

1. Henry Hitt Crane tells the story of the House of Life:

"In the House of Life I saw a great multitude, that no man could number, almost achieving, nearly successful, not far from the goal of their desires, but somehow they lacked, and missed and failed.

I saw a bridegroom, just after marriage at the church, when he had but kissed his new wife upon the mouth. And a message was handed him, for he was a soldier; and he had to leave instantly, and cross the world; and he died of a foreign fever.

I saw an eager, earnest scholar compelled to leave the university just before graduation, because a sudden illness smote him, and his sight failed, and his speech was stopped, for he was now a paralytic.

And I saw a ship full of passengers, eager to reach home; they had been a fortnight at sea and were weary; and on the shore their friends stood anxious. And the ship was held in quarantine, right at the harbor's mouth, for ten days; during which time the lawyer's case was lost, the politicians plans were undone, the merchant's opportunity slipped by, and the returning son's mother breathed her last.

I saw a man build a house and die at its threshold.

And I saw a mighty ruler on a throne, pondering a vast alternative, considering a daring adventure that would open new worlds of opportunity; and he listened to the challenge of a messenger of the Most High; and he said: "Almost thou persuadest me!" But he couldn't quite make up his mind;

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There are several meanings which an Easter Sunrise Service may have for individuals. Some may think of the beauty of the sunrise as symbolic of the rising of Christ from the dead, others sometimes think of it as standing for the promise of a new day upon earth, still others consider the Sunrise Service little more than a beautiful and nice way to start Easter Day.

None of these meanings is entirely wrong, and there is good in each of them. Yet, historically, we remember the resurrection of Christ through a Sunrise Service because in Scripture we are told that it was "very early in the morning" when the women went to the grave and found instead of a dead body a live "gardener" who turned out to be the risen Christ.

Today through the rejoicing of song and worship, new attire and social intermingling we proclaim this risen Christ our Lord. So in the morning let us too recognize the love of this Lord ~~much~~ much us.

and his indecision doomed him.

I saw a victorious nation standing on the top of the world, holding in its hand the destiny of mankind, for it had unlocked the secret strength of the sun with which it could now bless or blast the hopes of humanity; and some shouted: "Get tough! Treat 'em rough! Call the bluff of any who oppose us!" And airplanes went flying over forbidden territory, and incredibly costly battleships and carriers went anywhere they pleased, and atomic bombs were dropped to test the nerve of an already jittery, half-shattered world; and insane militarists and vicious jingoists talked of a Third World War -- and soon! And others said: "Listen! There's another way. No toughness, but truth! Not bull-dozing, but brotherhood! Not cursing, but Christ!" And the nation shook its head, and wondered -- while the tough boys shouted all the louder about a realistic foreign policy.

And I saw an old man, who was a Sage, and loved men, and he looked with sad eyes upon all, and murmured, as to himself: "Almost, nearly, not quite."

2. God is concerned over the inabilities of mankind to reach the completion of his efforts and desires. He is more concerned with man's almost-but-not-quite efforts to ~~know~~ fathom the meaning of life.

3. ~~One~~ A British plane was shot down by the enemy. The plane, dropping into the ocean, soon sank. The crew of five managed to get into a small rubber raft that could hold only four.

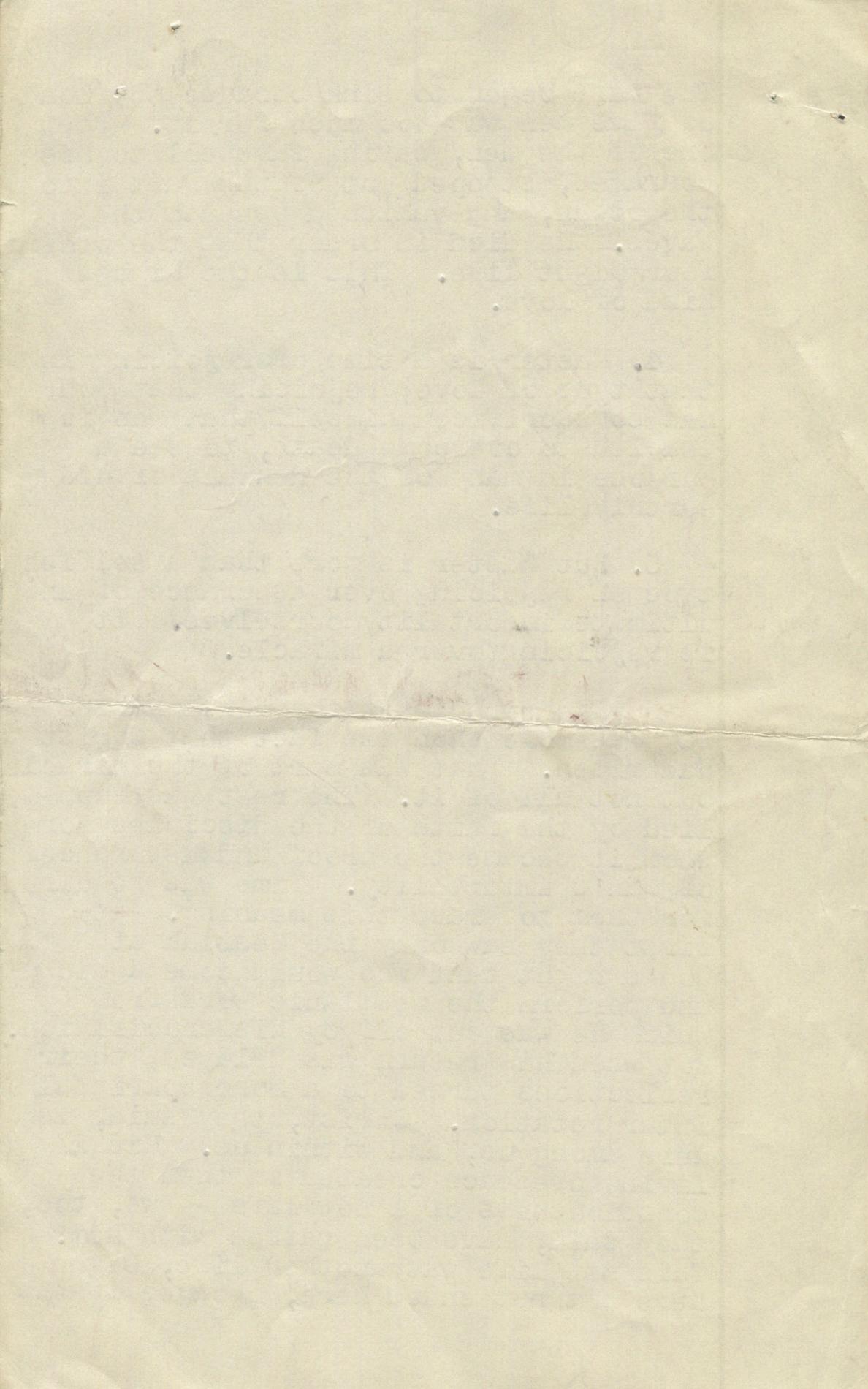


The raft began to sink because the load of five men was too much for it. Then one of the men, saying farewell to his comrades, stepped out of the raft into the ocean, and vanished beneath the waves. He died in order that the other four might live. This is the highest kind of love.

4. Easter is a time of rejoicing in that type of love; rejoicing that God has so sacrificed himself that man is enabled to overcome death, to see a purpose in many of the denials of his earthly life.

5. But Easter is more than a selfish type of rejoicing over assurance of an ultimate immortality ourselves. It is rejoicing over a miracle.

6. The miracle of the first Easter Day was more than the fact that Christ had risen. That was part of the miracle but not all of it. The rest was supplied by the faith of the disciples for whom it became the proof and assurance of man's immortality. Time was required for them to grasp this meaning. At first they saw only the Messiah at God's right hand who would come again and perform the messianic work from which he was cut off by his crucifixion. But when his return was delayed, their reflections turned to a more spiritual interpretation. Christ, they said, is here among us, and within us. His living presence created in them the consciousness of a new life -- we, too, they said, have been raised with him! This new life was another life, begun here but not ended here, because it was



the revelation of the very life of God in them. The early church cherished this assurance of immortality as their most distinctive and precious possession "Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall be manifested we shall be like him."

Their faith in a future life was not an achievement of reasoning, but a consciousness of Christ's presence who could not be held by death. There are some good philosophical arguments for immortality, but the best of them are hard to grasp and frail to lean upon. However, the Christian faith in eternal life does not rest upon these arguments. It rests at last upon the character of God. His character was revealed in Jesus Christ who vanquished death and brought life and immortality to light. Such a God will not cast his children to the void. The ~~xxxix~~ keystone to man's immortality is his possession of eternal life now -- that new life which the living presence of Christ bestows upon all who love and obey him.

Portland  
Salem  
Eugene

July 1842

Casper, Wyoming, March 25, '51