

123 It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

1 It came up-on the mid-night clear, that glo-rious song of old,
 2 Still through the clo - ven skies they come, with peace-ful wings un - furled,
 3 Yet with the woes of sin and strife the world has suf-fered long;
 4 And you, be-neath life's crush-ing load, whose forms are bend-ing low,
 5 For lo, the days are has-tening on, by proph-ets seen of old,

from an - gels bend - ing near the earth, to touch their harps of gold:
 and still their heaven-ly mu - sic floats o'er all the wea - ry world:
 be - neath the heaven-ly hymn have rolled two thou-sand years of wrong;
 who toil a - long the climb-ing way with pain - ful steps and slow,
 when with the ev - er - cir-cling years shall come the time fore - told,

“Peace on the earth, good will to all, from heaven’s all-gra-cious King”:
 a - bove its sad and low - ly plains they bend on hov-ering wing,
 and we at war on earth hear not the tid - ings that they bring;
 look now, for glad and gold - en hours come swift - ly on the wing:
 when peace shall o - ver all the earth its an - cient splen-dors fling,

The “it” of the first line of this text by a Unitarian minister does not refer to the birth of Jesus, but to “that glorious song of old,” the angelic tidings of peace on earth. The restored third stanza laments how often the noise of human strife has obscured that message.