

Address
delivered at Philadelphia Pa

July 13th 1884

209

Subject
"Christian Endeavor"

James
Account of the ...

July 1871

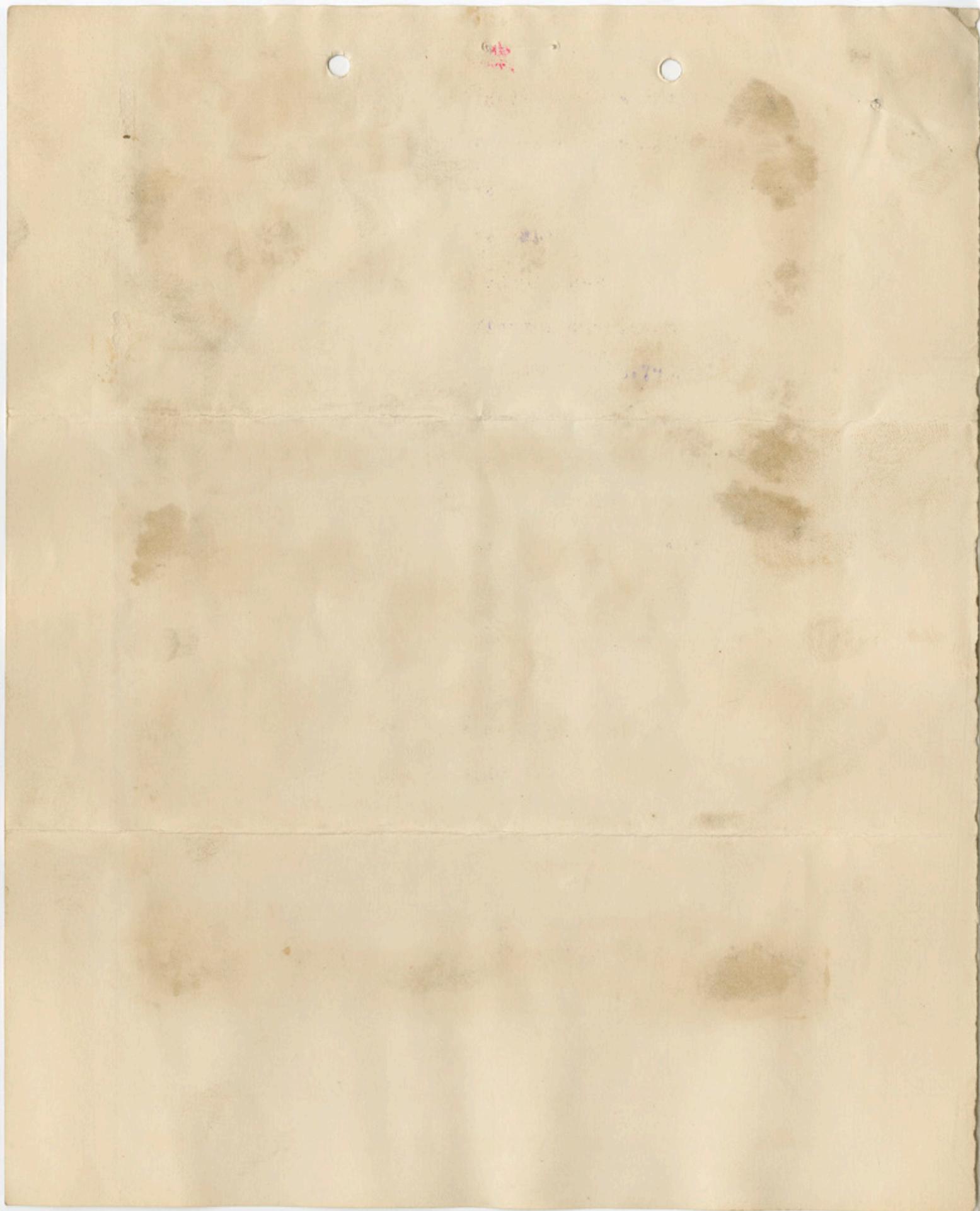
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Subject
William ...

Christian Endeavor! These are two words happily chosen.

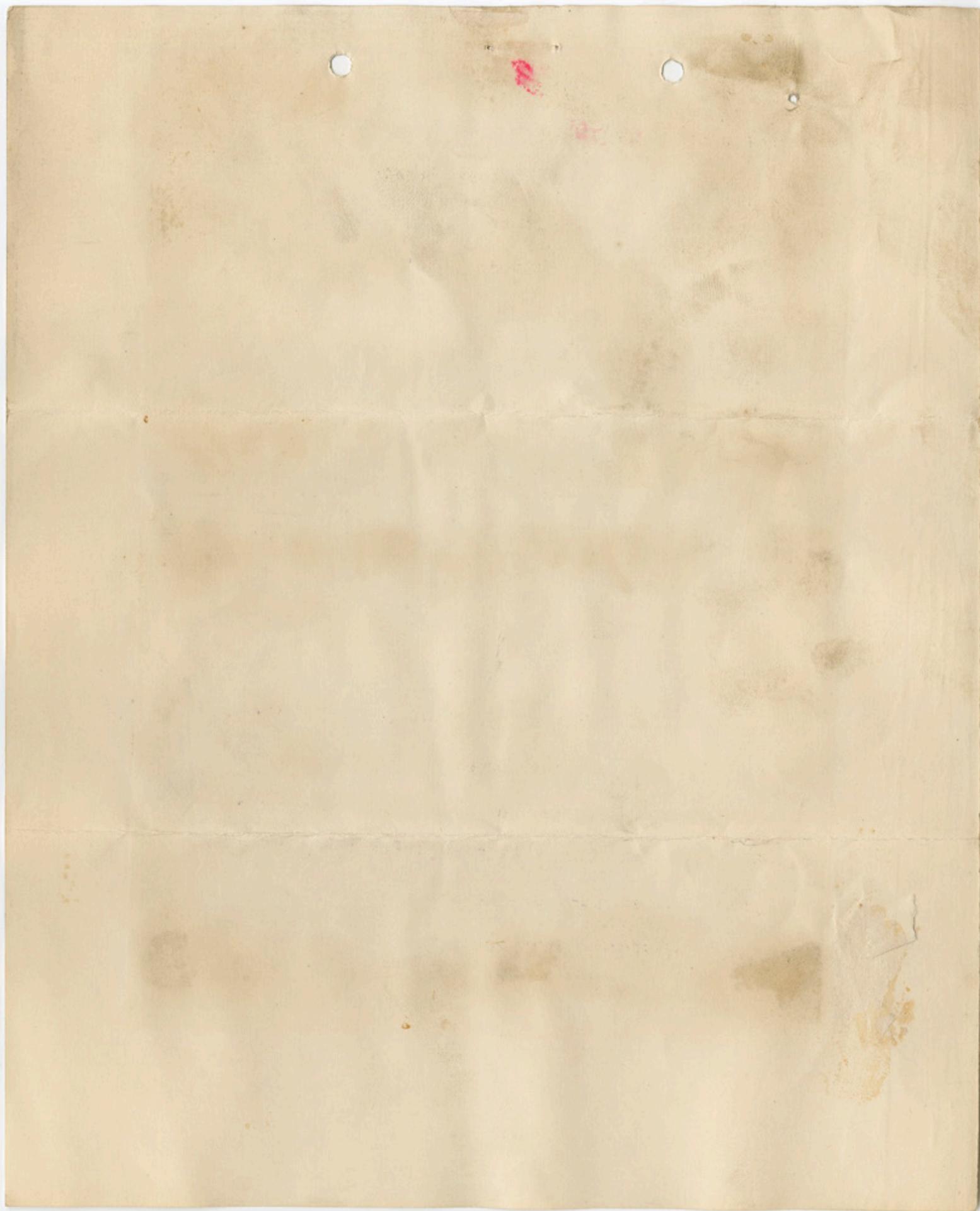
A Christian has a trinity of phases, an active, a passive and a completer side. In this 19th Century we are accustomed to place the active in the front rank, and we are so zealous, in our theories at least, that we sometimes even deny the existence of a passive Christianity.

But if we look back a century or so we will find plenty of passivity touching all sorts of Christian work, e. g. in Sunday-schools, Foreign Missions and other progressive societies; also touching human bondage and other social evils. "Let them alone!" was the common conservative cry. "In God's own time He will convert the young; He will reach the heathen; He will abolish slavery if that be best; and He will himself purge human society." It was the ascriptive ~~of~~ meaning to the Scripture, "stand still and see the Salvation of our God!"



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One can often rightly study groups of people in the individual. The sincere follower of Christ passes through different epochs of heart-experience. When the light of God's truth first breaks in upon a man and he realizes that his sins, which were many, are actually forgiven him, he is full of ardor, and no obstacles appall him. He is active in some line of Christian effort. He is brave; he is aggressive; he penetrates the by-ways, the jails, the poor farms, and the destitute quarters of the city. He distributes circulars, tracts and leaves of Holy Writ at every corner. He speaks to every sinner that he meets, tells him of a Savior's love, and invites him to give up his sins and follow Christ. Often this early ardor blinds his vision, so that, though this Christian's effort is great, the fruitage is comparatively small. Older men understand the case. The sapling is not the oak, the young steer has not the strength of the ox, nor has the youthful soul the wisdom of age.

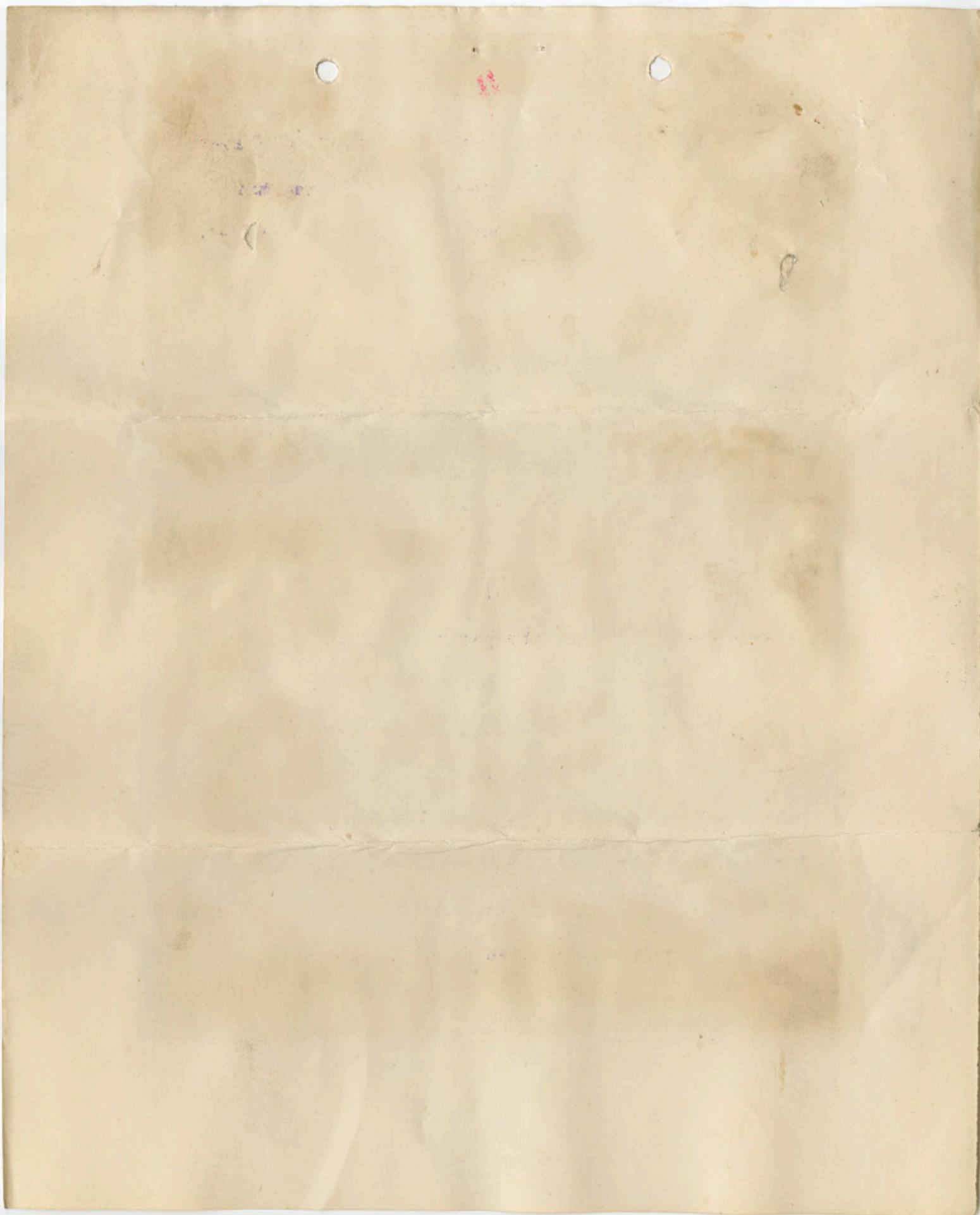


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3.

The want of fruitage correspondent to effort sown produces in the young heart a strong reaction. He does not often altogether surrender his hope of sins forgiven, nor his joy in his Lord, but he relapses into a comparative quiet. You now seldom hear his voice in meetings, and his visits to needy places become rarer. If you speak to him about the change, he says: I was fighting the air, - my talents do not seem to lie in that direction. I could not see any proper and adequate fruit of my labor.

But a little later after having been chastened by sickness or some fell disaster, much of his old spirit returns and with it a noticeable judiciousness. He had first the zeal that consumed him, next a sense of great weakness and dependence amid discouragement, or, perhaps, was flooded with a worldliness that for a time engulfed him almost in despair; but at last his Master brought him into better conditions, when again, his hope became strong

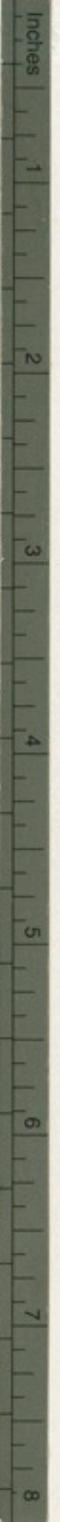


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like an anchor, and his fewer efforts, to his astonishment, brought forth more frequent and more abundant fruits. All along our Master was his powerful partner and was moulding him into fellowship, yes, into a more complete unity with himself.

4 Then to re-state my thought, I would say, that this Christian was first active, then passive, then more complete.

4 We have watched our Y. M. C. Associations through these three periods. One, most intensely active with precious little of judiciousness in many places. They followed the period of great depression when individual societies were so passive as hardly to be able to hold their own. Oh, the disasters that came here and there, the enormous debts, the failures, the disgrace through false brethren, and what not! At last set in a solid reaction and improvement. Now they revive; they develop again and girdle the world, perfected in organized strength,



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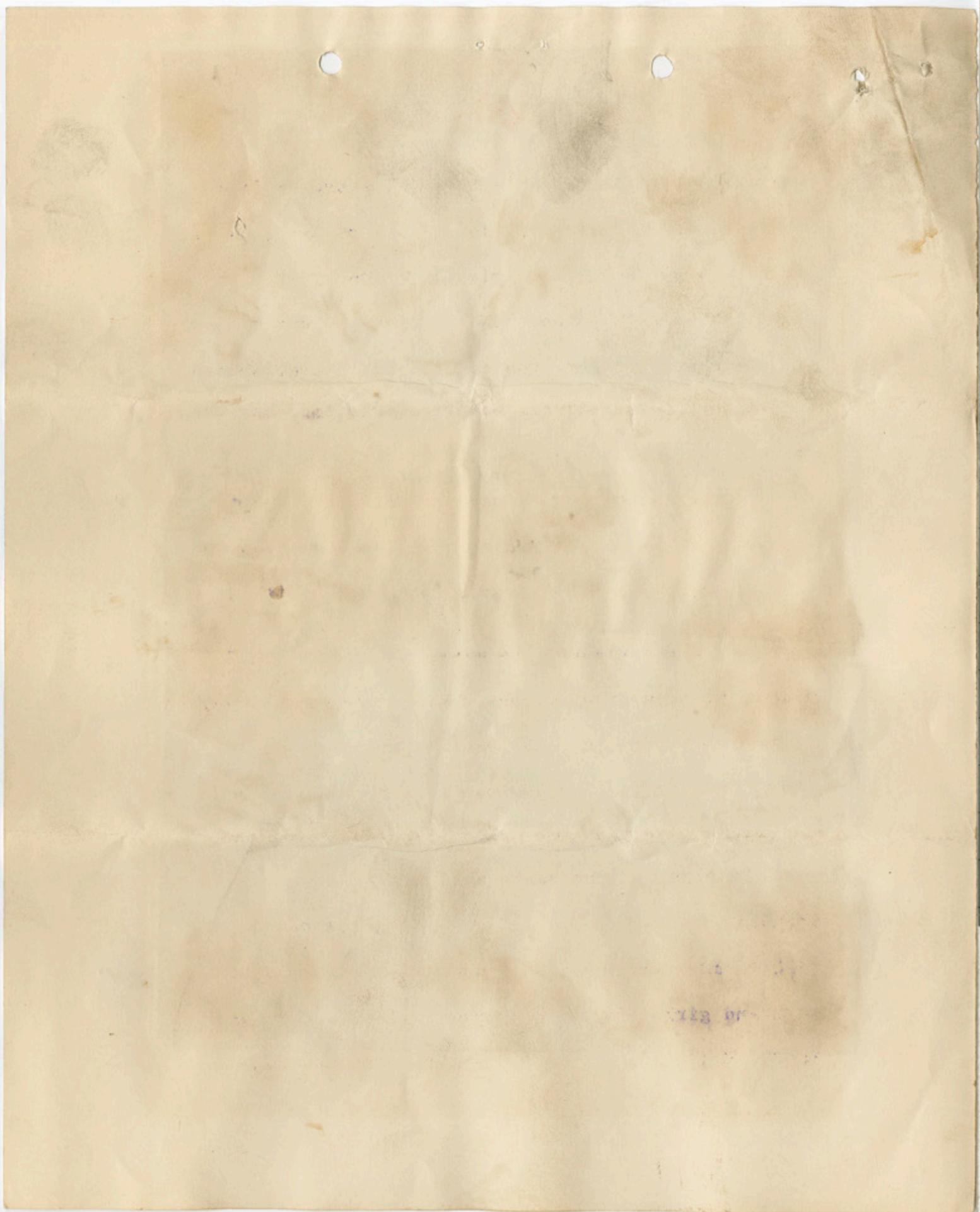
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without perplexing and paralyzing debts, strong in purpose, judicious in management, and really more abundant in fruitage than ever before.

¶ When a Young Men's Christian Association, in 1884, paid a visit to Emperor William of Germany and was permitted to sing for him some of their sweet hymns, he was much affected, and said: "young gentlemen, could you not take into your company an old young man?" With a like sympathetic disposition may ~~not~~ ^{who listen to your songs} ask you of the Christian Endeavor,

to consider the word of "an old young man," and study the three phases thus presented.

¶ We have had in our country what has been called "the society craze"—or better perhaps "the association craze." Every social ill that cropped out must be cured by a new society. A friend of mine belongs to fifteen societies, the Sons of Temperance, Good Templers, Society of the Army of the Tenn., Society of the Army of the Cumberland, G. A. R., Meade's Relief Corps, Legion of Honor, Military

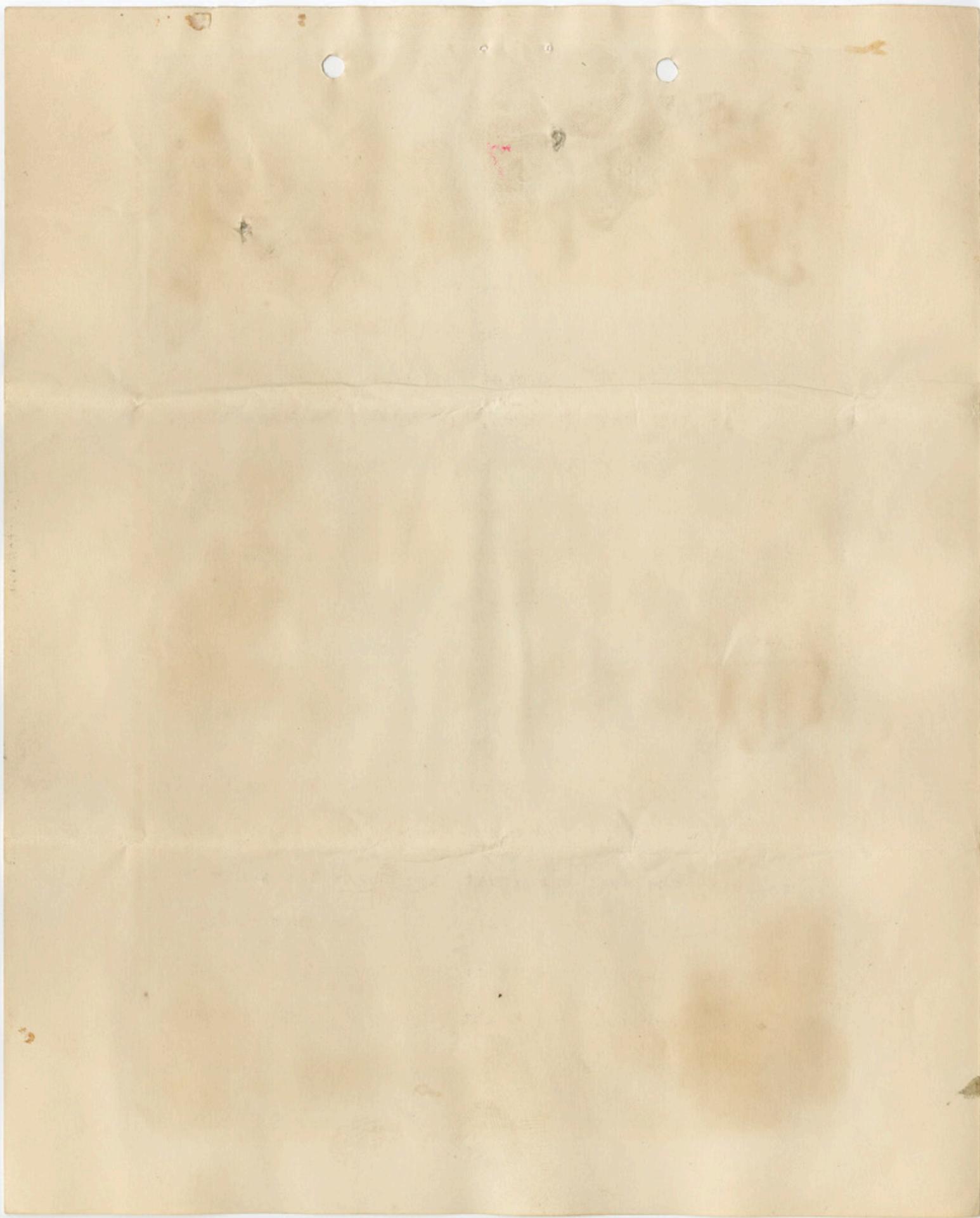


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Service Institution, Bible Society, American Board of Missions, American Missionary Association, Y. M. C. A. , the Society of Christian Endeavor and the American Sabbath Union. Now if you add the demands of his church proper, you can get an idea of what a draft such associations, however Christian, however benevolent, must make upon his time.

Christian observers have watched the rise and progress of this youngest association luminary, the Society of Christian Endeavor, with much interest and no little anxiety. The missions in the churches were pressed forward, but they needed more money; the churches grew, but the vast majorities were still outside; the prayer meetings kept alive, but old people said the same prayers, grieved over the same old sins and the seats were mostly empty. Pastors of flocks said to themselves, how can we fill up our churches? How can we keep with us the boys and girls who are entering manhood and womanhood? How can we press out the missions at home

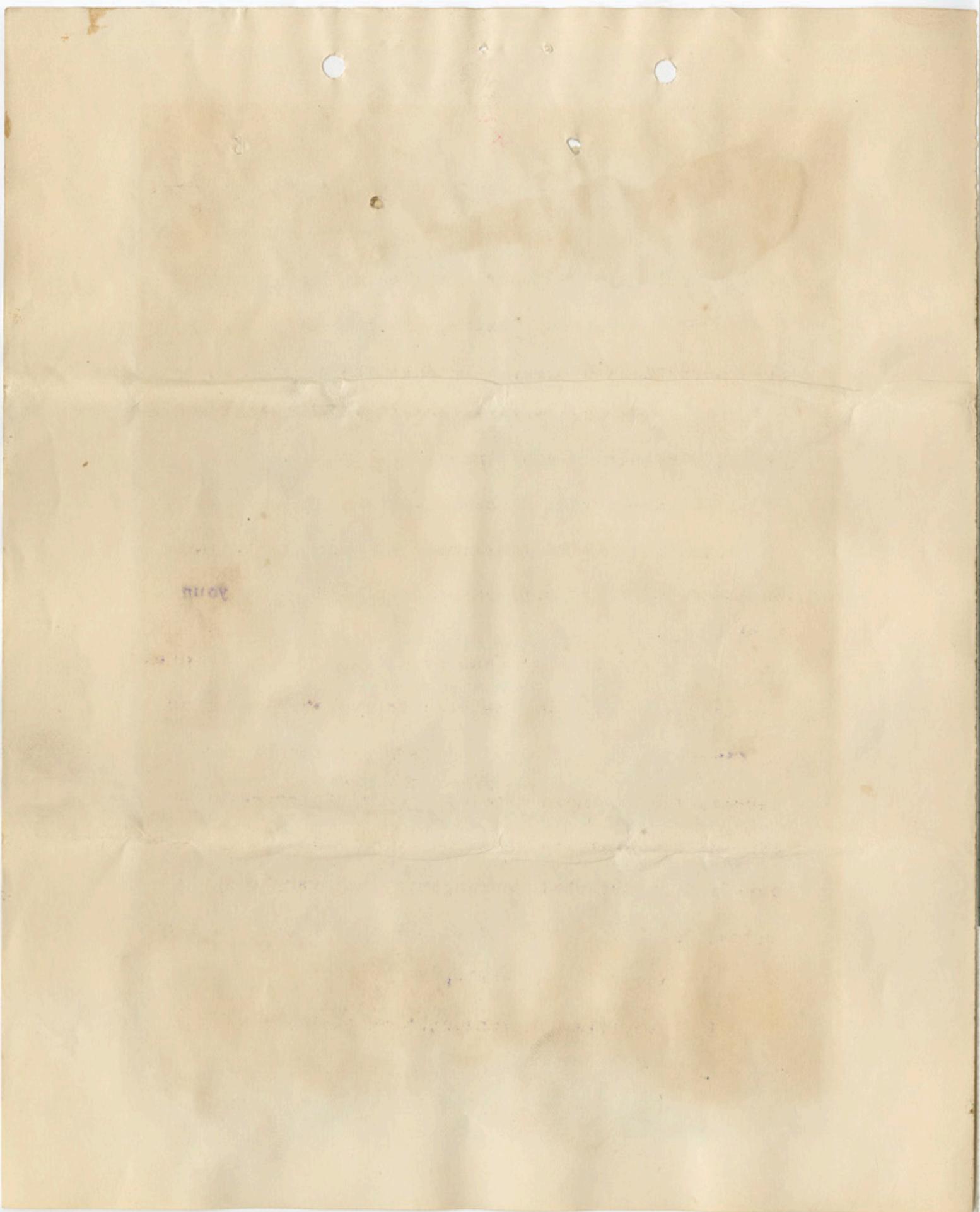
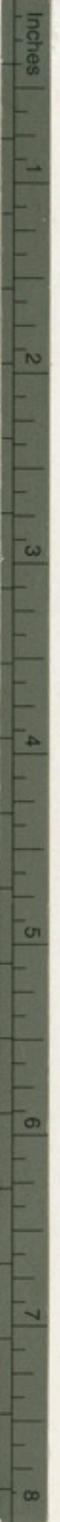


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and abroad? How can we give life to our home meetings for prayer, and transform them into places of power and attainment. Some one as usual, proposed a new organization- a society of youth to be an aid to the pastor in each church, and happily named it significantly, "Society of Christian Endeavor." It is pledged to work to be composed of young men and young women, pledged to take part in the meetings and pledged to efforts for the gathering in of young people; pledged to make further efforts for their reformation and Christian training.

~~Now all this is splendid in the conception.~~
These societies speedily multiplied till they covered the land. Under the first phase of the pyramidal exhibit, the zeal was great, the Christian youth were happy together; hardly any respectable young folks could withstand their appeals, but little by little older people thought lightness, levity, social

in some few churches



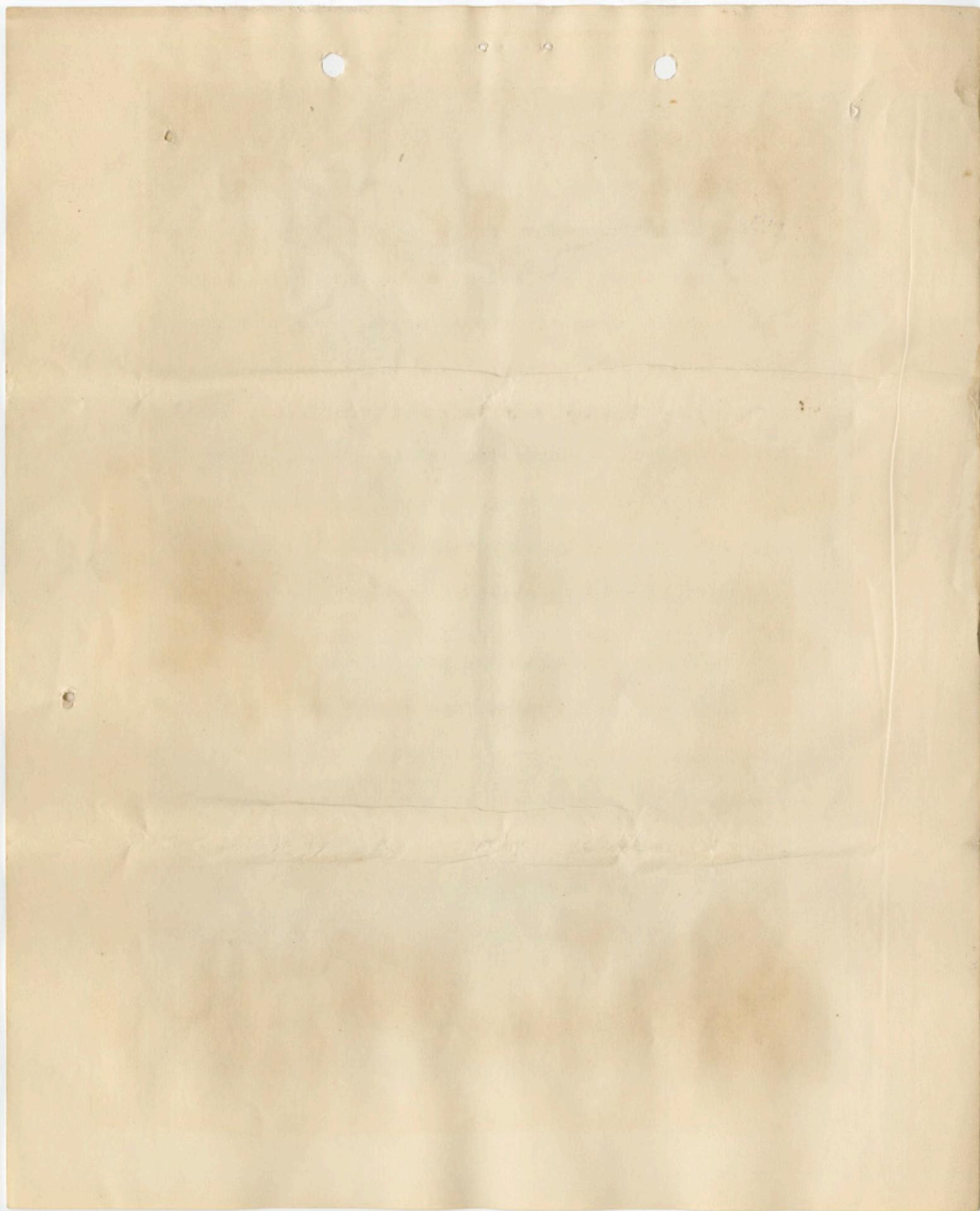
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delights, spectacular scenes, joyous songs, and witty speeches were excluding weight of character, seriousness, united and thoughtful prayer, readings of the Divine word, hymns of praise, and genuine convictions and confessions of sin. In fact the passive phase had come. The hot water was being cooled by too much of the luke warm and too many bits of ice. The young world was indeed coming into the church, but the young church, however zealous, was not strong enough to convict, convert and assimilate the young world.

Again the strength and zeal of youth outstripped the poor pastor. He was "too foggy" society began to combine with society, to elect presidents and secretaries, ^{if we apply church names} to hold sessions and conferences, synods and associations, general assemblies and conventions- and so the whole arrangement has very soon gotten far beyond the individual church and has become a mighty power in the world.

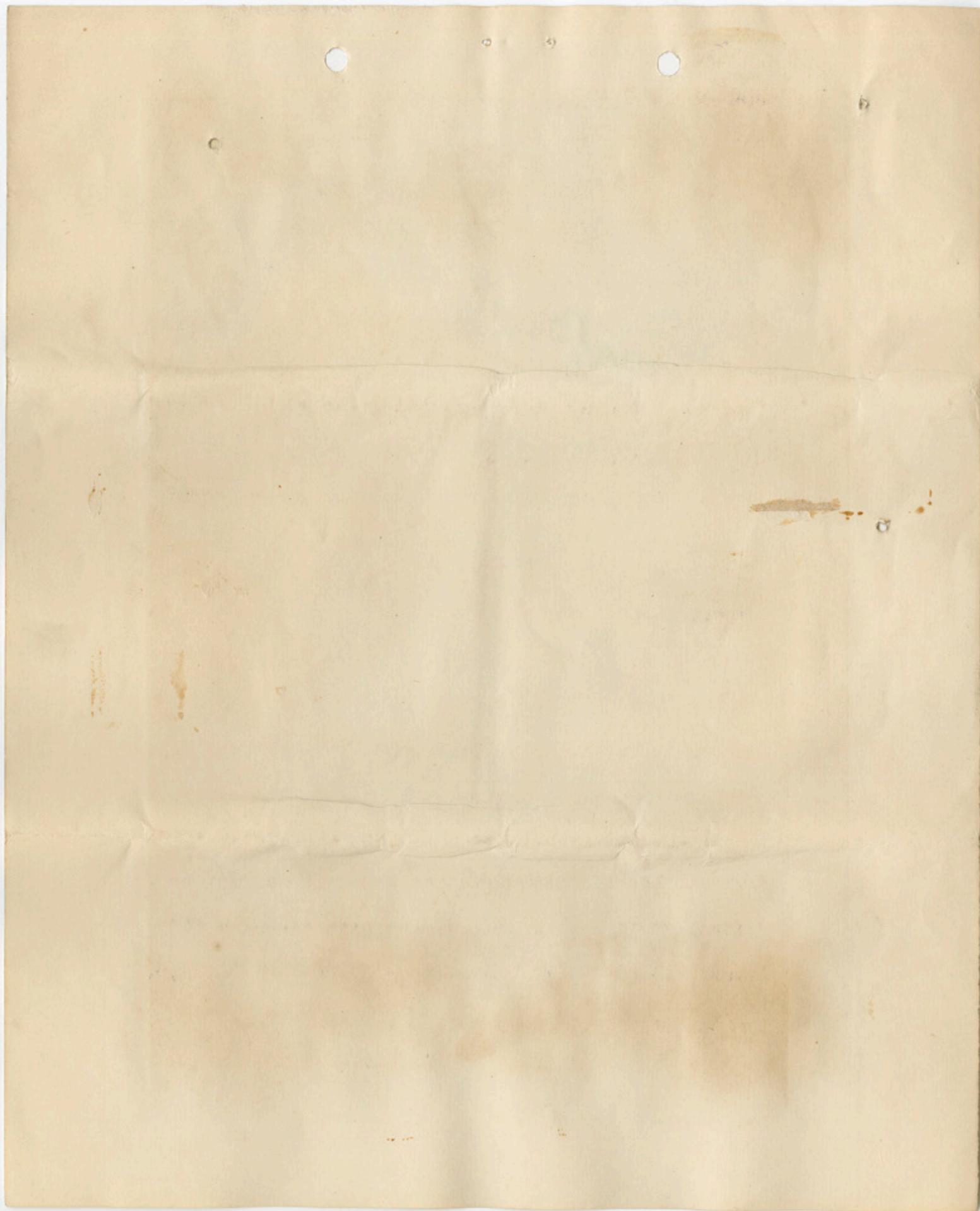
What worries the conservative observer is the



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problem of getting out of the passive phase, so far as real vital christian graces are concerned, into the one more complete; into the one where Christ shall indeed be all in all and where our young people shall not only be partakers of the innocence of the doves, but be permeated with genuine wisdom.

I glory in the young, Alexander was a young man and he conquered the world, but his acquired territories could not long be kept together. He had ambition, energy and abundant enterprise, but lacked the true wisdom.



10.
Solomon was a young man who understood the wisdom of the wise, and greatly prospered, but at last fell under the blight of worldliness and luxury, and left a dividing and degenerating kingdom.

Washington was a young man with energy, virtue and wisdom, a man, as we love to repeat, "first in war, first in peace and first in the hearts of his countrymen." Behold to-day the inheritance of increasing possessions and teeming millions of populations which he has left us, and which already

shakes the whole earth.

In plain words, I would say in closing, Keep close, close to each individual church, and let the individual church expand by your increasing help. Do not aim at being leaders and rulers, but, rather, at being subordinates and patriots by choice. And strive for more and more knowledge of the Bible, and for a deeper and deeper work of grace in the individual heart, that Christian Endeavor may not be thwarted in any direction, but give strength and inspiration to the entire body of Christ's people.

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