Milford

[Hymn for Easter Day]

Joseph Stephenson

If angels sung a Saviour's birth, if

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Milford
1. If angels sung a Saviour's birth
   On that auspicious morn,
   We well may imitate their mirth
   Now he again is born.

2. If stars in heav'n shone bright as day
   To light the manger throne,
   We should rejoice as well as they
   That love doth reign alone.

3. All Glory be to God on high,
   And to the earth be peace;
   Goodwill henceforth to men
   Begin and never cease.

Joseph Stephenson, a contemporary of William Knapp, was for 45 years Clerk to the Unitarian Church of Poole, Dorset, between 1766 and 1810. MILFORD occurs, with regional variations, in many church manuscripts, from Dorset, along the south coast to Sussex, west to Bristol, to Somerset, and north to Oxford. It also travelled to America, and Stephenson's first book of 'Church Harmony', first printed in England in 1756, was reprinted there as early as 1766. It was first called MILFORD in 1779, the name keeping strictly to America. This setting comes from a collection of 33 psalms and 10 anthems, possibly compiled by Matthew Wilkins of Great Milton, Oxon., between 1755 and 1760, (no title page), and now owned by Sheila and Edwin Macadam. Therein it was entitled 'Hymn for Easter Day'.