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

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

Box	Folder	Item
4	7	17

“The Jew in America,” 1904 April 17.

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April 17, '04.

THE JEW IN AMERICA.

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The Jew is not alien in America. He is not new in this country. He is not of the recent comers. Many, even Jews, believe the Jews are newcomers in America - since 1891 when the Ignatieff May Laws were re-inforced or since 1882 when they were first put into execution, or since 1848, the days of the revolutionary spirit in Europe.. Jews were in America long before. They have been here in Cleveland since the close of the third decade of the nineteenth century. Three generations have been born here in this city. In Cleveland next year we hope to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the first American Rabinnical Conference held in Cleveland in 1855.

Jews fought in the war of the Revoulution. They sacrificed life and fortune in the cause of independence. Jews were active in rank high and low in the war for the Union and liberty. They answered the call and rallied to the flag to free oppressed Cuba from the ~~Spanish~~ yoke of Spanish injustice. Through the years they have rendered distinguished service in the ways of peace.

The synagogue and the cemetery at Newport associated with the family of Judah Touro and made famous by the poem of Longfellow remind us of the life and the activity at Newport, once a commercial center of the colonies. Rhode Island under Roger Williams granted a perfect freedom, liberty, civil and religious. The Jews were active and influential in Rhode Island. They were in Newport before our American Four Hundred. They came to New York City two hundred and fifty years ago upon the condition that they should be no burden to the state. They have been no burden to the state.

It is said there were Jews with Columbus, a Jewish interpreter and a Jewish physician. We find Jews in all the settlements of Spanish America and on the islands of the Atlantic. Jews are not alien in America; they are not new in this country.

In America there is freedom of conscience. In Russia there is and there is not. Jews in Russia bear taxes, are made to carry burdens, live under exceptional laws, from all of which conversion to the Greek church brings quick relief. In America there is freedom of speech. In Russia there is not. In America the press is free. In Russia there is the censorship. In American there is freedom of assembly; in Russia there may be no public meetings without official sanction. In America there is freedom of life and freedom

Not everything is as it should be even in America. European and mediaeval prejudices still survive to ostracise the Jew. The problem of social relationship is difficult indeed. What manner of justice or of true freedom is that which declares in these houses, in these apartments, Jews may not live; into these clubs and social halls etc. Jews are not welcome because they are Jews. I see no clear solution - but a social wall is building whose foundation stones should never have been laid. Perhaps the time will come when non-Jews sincerely believing in liberty and acting sincerely with justice will protest against any discrimination against any man on account of religion or of race. Some day perhaps liberty and justice-loving Americans will refuse to form or will refuse to be members of Clubs or of social organizations, governed by prejudice so unjust and so senseless.

Meantime Jews must ask to be respected as Jews and as men. They need not compromise their convictions nor their conscience. Let them stand honestly for their truth and their principles; despised be the men of no conviction, without conscience and without principles. Let Jews be of the best, believe in the best, and live for the best; not too materialistic, nor too prominent in the public eye as sensualists and pleasure-seekers. Exercise a nobler self-denial and a nobler self-restraint. Be distinguished for the higher qualities of manhood and womanhood. Be men and women of mind and of character; of heart and of soul.

Jews hold a position of honor in America. They have played a full and honorable part in the upbuilding of the commerce and industry of the nation. They have been zealous in labor, sober and industrious, peaceful and lawabiding. They are active in the learned professions, honorable in the law and honored as of old in the field of medicine. They are engaged in all the arts and sciences - on the faculty of every great university Jews are teachers.

They have not held high political places. They have not been leaders in politics and political life. Jews have not been ambitious for political power; they do not seek representation as Jews. Some Jews have been influential in public life. Jews generally are good citizens. They believe in law and order. They stand strongly for American principles and American ideals. They are eager defenders of the liberties of the people.

Jews come to stay in America. They give allegiance to the flag without reserve or qualification. They believe in liberty with all their heart and all their soul.

Temples and synagogues are building everywhere. Judaism is respected. Our religious life is none too intense. We have been swept along with the current. Jews are none too religious. We are free from gross superstition; free from dark fanaticism. Judaism teaches liberty and always the ethical life.

Jews are distinguished for their charities, for their orphan homes and homes for the aged and hospitals for the sick and all their philanthropic institutions and societies. The world believes there are no Jewish poor. There are thousands of Jews poor enough. They cannot suddenly be transformed from the poverty and misery of their former life in Russia and in eastern Europe to prosperity and wealth. Jews do not hide their poor from the world but historically Jews have always cared for their own. Jews care for the Jewish poor, therefore the world sees none of them. Jews also do their share to lift the burden of those not Jews.

A new epoch is opening in the history of Israel; America is destined to leadership among the Jews of the world. It is a great opportunity; it brings a great responsibility. Great power means great obligation. We Jews do not feel deeply enough the importance of this problem. Many are content with their own prosperity and peace and are unwilling to sacrifice. Some wish the Russian Jews would not come to us; they are a danger to our peace and prosperity. All true men wish the Jews might all of them remain in Russia, that Russia were just enough to care for her children, just enough to give shelter and protection to the millions that belong to her. What Jew or what American would be so brutal as to shut the door of opportunity in the face of the exiled and the persecuted?

The spirit of the American people is plainly revealed. There is strong feeling against Russia and strong sympathy with Japan. Russia may charge America with commercial selfishness. Russia may declare on the one day that Japan is the catspaw of the United States and on the next that Japan is inspired by the Jewish power of the world.

An Odessa circular, freely distributed, blames the Jews for the war and classes them with the "godless English" and the "huckstering Americans" and the "heathen and insolent Japanese". It is foolishness. The people of America are not governed wholly by commercialism. The people of America are not in sympathy with Russian despotism. They have no re-

spect for Russian brutality. America believes in justice. The people of America believe that governments and officials and men have sacred responsibility for human beings. Read the judgment of America in Isidore Singer's book, "Russia at the Bar of the American People" read the words of President Roosevelt and of Secretary of State John Hay. Read the addresses of ex-President Grover Cleveland of the distinguished Carl Schurz, of Ex-mayor Seth Low of Jacob Schurman, President of Cornell, and the host of others. Their thought is one. Man has a right to be free. Let Russia give to her Jews freedom to be men and citizens. "If not", says Jacob Schurman, "America is still another name for opportunity, and a race of such capacity and endurance as the Jews is not only assured of triumphant survival but by virtue of its contribution to our highest civilization, is entitled to universal welcome."

