

Sermons  
Non-Scriptural  
Hymns as Inspiration and Truth

Theme: Inspiration and truth in the hymns of the Church.

Proposition: The hymns of the Church are in many instances capable of inspiring people to higher ways of living and to fuller understanding of truth.

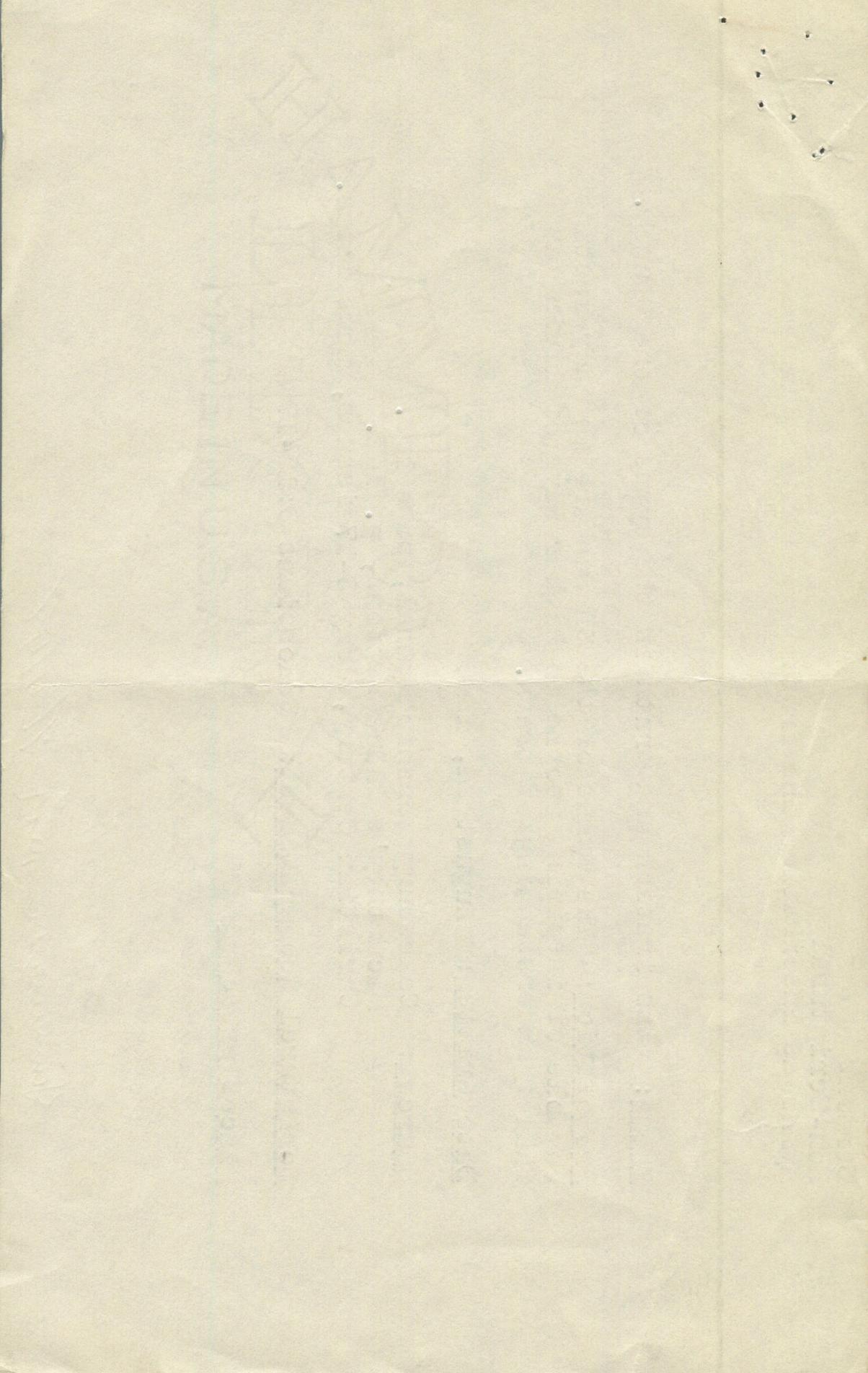
Date written: August 24, 1946

Sources: Cokesbury Worship Hymnal, page 106.  
Macartney's Illustrations, p. 142.  
Christian Century, July 3-17 issues, news items.

Scriptural Accompaniment: Colossians 3:12-17

Places preached:

Pawcatan } 8/25/46  
Pocahontas }  
Salem 10/6/46  
Huntington, Va 7/4/48



Introduction:

1. There is a little ditty sung around campfires, etc., that goes something like this:

It isn't any trouble just to  
S\*M I L E

It isn't any trouble just to  
S\*M I I - L - E

There isn't any trouble but will  
vanish like a bubble

If you'll only take the trouble  
just to S-M-I-L-E

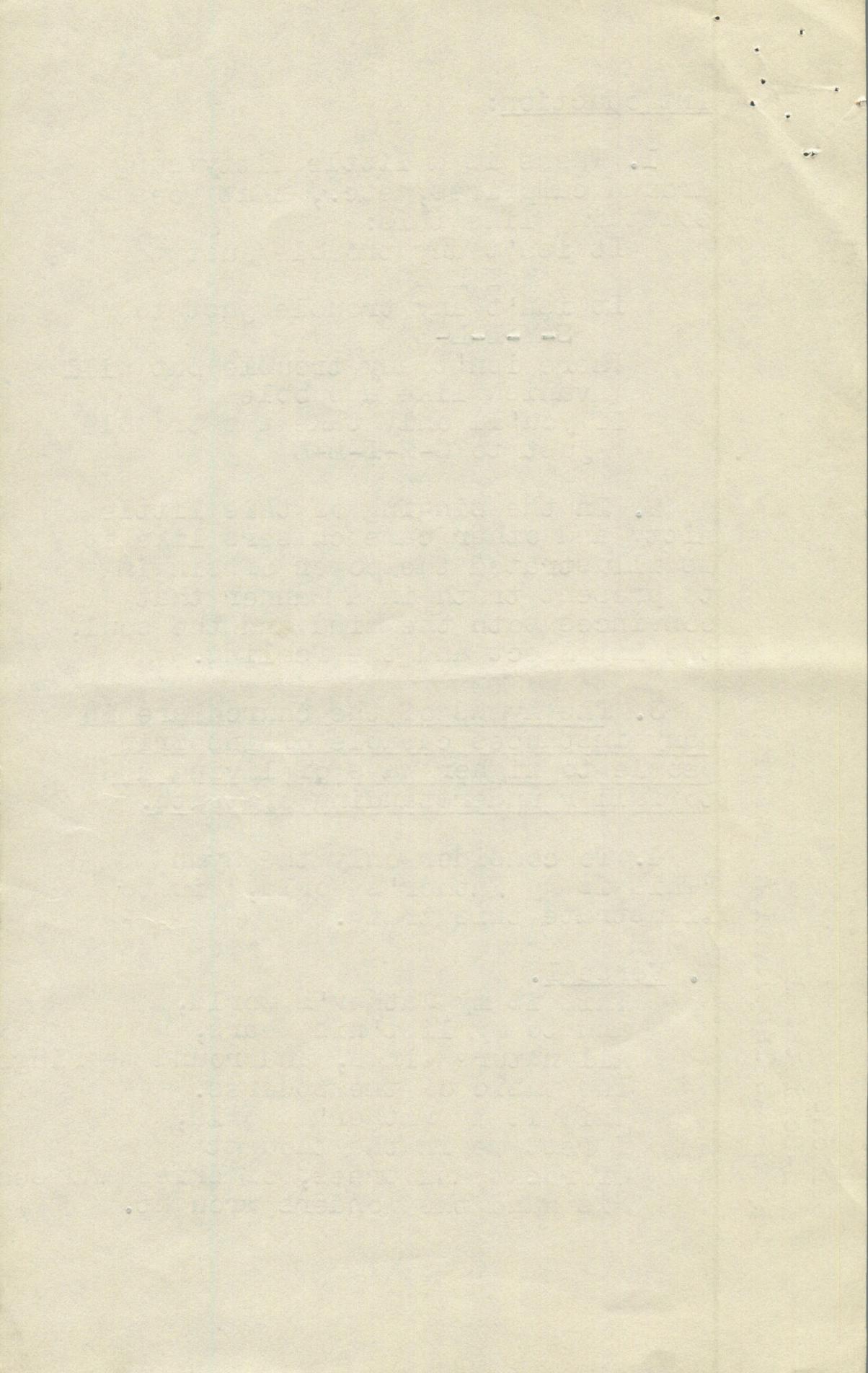
2. In the singing of this little ditty and other care chasers like it is illustrated the power of singing to present truth in a manner that convinces both the mind and the soul, the intellect and the feeling.

3. The hymns of the church are in many instances capable of inspiring people to higher ways of living and to fuller understanding of truth.

4. To consider only the hymn "This is My Father's World," is to illustrate this truth.

I. Verse I.

This is my Father's world,  
And to my list'ning ears,  
All nature sings, and round me rings  
The music of the spheres.  
This is my Father's world,  
I rest me in the thought  
Of rocks and trees, of skies and sea  
His hand the wonders wrought.



1. The words which give the hymn its title are remindful over and over of Christian unity.

a. "This is my Father's world," is repeated twice in each verse. These words are the theme of the song throughout.

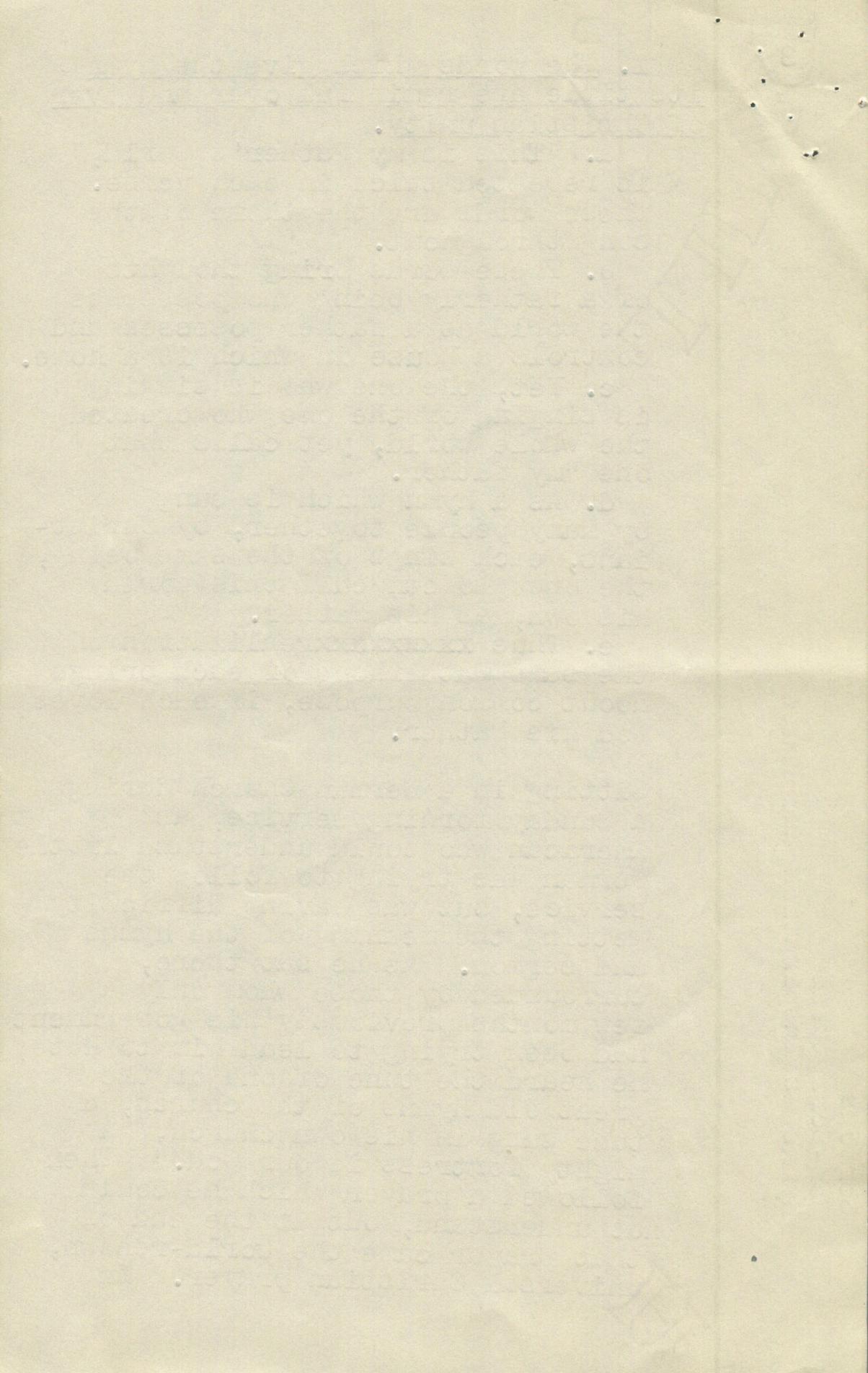
b. These words bring thoughts of a fatherly being who possesses the world as a father possesses and controls a house in which is a home.

c. Yet, the one who is singing is singing of the one who created the whole world, yet calls that one "my father.

d. As a hymn which is sung by many people together, by Christians, each sings of the same being, the one who can call this world his own, as his Father.

e. Thus ~~xxxxxxx~~ realization of the same Fatherhood of each brings about common purpose, if each loves God his Father.

Sitting in a German Church during a Sunday morning service, an American who could understand little German was trying to follow the service, but was having difficulty getting the meaning of the hymns and sermon. As he sat there, surrounded by those whom only a few months previously his government had been trying to lead him to hate, he heard the tune of one of the great old hymns of the church, a tune sung in his own church, "A mighty fortress is our God." Then followed a prayer which he could not understand, but at the end of that prayer came the world-renown, universal Christian prayer. In



German it began "Unser Vater in Himmel."

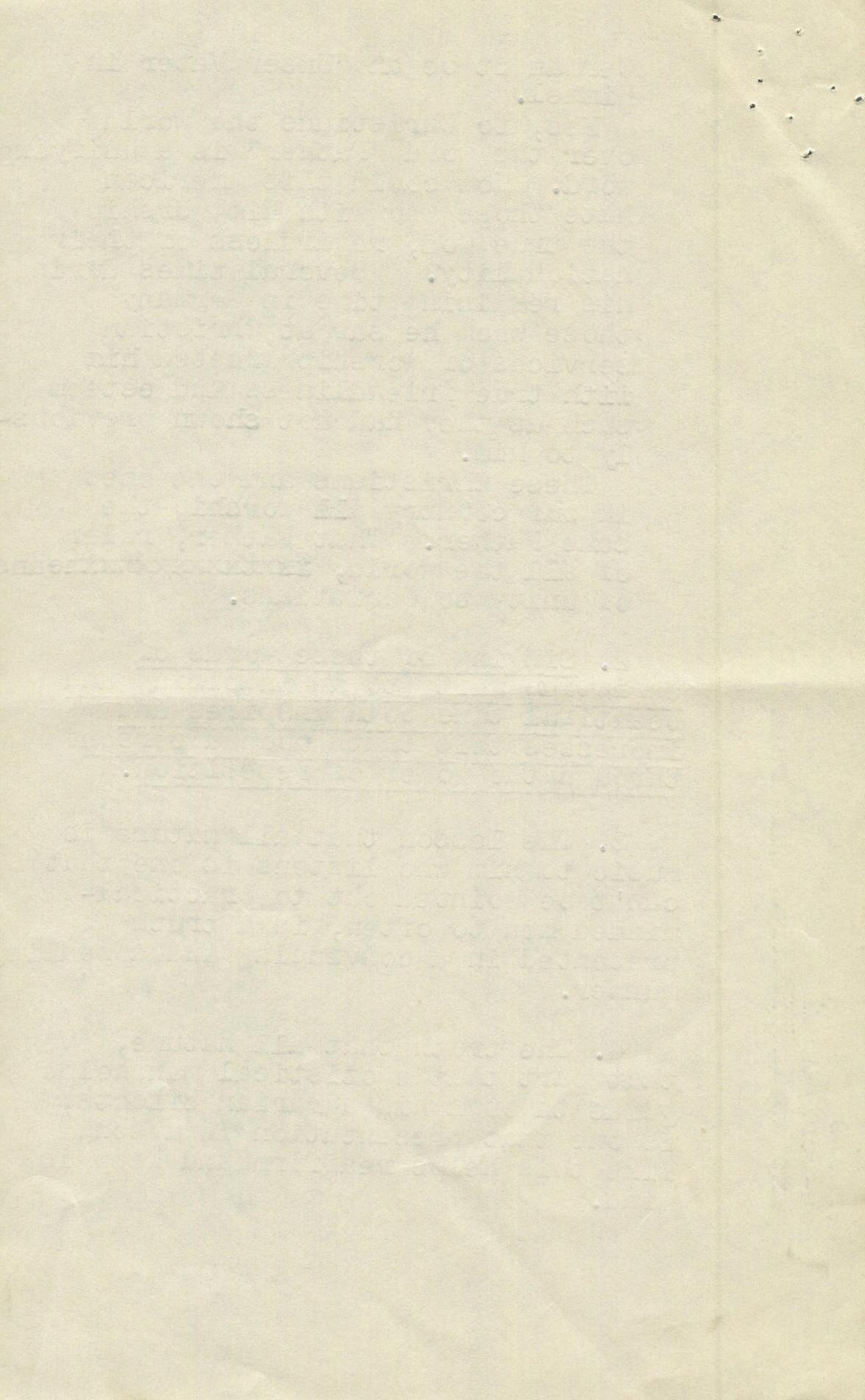
Yes, to Christians the world over the word "Father" is a unifying word. How could this American hate those who with him worship the true God, regardless of their nationality? Several times during his remaining time in Germany those whom ~~he~~ saw at Christian services of worship greeted ~~him~~ ~~with~~ true friendliness and esteem such as they had not ~~shown~~ previously to him.

These Christians and the ones in our country ~~all~~ worship the same Father. That Father, ruler of all the world, ~~xxxxxxx~~ means of unity to Christians.

2. Singing of these words of Christian unity to an inspiring and beautiful tune both inspires and impresses this truth upon a person through the power of repetition.

3. The lesson that all nature is music to him who listens is one that can't be pointed out to practical-minded men too often, is a truth presented in a convincing and appealing manner.

4. The truth that all nature, even that part that egotistical man helps guide through his agrarian efforts, is one that presentation in a song like this helps reaffirm and keep in mind.

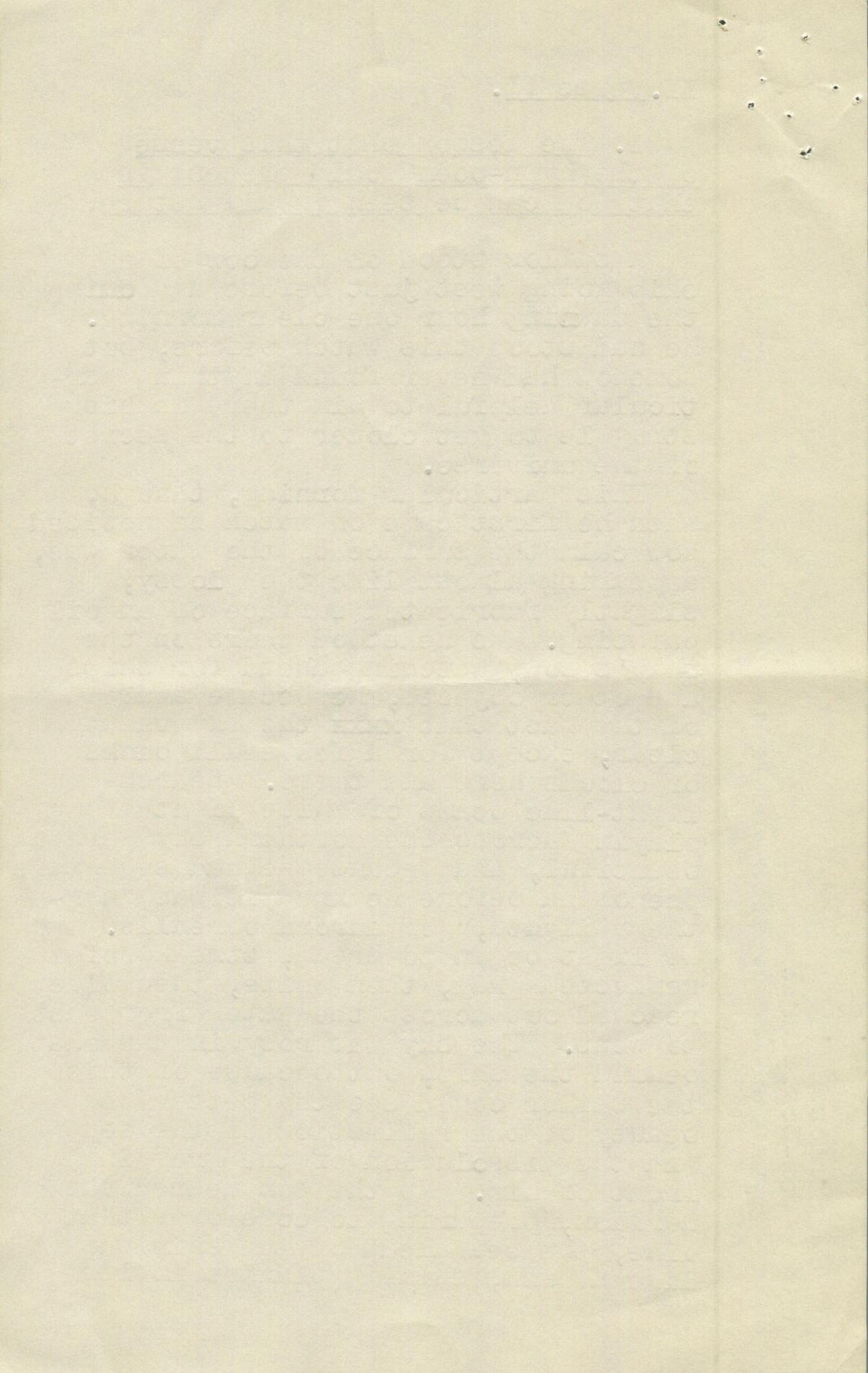


II. Verse II. (Read)

1. The lesson that this verse of the hymn-poem would present is that God can be seen in all nature.

A sailor stood on the bow of a ship going west just before and during the dawning hour one clear morning. He had stood this watch before, but somehow had never found anything particular helpful to him there in his struggle to get closer to the secret of the universe.

This particular morning, though, when he first came on watch he noticed how calm the surface of the water was, appearing almost like the glossy, slightly fabricated surface of an oil painting. As he stood there on the ship's bow, watching ahead for ships and other objects, he became aware of the fact that ~~xxxx~~ the sky was clear, except for a few small banks of clouds here and there. Search-light-like beams of white light playing across the northern sky were beautiful, and because he had seen this phenomena before he knew it was "northern lights," or aurora borealis. As light began to break, streaks of reflected gray, then white, then blue reached out across the water from east to west. The sky was rosy in the east behind the ship, but because of this the sailor could see the better the beauty of the reflection of the sea and the dissolution of the gray in front of him. As the sun neared the horizon, preparing to come over that line, the sea ahead of the ship was like a pink, shining blanket in its



coloring, then like red satin, with all the while here and there patches of blue light reflected from the sky overhead. Then, as the sailor looked back toward the east, the sun was about read to appear. Along the easter horizon was a line of fiery, golden light, too brilliant to look into. The clouds near it, fluffy, floating, cottony clouds, were as if afire, and those in the west were assuming the pink, then scarlet the sea had just been reflecting. The colors everywhere were in their most vivid contrast when the sun suddenly seemed to send its first direct rays up and out over the horizon then quickly dispelled the contrast of colors as it quickly climbed over the horizon to reveal itself in all its golden glory.

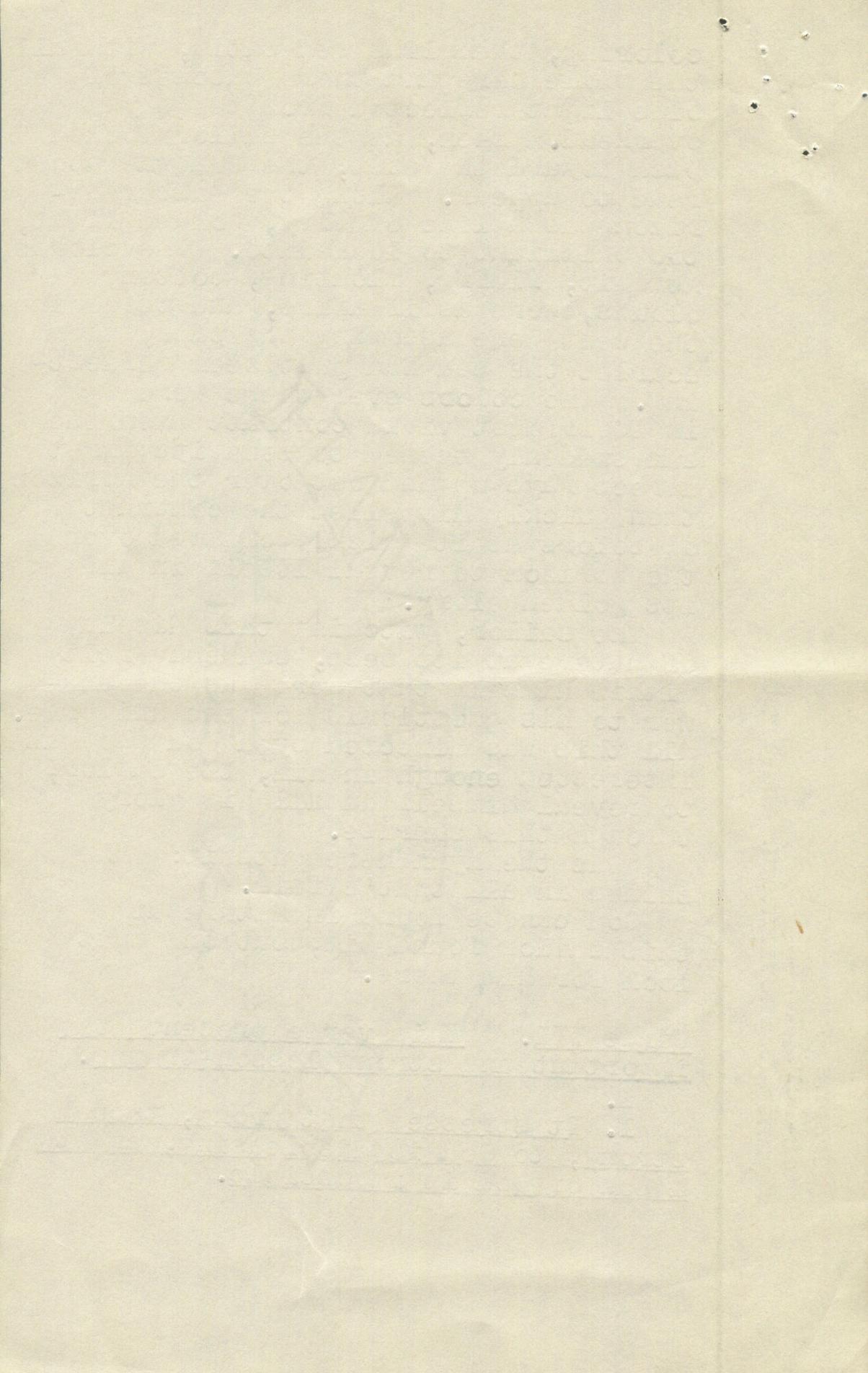
The sailor, watching this display of nature at its best, suddenly felt within himself that here was the answer to his questioning of the universe. All this was directed by a God who was interested enough in him, the sailor, to reveal himself in all his glory through this sunrise.

As the hymn here puts it: "He shines in all that's fair."

God can be found in nature as this sailor found him, but one must look for him there.

Verse III. (Read) This verse presents two important and strong lesson-truths.

1. It stresses that wrong, though strong, to God is displeasing, and to a Son of God is impossible.



a. The hymn doesn't bother to go into the details of why wrong is impossible to one who recognizes God as Father and Ruler. It merely depends on the association of the words and the inspiration of the music to impress the fact on people.

b. This is a truth which most who come to know God quickly discover.

The author of a drama dealing with Joseph and his temptation in the house of Potiphar represents Potiphar's wife as answering the objection of Joseph that he could not sin against God by taking her skirt and throwing it over the bust of an Egyptian god which stood in her chamber. "Now," she said, "God will not see."

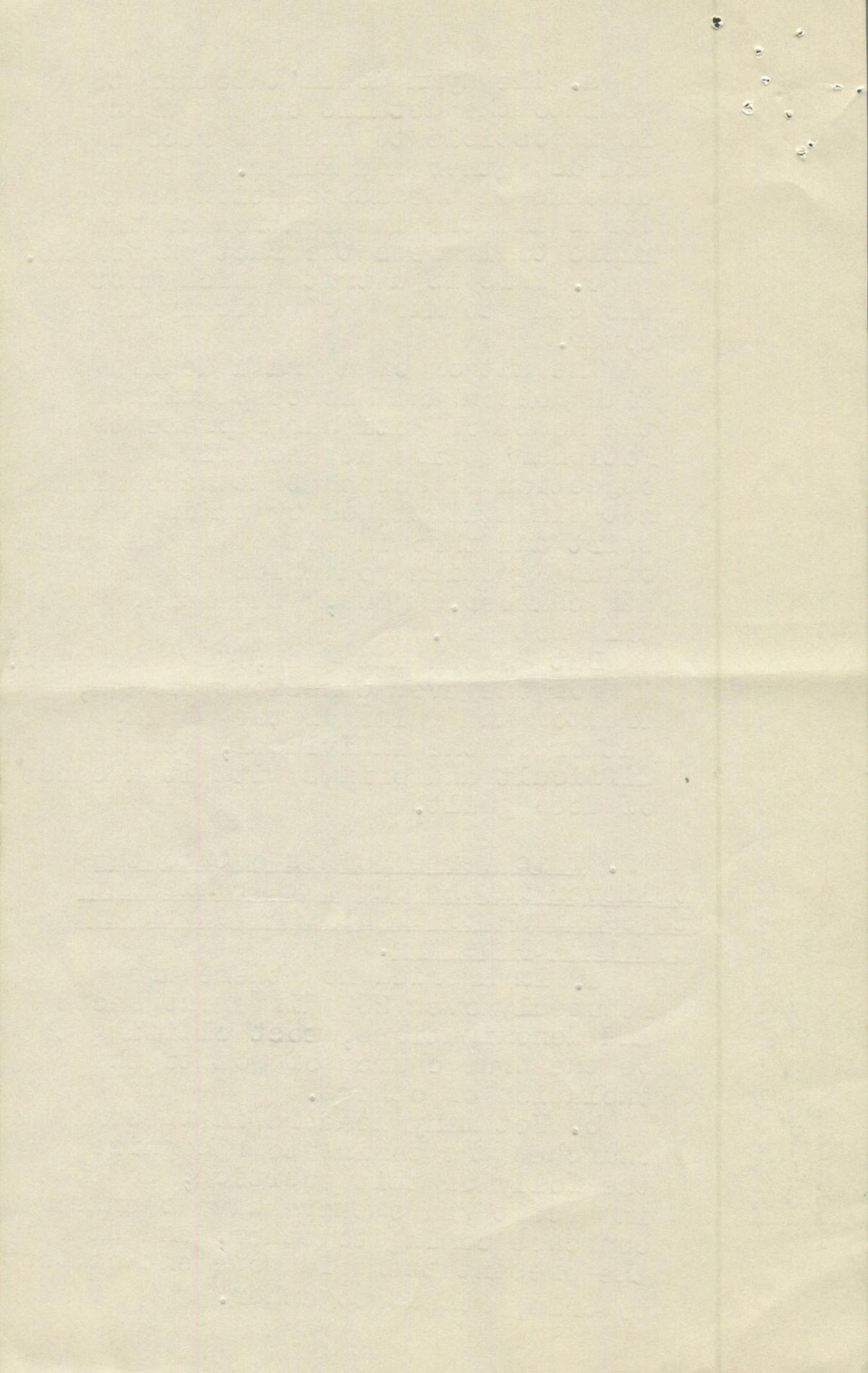
But Joseph answered, "My God sees!"

For one ever conscious of God, creator and ruler of the world, Father of the individual, sin is difficult and brings with it a sense of deep guilt.

2. This verse points out to the believer in the one father his duty to continue to fight for "earth and heav'n" to be one.

a. In America now there are reputedly over 230 different sects and denominations, **most** claiming to be the true church of God to the exclusion of others.

b. Yet many leaders in these churches are coming to recognize the folly of this position, so that in recent years there have been some churches coming together, and at the present there is movement on foot to bring others together.



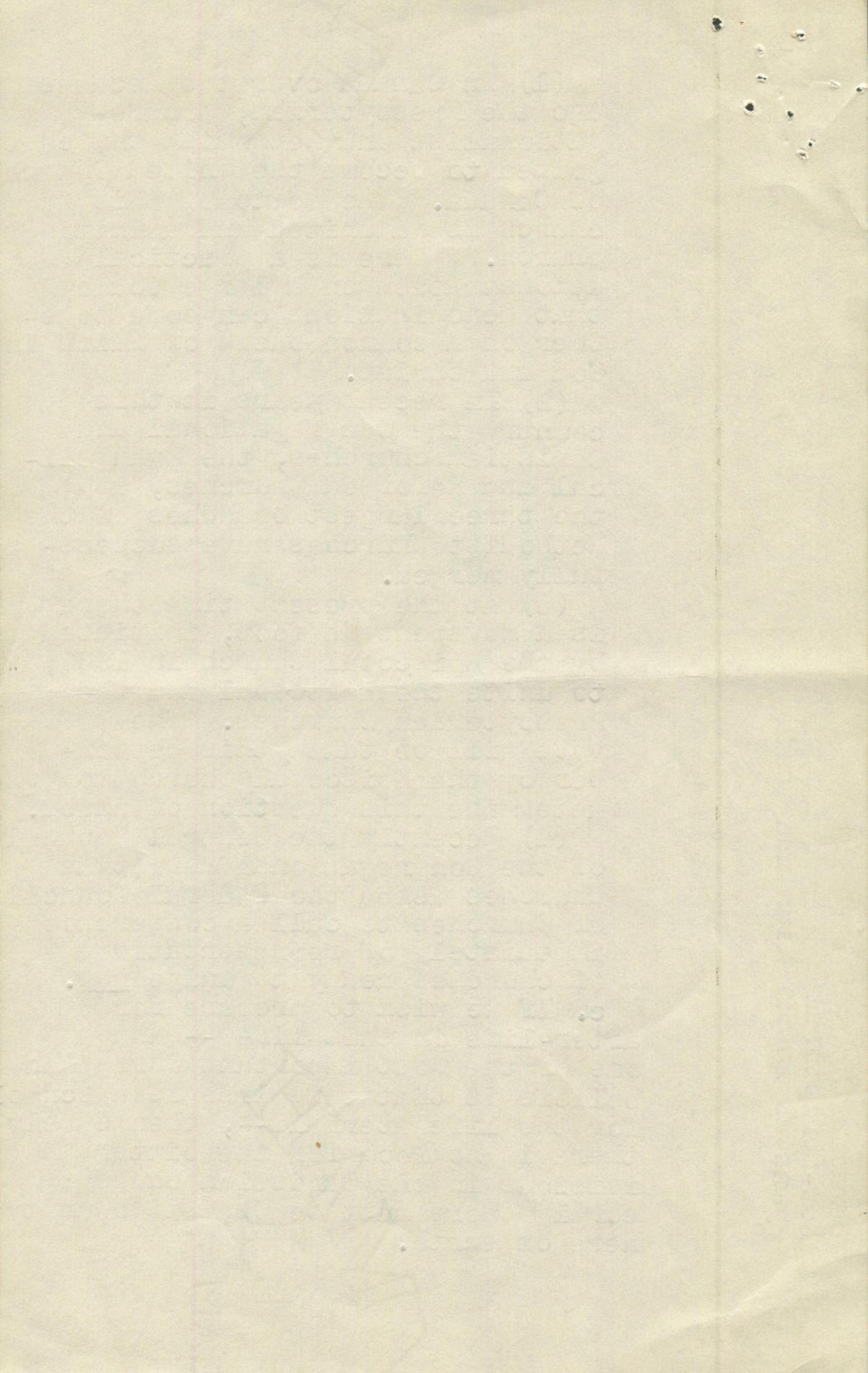
(1) In Canada over two decades ago the Presbyterian, Congregationalist and Methodist Churches joined to become the United Church of Canada. The motto of this church is "a united and a uniting church." Here is a practical demonstration on a large scale that denominations can come together on a common basis of faith in God and Christ.

(2) In recent years in this country the Congregational and Christian churches, the Evangelical and Reformed Churches, and the three largest branches of the Methodist Churches have successfully merged.

(3) At the present time there is a movement on foot, initiated by the Episcopal Church in 1937, to unite the Episcopal and the Presbyterian Churches. The vote will be taken this September by the Episcopal Church to determine this question of unity.

(4) Recently the General Council of the Congregational Christian Churches asked the Federal Council of Churches to call a conference immediately of representatives of churches ready to unite now.

c. If we wish to prepare for after-life in this life -- and one of the most important Christian beliefs is that this life is a school for the life eternal --, then surely there is no room for the bitter divisions in the Christian church; surely there must be Christian unity here on earth.



9  
Conclusion:

Singing this great hymn of the Christian Church, "This is My Father's World," one can't help but feel bound to the truth of one God, one world, one religion, The beauty of the hymn is uplifting, inspiring, truth-laden.

Thus, singing of hymns in the church is one of the best ways to lift oneself toward God, toward practical truth for everyday living. When you sing, live, learn, be lifted.

