

**THE GOSPELS, HISTORICAL  
ADDRESS DELIVERED AT THE  
UNITARIAN CONFERENCE IN  
WASHINGTON, D. C., OCTOBER,  
1895, AND OTHER SERMONS**

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The Gospels, Historical Address Delivered at the Unitarian Conference in Washington, D. C.,  
October, 1895, and Other Sermons by W. H. Furness

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**W. H. FURNESS**

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ADDRESS DELIVERED AT THE UNITARIAN CONFERENCE  
IN WASHINGTON, D. C., OCTOBER, 1895

AND OTHER SERMONS

BY

*William Henry*  
W. H. FURNESS, D.D.

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1896

THE first edition of this book was printed for private circulation, and has all been given away. The demand for it, however, has been sufficient to warrant the printing of another edition, that those who wish for these last words may be gratified.

ANNIS LEE WISTER.

February 10, 1896.



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#### ADDRESS AT WASHINGTON

THE study for many years of the Internal Evidence of the truth of the Gospels has resulted in a conclusion as to their truth, which my aim now is to set before you to the best of my ability. I confidently trust that it will be accepted by you all, however skeptical you may be, as to the truth in regard to the contents and origin of the four Gospels. This most satisfactory conclusion is simply this :

The Religion for which Jesus lived and suffered death was, in all respects, perfectly natural, as natural as the rising of the sun. What he is recorded in the Gospels to have said and done, is in the closest conformity to the laws of Nature. His works were extraordinary natural facts. He declared they were done by God. And as explicitly he said that they were wrought as God always works, by a law of Nature, by the highest law of Nature, the law of the Supremacy of mind over matter, of Spirit over the flesh.

Man is naturally possessed of reason and conscience, enabling him to know the right from the wrong, to hate the one and to love the other. He is possessed also of instinctive sympathies, which bind men to mutual

help by the ties of kindred, of family, and of a common nature.

Thus is he provided with the instruments and opportunities for that Humane Spirit: the Spirit of Love, for which Jesus lived and died, the Holy Spirit of God, the Divine Force, present in man as in everything that exists.

But in this world man is in his infancy. In the earliest times, although the highest and best in him was only feebly developed, he saw, indeed, that there were invisible Powers over all. The manifold evils of life, physical, moral, intellectual; earthquakes, inundations, evils terrible in their consequences, sweeping away thousands of creatures, appalled him, and his startled imagination saw in these convulsions of Nature and in the devastation of the mystery of death, the power of unseen gods, expressing their wrath and cruelty, just as men do. Thus what was named religion was polytheistic and anthropomorphic.

Amidst the teeming mysteries of Being, one thing, however, is discernible. Throughout the Universe there is apparent a purpose, or tendency, out of good to evolve a better, even the worst working to the same end, slowly, indeed, but in the Supreme Power's own good time. Accordingly, it has come to be thought that man has descended (or rather ascended) from well-nigh the lowest forms of being—from the ascidian and the ape. In the primitive, prehistoric ages, reason