

**A DISCOURSE ON THE LIFE AND CHARACTER
OF THE REVEREND JOHN THORNTON
KIRKLAND; ALSO A DISCOURSE ON THE LIFE
AND CHARACTER OF THE HON. NATHANIEL
BOWDITCH; DELIVERED IN THE CHURCH ON
CHURCH GREEN, MAY 3, 1840 AND MARCH
25, 1838**

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A Discourse on the Life and Character of the Reverend John Thornton Kirkland; Also a Discourse on the Life and Character of the Hon. Nathaniel Bowditch; Delivered in the Church on Church Green, May 3, 1840 and March 25, 1838 by Alexander Young

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ALEXANDER YOUNG

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JOHN THORNTON KIRKLAND.

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A

DISCOURSE

ON

THE LIFE AND CHARACTER

OF THE REVEREND

JOHN THORNTON KIRKLAND, D.D.LL.D.

FORMERLY PASTOR OF THE CHURCH ON CHURCH GREEN, BOSTON,
AND LATE PRESIDENT OF HARVARD UNIVERSITY,

DELIVERED IN

THE CHURCH ON CHURCH GREEN,

MAY 3, 1840.

By ALEXANDER YOUNG.

BOSTON:

CHARLES C. LITTLE AND JAMES BROWN.

1840.

Boston, May 10th, 1840.

At a meeting of the Society worshipping at Church Green, held after the morning services this day, the Hon. WILLIAM PRESCOTT presiding as Moderator, the following Resolutions were unanimously passed :

Resolved, That this Society cherishes a lively and grateful remembrance of the faithful and valuable labors of their former Pastor, the Rev. JOHN THORSTON KIRKLAND, and unites with this whole community in acknowledging the eminent services which, as President of the University, he has rendered to the interests of Education, Learning, and Religion.

Resolved, That the Standing Committee be desired to express the thanks of this Society to the Rev. Mr. YOUNG for his able and interesting Discourse on the Character of the Rev. Dr. KIRKLAND, and to request a copy of it for the press ; and that they cause the same to be printed when the copy shall be obtained.

B. A. GOULD,
Secretary pro tempore.

BOSTON :
FREEMAN AND HOLLES, PRINTERS,
WASHINGTON STREET.

DISCOURSE.

DANIEL V. 11, 12.

LIGHT, AND UNDERSTANDING, AND WISDOM, AND KNOWLEDGE, AND AN
EXCELLENT SPIRIT, WERE FOUND IN HIM.

ON former occasions, in the regular course of my ministrations in this place as a Christian teacher, I have spoken to you, my hearers, of Christianity as the chief agent in human progress and cultivation; and have endeavoured to portray the mighty effects which its introduction and diffusion have gradually produced on the moral and social condition of man, and the entire change which its establishment has brought about in the aspect of the civilized world. At the present time I propose to take a somewhat different view of the same comprehensive topic, and confining myself to a narrower range of observation, point out what our religion has done for the intellectual culture of our race, and for the promotion of good learning. Its services in this province are hardly less remarkable; and I trust are not unsuitable nor unworthy to be presented to the notice of a Christian congregation.

I begin with observing that Christianity is necessarily connected with letters. Being a historical and documentary religion, built upon facts, early committed to writing, and derived by us at the present day solely from records, it cannot be illiterate, nor dispense with the instruments and aids of human learning. This revelation has come down to us recorded in an ancient language, which is no longer spoken. In order to ascertain its precise import, and transfuse it into modern tongues, erudition is indispensable. I do not mean to say that it is necessary that all persons should have it; for I hold that the simplest and least instructed Christian can obtain from any version of the New Testament, however defective or erroneous it may be, all needful light and all saving truth. He who runs may read and understand. The Word is written in capitals as with a sunbeam. It is not now, as it once was, "a very learned, and a very subtle, and a very ingenious thing, to be a good Christian." But I do mean to say, that there must be knowledge somewhere of the original, in order to convert it, however inadequately, into the spoken languages of the present day, and to make the treasures of divine wisdom accessible, even in an imperfect form, to the people at large. The translators and expositors of the Word, the teachers and the defenders of the faith, must possess acquired learning as well as native genius and good sense. There is no getting along without it. There must be some persons qualified to translate and interpret our sacred books. Nobody knows Greek now-a-days by inspiration.

The Gospel, in order to be thoroughly understood in all its parts and relations, requires to be studied. Its evidences and its doctrines demand and deserve a minute and patient investigation. They are capable of tasking the profoundest intellects; and such men as Grotius, Newton, and Locke, had not the vanity to imagine that by mere intuition they could grasp divine truth in all its vast extent.

Christianity became very early connected with literature, and received from it substantial benefits, which it repaid by the most important services. Resting upon a written record, this record became the text of written comments, and in this way all literature ranged itself under its protecting banner. The progress of letters was inseparable from the progress of religion; it was in the language of Homer and Virgil that the Fathers of the Church explained and defended the principles of their faith. One of the most valuable services that Christianity rendered to learning, was by preserving the classical languages, the Latin in particular, from extinction, when the ancient civilization was overrun and buried by the irruption of the barbarians, and by keeping the knowledge, that was locked up in them, until the modern world was ready to receive, and able to comprehend and apply it. This it did, mainly, by making the Latin the language of the Church. Its liturgy was read, its litany was chanted, its ritual was performed, all its offices of worship were offered, in this language. The Vulgate translation of the Scriptures was in Latin, and the correspondence of its widely diffused clergy was carried on