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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	10	4

“The Jew through the Centuries,” undated.

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"The Jew Through The Centuries"

The Jew was born at the dawn of human history. He has been long in the world, but his life is not known and his history is not understood. Are we Jews of today strange antiques, oriental curiosities out of place in this Twentieth Century? Are we the survivors who have escaped the fires and the floods of the ages? How ~~damaged~~^{tragic} then our life, with the nature of it overshadowed by these eighteen centuries of living a life so useless and purposeless. Or are we Jews under a great curse, doomed to live the accursed of God that we cannot die; that we must continue an eternal witness and continue outcasts and wanderers upon the face of the earth? Or are we a chosen people under God's favor, or perennance under God's punishment, enduring God's blessings or enduring God's curses? Have we been chosen out of the nations and the peoples of the earth in order to produce a Messiah, a Messiah who should save mankind and redeem the world, and then, because we rejected and crucified Jesus when he came eighteen centuries ago, that therefore there ^{has come} ~~is to come~~ a standstill in our history and all the curses written in the old book have been ~~fulfilled~~^{fulfilled} against us? And is the rest of all our Jewish history that has passed to remain forever unknown and misunderstood? How do we explain the Jew life today? Do we explain him as one of the indestructible race? Do we

interpret him as a living curiosity of the ages? Do we explain him to the world declaring that the vitality and the persistence, the power and the genius and the cunning of the race have preserved him wonderfully in the face of all the world? Or do we believe that we are living in fulfillment of the ancient law and the prophecy; that the curses written in the great law book have been fulfilled ~~against~~ upon us, so that we may be an astonishment and a by-word, that we may be scattered from one end of the earth to the other, that we shall serve our enemies, that we shall know hunger and want and nakedness and thirst; that among nations we shall find no ease, neither shall the sole of our foot ever rest, our life shall belong to the earth neither day nor night? Are we living in fulfillment of the prophecies, with the sort of fulfillment of the prophecies so disastrous; that we shall be ever x x x and curse among men? Or are the Jews living so that at last we shall see the living and know the truth and shall be destined to return to Palestine and to rebuild the Temple?

Behold the Jew of history from his earliest beginnings, with his development from the time of the patriarchic Abraham thousands of years ago; through the days of the patriarchs, through, through the sojourn in Egypt and the wanderings in the desert to the time of the vast republic of the world they knew. We come and we go. It is a

history of defeat and disaster. How vast the features of our Jewish history contrasted with the 400 years of American life. From the Patriarchs to Egypt 400 years and more; from the life story in Egypt and the story of the Exodus 400 years and more; from the story of the first Hebrew Commonwealth under the Judges; and the time to the day of the destruction of the Temple, the return from Babylon and the rebuilding of the Temple until that last fall of Jerusalem and re-destruction of the Temple 400 years and more. Are we a chosen people to receive God's blessing or are we a chosen people sent to the different nations for God's punishment and curses? We interpret Israel as the servant of God -- Israel as the servant of God with the rare genius to evolve and proclaim a life which is true. Not that type which is destined to give birth to a religious redeemer. We interpret out Jewish life and history not with the purpose of giving birth to a personal Messiah, but rather to proclaim to mankind that great Messiah of which the world is still dreaming and living forward to its fulfillment. Because the Jews did not believe in a personal Messiah, because the Jews did not believe in a political redeemer, therefore they rejected and denied, and ~~xxxxxx~~ according to some, refused to believe in Jesus when he came. But they did not crucify Jesus. The story of Jesus and his crucifixion, as narrated in the New Testament,

is absolutely impossible according to Jewish law. We do not believe that Israel is under the curse. We do not believe that the disruption of Israel was a curse. Israel was dispersed long before the days of Jesus and long before the destruction of the Temple. Neither do we believe the destruction of Jerusalem was a curse. That final scene in Jewish history is a magnificent scene, -one of the most magnificent scenes in history. That great and valiant defense of the *loyal and true* ~~x x x~~ standing like a rock steadfast against the greatest x x of characters the world ever knew. The destruction of the Temple is not a curse. Read how the rabbis interpreted it. On the day the Temple was destroyed the Messiah was born. On the day of the destruction of the Temple, the rabbis tell us, a hand reached out of the cloud and grasped the chosen keys of the Temple, signifying that it was no longer linked x x x . We do not believe as Jews in the Messiah of mankind, but we do believe the messianic appointment came to Israel as a great people x x x that any one people or one Jew believe in a Messiah. It means for Israel to believe and to proclaim one God, the only God, and that Israel is the prophet of righteousness, love and peace.

It is true that Rome destroyed Jerusalem x x x *Jerusalem and* but the Jews were triumphant at last and Rome was ~~destroyed~~ defeated. We know the

beautiful story of Jochannan Ben Zaccai x x x and establishing there
a school of x x x for the study of the law in order that the
coming centuries might receive the light of reason x x x
and give light and illumination x x

The Jews' later history after the destruction of the Temple is more
wonderful far than the bible story itself. In every land a wanderer;
in every land seeking refuge and a home of peace or prosperity, and
everywhere an object of envy and of hate, and then persecution, and
always given the same choice, apostasy, exile or death. Thousands
there were whose hearts failed them and who were ^{not} ready to be apostates.
They left their homes and possessions. But thousands there always
were who were ready to take their staff in hand and go out into the
strange world; and thousands there were who were ready to face death
and at last faced death, but with that supreme courage not to die but
to live--to live as exiles suffering the persecutions and oppressions
of the world. We do not comprehend, we do not understand the perse-
cution and oppression of the Jews for centuries. We cannot understand,
we cannot comprehend what it means to live day and night with one's
life in danger, with one's property subject to confiscation, with the
home not sacred and women not inviolate from inhuman outrage, and
women and childred slaughtered with butchery. But the terrible ~~tragedy~~
tragedy during the time of the crusades, when the crusaders, inflamed

with their holy passion, plundered infidels at home. But the particular shame that a capable people descended from kings and prophets should feel, the shame and infamy heaped upon the Jew by Church and State x x x wear badges of shame upon their breasts and upon their heads. But we do not understand and cannot comprehend it except as Russia these years past has taught the Jew to understand and comprehend. Hear you not that the Jew stands aloof from the world? Have you not heard it? x x The Jews stand together only when the world oppresses them. The Jews for thousands of centuries long have always cared for their own because no one else cared or would care for them, and so the Jew has always stood at a little more disadvantage around the world as long as the Jew did not know the meaning of liberty to all. How long is it since the Jews are free? The story of our emancipation is a little more than half a century old, and yet, I ask, are we completely emancipated? Turkey and Holland and Poland were the only countries of Europe that in the medieval ages were lands of peace and freedom for the Jew. The Jews were expelled in 1290 from France, from x x x in 1394, from Spain in 1492, and the disabilities that so long oppressed the life of the Jew were not removed from him in England until in 1850, in Germany in 1858, in Switzerland in 1874, and in Russia and Roumania not yet. The Jews of today are the result x

of a ~~maxx~~ marvelous transformation of all the changes. Every Jew bears upon his person the free impress of this life story of persecution, oppression and suffering. From an ancient agricultural people, from a source of seers and singers and prophets of old the Jews have been transformed to that figure of human fame to your eye. The men with their eyes of sorrow and their faces clouded with misery. And yet, if we search beneath the outer surface and look within we know the true figure they have mighty well that makes them kin to the prophets, seers and kings of old. We appear to the world like a race of traitors. We are Jews, but we do not live upon the soil. The world forgets that we have been removed on mother earth these thousands of years. We have been driven from the holy land almost 2000 years. Driven thus, we have preserved for ourselves the customs and festivals peculiar to the soil. This is the idealism of the Jew. In spite of ~~max~~ his necessities, which compelled him to be sordid and follow mean occupations for eighteen centuries he still continues to be ^{in his own aims paltry.} x x x He sees the rushing of waters and the great sea. His eyes are lifted to the hills and mountains. Under great anguish and suffering and the enduring of martyrdom his breast is open to the ^{blessed} ~~xxxxxx~~ Israel that hear his cry. That is to say, we Jews are materialists. We Jews are materialists and we are also idealists. We are practical men of

of the world, but we are dreamers also. Every humane call appeals to us. Not by accident is it that the Jews are leaders of the world and share in the movements of the world. We are practical men of the world, but we are practical idealists whose hearts are burning with the cause of freedom, and every one of us believing in the final triumph of the cause of justice, despite 18 centuries of misery. Despite all these tragic and terrible realities we have clung to our idealism. We are still dreaming and dreaming, looking forward to the messianic age and era.

Let those who will tell the stories of Jewish achievement; I have not the time therefor. They tell us of the glorious story of Israel's contribution to science and medicine, of Israel's interpretation of x x , of Aristotle and of Greek knowledge as he interprets it. They tell us of the Jews of the Arabian civilization, of the glories of the Jews under the Kaliphs in Spain, and under the Moorish civilization, where Jewish signs still stand in the old cities of Seville and Grenada. x x x

The Jew still preserves human knowledge and gives stimulus to intellect and to life.

Let others speak of the women born of Israel, of the sons who have won high place and received high distinction. Born to our

ancient faith but not always loyal to our faith. I shall not speak of it, but I remind you that with less than one century of freedom, with less than one century of liberty, with less than one century since the days that the shackles were struck off and the chains were loosed, Israel has pushed into the fore-front. Not, as some believe, in the ranks of commerce, but in science and in politics, standing side by side among the leaders of mankind.

Shall I not say a word concerning the Jew of America? The Jews of America, now numbering more than two million strong, sailing perhaps as Columbus did upon his voyage of discovery, settled in this land more than 250 years ago, the Jew of America that helped to establish American independence. He gave his life and fortune for the cause of American freedom. He helped to maintain liberty in America and served in the preservation of the Union. Through all these years he has loved freedom and has been giving his life's blood for freedom. Are we Americans in spite of being Jewish? No, we are not Americans in spite of our Jewish principles. The principles and purposes of this republic are in perfect harmony with Jewish principles and Jewish purposes. The spirit of the old Hebrew commonwealth, ~~the Jewish~~ is at the very foundation of the spirit of this, the greatest and first republic of history, the first republic of history thousands of years

ago in little Palestine laid the foundations of this American commonwealth. And to Jews everywhere throughout the world, to millions in darkness and oppression, America has always been made a land of promise, to which they have looked forward, to which they have turned as the land of their redemption.

The Jew today is a living representative of 100 generations of Israel's life 4,000 years old and 4,000 years long. Israel lived on because of its might and lives on because of its liberty. The prophesy of old was never fulfilled that Israel shall be as the sands of the sea or the stars of heaven for multitude. Nations more numerous than Israel have aged and declined and passed away, and the Jew still wonderfully lives. The Jew was in Egypt when she built her temples, tombs and pyramids; the Jew was in Babylon when she erected her noble palaces, marvelous walls and hanging gardens which were the wonders of the ancient world; the Jew was in Rome, founded upon her seven hills x x x x ; the Jew was with Alexander when he went forth to conquer the ancient world. These are the great names and the great peoples of antiquity and the great nations of all ancient history. Now they are only memories. They have gone down in the oblivion of the past. The pyramids still stand fronting the sands of the desert.

Thagging gardens of Babylon are buried now beneath their ruins. The Parthenon still shines on the heights of the Acropolis; and the Arch of Titus that we know symbolized as a type of Jewish x x x seven branched candle stick, now speaks to the world of Roman power and Roman pomp and pride that were once in the days past but that are no more. And Jerusalem also has fallen and has been rebuilt, and the Temple of God stands yet on the ancient hill of Zion, but alone of all these ancient people the Jew lives with honor and with power. He alone lives the child of an ancient old race, marvelously, miraculously preserved through the centuries.

Nine years ago I spoke these words: "Israel in Russia lies bleeding and bruised and broken under the modern Pharaoh whose name is Nicholas. Israel lives x x x under the Pharaoh of extermination, and not a human hand is outstretched to save, and the nations expect for her courtesy and make ^{alliance} alliance with the Russian butcher." Russia is guilty of words and deeds of the vilest brutality. Who believes Israel will perish in Russia? Who of us believes the ancient people of Israel will be destroyed by this brutality? Who of us believes the Jews will be exterminated now by Russia?" And out of our hearts there poured forth the great faith ^{old} held as in Israel as an indestructible people and the old faith born of the wonderful stories

of thousands of persecutions and triumphs over them all. And supported by that faith, we spoke the words we believed that Israel will not be destroyed. We believe Israel will survive. We believe Israel will triumph. We believe Israel will live and not die, and that at last in Russia will dawn a day of freedom. And you and I have lived to see it. Spain is inviting to return the children whose fathers they expelled by the fires of the Inquisition 400 years ago, and Russia has within the last few days sent out a message of freedom and equality, granting to her sons alike all God-giving human rights. So at last history knows its transformation, and the people who have worn the shackles and fetters at last stand free in the sight of all men. Therefore we ~~may~~ see Israel forty centuries old in the midst of the peoples of the earth; ~~therefore we see Israel~~ Forty centuries old in history and in law and in custom is not forty centuries old, but is forty centuries young,--young with life ever renewed,- young with power unceasing,- young with enthusiasm and idealism. Israel remained true to its highest interpretation of the Jew in history.