"And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, 
behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, 
which shall be to all people.
"For unto you is born this day in the city of 
David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

- Luke ii,10,11

Jeremiah xxiii,1-8

Psalm 89, vss.1-18

New Book of Worship, Psalm 89, p.68

Luke ii,1-14

The history of every individual parallels the history of the human race. So we can see ourselves mirrored in the history of humanity. Every child falls from the innocence of infancy. The same serpent that tempted Eve tempts us as children and with the same illusions and fallacious hopes. The senses and the natural mind are first developed. They lie close to the earth. We pluck fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and we eat it and fall. Again, there is a Cain in every one — the tendency to trust in faith alone, profession of belief without the constant effort to amend our lives in accordance with it. And there is in each of us an Enoch that gathers up the remains of innocence and conceals them in the inner recesses of the soul, preserving them for later use, an Enoch that walks with God and no longer appears in outward life, for God takes him. Every life is beset by a flood of false principles. Everyone goes down into Egypt to get corn to sustain him in intellectual and spiritual famine, and he has to work his way to freedom by the wanderings and temptations of the wilderness.

As in the history of the human race so in the life of the individual, the Lord sends His prophets to warn and instruct. And He Himself comes to us as we can bear His presence and will heed His counsels. In His love He protects, guides, and sustains us in all our ways, withholds from us all the evils that we will permit Him to withhold, and gives us all the blessings we will receive from Him.

When neither law nor prophet nor priest was of any avail, He came into the world Himself, clothing His Divine in a human nature, that He might reach men and become our Redeemer and Savior.

The coming of the Lord into this world as the Savior of men was the great event in human history. It was the point on which the dark past and the eternal future of humanity turned. He came in the fullness of time; from this point the light of truth was revealed, and for nineteen centuries the world has been toiling upward. The progress has been slow but sure.

This grandest of all events in the history of humanity has its parallel in the life history of every man and woman who becomes regenerated. It is the great event in individual history. It decides the eternal futurity.
The Lord assumed an earthly body and took on our nature as the means of reaching men and of making Himself known, for they had departed so far from Him that He could reach them in no other way. And as He came down from heaven and was born into this world, so must He come down from the heavens — the highest regions of man's spiritual nature — and be born upon the earth of the natural man. He must become established in the natural mind, so that we can know that there is something in our nature, or on our earth, beside ourselves, some being who speaks "as one having authority."

When He is thus born in us, the whole current of our life begins to change. New light, new power, and new purposes are born in us, and the course of our life is turned upwards. This is something of what is meant by the angel's message: "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

The life of the Lord as recorded in the Gospels is reenacted in the history of each regenerating soul. It starts with very small beginnings, and there is a long apparently unproductive period in everyone's life after heavenly principles have found some lodgment in the natural mind. It is one of the most remarkable facts in the story of our Lord's life on earth that nothing is recorded of His first thirty years except the circumcision, the flight into Egypt, the return to Nazareth, and His appearance in the temple at Jerusalem when He was twelve years of age. It is simply stated that "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." So with us the truths implanted may work within us for a long time without outward manifestation, but a work is going on. Many years may pass before the inward principles begin to reign in the natural mind. Real development must be slow to be full and true.

The Christmas season brings to mind more particularly the beginnings of the Divine ministry, not only in the world but in the soul. In the story of the Nativity several incidents stand out clearly to the mind — the annunciation, the shepherds abiding in the field, the Virgin Birth, the visit of the wise men, the wrath of Herod, and the flight into Egypt. One striking lesson of this story is that the truth, when born in us, has to be taken care of. Potentially it will and can take care of us and can be so firmly established in us that it can say, "All power is given unto me in heaven and on earth." But at first it comes to us with no such words of omnipotence. The Lord has all power, and He comes to us from His infinite love to watch over our welfare and to provide us with every possible blessing. By the Incarnation the Infinite came near to us to enter into us and gift us with life and strength. But at first we do not feel this power. The Lord comes to us as He did in history in apparent feebleness — as a little child,
As children we learn about the coming of the Lord, but we do not understand it at first and we hardly feel its power. We learn His name and about the wonderful things that He did. But this belief has to be protected. The child will hear ridicule of what he has been taught — Herod trying to kill the child of Bethlehem. The Lord was born of Mary — the affection. The truth of Christ as the Savior is no product of human intelligence, as those imagine who try to establish the theory that Christ is the product of the best religious thought of the race. Joseph — human intelligence — can be the guardian but not the father of Christ. Christ is first received in the heart.

One first loves without understanding. The child at first loves his parents without understanding them, knowing nothing about them, whether they are rich or poor, wise or ignorant, good or bad. We begin our life under this law. We need to advance out of this state so that we can understand, and we can learn more and more about the Lord to infinity, but if the law were that we must understand before we believe, infancy and childhood would be a blank. By the merciful law that belief is first of the heart many a precious truth is born in us which we cherish not because we understand it but because the Lord has put it into our hearts. The Lord's birth brings Him into touch with the beginnings of every human life. His presence with us enables us to become human.

Down through the ages the Lord has so come to men, forming His heavens by giving of His love and wisdom and power to those who would receive Him. He does not come to destroy but to save. The natural mind separated from the spiritual sinks down into disease and death, as the body does when separated from the soul. The purpose of the Lord's coming is always the same: to restore life. The record of the Lord's life upon earth is the record of His life in us. He changes not. It is the record of what He seeks to do for us now, to work all His miracles in each one of us, healing the sick, giving strength to the weak, feeding the hungry, raising the dead, and preaching the Gospel to the poor.

The angel's message is for every individual in all times:

"Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

Amen