

**INAUGURAL DISCOURSES, OF
PROFESSORS MORRIS AND NELSON,
DELIVERED AT LANE THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY, ON THE THIRTY-SECOND
ANNIVERSARY MAY 13-14, 1868**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649312511

Inaugural Discourses, of Professors Morris and Nelson, Delivered at Lane Theological Seminary, on the thirty-second anniversary May 13-14, 1868 by Various

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

VARIOUS

**INAUGURAL DISCOURSES, OF
PROFESSORS MORRIS AND NELSON,
DELIVERED AT LANE THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY, ON THE THIRTY-SECOND
ANNIVERSARY MAY 13-14, 1868**

Inaugural Discourses

Lane

Theological Seminary,

Walnut Hills, Ohio.

1868.

CINCINNATI:
ELM STREET PRINTING COMPANY.

Inaugural Discourses,

OF

Professors Morris and Nelson,

DELIVERED AT

Lane Theological Seminary,

ON THE

THIRTY-SECOND ANNIVERSARY

MAY 13-14, 1868.

*Together with a brief Sketch of the Institution,
and the Annual Report of the Treasurer,
F. V. Chamberlain.*

CINCINNATI:

PUBLISHED BY THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES.

1868.

ELM STREET PRINTING COMPANY.

THE inauguration of REV. EDWARD D. MORRIS, as Professor of *Eccelesiastical History and Church Polity*, and REV. HENRY A. NELSON as Professor of *Systematic and Pastoral Theology*, took place in the afternoon of Wednesday, May 13; the services being conducted by REV. G. M. MAXWELL, D. D., President of the Board of Trust. After the reading of appropriate passages of Scripture and prayer by REV. DANIEL RICK, D. D., the Professors elect were formally inducted into office, and were earnestly and solemnly charged by the President, to be faithful to the sacred trust now committed to them. This ceremony was followed by the inaugural discourse of Professor MORRIS, on *The Supernatural Quality of the Church of God*. The discourse of Professor NELSON, on *The Relations of Christian Truth to Christian Life*, was delivered on the following day, at the close of the anniversary exercises.

DISCOURSE.

THE SUPERNATURAL QUALITY OF THE CHURCH OF GOD.

THE speculative unbelief of the seventeenth century, incarnated in the person of Thomas Hobbes, declared the church to be simply an arbitrary contrivance of human society:—an organization devised by men for the purpose of securing the more readily certain social and political ends, and having neither existence nor authority except by the *imprimatur* of the State. The more philosophic skepticism of the nineteenth century recognizes that church as something more than a political device—a tributary institution adhering to the civil power, as the mistletoe clings to the oak: yet attributes its origin exclusively to the moral instincts of mankind, and denies to it any validity or authority, beyond what it may possess as the product of our spiritual nature. Both agree in rejecting the cardinal truth, that *this church is a divine institution*: springing neither from civil enactment nor from moral instinct, but originating in the mind of God, and by Him implanted in the earth for purposes higher far than any which either political necessi-

ties or spiritual impulses would inspire man to seek. A philosophy more broad and just combines with the Holy Scripture to affirm that this remarkable institution is not to be viewed as, in any essential sense, the contrivance or creation of man: but rather as the manifest product of the same beneficent Being who framed the worlds by His power, and who in infinite love gave to mankind the gospel of His dear Son. Precious truth: questioned indeed by that skepticism which would reduce all things to the low level of sight and of nature, yet as worthy of universal acceptance as the fact of creation, or the doctrine of redemption in Christ Jesus!

But this is only a portion of the truth. The church is not merely superhuman in its origin: it is *supernatural in essence, in vitality, in development*. Implanted in the earth by the hand of God, it has not been left to unfold and bloom there under the action of natural or visible agencies simply: taking its place, like the family, in the great plan of Providence, and under that plan rising like a tribe or an empire to its present eminence. In no improper sense of the term, the church of God on earth is a continuous and germinant miracle: living from age to age only because He abides in it perpetually: increasing in luxuriance and fruitfulness, century on century, only because He pours into it his own perennial life. Standing in the plan of grace, rather than the plan of Providence, her superhuman origin becomes the preface to an equally superhuman existence and unfolding. As John beheld her in apocalyptic vision, descending from heaven, and adorned with the complete perfections

of the millennial state, so she descended from heaven at the first: and her entire career has been that of a celestial visitant, inspired continually by divine impulses, and continually led by a divine hand, in her gracious ministry to the soul of man. Her life is the life of God: her existence and her course constantly attest His presence and His power. More precious truth: unseen by the dim eye of a perverted nature, and rejected by a philosophy as pretentious as it is skeptical, yet obvious to all who study the history of that church with unperverted vision, and above all price in the esteem of those who dwell within her shelter, and are conscious of her nurturing and hallowing power!

In this wiser and purer spirit, let us meditate together upon the theme thus presented for our consideration: *THE SUPERNATURAL QUALITY OF THE CHURCH OF GOD.* To such consideration we are summoned by far higher incentives than any that may be derived from the peculiar solemnities of this occasion, or from the contemplation of those specific and difficult duties with which I have just been officially intrusted. The skeptical assaults upon the career and doctrine, and even the validity and authority of the church; the papal and prelatial tendency toward the humanization of the church at the sacrifice of her spiritual supremacy; the yearnings and efforts toward closer fellowship among those who are conscious of belonging to her holy and catholic communion, alike demand that we should possess the clearest, soundest views of that central and divine quality in the church, whose presence manifested puts both unbelief and priestly assumption to silence, gives rest to controversy,

calms division, and unites all who are consciously the children of God in one common and blessed household of faith. Let us, therefore, as disciples of Christ rather than students of history, first contemplate *the great fact* thus suggested, and then consider in brief certain *practical bearings of this fact* upon our belief and our duty.

I. One prominent illustration of this supernatural quality may be found in the sphere of *doctrine*: that inspired series or system of truths, which constitute the intellectual basis of this divine institution. It is an obvious and significant fact, that such a foundation of doctrine is a peculiar feature of the church of God. Heathenism, whether modern or ancient, blossoms into temples and altars and gorgeous rites; under the influence of classic or oriental philosophy, it sometimes takes on the aspect of profound speculation; but never does it ripen into doctrine. Like other human efforts in the region of the ideal, it only reflects, even when it wears the appearance of truth, the degenerate temper of the source whence it sprang. Not even the elaborate Deism of the eighteenth century, surreptitiously appropriating from the Christian system such cardinal features as the existence and providence of God, and the immortality of man, and the immutability and worth of virtue; or even the Positive Religion of our day, professing to despise and demolish Christianity, yet building its grand temple of devotion with material clandestinely taken from the ruins, will furnish an exception to this universal law. Man by nature is competent to fabricate philosophies, or invent forms of worship; but