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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
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“Church and Minister,” 1903 December 20.

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American Jewish Archives website.

Dec. 20th, 1903.

Church and Minister.

I use the term Church in its larger sense, including Temple and synagogue and every house of God.. Why speak of the Church as a soldier of civilization? It is teacher of love and peace. The history of the Church is not a history of love. It is not a love story, always prompted by the law of love. We cannot forget Mohammed conquering the world sword in hand, nor Christianity with its sword and torch and stake, its persecutions, its bloody wars and cruel massacres. Thank God! a new tolerance beats in the hearts of men; a new liberty is born in the world.

Immeasurable has been religion's influence upon civilization; it has transformed the nations of the world. With the great religious teachers begin new epochs in the history of mankind. The church should be moved by the aggressive spirit, not silent, not diplomatic in the face of human wrongs, making no treaty with wrong doers. The voice of conscience speaking in every age, "thou art the man."

Worship has been universal; on mountains, in valleys and groves. Altars and high places - then the Temple at Jerusalem, and after the Temple the house of assembly, the synagogue in which the word was read and expounded.

Today we celebrate the Feast of the Maccabees. It is the Feast of Lights. We remember the national triumph and the establishment of the independence of Judea. But the first action of the victorious Maccabees was the re-dedication of the Temple. Religion and patriotism were as one in ancient Israel.

The Rabbi was honored in Israel; honored as teacher and judge, honored because of qualities of mind and heart. He was interpreter of the law to guide life. He is interpreter still, applying the ancient undying principles to modern life and necessities. Rabbis and ministers are successors to the prophets; they have a prophetic duty; a message to give; a truth to expound.

The church is the one organization unselfish in purpose; to keep alive the ideals of home; to be the ally of the school. It touches most lives and most homes, week after week and year after year. No other institution has done or can

do its work. it is the moral teacher pointing men, women and children to the better life. It is organized religion - religion at work.

The church and the Temple have the mission to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. They are the heralds of the Messianic ideals and the Messianic age. Let us have no false emphasis upon other worldliness. The Church is not to be out of life; it teaches the duties of life. It calls for no surrender and sacrifice of the world; it commands service to the world. The day of righteousness, of truth and of justice are the Messiah time of the world. The Temple stands as the living symbol of Israel's historic doctrines. Israel is historic champion of justice and righteousness, of love and peace. The Church must teach the truth that touches the life of men, women and children. It is appointed to leadership in moral reform, to solve the problems of the time.

The Church is the teacher of brotherhood. We Jews emphasize brotherhood of Jew and Christian and heathen; of the rich and the poor; the educated and the ignorant. What institution more than the Church should know its obligation to human society today. The tenements of the poor with all their poverty and misery and resultant evil tell us plainly our civilization is not ideal. Wrongs there are of man against man, by man to be righted.

The Church is against militarism in time past or present. It teaches the glory of peace, and happiness under peace. It values the true heroism of life.

The Church is the creator of the public conscience. It establishes public opinion - and upon public opinion a free government must rest. The Church stands for purity and honor, defender of domestic virtues, guardian of the sanctity of the family and the holiness of the child.

The Church is the inspirer of life; it reveals to man his nobler nature. The philanthropy of the ages has been the work of religion. The poor, the orphan the friendless, the outcasts of the world are the children of the Church.

The Jew believes in the Temple and in religion. Historically his life has been bound up with the life of the Temple. Israel is the people of religion.

The first teacher of the moral law to the world, the Jew must still be the prophet of religion and the herald of truth. This is the meaning of the Maccabean victory. They fought for the Temple in the name of God. He must be to the last generation the prophet of his age old truth. God is, and man is in the image of God. Living voice of the past, he speaks the divine commandments of old. Love God and love man.

America believes in the Church and in religion; not in a church supported by the state, nor yet in the Church seeking to dominate the state. In the history of America religion and the ministry have always been powerful in the direction of public thought and feeling.

The Church is necessary to human society. State, nor school, nor press can take its place. Our age and the republic need the cooperation of home and school and church for the making of man and woman and the child, for the building of the nation. The nation needs men, masterful men and strong. They must be men of heart and soul; strong and masterful for the good. "Republics live by virtue", says Bryce. "History tells us that civilized society has rested on religion, and the free government has prospered best among religious peoples".