

Scrip-Text: John 16:32---"Behold,¹
the hour cometh, yea, is now come,
that ye shall be scattered, every
man to his own, and shall leave me
alone: and yet I am not alone,
because the Father is with me."

Theme: Your Loneliness.

Proposition: Your loneliness is
an invaluable asset when it turns
you to God.

Date written: March 7, 1958.

Dates and Places preached: *OVER*

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Sources (marked sections)

Johnson, Paul E., Personality
and Religion, Abingdon, 1957,
p. 105-108, 115-119, 141.

aug 7, '63 - Montreal, Colo - 9:00 am
Winnipeg, Colo - 11:00 am

Introduction:

1. Jesus was lonely.

a. His own race misunderstood, hated and sought to kill him.

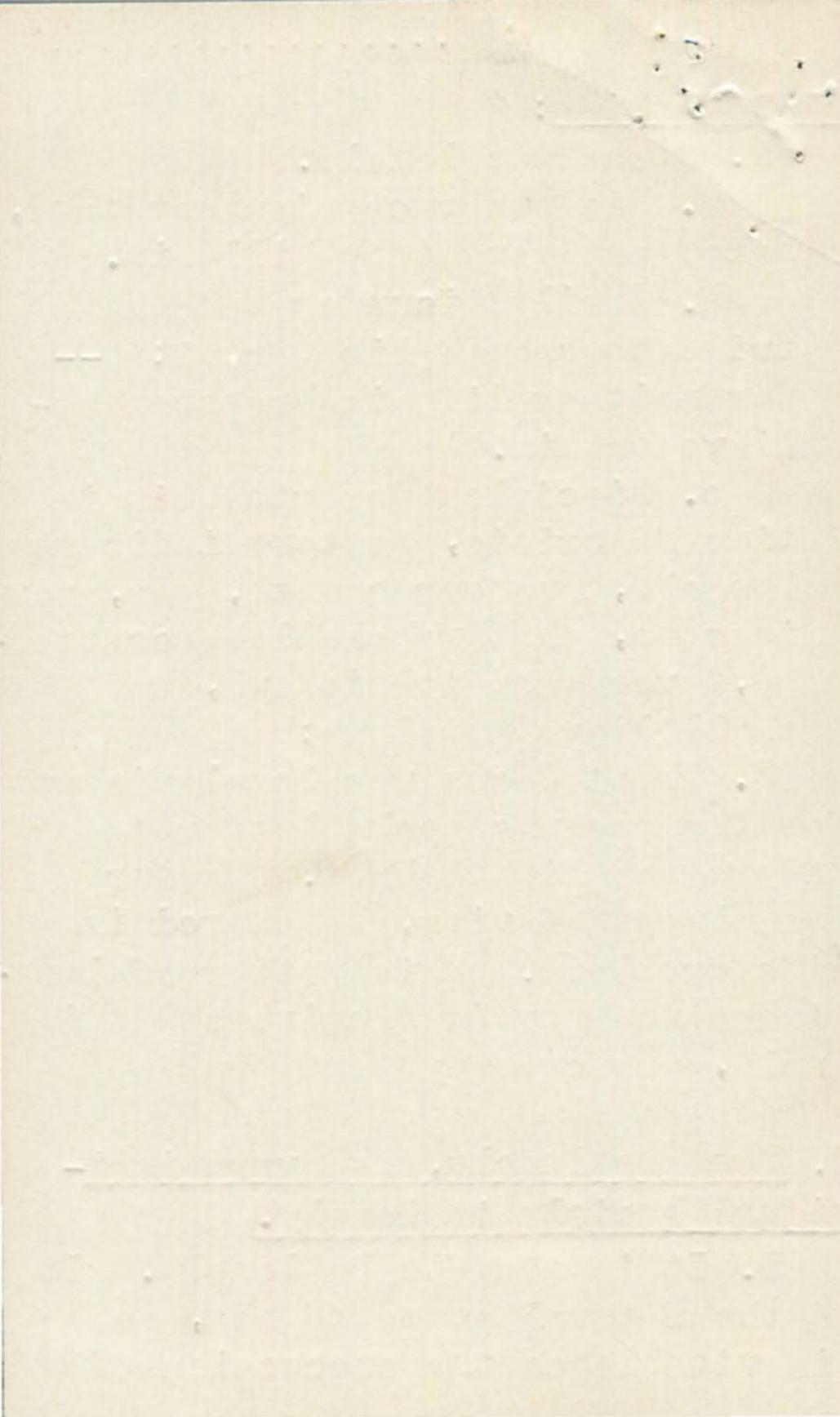
b. Family misunderstood and tried to change him (Jn. 7:5 -- "for neither did his brethren believe on him.")

c. Disciples deserted him in time of crisis, as text indicates "Behold, the hour cometh, yea, now is come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone:"

2. That Jesus was lonely is good for the one who seeks better to understand him to know. As our Example and Savior, he shared in life problems. This matter of loneliness we know is a universal thing. Truly, one can say that

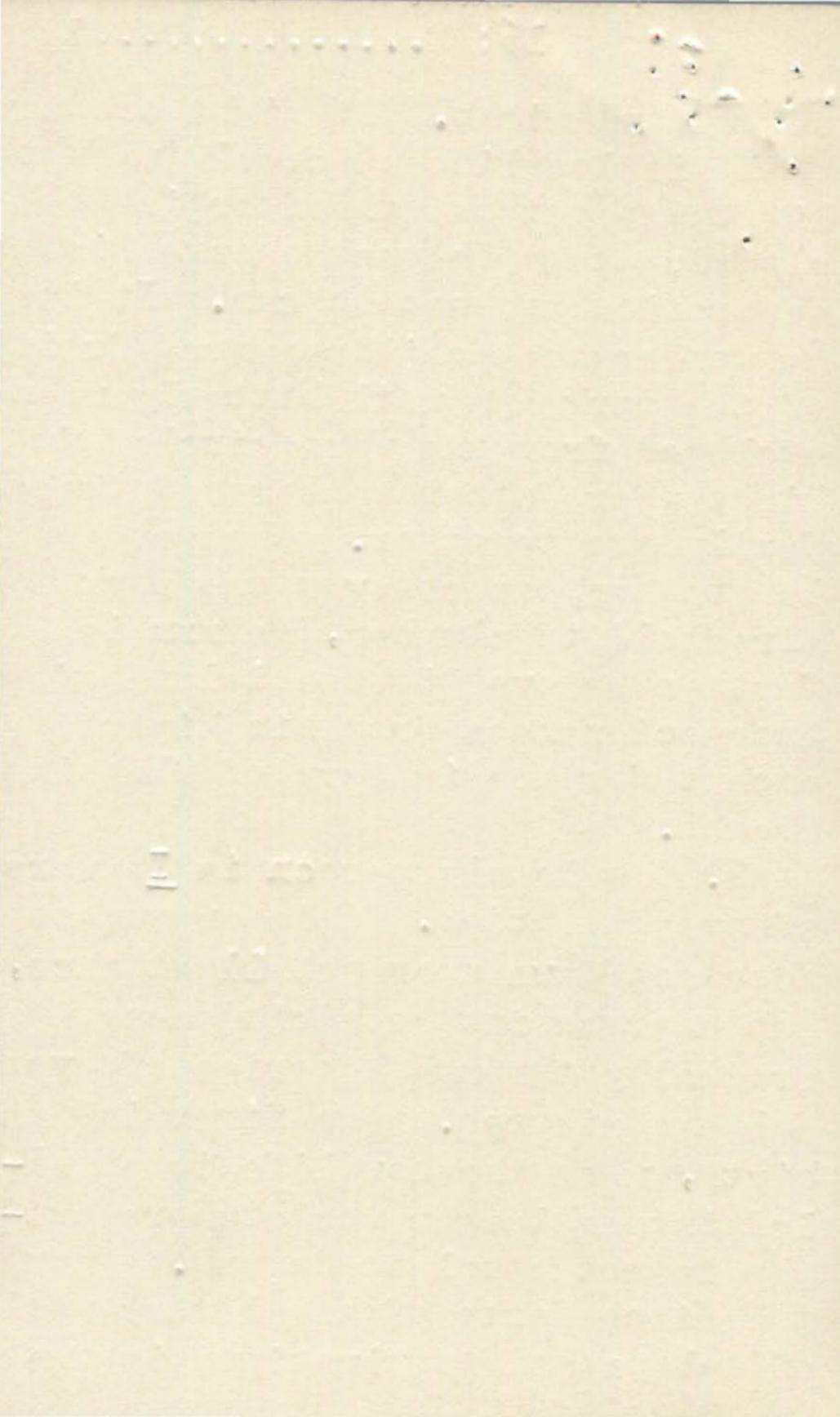
I. You are lonely, as every individual basicly is lonely.

1. It is easy to be lonely. It is the natural state of man, as inevitable as the succession of



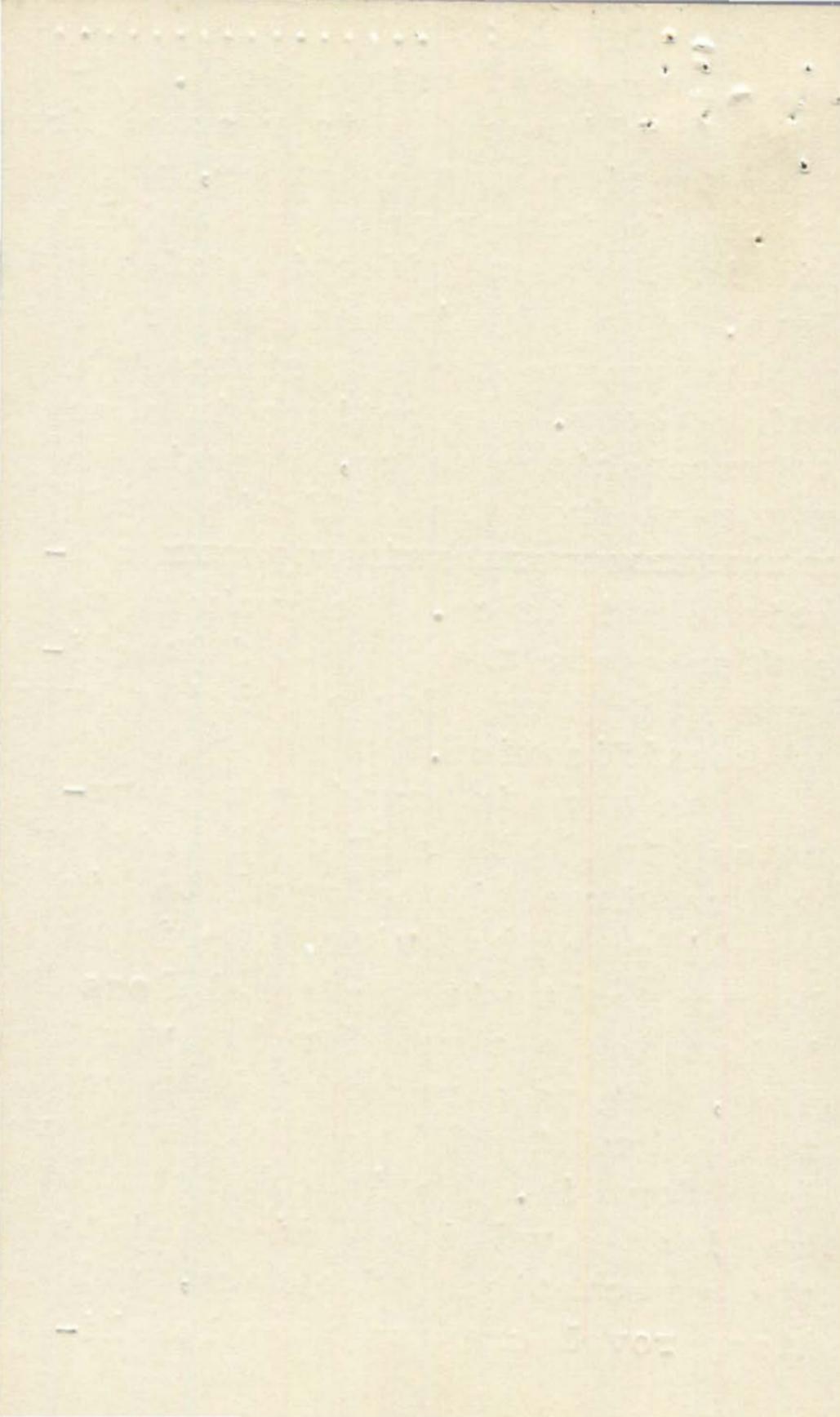
of day and night. At night one may feel his loneliness acutely when the lights go out and the door is closed; then he must endure his separation as best he can. It is no wonder that children are afraid of the dark and wail bitterly when excluded from the warm circle of light where other members of the family are together. When at length one passes over the dark threshold to slumber, he ~~far~~ is farther removed in the island of unconsciousness from his kindred except for the imagery of fleeting dreams.

2. The lonely person is I aware of my separation. This awareness does not dawn upon me all at once, but emerges into consciousness gradually through a series of eventful experiences. The first is birth, when the new life is expelled into a larger world where supply is not equal to demand. Among the discomforts of the larger world of delays and deprivations is the



the distress of being alone. From this loneliness one is rescued from time to time by the mother, who takes him in her arms and enfolds him in the warm affection of her love. The baby is not prepared as yet to endure the experience of being alone. He retires in sleep to unconscious peace, wherein he may rest from the sufferings of ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ conscious existence. He awakens to suffer again the pangs of loneliness and to cry for enfolding arms of reunification.

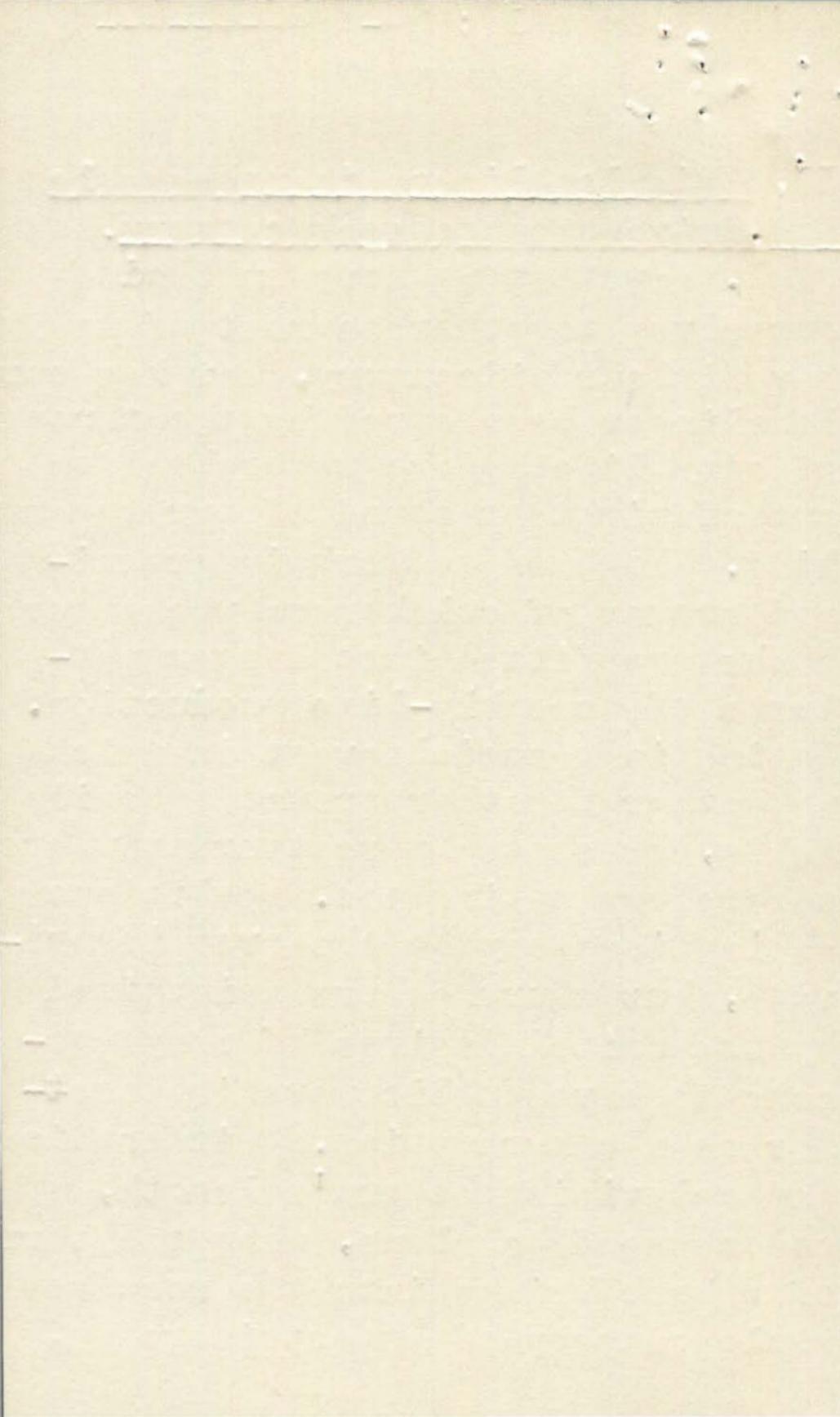
Each step in growing up separates him farther from the mother and requires him to regulate his own life and behavior. He is no longer dealt with as a helpless infant to be cared for in every need, but as a responsible person to do for himself what others have done for him. He is subject now to disapproval if he disappoints the expectations of others, and disapproval creates more loneli-



ness.

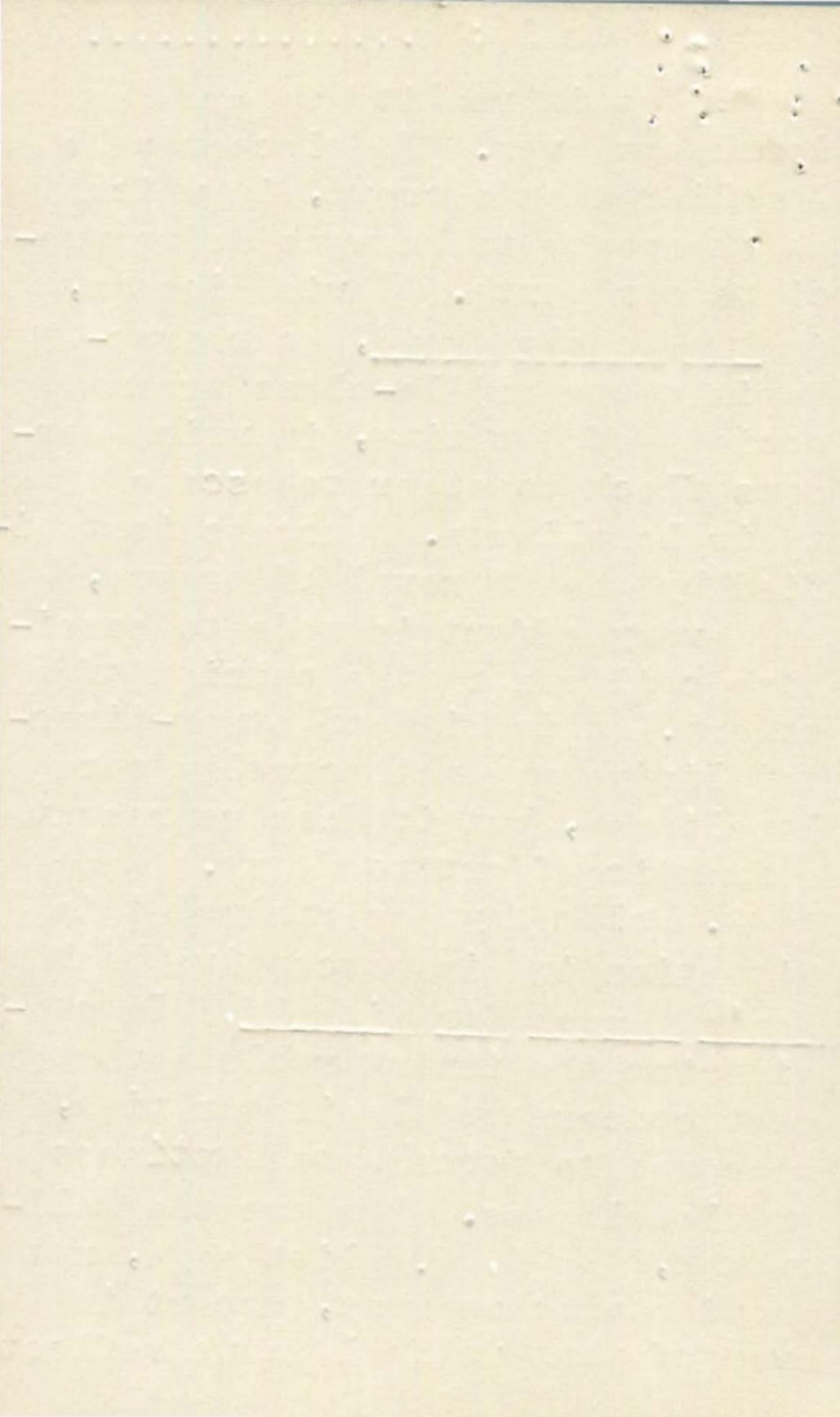
II. This loneliness is unbearable and drives you to seek company.

1. Now that we have huddled ourselves together as most of us have in our midcentury, how has our loneliness been cured by the throng of city life? Here we are seldom out of sight or sound of our human kind. Most of us work in organized groups of collaborators where our tasks are fitted into larger patterns of assembly-line production. Eating is a social event in which we gather together around a family table, or choose a restaurant where others are eating too. Religious aspirations may be observed in private, but churches are maintained by the united desires of many persons to have public worship together as a congregation. With radio and television at arm's length, no one need be alone, when the turn of a knob brings into the room a whole company of entertainers, ~~and~~



2. Yet in reality we are as lonely as ever. No place can be lonelier than a crowd, in which no one seems to know us and appreciate our worth. David Riesman, in The Lonely Crowd, so characterizes the middle-class urban society of our time, in which persons flock together to escape their loneliness. Success is typified by the approval of others, and every effort is made to sensitize children to the opinion of others. This kind of other-directed living may not actually cure loneliness, but it does represent a frantic effort to do so.

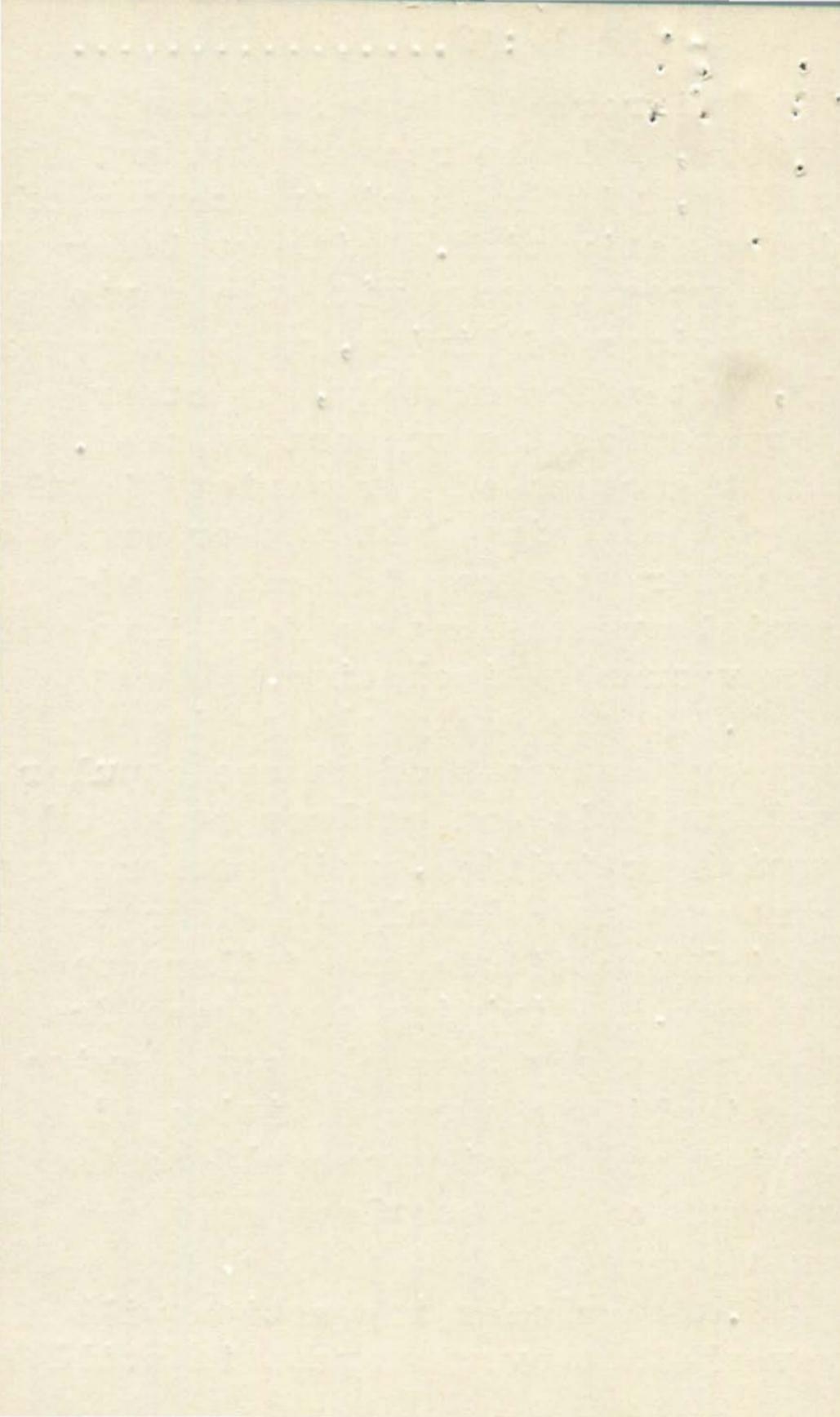
3. Rollo May has analyzed this situation in his perceptive book Man's Search for Himself. In considering the inner problems that most concern people in our time, he comes to focus upon emptiness and loneliness. "We are the hollow men," as T. S. Eliot says, not knowing what we want, uncertain even of what we feel as we reflect



like mirrors the expectations of others, able to respond but not to choose, with no decisive center of inner motivation. Without inner resources to cope with the anxious confusions of living, we turn eagerly, often desperately, to other persons for the support we need. And the cause of our anxiety is the threat of being left out or excluded. So we try to keep "dated up" with social events lest we fall into the vacuum of isolation.

4. To the hasty glance it may appear that some of us are popular and busy with an endless round of social activities, while others are shut out to a lonely life due to social ineptitude and failure to "adjust." Dividing the sheep from the goats may be a pleasant device to simplify the complexities of living and consign oneself to the company of the spotless good people or the spotted bad people.

5. But closer inspection will reveal that every person is still



lonely. The busy person may put on a show of feverish success by plunging himself compulsively into the social whirl. In this way he may conceal from others, and even from himself, the void within, until some failure or dismay brings sharply into focus the hidden loneliness that drives him to his social pursuits. By contrast, the secluded person is one who is more open to admit his dissatisfaction with the social scene, or less willing to undergo the strain of keeping up with its demands. He may not feel free to talk with others openly about his feelings, taking his reprisals in cynical and sarcastic attitudes toward the social joys of others. But to himself he may admit the futility of keeping up with the pretenses of the every-busy social bee, and well know the poignant sorrow of lonely separation.

6. The more one seeks the company

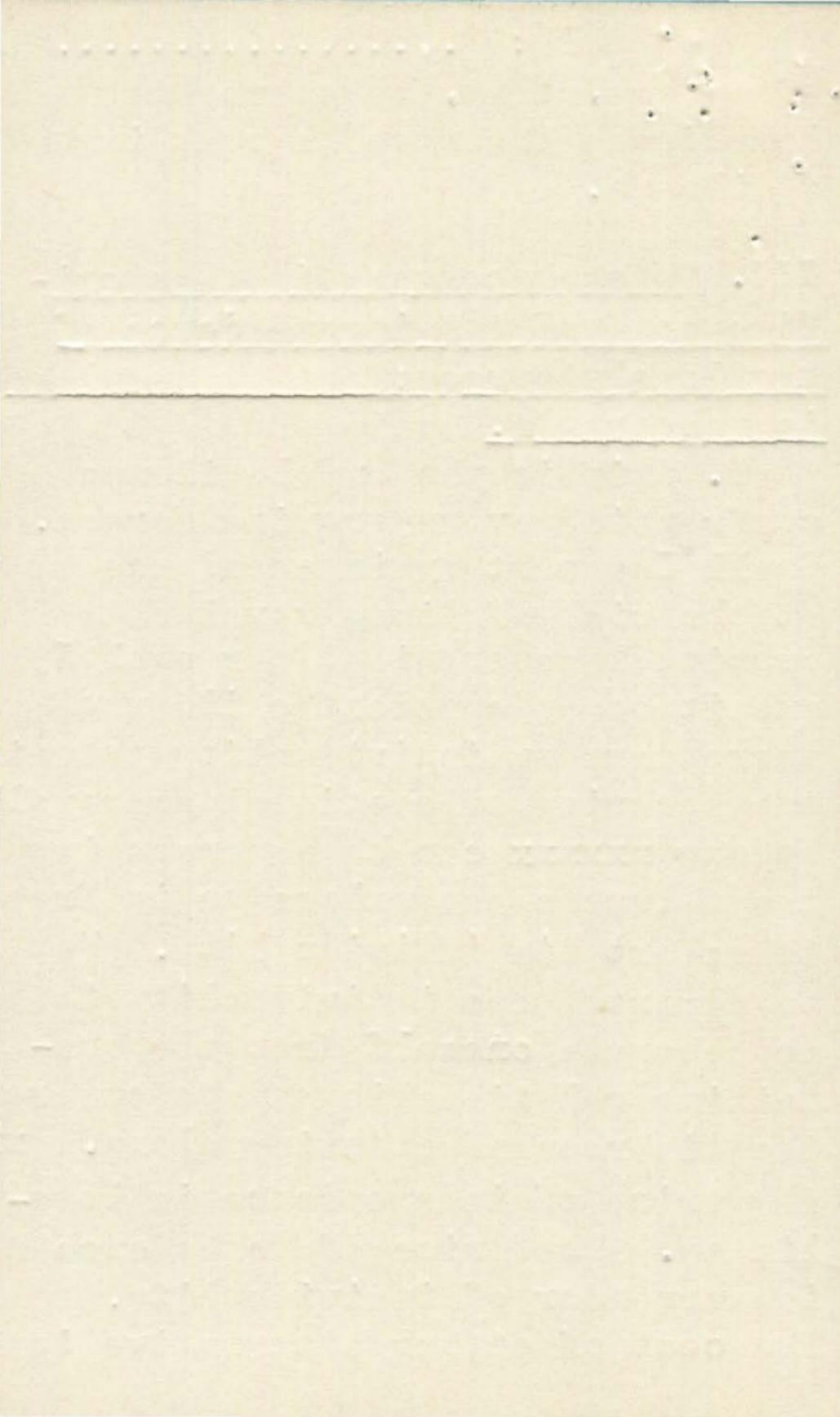
103

103

of others, then, to solve his loneliness the more he runs into a dilemma.

III. To seek company is to sacrifice some of the independence of the lonely person; and to be alone is unbearable.

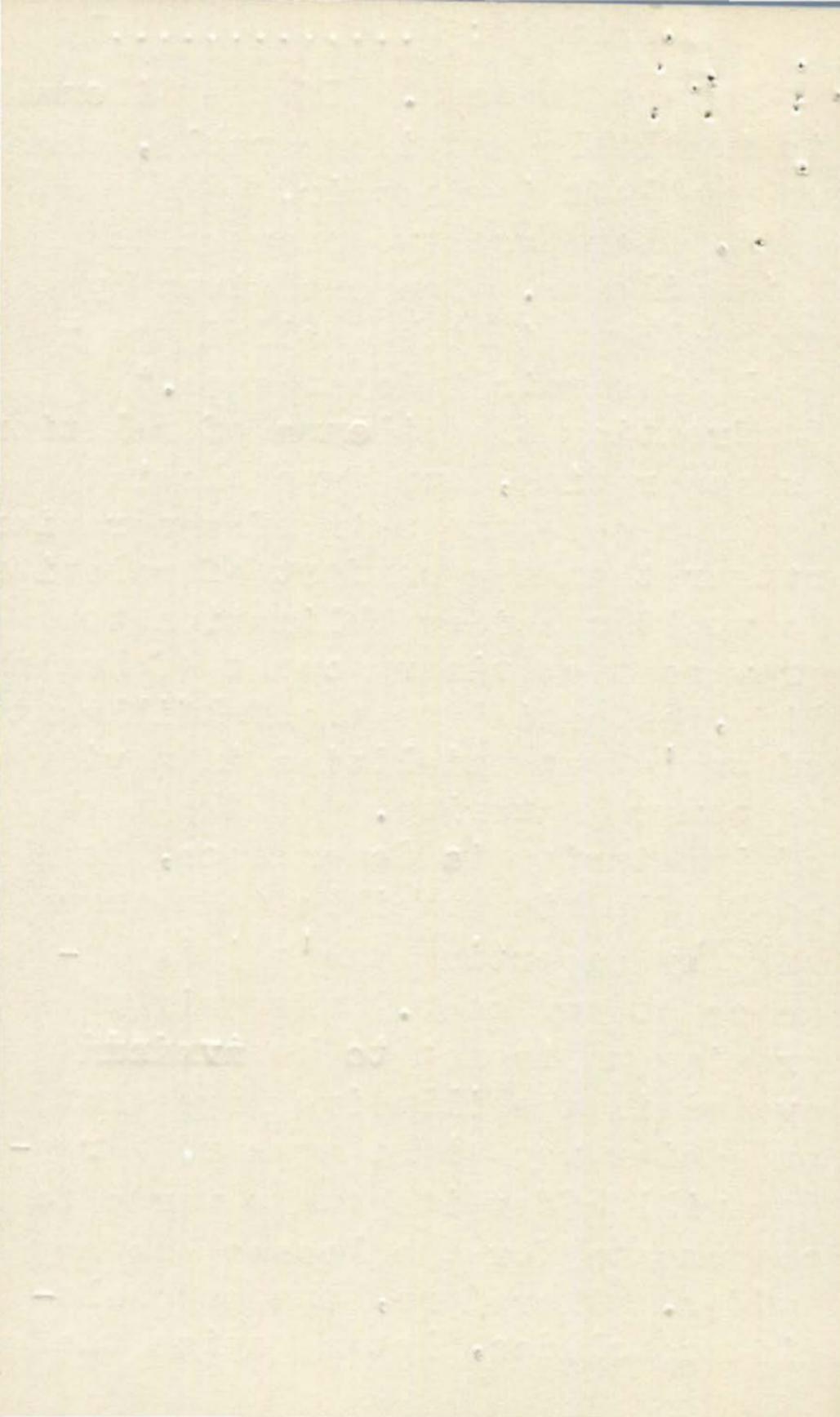
1. This is the awful dilemma confronting every growing person. Shall I assert my independence at the risk of disapproval and emotional separation? Or shall I submit as a dependent child who surrenders my individuality to gain the security of emotional approval? No one ~~person~~ can be a person in the mature sense unless he is free to assert his individuality. Yet to assert ones individuality is to separate oneself from the sustaining relationship and to endure the distress of standing alone. The price of independence is loneliness. The price of dependence is surrender of individuality. The cost of either alternative is



too great to bear. If the dilemma is insoluble and inescapable, then we are left in despair.

2. There are two answers to this dilemma. The one given by psychology might be called the "goal of heroic independence."

Confronting the dilemma of relation or separation, our psychologist would choose the pain of separation rather than the comfort of relation. He would consider obligation to grow as the primary ought of human life, essential to the fulfillment of one's potentialities in moving on toward maturity. As the mark of immaturity is dependence, he would find it possible to mature only by asserting one's independence at any cost. The pain of growing up is not to be evaded in the illusive hope that an easier way might appear. Freedom will offer its own rewards to compensate for the losses one may suffer. Therefore, the psychologist concludes, let us seize the

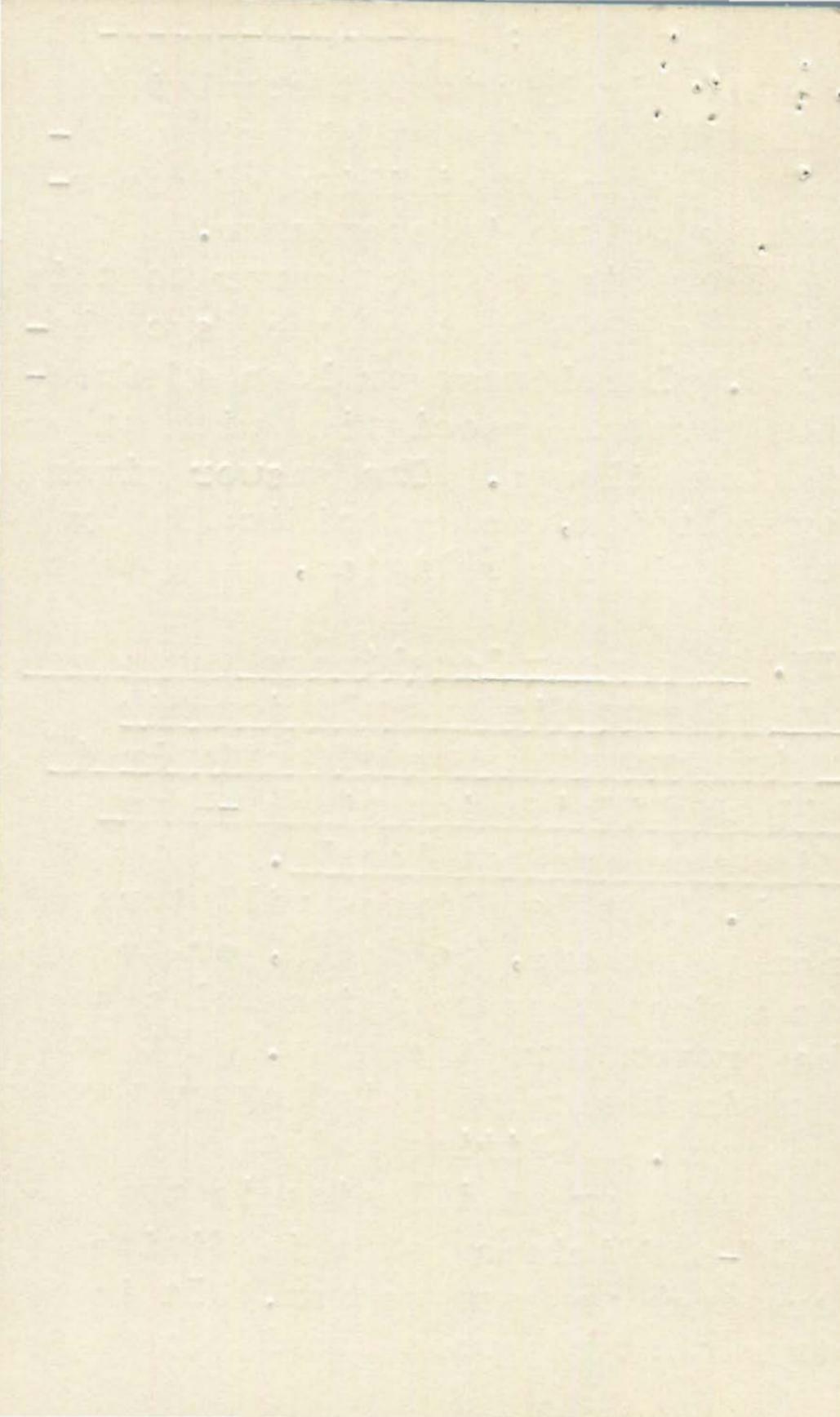


nettle firmly without complaining and take up with unflinching courage the responsibility of asserting a mature independence.

There is another answer to this dilemma than that of the psychologist. Loneliness or loss of freedom through associating with others is the dilemma. The answer given by religion, and specifically by the Christian religion, says that

IV. When your loneliness turns you to God you find a relationship which sustains you effectively in all of life's situations -- you find you are not lonely.

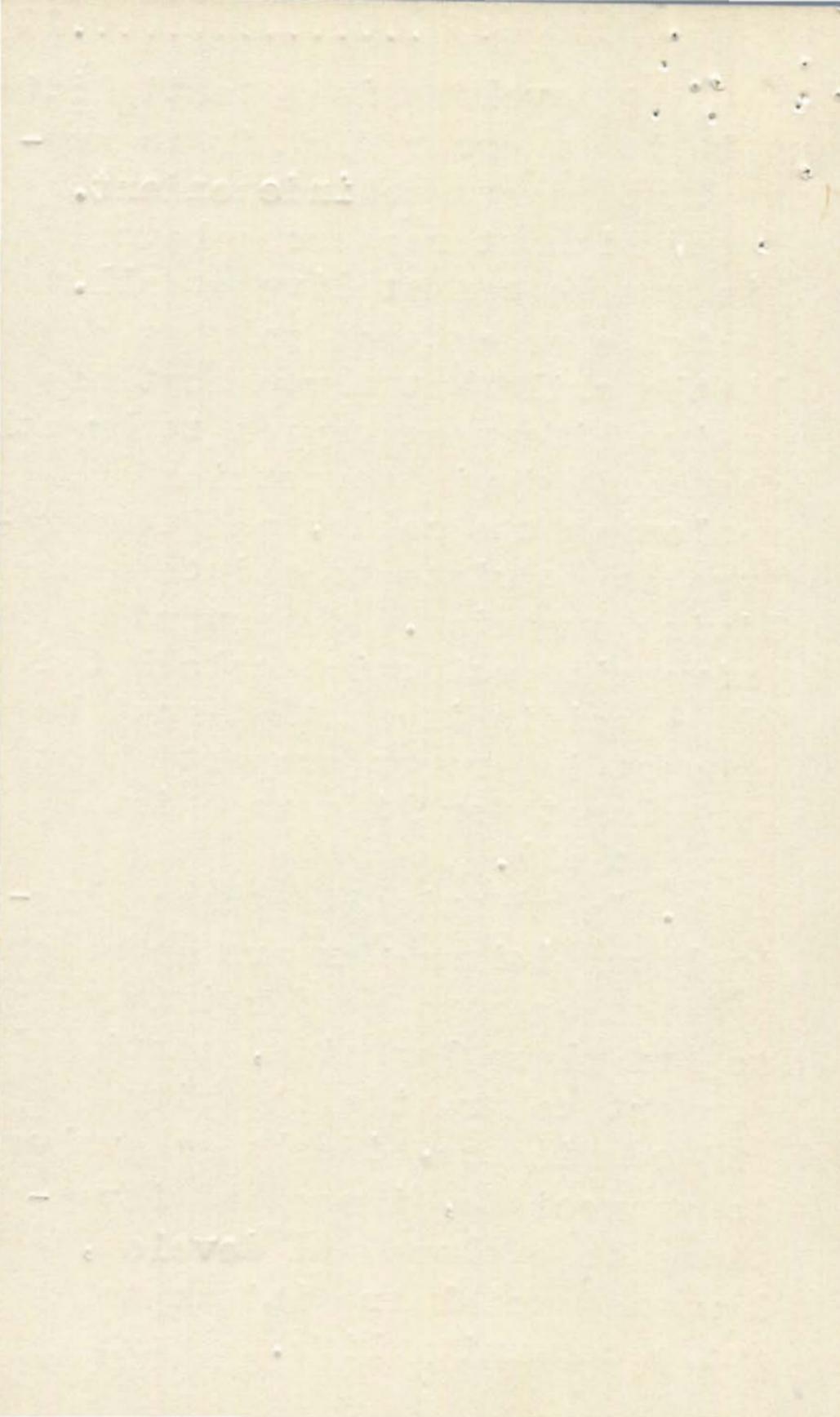
1. That loneliness will turn man to others, to death, or to God is a fact that religion holds to be proven thro the ages. But to God is the only satisfactory way to turn. Religion points out that the great illusion is the self-sufficiency of this finite creature we know as man. It is true that a person should do what



he can to develop his potentialities but it is an error for him to suppose that he can be **independent**.

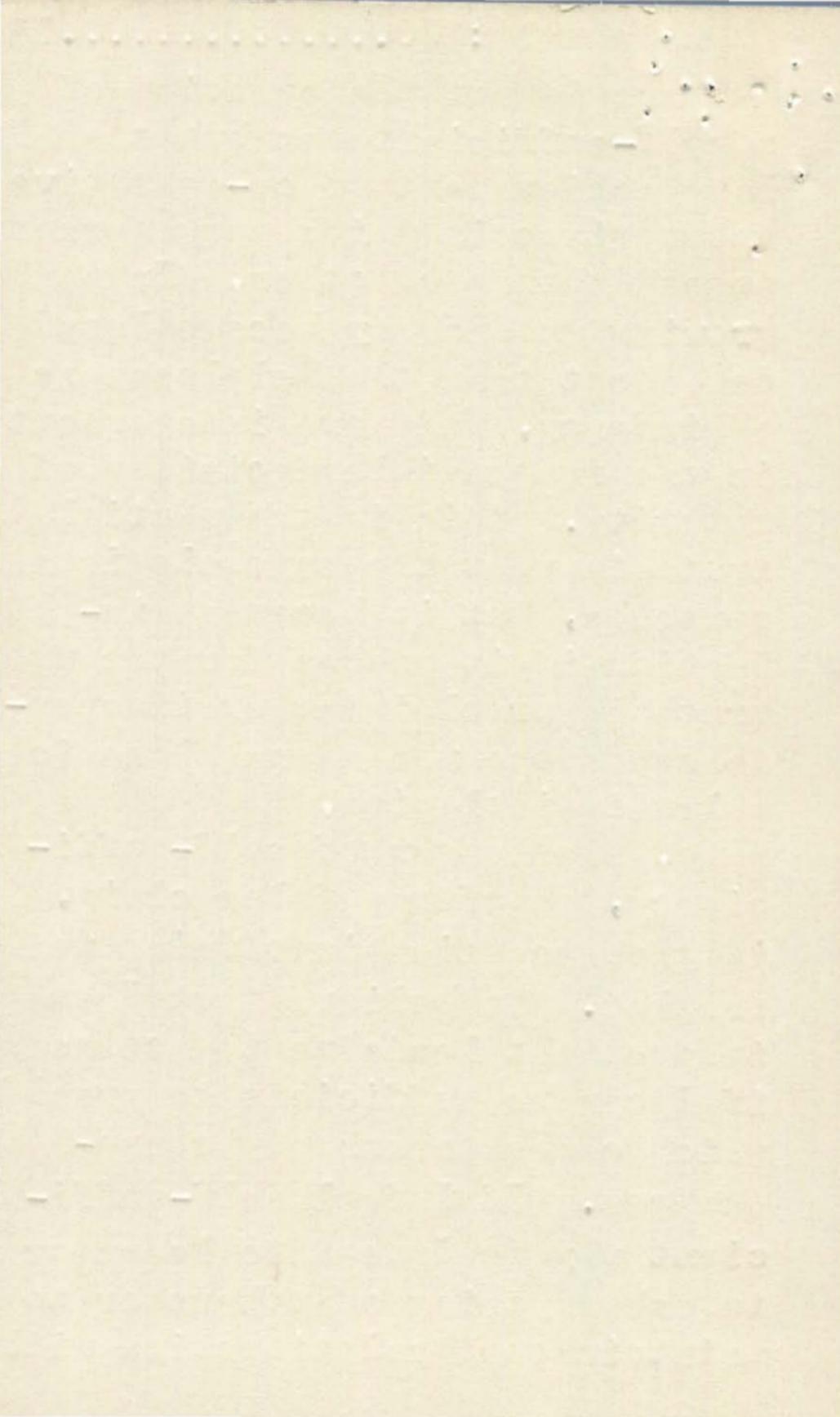
a. Without resources beyond his own he cannot live at all. He is dependent not only as a little child but throughout his entire life upon oxygen to breathe, food and liquid to nourish and replenish the cells, and temperature appropriate to maintain the living organism. A Harvard University scientist calculated 214 specific items that must be present in proper proportion on our planet for life to exist here at all.

b. In addition to these physical conditions we are dependent upon other persons for interests to stimulate learning, emotional support to provide security and confidence, ideals and values to appreciate, ideas and inventions to explore and develop, law and social traditions to guide community life. Human



culture is not the creation of a self-sufficient man but the long achievement of co-operative enterprises in which many persons depend upon each other. In growing up one may become less dependent than the helplessness of infancy, and more independent in the responsible decisions of maturity. This is the partial truth in what the psychologist contends, but it becomes misleading if it passes for the whole truth in proclaiming my independence as one who stands alone in splendid isolation.

c. The danger of self-sufficiency, as of any false claim, is the deception into which we are led. To believe that I am independent leads me to act as if I can be sufficient to myself, which comes to unhappy consequences. If I feel self-sufficient why do I need to learn or to ask anything of others or to maintain good relationships with

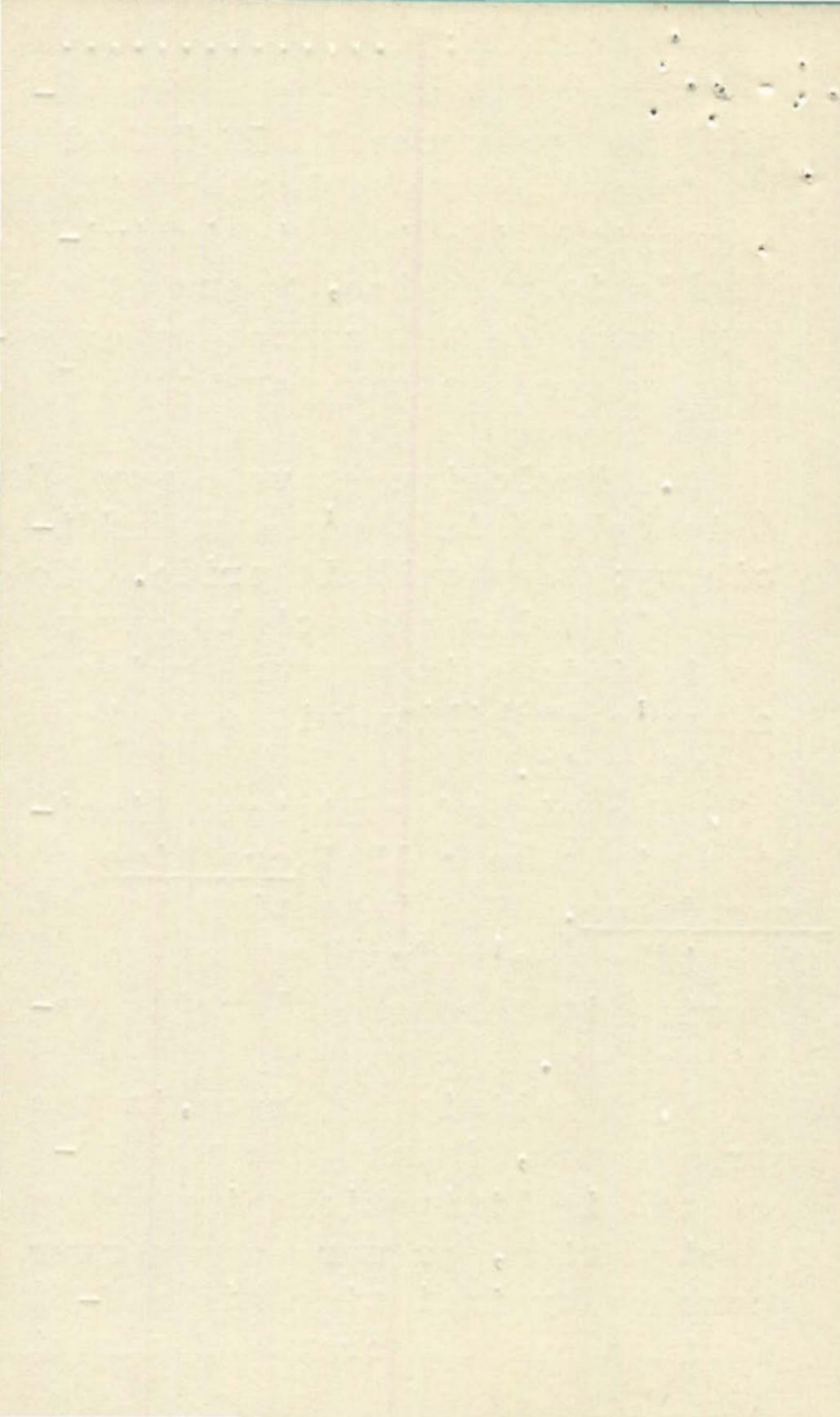


other persons who are nonessential to my success? If I feel so independent why bother with community life in this individualistic paradise, where others may amuse me but cannot be expected to need me any more than I need them?

d. Theologians have a word for this belief in one's own sufficiency; they call it **pride**. To them it holds a special danger so insidious it may undermine a man's stability without his knowing it.

2. The aim of religious discipline might be called creative dependence. The intention is not to stifle one's freedom but to exercise it through enlarging relationships.

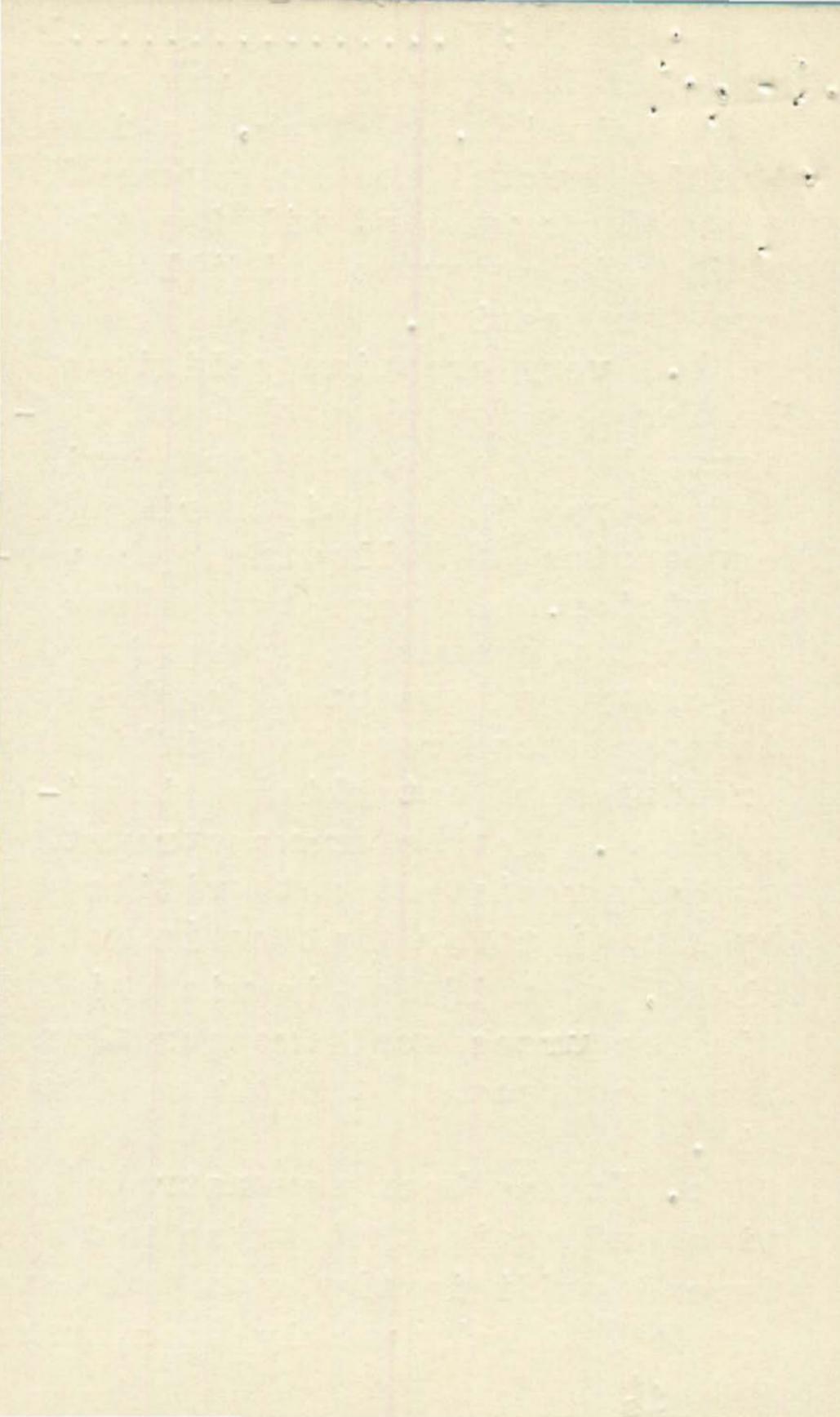
a. A religious person, in the true sense, is not one who accepts his limitations in weak resignation, or nurses a martyr complex by insisting his sufferings are the crown of enduring



to the end the person he was at the beginning. Rather, he is one who is devoted to the cause of eternal growth and willing to suffer in order to fulfill a greater destiny.

b. Every creative religious leader has forsaken old and comfortable ways for new and daring departures in the pioneering enterprise of following a heavenly vision. He may stand alone against the smug and powerful majority and assert a fearless independence from the stifling tradition of established institutions. Yet he draws strength to defy resistant authorities by the discovery that he is not alone, that if God is with him his resources are stronger than the resources of those who oppose him.

c. It has been demonstrated time and again that those who depend sufficiently upon God have not had to rely weakly upon human

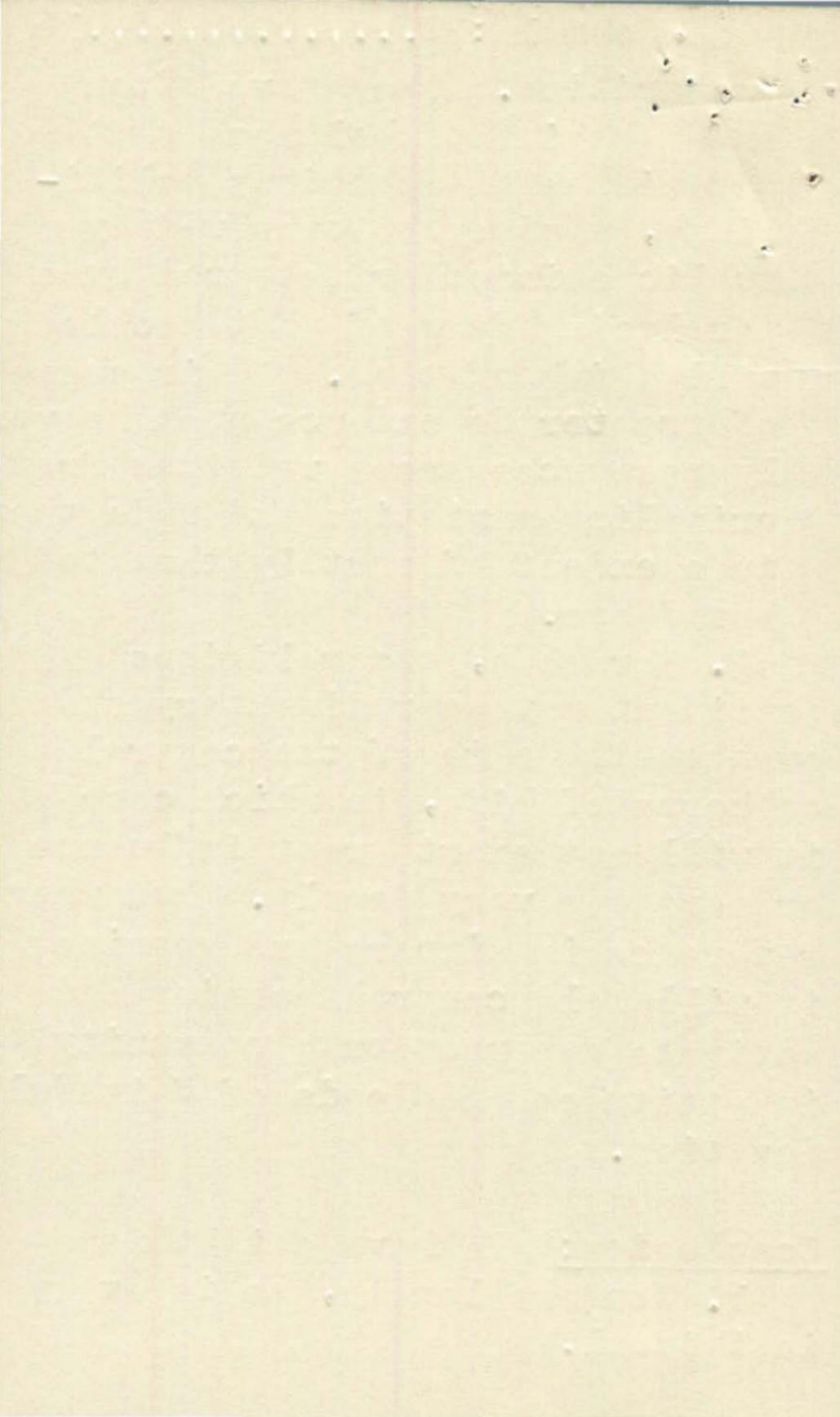


authorities. They have often shown a kind of boldness that astonishes the cautious politicians, who may be overawed by public opinion or deterred by a paralyzing fear of what people will think of them. Their sense of ~~greater~~ dependence upon heavenly resources has saved them from crippling anxieties and made them independent of earthly threats and fears.

3. For some, the religious sentiment may be rudimentary and even on the edge of the central concerns of life, in which case it will not exert great influence or move one very deeply. But when reverence is sincere and genuine it will hold central meaning and motivate a person or a community in attitudes and deeds of faithful devotion.

Conclusion: We have said that

1. You are lonely, as is every individual.



2. This loneliness is unbearably and drives you to seek the company of others, to seek the approval of society.

3. But to seek such company is to sacrifice some of the independence of the lonely person.

4. ^{W.P. Boyce} That when your loneliness causes you to turn to God you find a relationship which sustains you effectively in the company of others or alone, and loneliness disappears.

5. We would conclude that your loneliness is an invaluable asset when it turns you to God.

6. The words of Jesus to his disciples near the end of his earthly life might well be words of ours, practical words, to our friends and loved ones: "Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave me alone; ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me."

