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**MS-53: Moses J. Gries Papers, 1850-1934 (bulk 1890-1930).**

Series D: Sermons and Addresses, 1893-1917, undated.

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“The American,” 1904 November 27.

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November 27, 1904.

THE AMERICAN.-

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America is a wonderful land - a land of physical wonders, inhabited by a wonderful people; wonderful in its three million square miles of territory stretching from ocean to ocean and from the lakes to the Gulf. America is wonderful in its development from less than four millions of people dwelling by the shore of the Atlantic to the more than seventy-five millions scattered over a great continent. And our land is very far from over-peopled. If America were as densely populated as ~~France~~, our population would number more than five <sup>hundred</sup> millions; if like Germany, more than six hundred millions; if like Great Britain, more than one-thousand millions. There are empires whose extent of territory is as great, and nations whose population is as numerous. America is wonderful because its mighty millions, spread over a vast continent, live at peace without the enforcement of law by authority. Freedom has made America great. The millions have been and are being attracted by freedom. America was colonized by men who wished to break away from bondage and through the century it has been settled by people who fled from bondage and oppression and persecution. Inspiring is the thought of George William Curtis, his conception of America, - "A virgin continent lay undiscovered for centuries - providentially preserved for liberty."

Who is an American, the true American? Not one born upon the soil of America, nor all that have adopted this land as their home; not every citizen of the United States is a true American. Americanism is not in birth nor yet in adoption. It is something of the heart and the spirit. Proud are some that their ancestors came over in the Mayflower which distinguishes them as Sons and Daughters of the Revolution. Honorable ancestry is an honor to us if we, being ~~honorable~~, honor our ancestry. No, not length of years, but depth of love; not ~~as~~ length of lineage but depth of devotion to American ideals and American principles makes the American. Oft-times the foreigners are more American in spirit and in heart and in soul than the native born.

The American belongs to the whole nation; he knows no sectionalism; he maintains no solid North or solid South, - a political separation which continues when the civil conflict of a generation ago is only a memory. The true American declares that

the nation is one. He knows no East and no West. He does not imagine that the East, with its great centers of commerce and industry is the whole United States. He is conscious of an education and a culture west, a West out of which have come presidents and great men of the nation. With President Roosevelt he protests against provincial patriotism, he protests also against a hyphenated Americanism. Men, in this land, should not be a German-American or Irish-American or Hungarian-American or Polish-American, and all the rest. Men should be plain Americans. Let us help to Americanize all the foreigners and let us Americanize ourselves that we and they understand and appreciate and live true to American political ideas and American principles. America is a land worthy of our love and our honor. Its principles, - liberty and equality and justice appeal to the best in us, - no royalty to defend and justify, no tyranny and no oppression to excuse and to justify. As Bierbower said, - "There is no contradiction between our patriotism and our ethics", and, as we have many times pointed out, there is no conflict between our Americanism and our Judaism. We Jews understand the Puritan character. We Jews understand the American and Puritan emphasis on righteousness and justice. It is born of the Old Testament teaching and principles which so strongly influence Puritan life, and the life of the founders of the Republic. American principles will influence the nations; they have influenced the nations. Liberty and justice, creating a happy people, cannot fail to be an example to all the world. Liberty and justice, transforming millions of the poorest and most unfortunate and most wretched of all nations into strong and brave, industrious and energetic workers, - helping America to be first among the nations, is a lesson which the world cannot fail to learn. What a revelation to the kings and the emperors and the nations whose throne is built and sustained by the power of the sword. Here are millions of people, scattered over a vast territory, living in perfect peace; millions, invested with freedom and with power, and abusing neither freedom nor power. It is a lesson to the world that people may be trusted.

America is a great nation with a great responsibility, - the mission of America is to be a world-power; not a world-conqueror by the power of arms, but a world-conqueror by the example of peace. Let us be true Americans, teaching the American principle and holding fast to the American idea. Here self-government is to find its full devel-



opment; here the social progress, of which the sages and seers - the pure and brave - hearted men of the world have dreamed for centuries, may find its realization. Here are to be worked out the problems of the highest civilization.

Distinguished thinkers agree with this thought as witnessed by Herbert Spencer ..... "The Americans may reasonably look forward to a time when they will have produced a civilization grander than any the world has known." Important and significant is the comparison which Professor Giddings of the Columbian University makes between the ethnic composition of the English people and of the American nation, - "England formed by the same ethnic elements which today are making the American people strong and plastic, with possibilities of action and of expression, of grasp upon the garnered experience of the race and of daring outreach into the things that, as yet, have never been, such as no people have yet shown."

Inspiring the thought of President Theodore Roosevelt, - "We shall never achieve true greatness nor reach the lofty ideal which the founders and preservers of our mighty federal republic have set before us, unless we are, in heart and soul and spirit and purpose, keenly alive to the responsibility implied in the very name "republican", (which I interpret to mean "American"), and proud, beyond measure, of the glorious privilege of bearing it.

Rabbi Gries closed his address with the reading of Bayard Taylor's famous Centennial Ode:-

"Foreseen in the vision of sages,  
Foretold when martyrs bled,  
She was born of the longing of ages,  
By the truth of the noble dead  
And the faith of the living fed.

.....  
Fused in her candid light  
To one strong race all races were united;  
Tongues melt in hers; hereditary foemen  
Forget the sword and slogan, kith and clan.  
'Twas glory once to be a Roman -  
She makes it glory now to be a man."