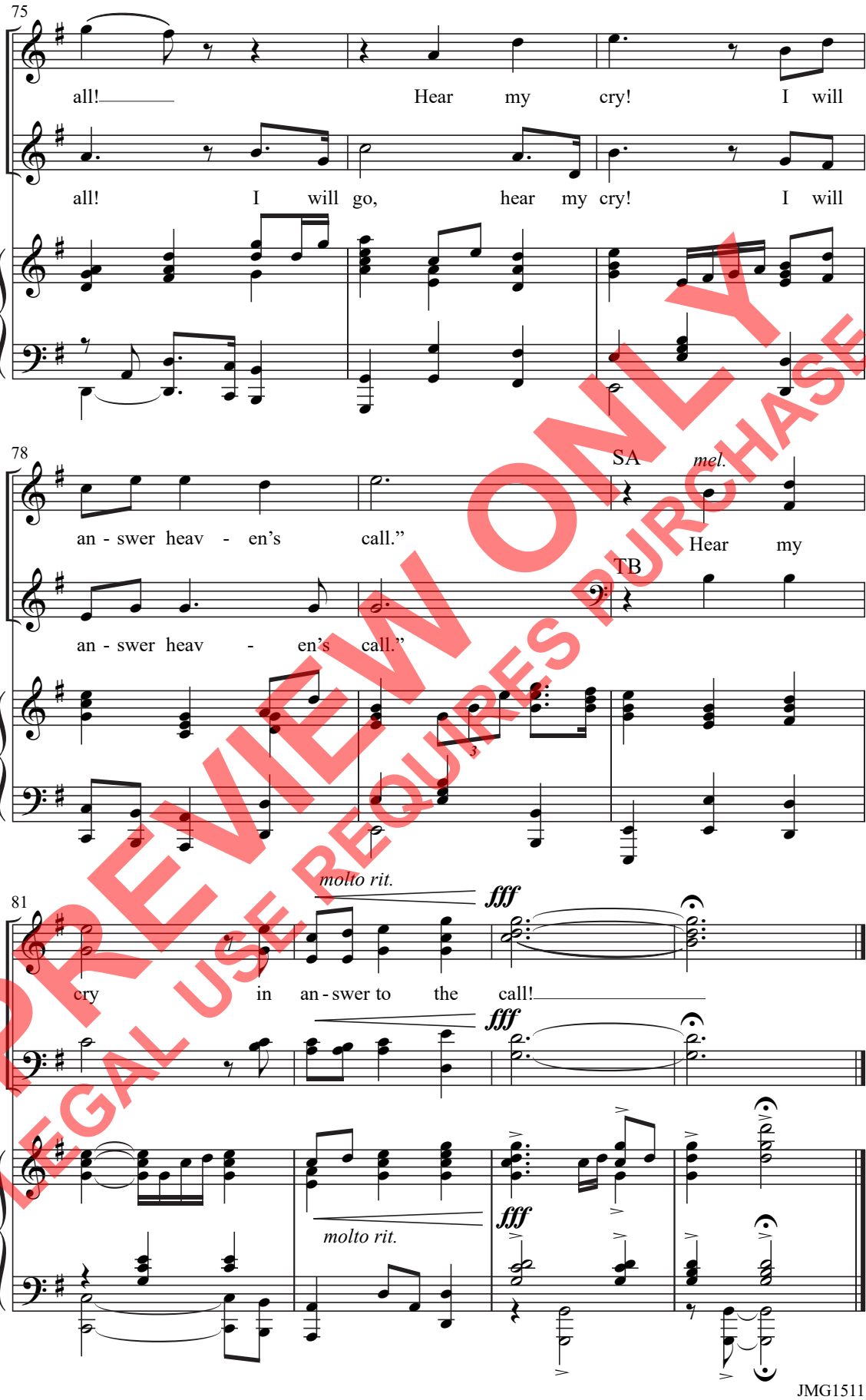

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NARRATION 7

NARRATOR: John was now a preacher in search of a parish. But without any formal theological education as required by the Church of England, he faced the daunting challenge of being ordained and granted a parish where he could live out his calling.

JOHN: At last, the door of opportunity opened, and I began my ministry in the little village of Olney, near Cambridge.

NARRATOR: John was seen by the people of Olney as a unifier, quickly gaining admiration as he united people with differing views of the church and their faith. He was innovative, attentive, and diligent in his pastoral work. His preaching was so popular that the congregation added a gallery to the church to accommodate the many people who flocked to hear him. He tripled the size of the Sunday worshiping congregation, introduced Bible teaching classes for children and adults, and carried a busy pastoral visitation schedule.

JOHN: In addition to my preaching, I introduced simple heartfelt hymns rather than the usual Psalms sung in our services. When enough new hymns couldn't be found, I began to write my own. My close friend, the great English poet William Cowper, often assisted me in writing these hymns.

NARRATOR: On January 1, 1773, John preached from I Chronicles the words from King David offered to God as gratitude for His divine blessing upon his life: "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my family, that You have brought me this far? You have looked on me as though I were the most exalted of all people!" It was in this sermon on that day when John first publicly shared the words of a new hymn he had just written.

JOHN: "Amazing grace! How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see."

NARRATOR: The change in John's life had been dramatic because of the grace of God. It had not been an overnight change, but it had been real and transforming! And the guilt that still resided in his heart regarding his role in the slave-trading industry was now leading him into challenging others also to a life of transformation. And then, a young man named William Wilberforce joined John's congregation, and John and William became fast friends. Their friendship would lead them forward into a wholehearted mission to free all slaves.

(Music for "From Blind to Free" begins)

JOHN: We must and will abolish the British slave trade industry! God created us to be free!

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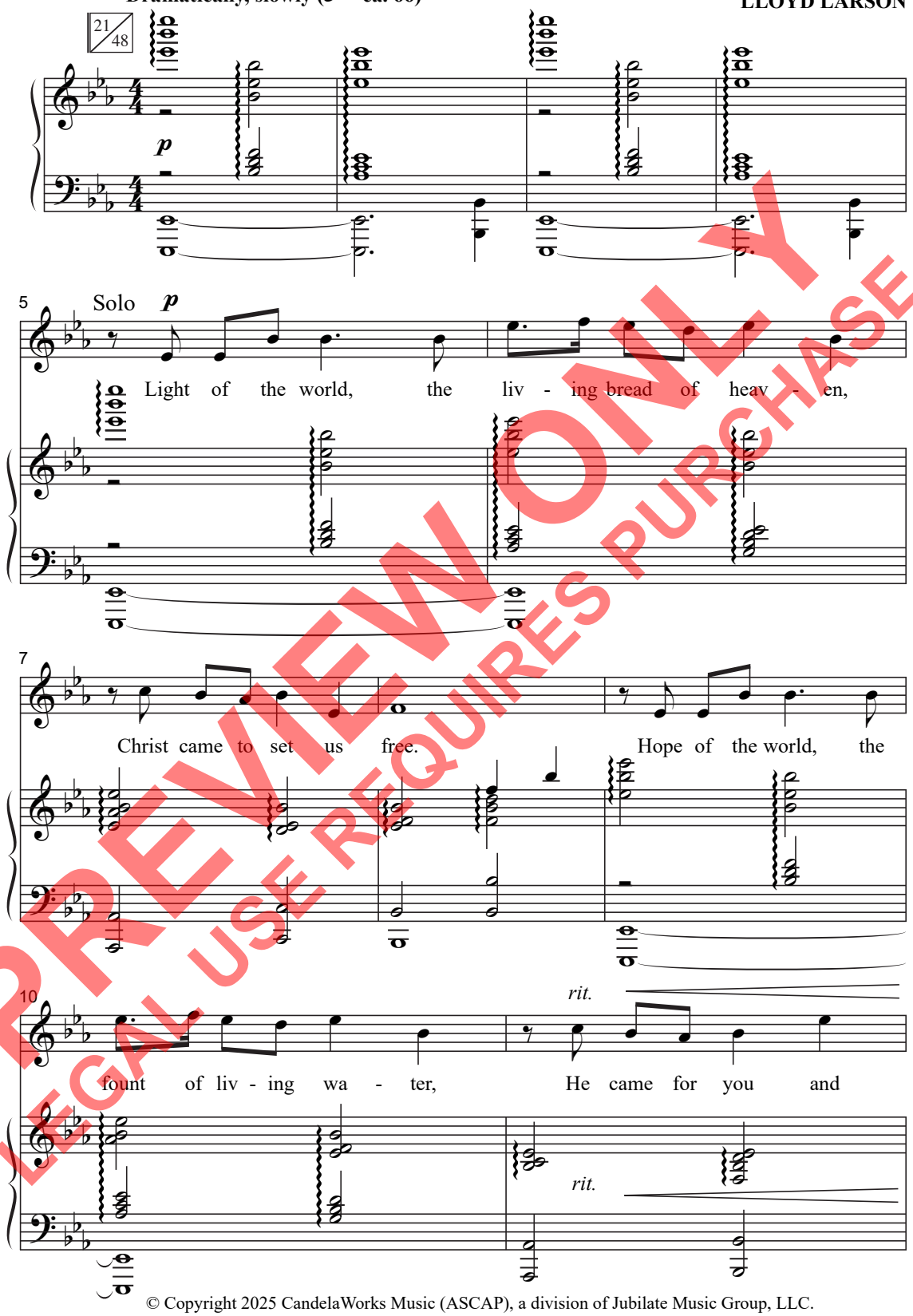
FROM BLIND TO FREE

Words and Music by
LLOYD LARSON

Dramatically, slowly (♩ = ca. 66)



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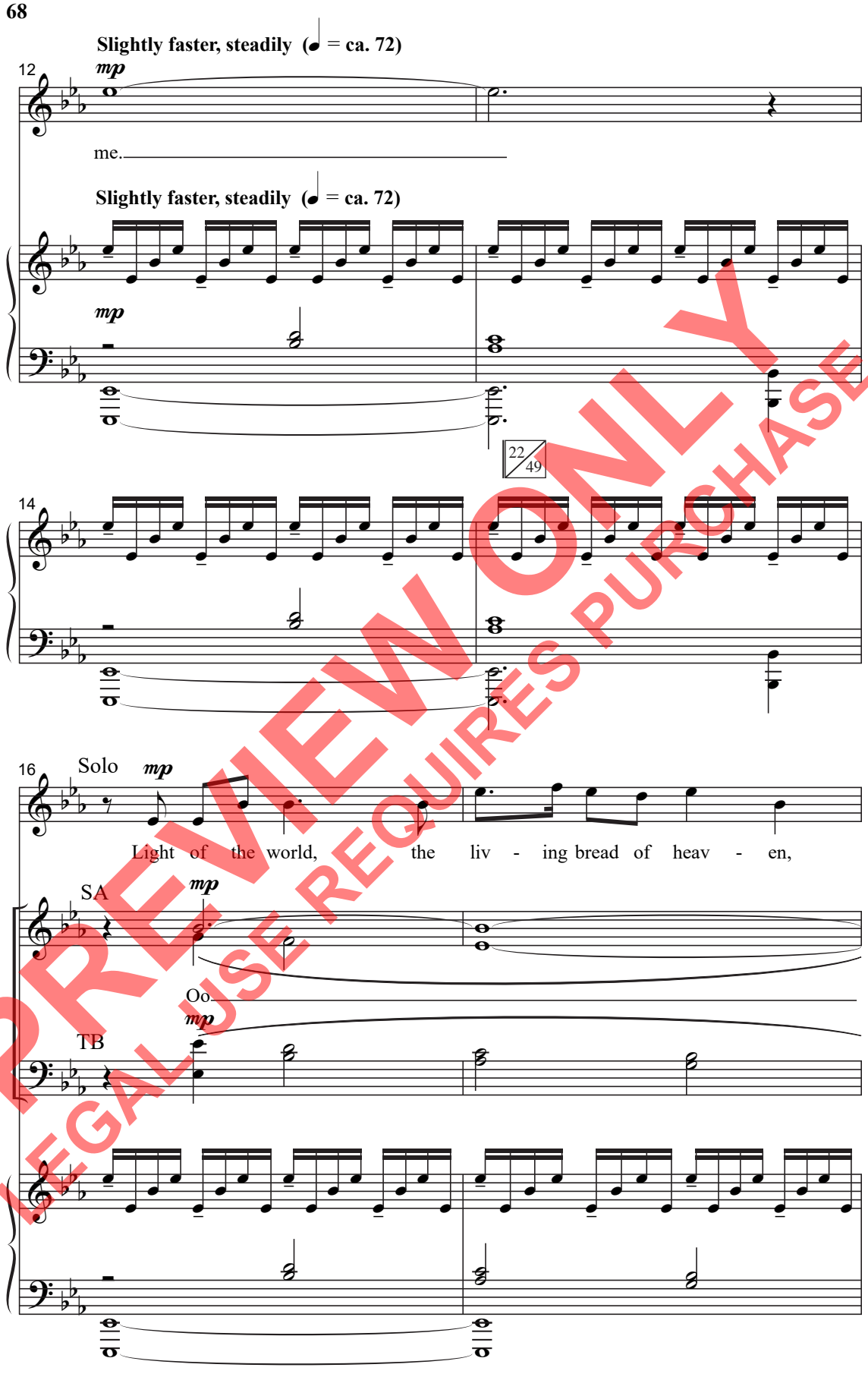

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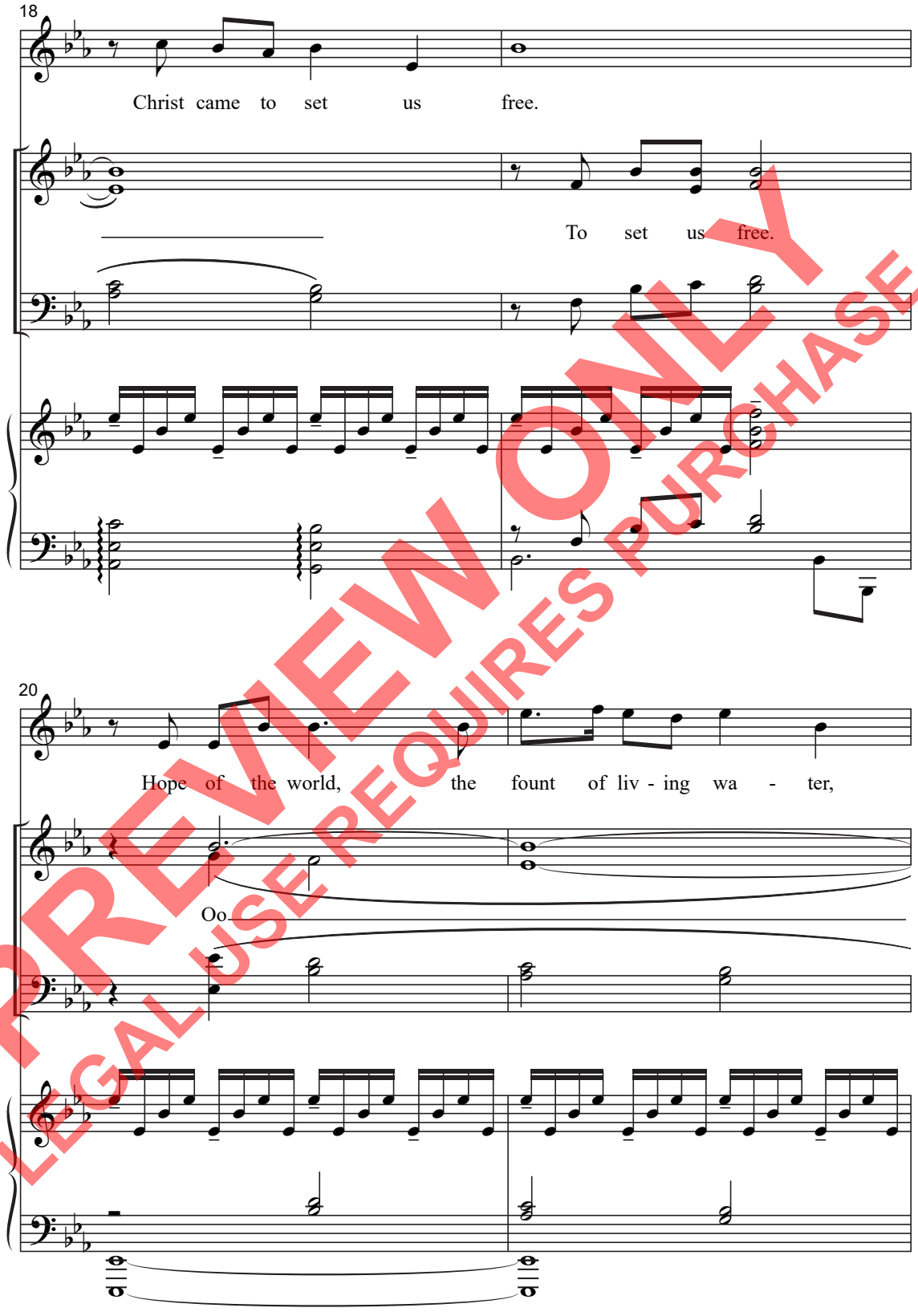

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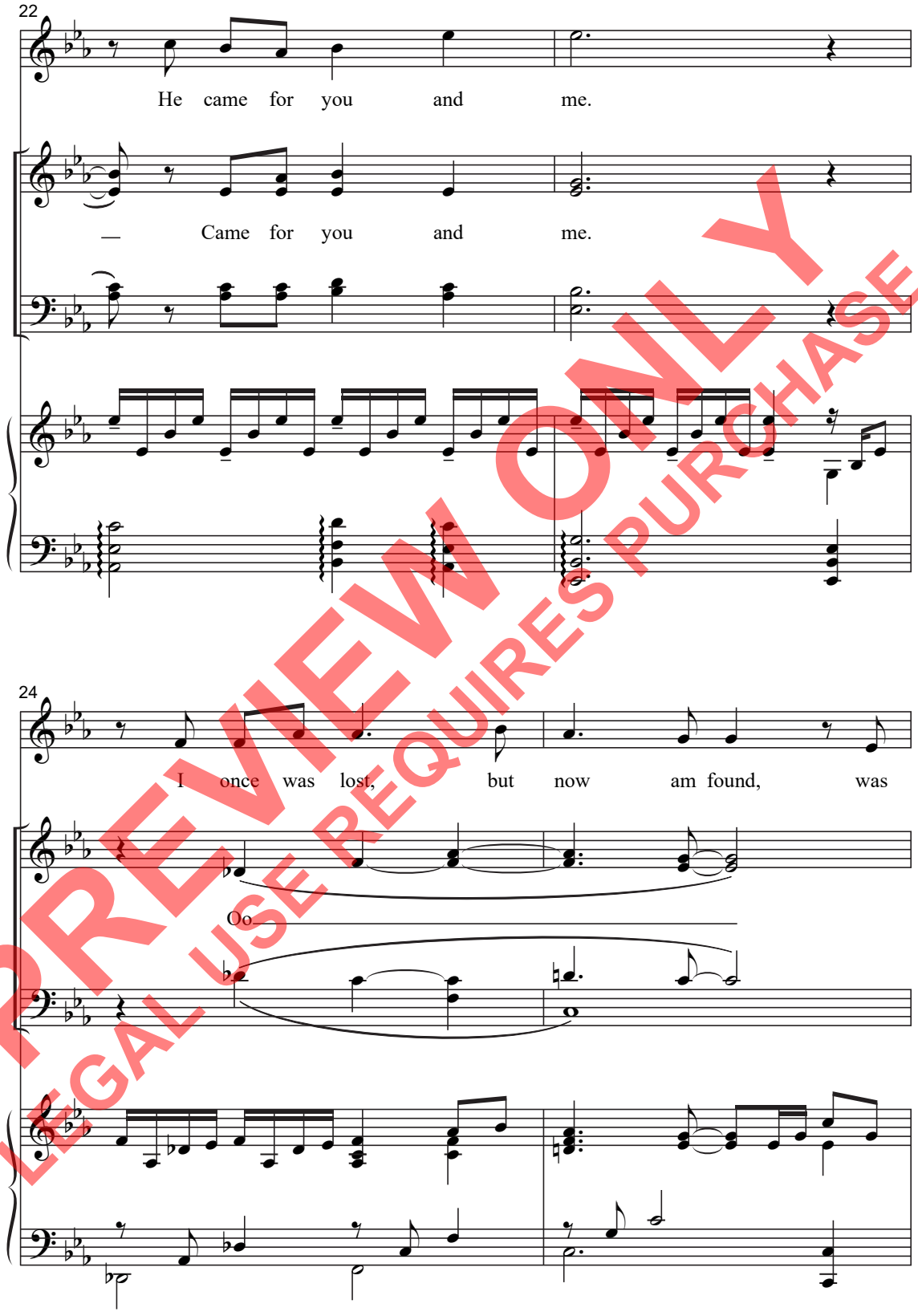

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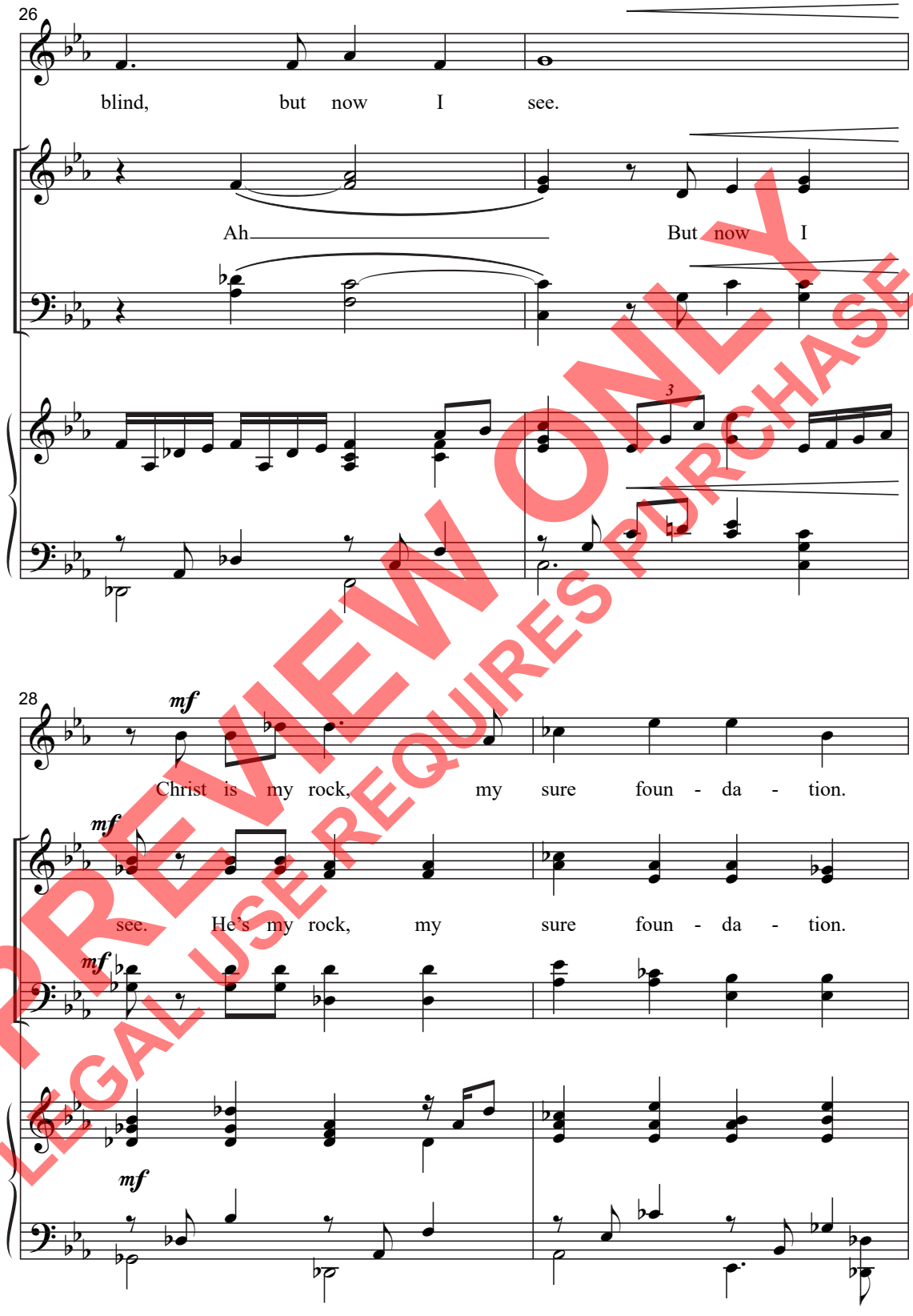

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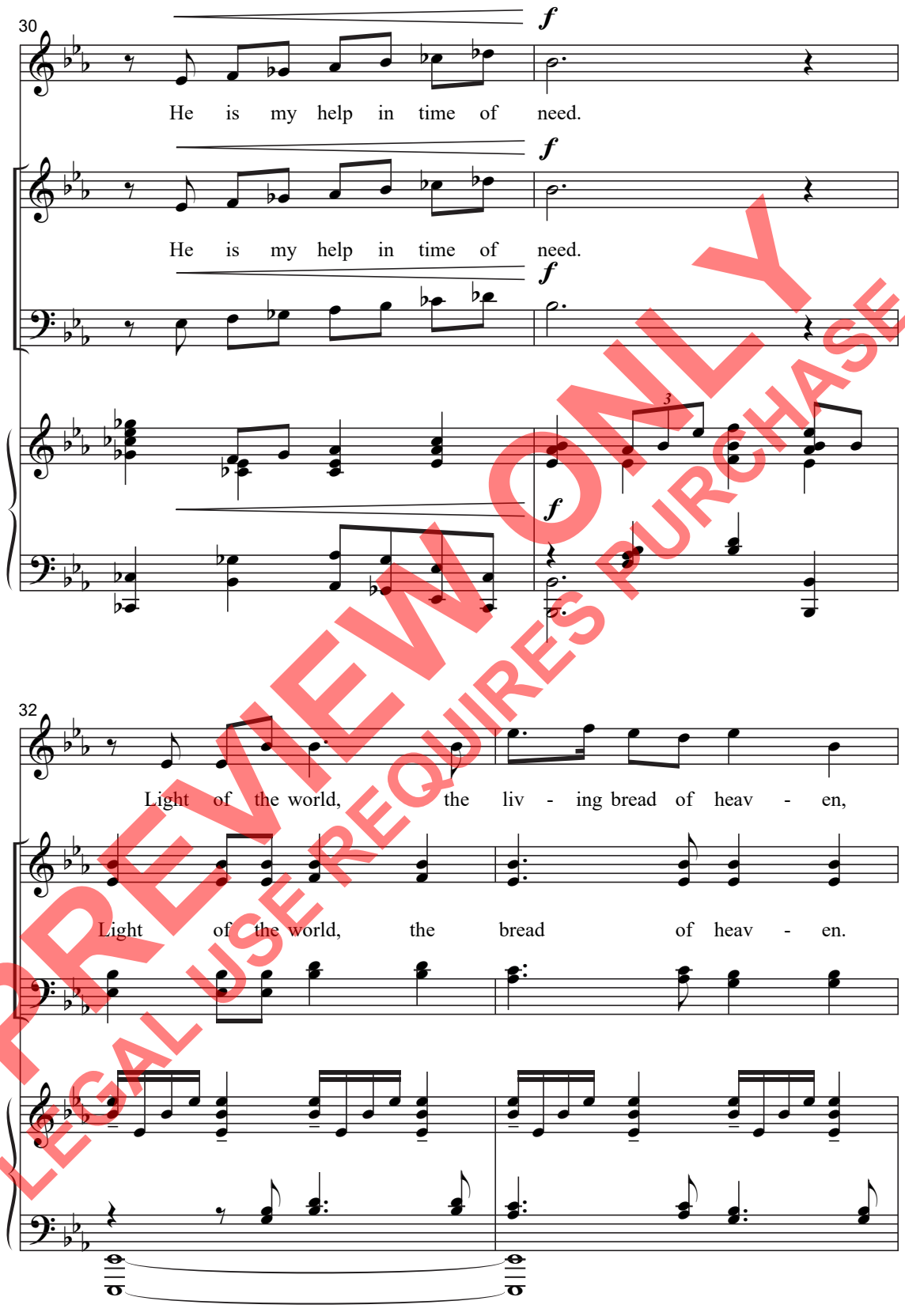

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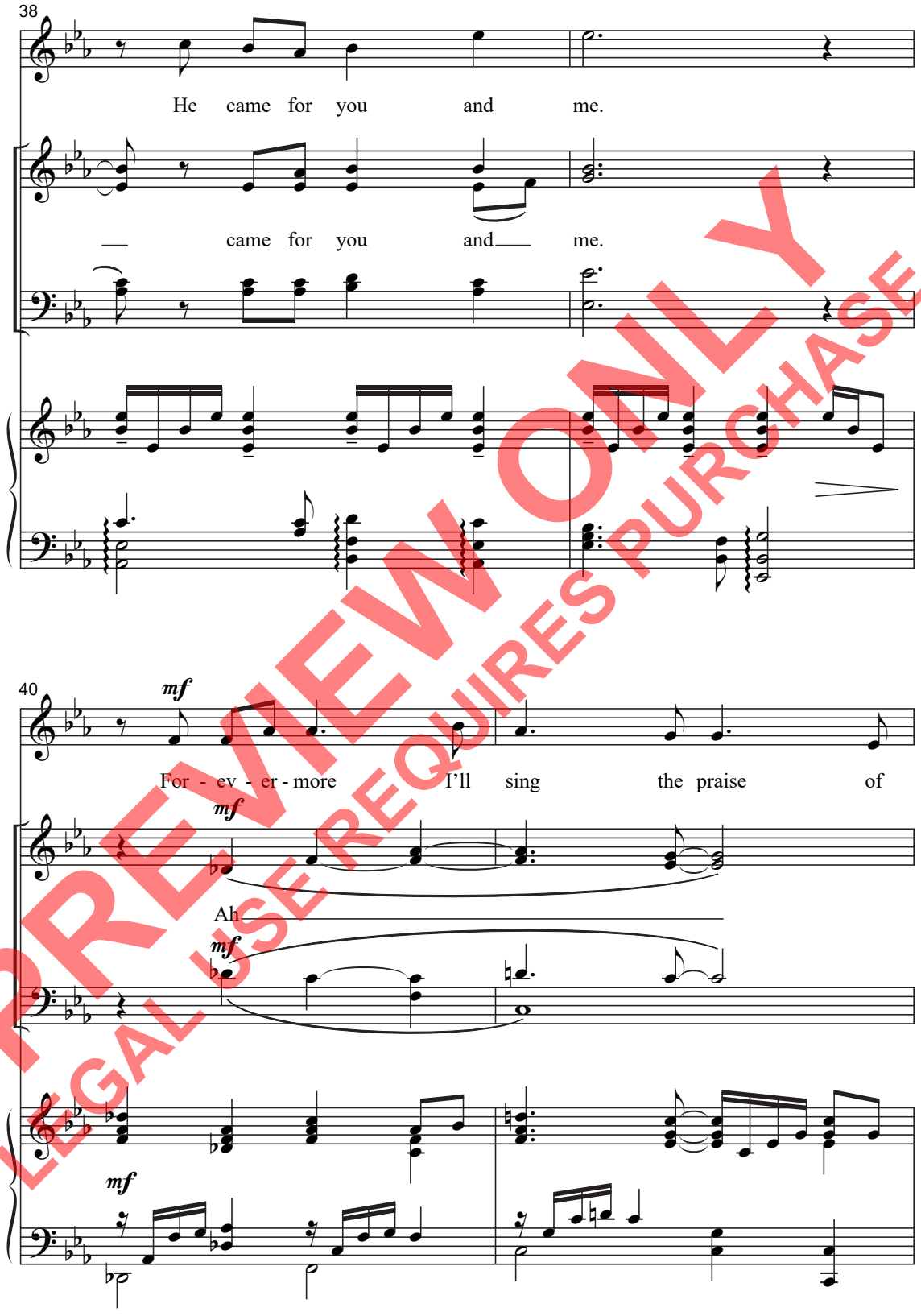

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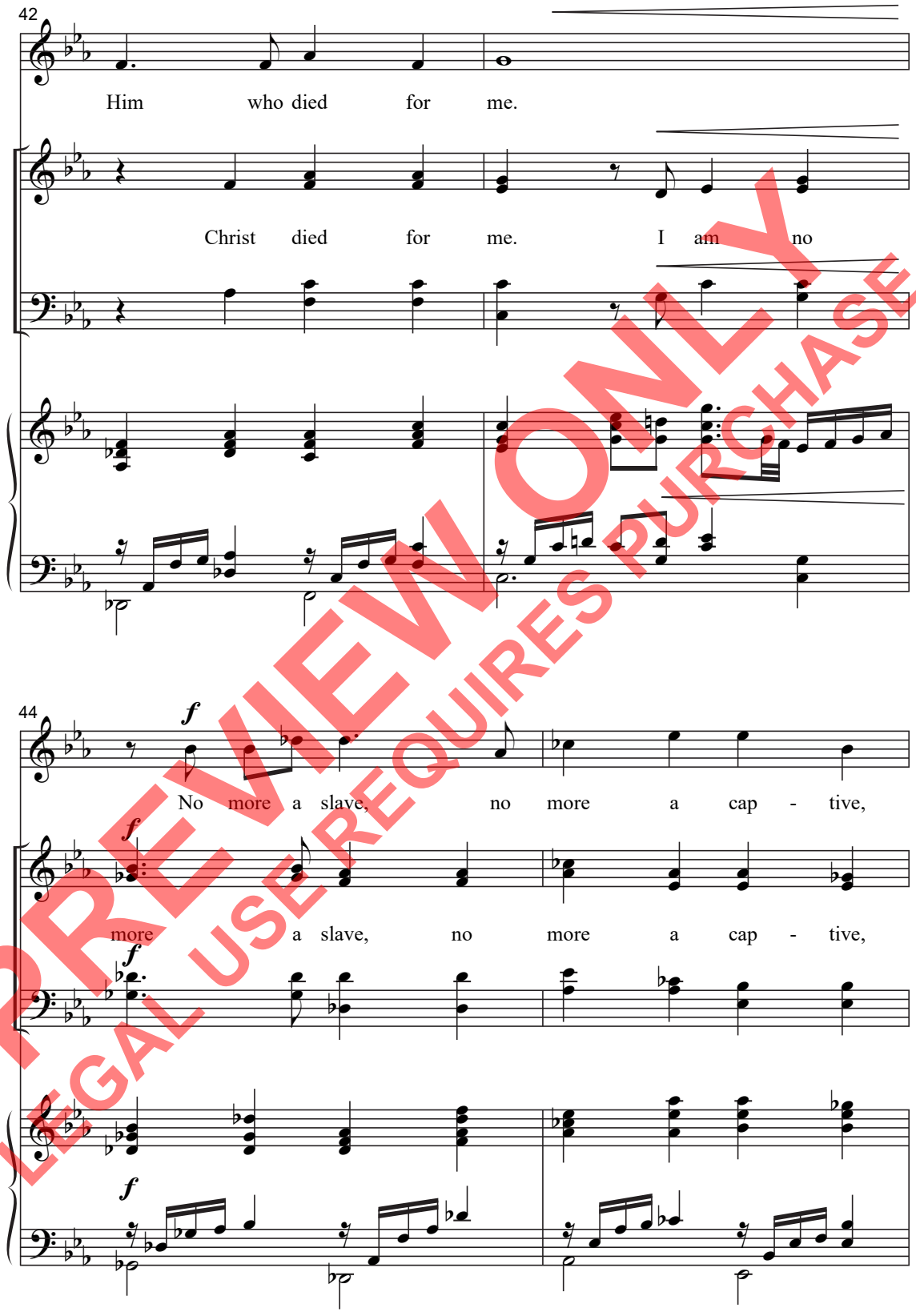

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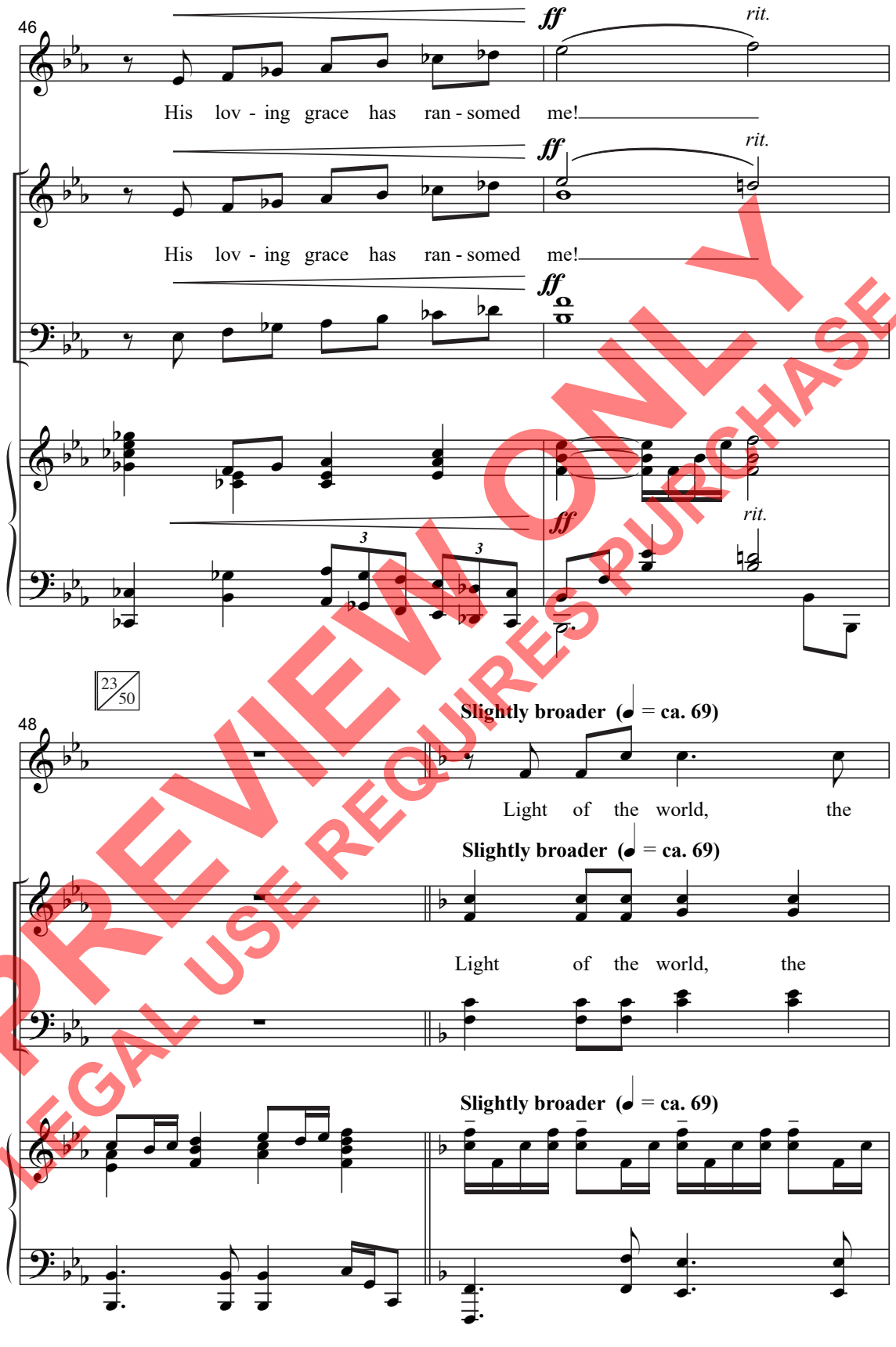

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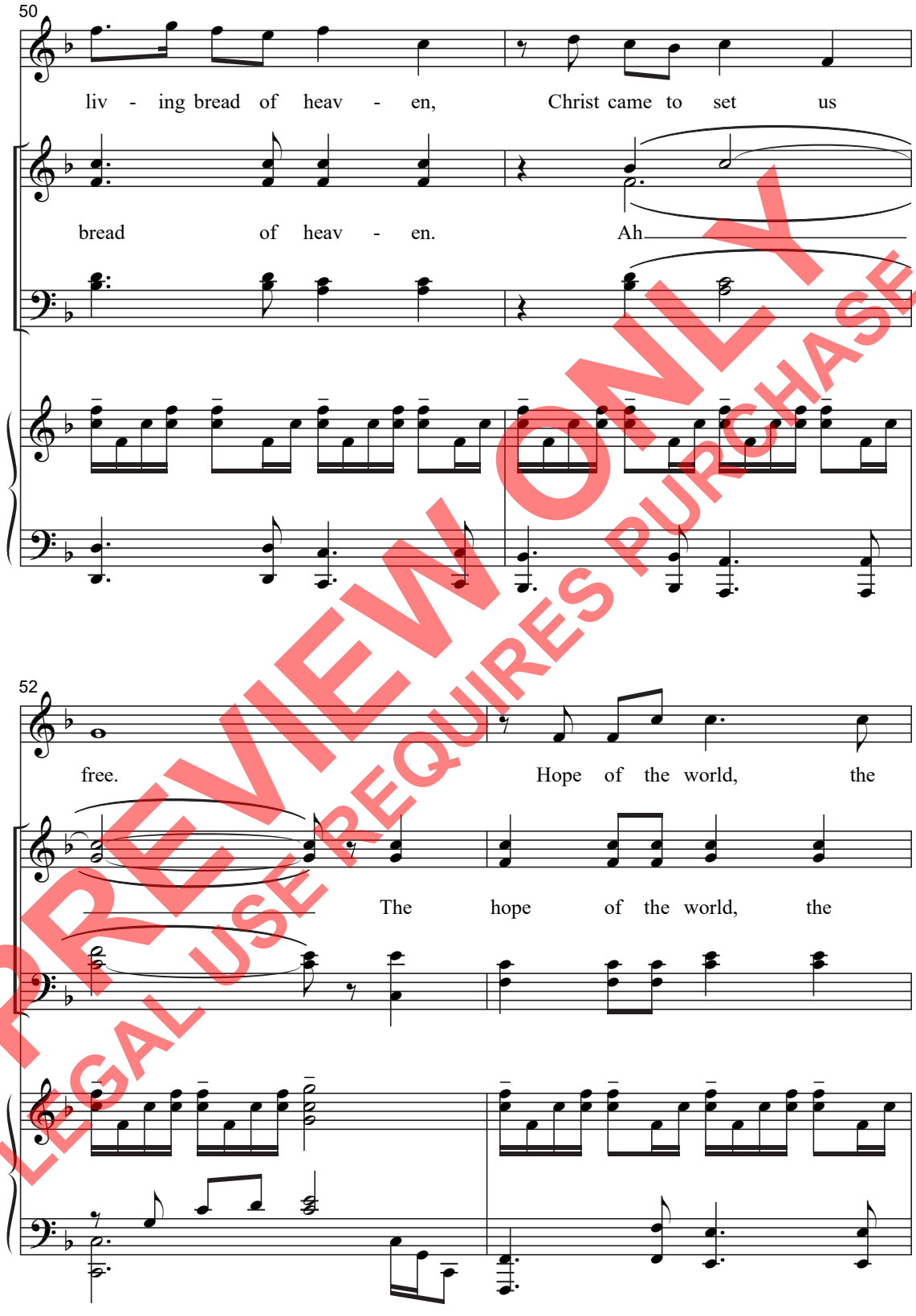

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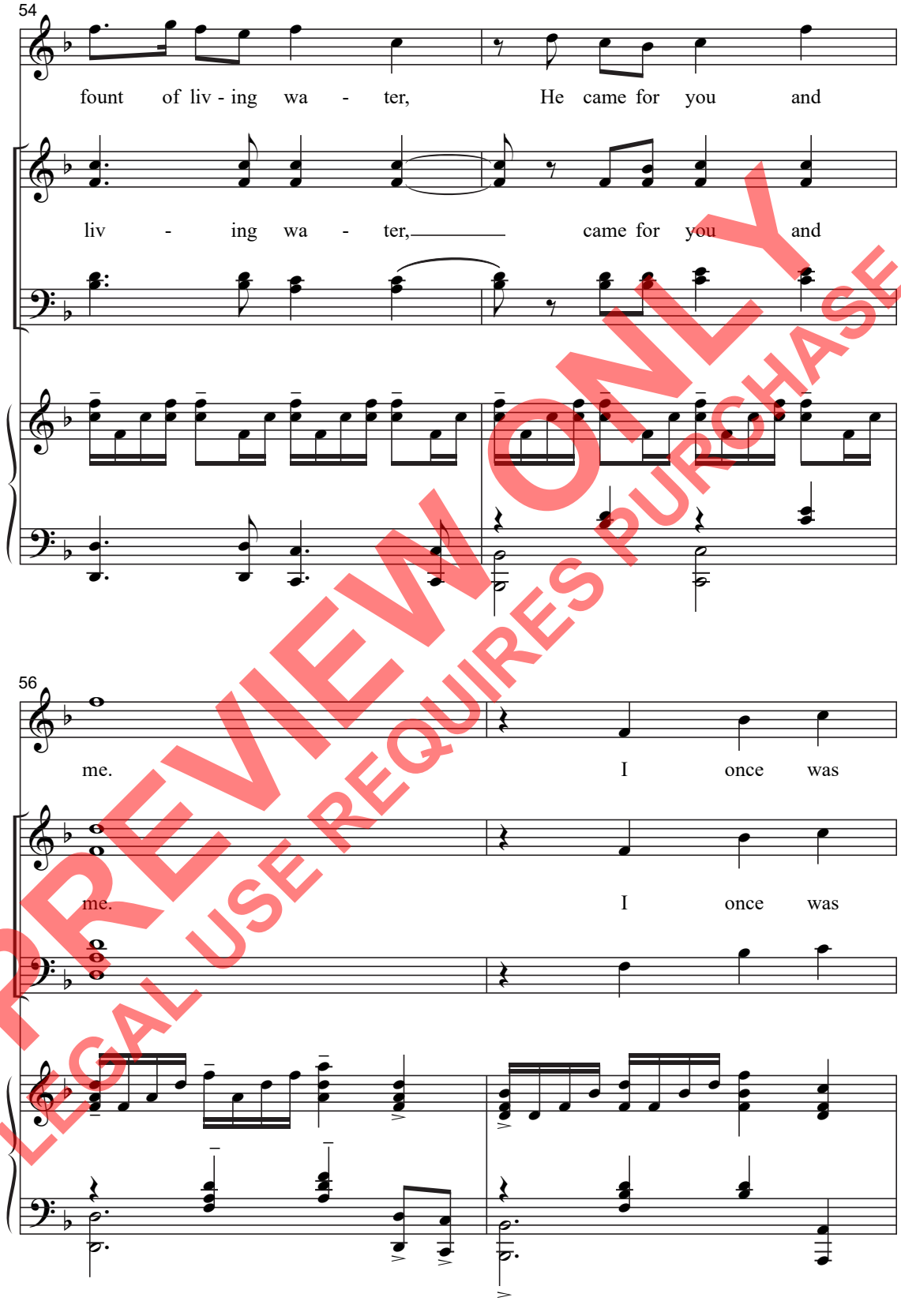

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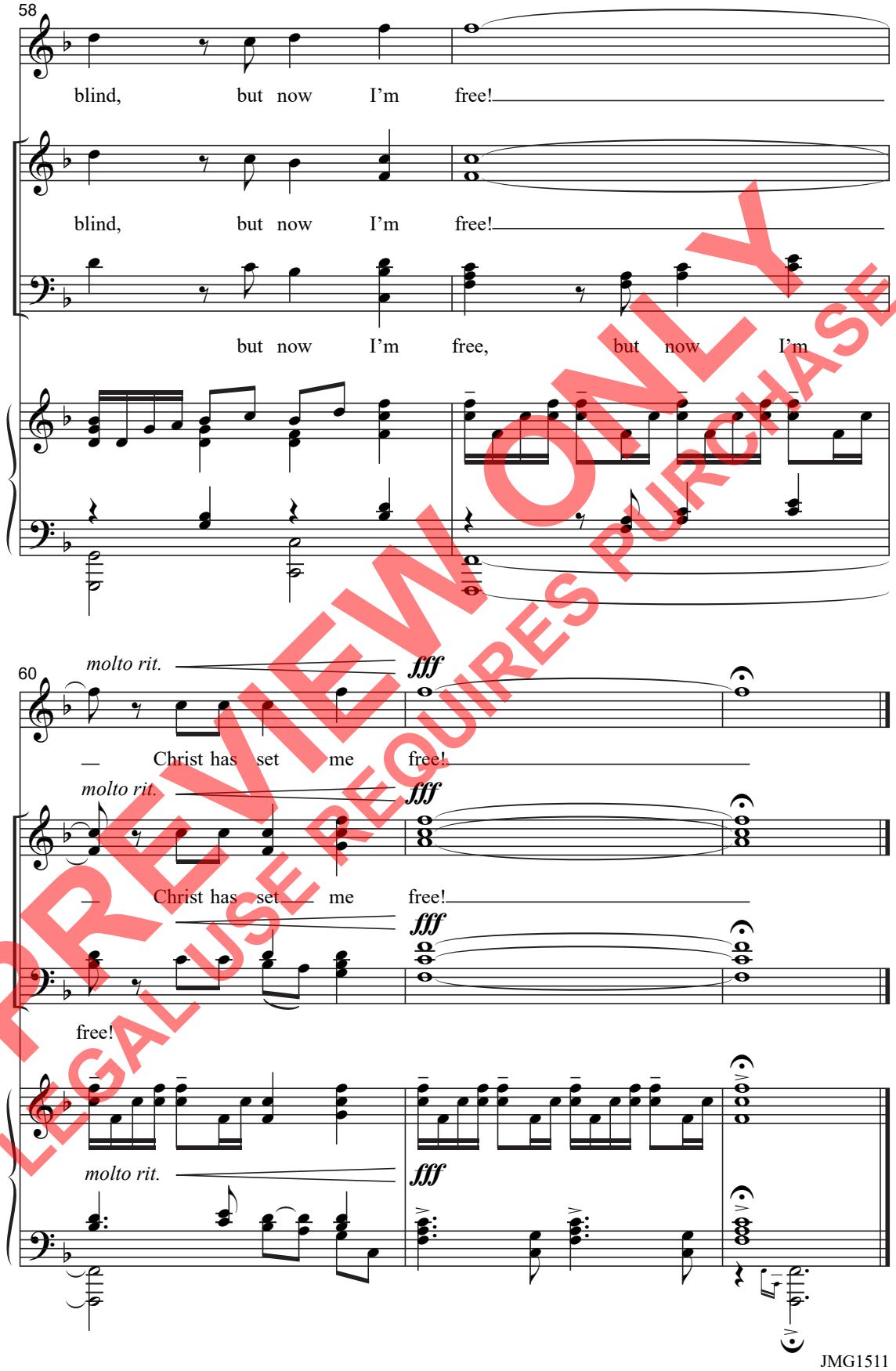

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NARRATION 8

JOHN: My name is John Newton. And now you know my story.

NARRATOR: God's grace is real and universal, and can always overcome the deepest valleys and darkest hatred. ***(Music for "Amazing Grace" begins)*** Our world has never been more in need of God's grace.

JOHN: From the heart of a repentant and grateful sinner came a hymn that has resonated for centuries. To God be the glory!

NARRATOR: Since John Newton penned the words to this immortal hymn, it has become universally known and loved around the world. Sung by church congregations large and small, celebrities, political figures, or a worried mother who is nursing a sick child, it assures us that no matter the depth of our fears, mistakes, or regrets, God's redemption is real. Its truth has sounded from small African tribes to the stage of Carnegie Hall. Here's hope…here's God's amazing grace.

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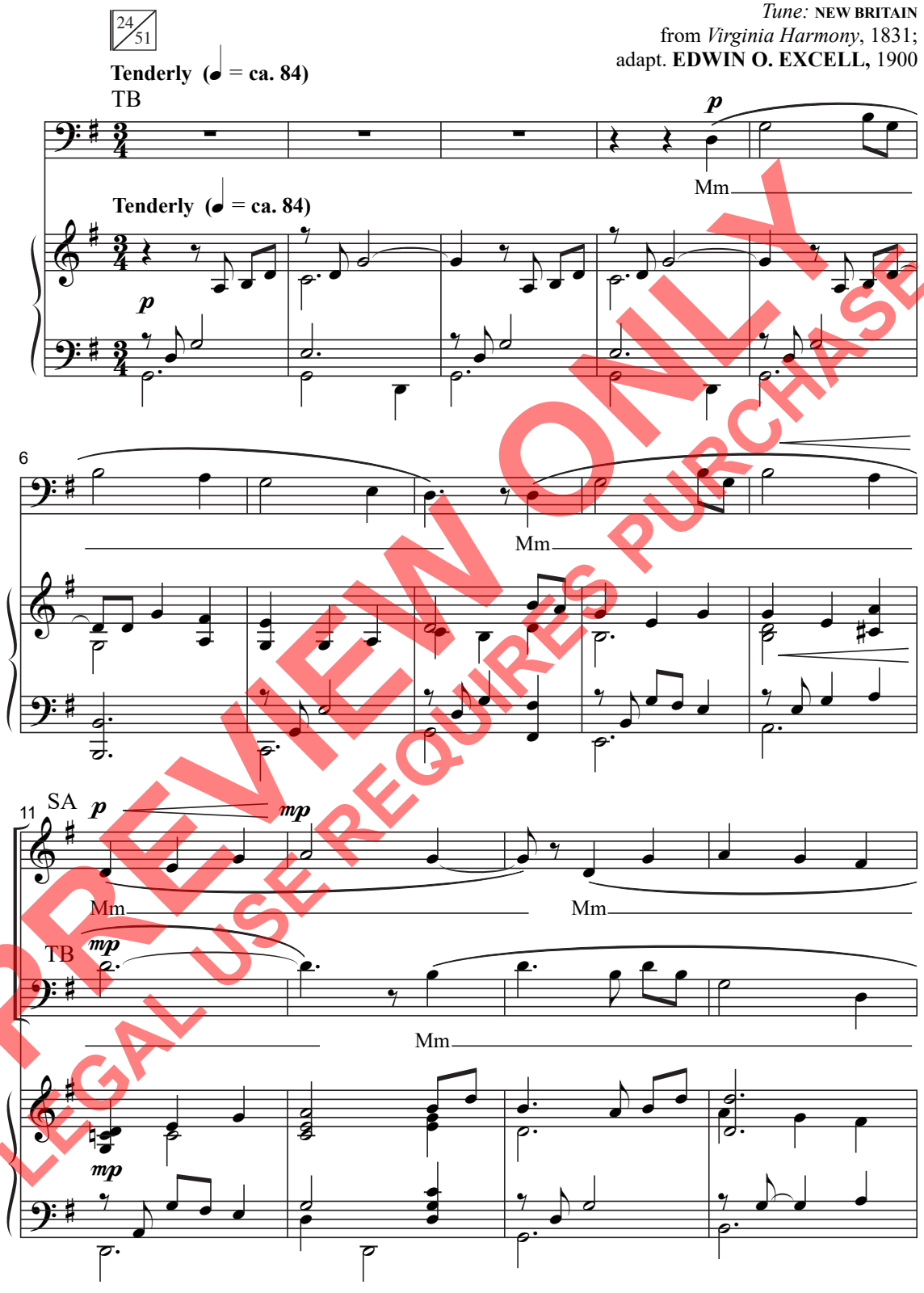
AMAZING GRACE!

Words by **JOHN NEWTON**, 1779;
st. 4 Anonymous

Arranged with New Music
by **LLOYD LARSON**
Tune: **NEW BRITAIN**
from *Virginia Harmony*, 1831;
adapt. **EDWIN O. EXCELL,** 1900



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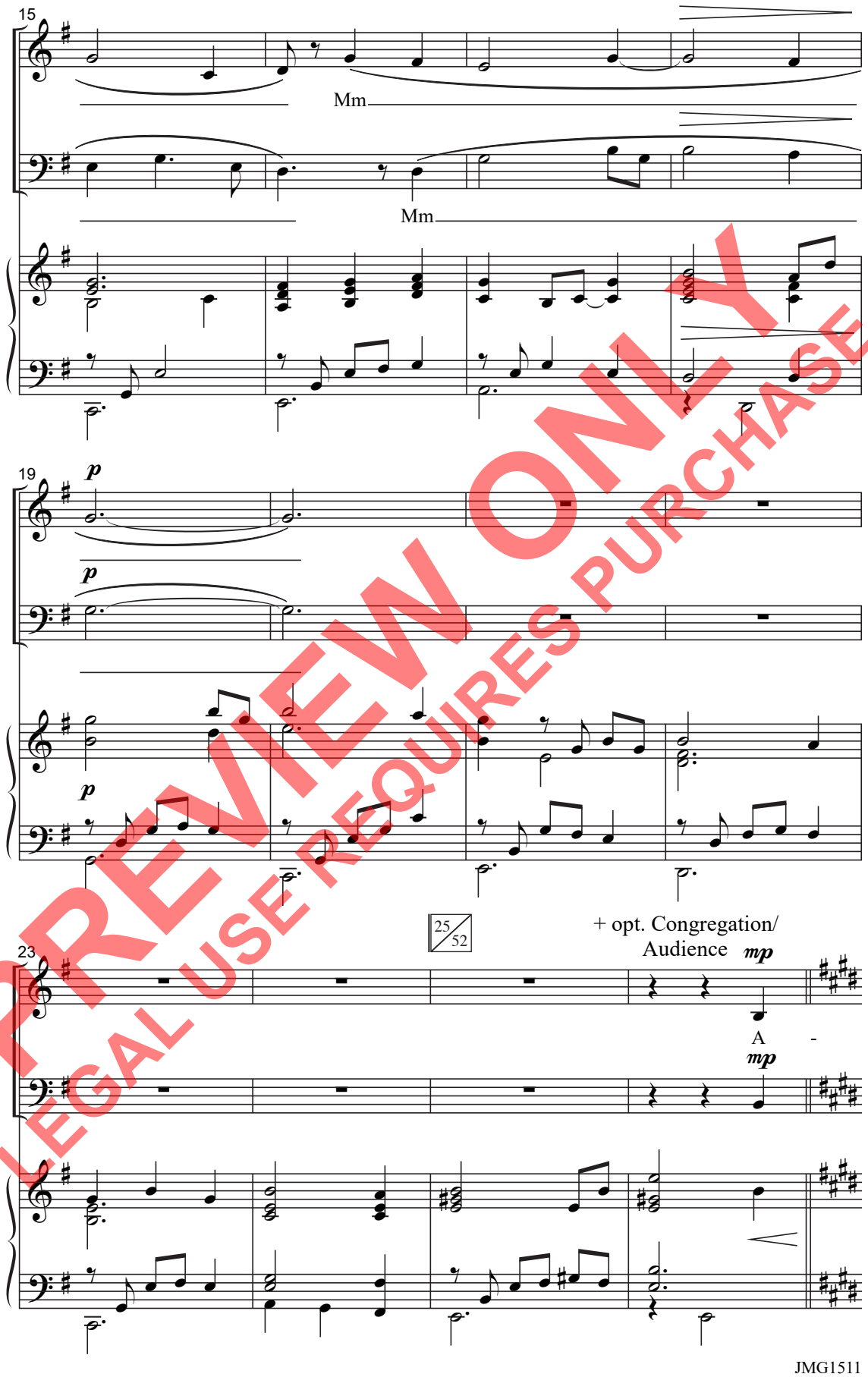

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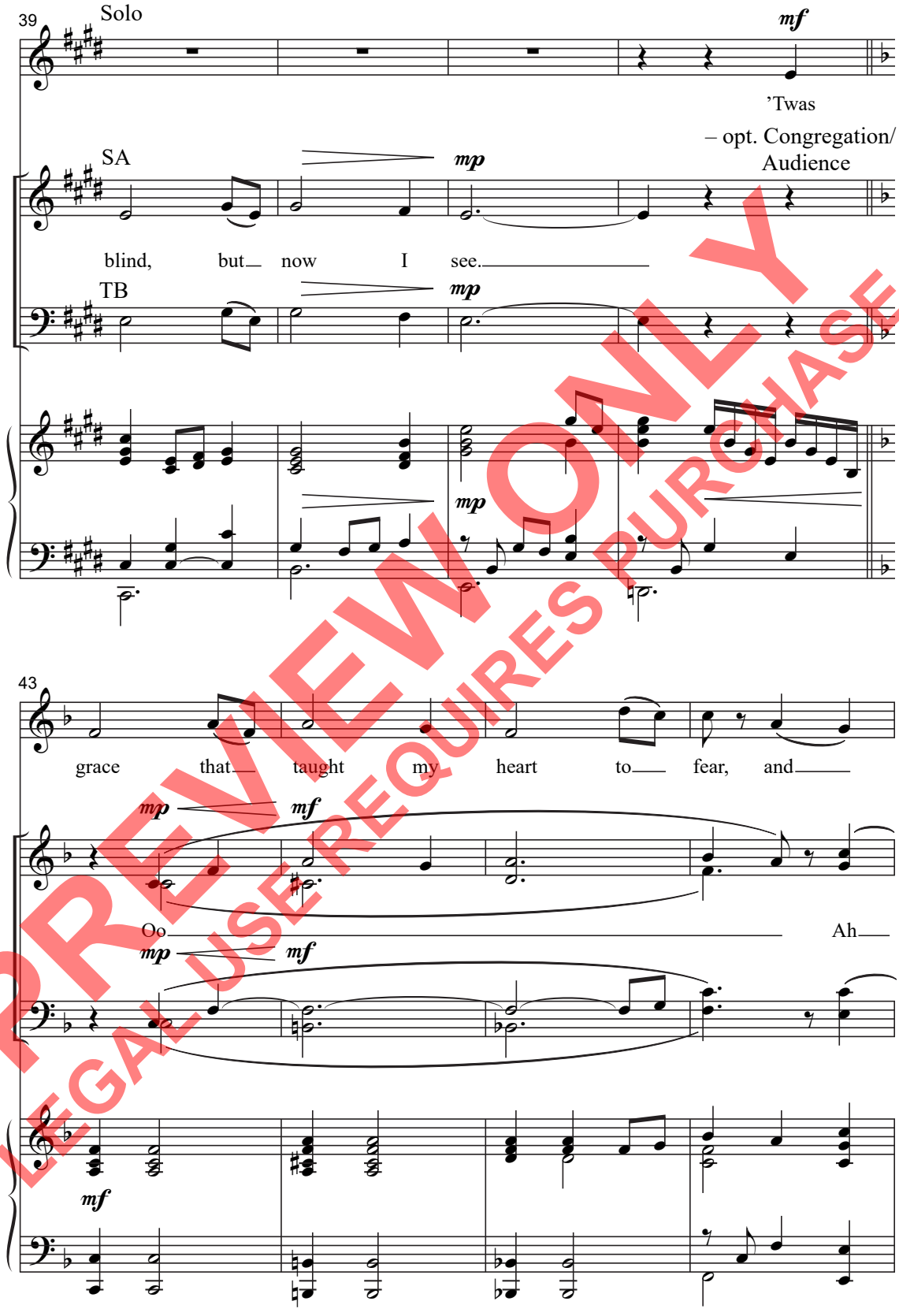

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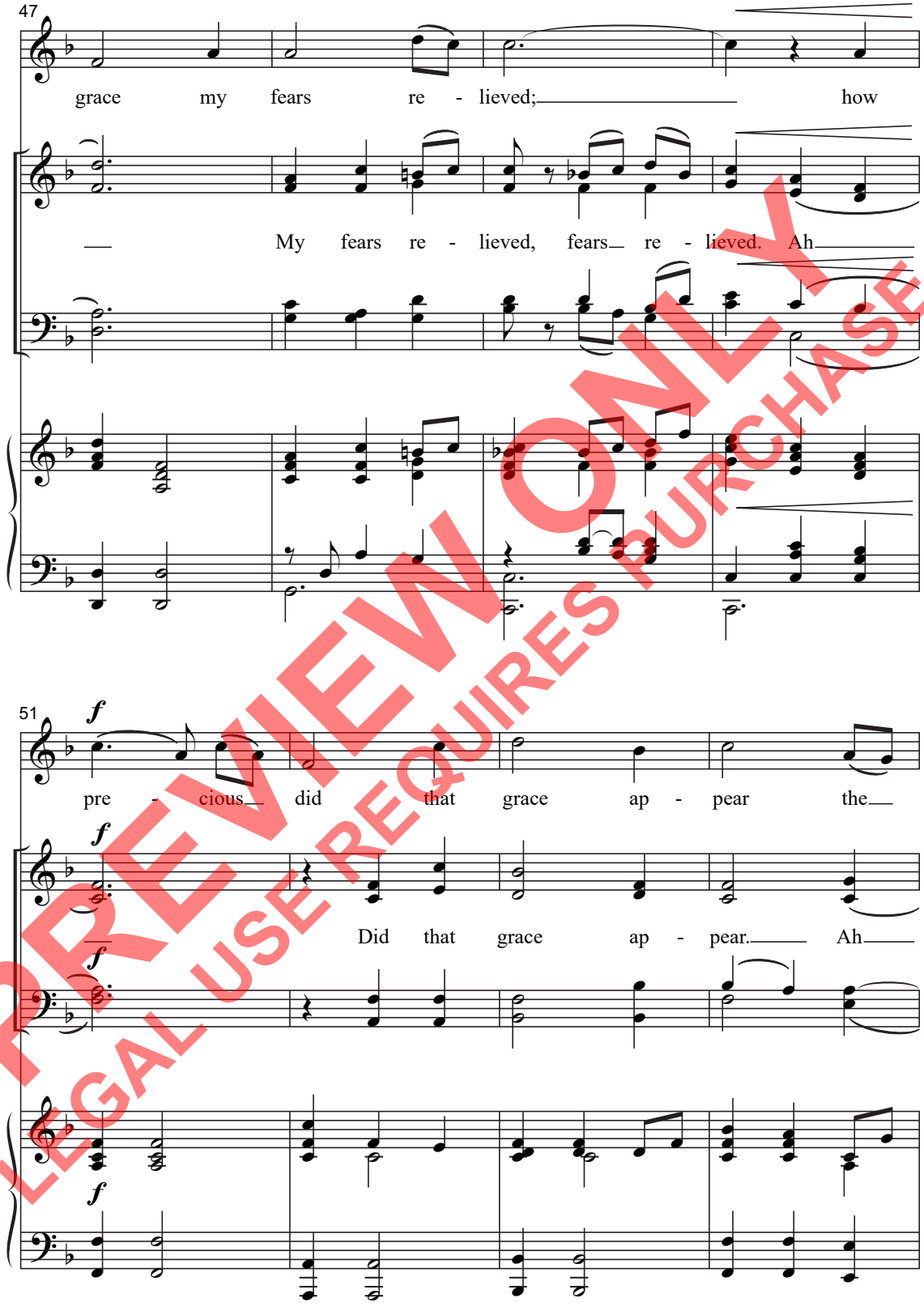

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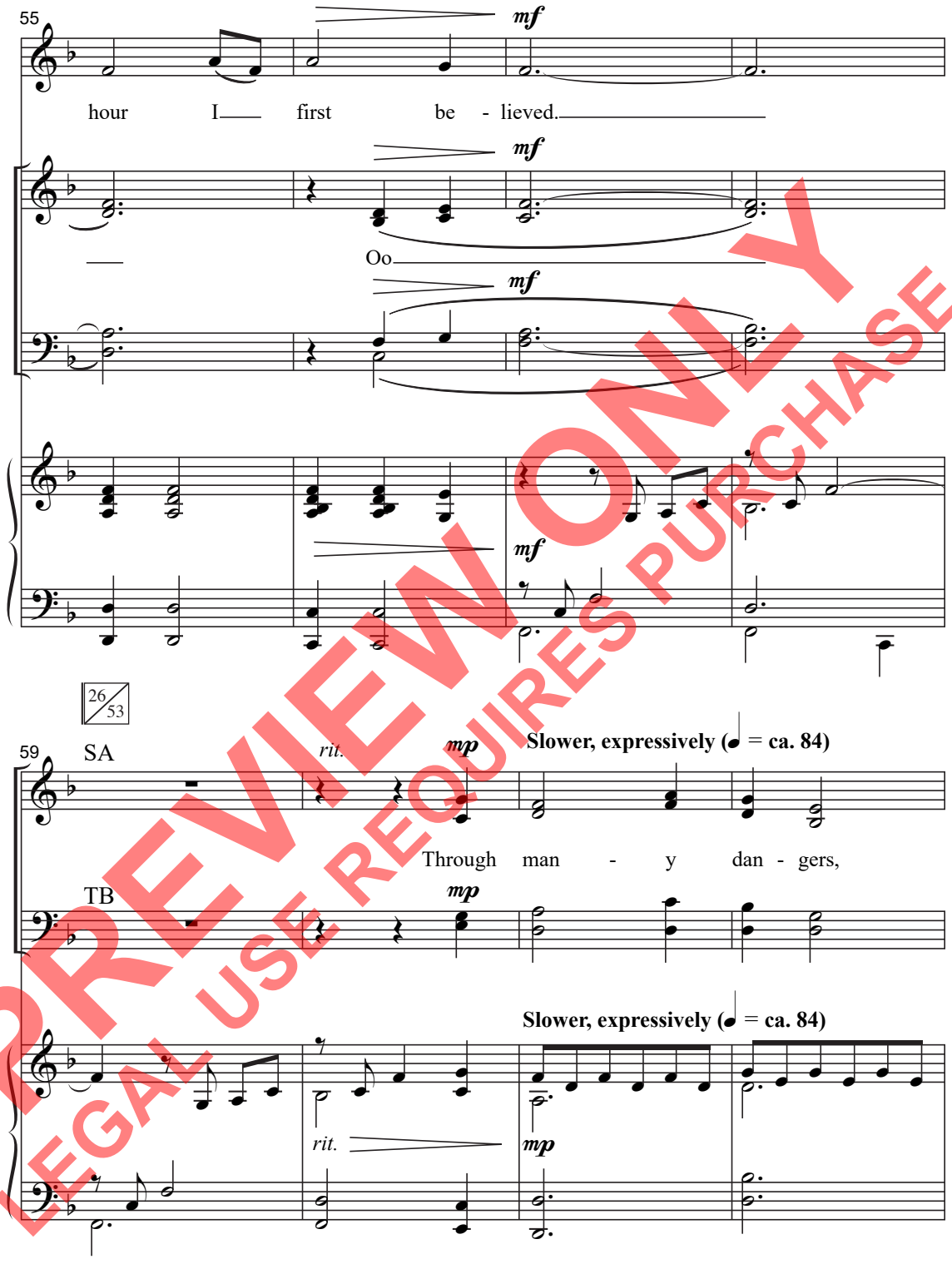

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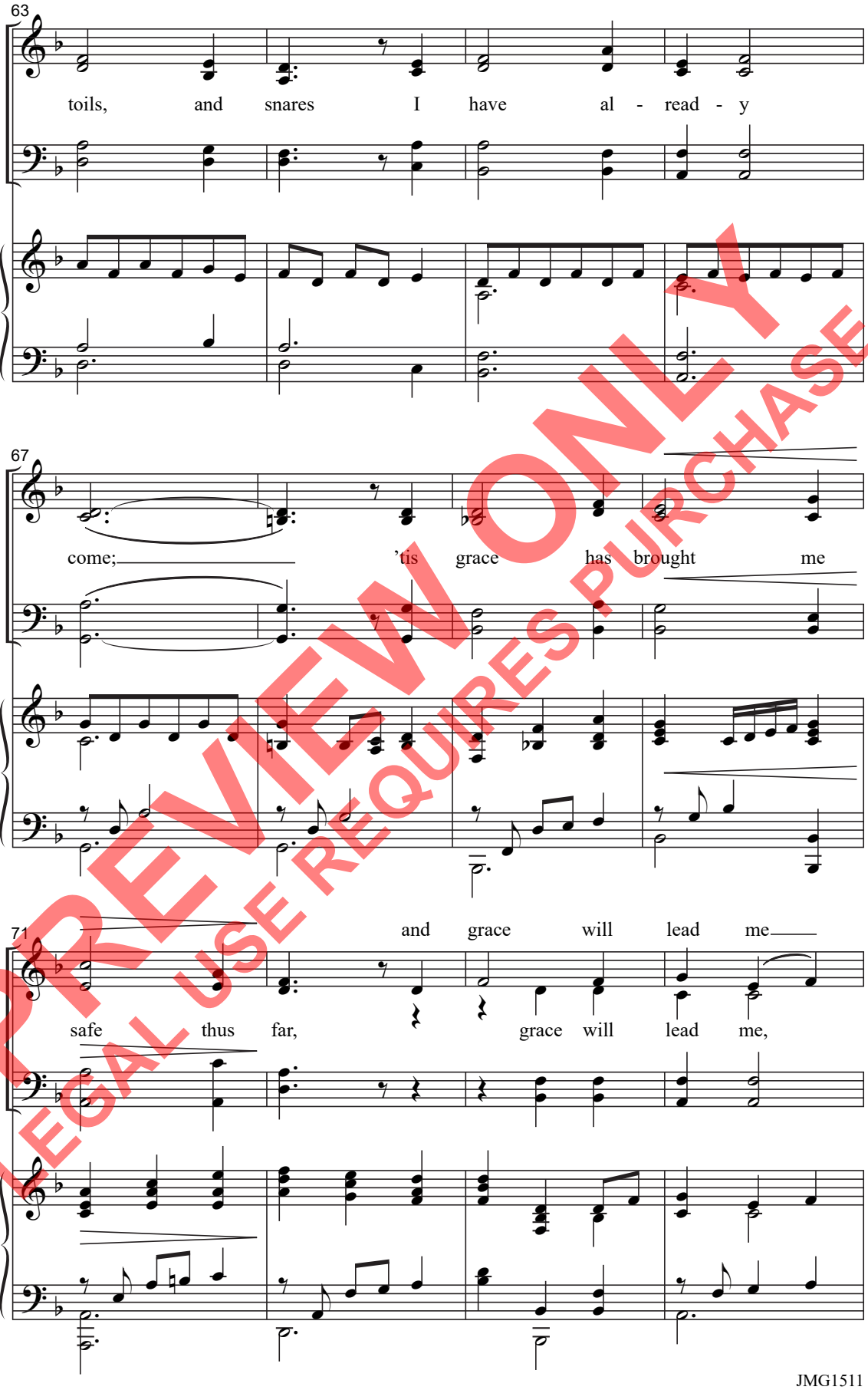

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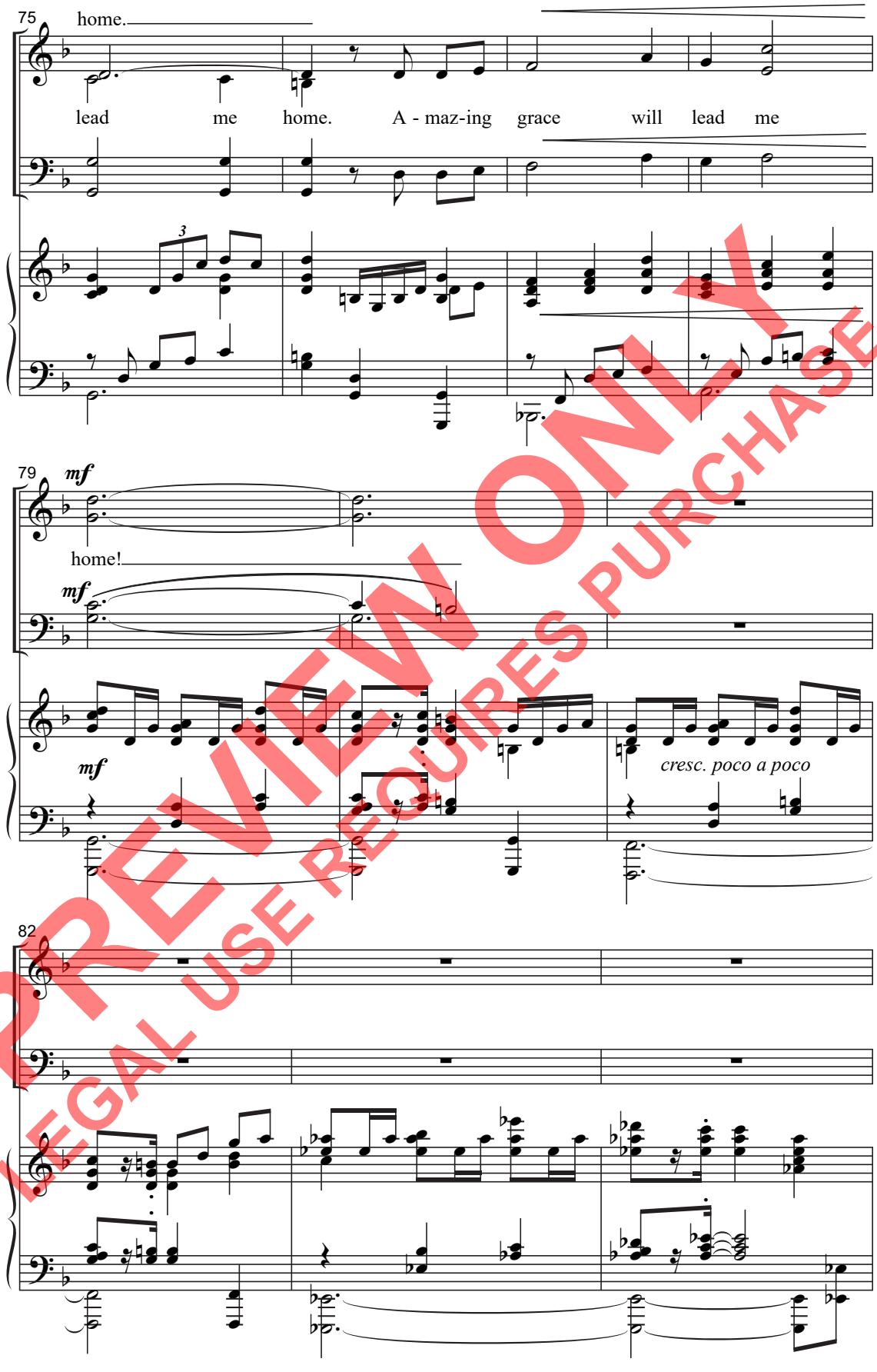

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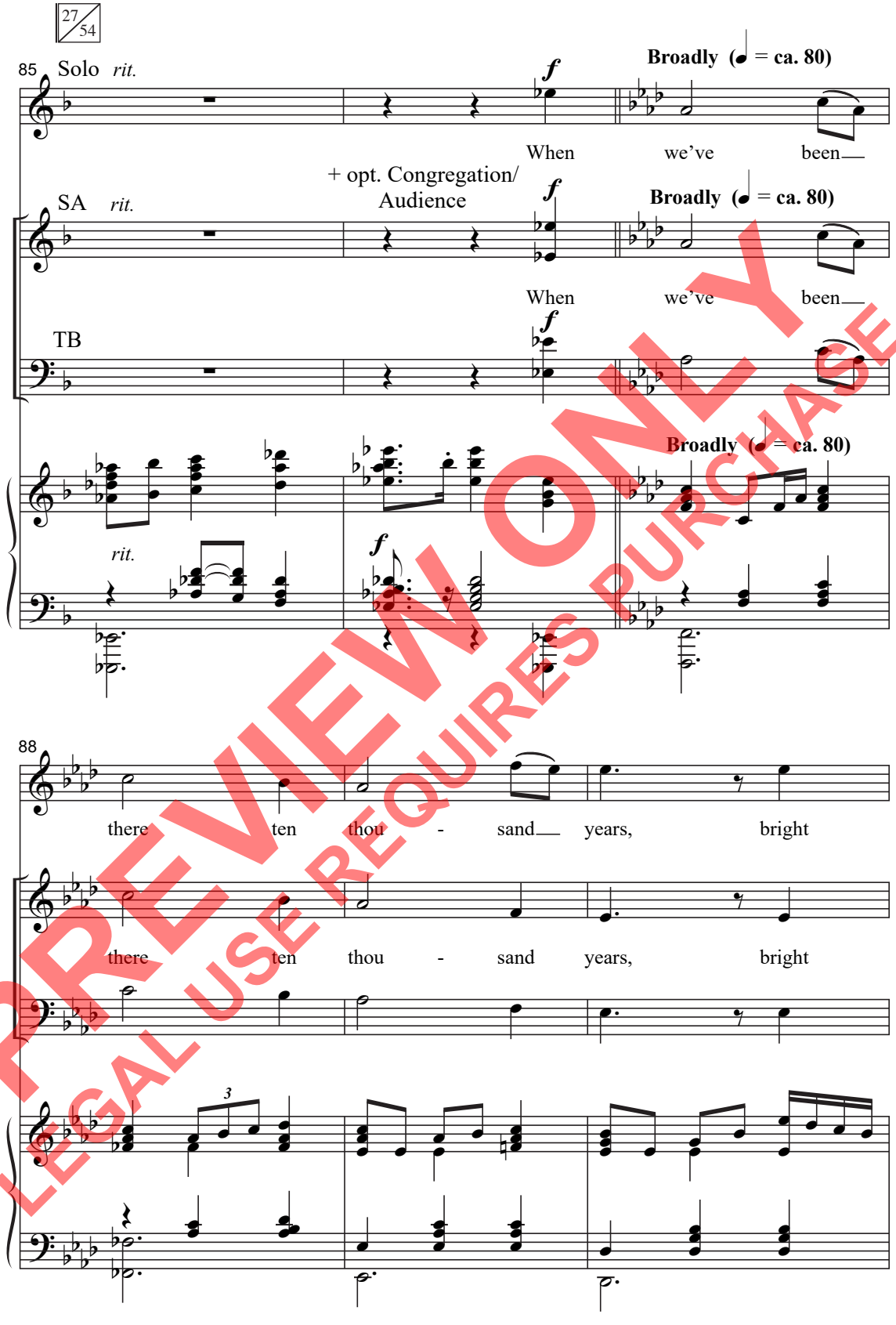

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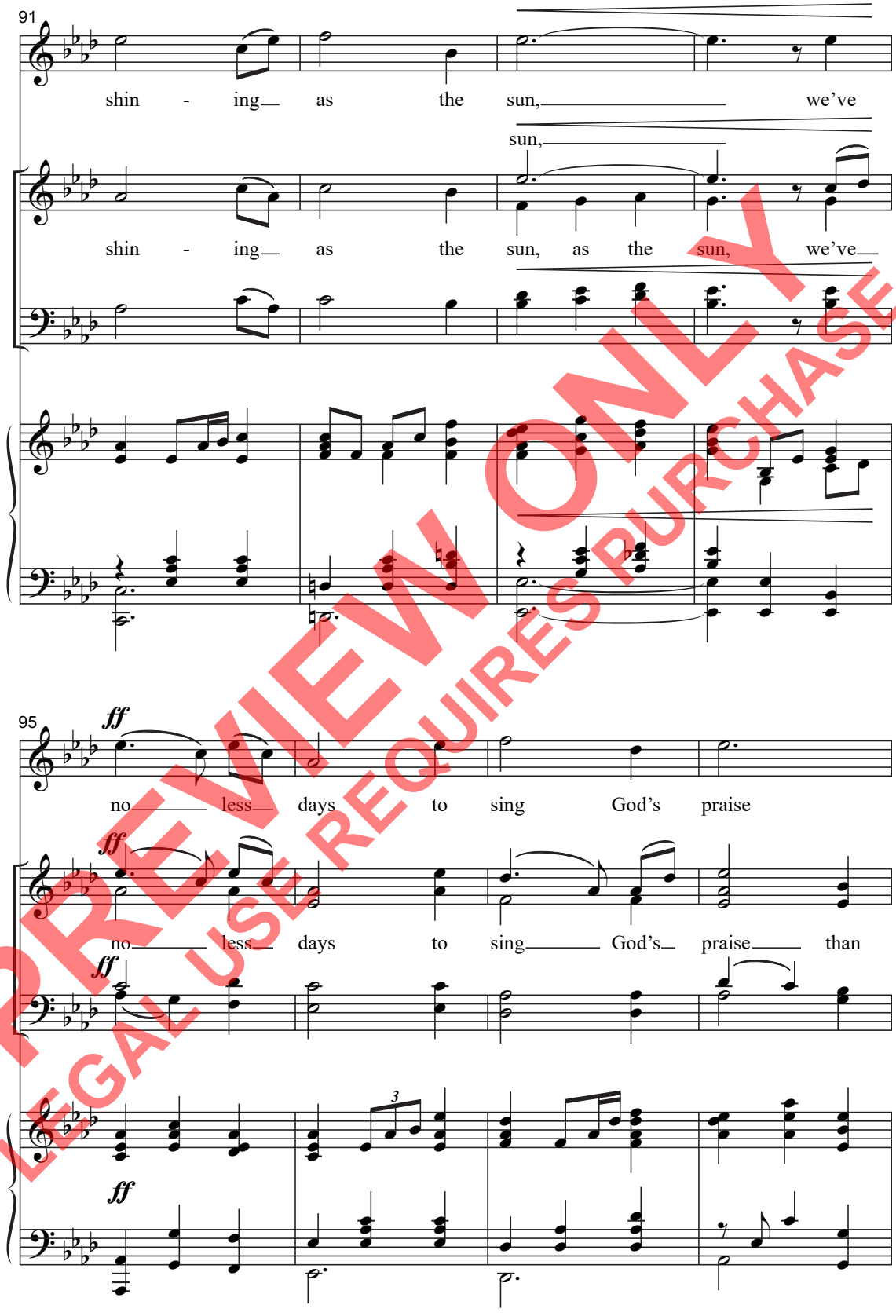

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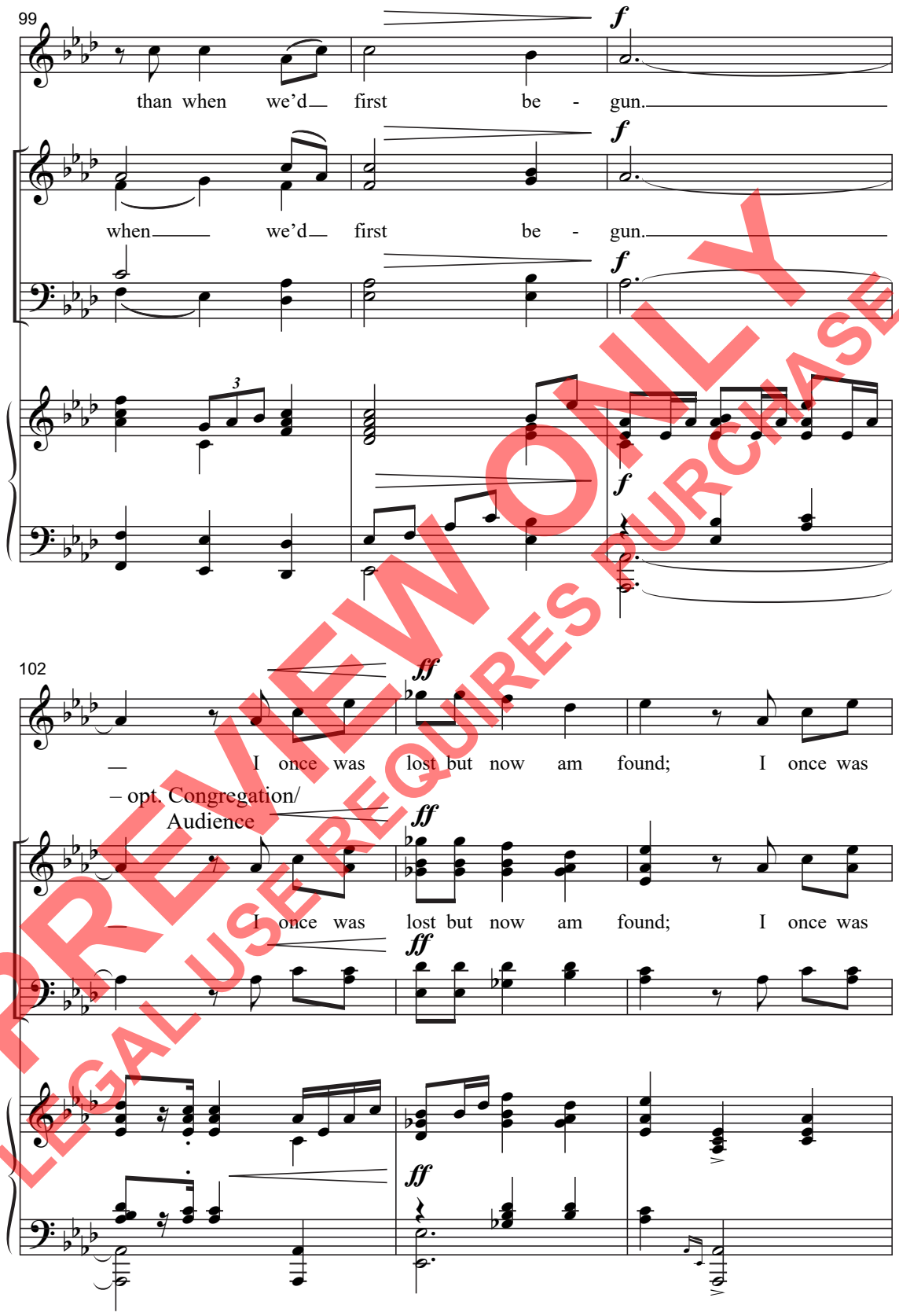

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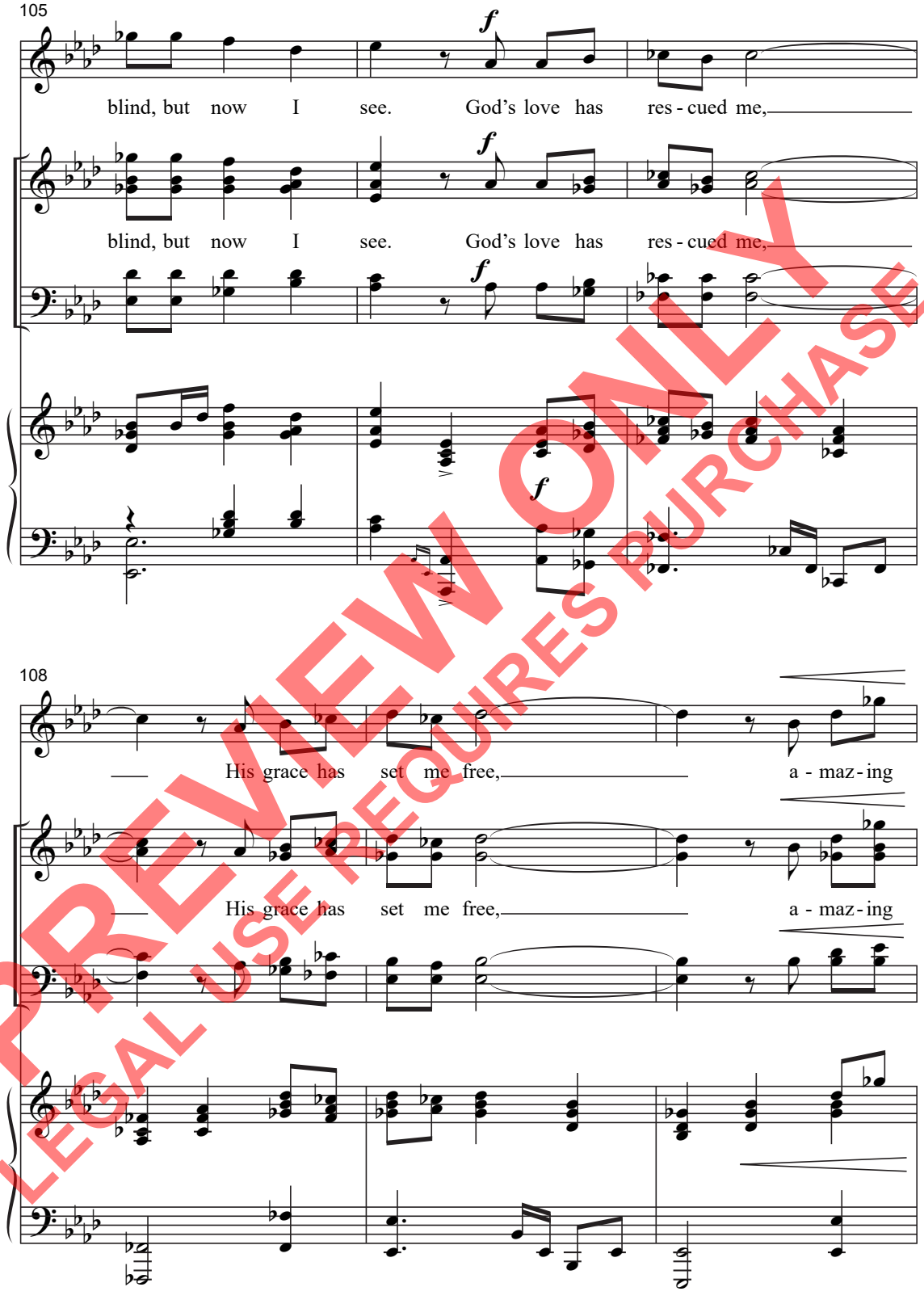

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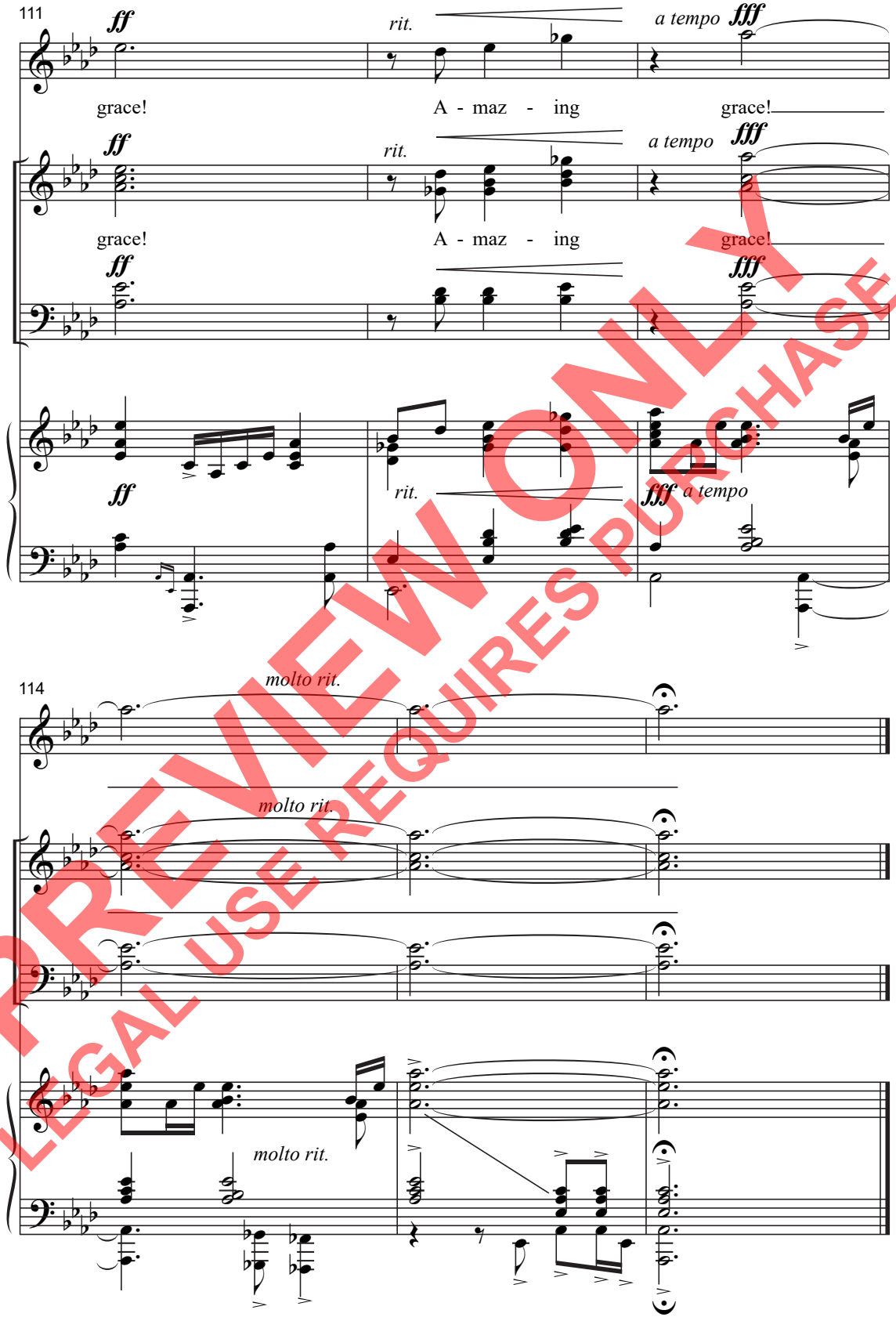

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