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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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“In the Beginning - God,” 1903 November 1.

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November 1st, 1903.

IN THE BEGINNING - GOD.

The skeptic says, prove God to me. I have full respect for the learned minds and the thoughtful souls who cannot believe. Honest doubt deserves respect. I have little patience with ignorance, presumptuously affecting superiority to religion and the religious minded. Prove God to me says the doubter. In no spirit of unkind criticism, I ask, have you searched for proofs? Would you understand them if presented to you? You may find the thought of the best in the literature of all languages. Have you read the philosophers of doubt and of faith.

Let the doubter and the skeptic prove. He stands in opposition to all, let him justify himself. All the world believes; prove then that you are right and the world is wrong.

It needs preparation, study and reading to understand the facts of the physical universe. Thus also it needs preparation to understand the facts of the spiritual universe. Why not be honest, modest and scientific in the true sense, seeking knowledge?

In the beginning - God. How else explain the origin of the universe; the order that is; the end and destiny that are to be. The best explanation is still the teaching of Genesis, whose opening words are, In the beginning - God. The order and beauty of the world, the necessity for unity in the universe and the appointment that good will triumph over evil, all compel us to believe in a power that makes for righteousness, the more than man, the not man, we say - God.

God is the best explanation of the universe and of man. There must be supreme unity. The order of the world seems the result of intelligence. It is more reasonable to believe that the universe and man are born of intelligence and order than of unconscious chaos. It is more reasonable to believe that spirit and mind are before and over matter than that matter is before and over mind. God is. Man himself is witness. The love of the human heart, the thought of the human mind, the nobility and unselfishness of the human soul reveal the ~~divine~~ divine within man.

There has been a development of the God idea in Israel. From the God of the Creation to the God of the Patriarchs, to the God of Sinai, to the God of the ~~Prophets~~ Prophets. The names of God prove this. Elohim - Shaddai, Jehovah or Jahvah. This is the name of God not to be spoken or written except in the sacred place and in the Sacred Book. The God idea advances from Abraham to Moses, through Amos, Hosea and Isaiah. God is Father in our old Jewish literature. It is not a new teaching to pray "Our Father who art in Heaven". And God is love. In the Old Testament literature as well as in the New.

The unity of Deity is of Semitic. The three great religions - Christianity, Mohammedanism and Judaism believe in the God of Abraham. "The Hear O Israel", the watchword of Israel is becoming more and more the thought of mankind. Thinking men and thinking women are accepting the Jewish position - God is one.

Monotheism is the distinct Jewish contribution to the religious thoughts and beliefs of mankind. In spite of Delitsch, the one God comes from Bibel and not from Babel. Intellectual anti-Semites misrepresenting and misinterpreting Old Testament and New Testament, ignorant of, or misunderstanding the spirit of Jewish

literature, are attempting to deny the contribution of the genius of Abraham to religion. It is the distinction of the Jew that he has been the religious leader and teacher of the world. The God idea still distinguishes the Jew. The Son of Israel not a God believer and not a teacher of God is false to all his history. He is not a Jew. Our Jewish teachers did not wait for Matthew Arnold to give us the conception of the power that makes for righteousness, nor yet for Felix Adler to emphasize that we must have a supreme righteousness, that justice must work out in the end, and that misery and evil and suffering must be transmuted to measureless good. The God of Israel, our Jewish teachers taught us long ago, was God of Justice and God of righteousness. The world faith of the present, in the final triumph of the right and the good, in the face of all the evil and the misery that darken civilization even in our most enlightened age, is the child of religion. Christianity has taught the world the Messianic hope of the age of love and peace, and before Christianity Jewish Prophets in the name of God made the Messianic announcement of the day when God would be one and His name one. The age when righteousness and justice and love and peace would fill the earth.

