No. 41.

Motives for studying the Scriptures.
John v. 59. "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me."

This is the command of one, from whose authority no man can admit an appeal. It is the command of our Lord; though it was enjoined by him on a particular occasion, with reference to a particular case, yet it may be applied in the spirit of it, to all who profess to be the followers of him. Jesus had healed them, whom he found languishing in despair at the pool of Bethesda. This miracle, like most of the other miracles of our so-called faith that is deep rooted, settled itself unshakably in the minds of the Jews. They first framed the accusation of violating the sabbath; and this charge was then with malicious zeal sought to be met with their dead long passions and the calumny compassing me. This felt that he was fulfilling a divine com-
mission. He says before them the evidences of his authority from heaven. He refers them to the testimony of John, who was the herald of this coming, to the acts of supernatural powers as performed, & finally to their own divine records, as the subjects of his claim to be the Messenger of God. “Search the Scriptures.” It is obvious, that by the word “Scriptures” in this passage, meant the books of the O.T. In the time when our Saviour was on earth, the books of the O.T. were not written. But, though the inspiration, when addressed to the Jews, must necessarily have been limited to this meaning, yet the fulness of meaning, contrasted in the light of a general precept, is not in meaning considered to search with devoted attention, not only the Jewish, but more especially the other revelations. The command, “search the scriptures,” enjoins something more than a careless or mechanical perusal. We are very far from being satisfied the acquisition of our laws, precepts, when we have turned over the leaves of our Bible, or hurried through its contents, with that cold & formal spirit, as tells plain as oracles can tell, that we regard it, as a book in which we have no interest. You see it may be, are fixed in the sacred page, but where we2

you have gone to the fountain of life, & taken its pure & invigorating draughts; but perhaps to you, they were insipid and insipid, because great thoughts were wandering, after the gratifications of seeking meaner delights. To search the Scriptures is to study them; to study them with a serious and earnest attention; it implies the existence of that devotedness of soul, in which we come to whatever we deem most valuable, ensouling in our hopes, & enkindling & elevating in our knowledge. It is this spirit with the precept of the text commands us to bring with us to the place of the Bible. Is it without meaning, that the command is given; for if there be an object on the mind which has a claim upon the whole ensouling of our souls, that object is found in the Scriptures. They are already, by the word of the Savior, by the word of the Saviour, should be girded in reading the Bible. I would our ears of the contents are to induce us to read the Scriptures with earnest attention & devoted diligence.

1. The motive to be mentioned is, that from the Bible alone we derive a satisfactory knowledge of God, of Christ.
explicit rules of duty, grounded by sanctified and approved by motives most solemn and animating. This is true, the voice of God is not heard in the Scriptures alone, but is heard among us, there is something in each of us of that. Faith and he must have a heart hardened by no unusual depravity, or soul sunk in the deadness of insensibility, who does not, if he should rather say, will not, see and feel the power of conviction in the arguments and reasons given in the majesty of the universe. But even men, whose minds are most enlightened and whose views most profound, have been sometimes much embarrassed in pursuing their investigations, even by the light from the light of nature alone; and surely, so many of mankind, this light could not be a sufficient guide. The character of the Deity, when considered as revealed merely in the mind of creation, is subject of reasoning of inference more or less remote; the facts, or rather the arguments or built, are in some measure disconnected, and must be brought together; one event must be compared with another, each appearance must be regarded in reference to the system of law which it forms; but a small part of the whole of creation is visible; time must be taken into view; the chain of events must be pursued through the mighty domains of God’s power, till it is traced to the throne of the everlasting and the omnipotent. Now this is indeed a most sublime process; but still it is a process, and by far the greatest part of men, could not be expected to undertake it accomplished, even if they had the power of patient attention and profound thought necessary to the business. They must have some plain and explicit declaration of the character of God, something the mind can immediately grasp, and to some representation of the Deity, which will go home with power to the heart and soul. Nor is it necessary this view of the representation, and is transmitted by the Bible, which we have a strong motive to study the Bible. The good portion in the Scriptures is a God, whom all can love and reverence, because all can discern the glory and the beauty of his perfections, which is presented to us in the Bible as the sole and sovereign ruler of the universe, whose power and agency are everywhere extended around us, as the invisible Spirit whose inspection penetrates through all the fields and meadows. Not the thoughts of our hearts, whose eye marks every step we take, though our path be in silence and darkness. He is as the Lord, teach us, feed the flocks of the air, thunder, earth and sea to move on man; it is he who has numbered the hairs of our heads, it is he alone who is good; from him we have the means of grace, the hope of glory; he will...
not, that any should perish but that all should come to the knowledge of the truth.  He saith, from sin the god shall receive their crown of glory; it is the mark of their better portion of punishment in an eternal state of being.  He appears in the parental character.  He is not far off, nor is his heart so far off as to be contrary to the evil.  He is nigh to the thankful and to the evil.  This is the way of learning, that we should fear because He is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.  Then, we should pray as do the angels in heaven.  From Him we should seek our mercies.  To Him all we should entirely resign ourselves.  He is the sole object of our worship.  From Him we must imitate and love.  Such is the Gospel.  They present to our affections your adoration.  Therefore, we are bound by every feeling which can attach us to our Lord.  We must study the Bible.  But this is not all.  In the Scriptures, above all, we have the most plain, direct, explicit rules of duty, and those rules sanctified by an authority, before which every creature must bow.  It is very easy to frame theories of minds to discuss the principles of right and wrong, to describe the action and influence of different passions, to unlock the sources of the various emotions and affections which warm and agitate the heart.  Yet point out the lines and shades by which one virtue is distinguished from another.  Virtue is something very different from giving rules of duty, especially of human duty.  It is one thing to speculate and another to profess the principles of holiness make them sink into the heart.  The first it is not difficult for man to do; the last can be affected only by the instructions of the Scriptures.  One is like the rays of light that penetrate and break on the surface of the water; the other is like the same rays when it penetrates its unclouded brightness illumines every object on which it falls.  Men have too many strong passions and too many debased propensities to be subdued or purified by abstract reasoning or refined theories.  It must have clear, immediate, necessary rules given by authority which cannot be disputed with impunity.  They are forced by sanctions which we can resist only to our own destruction.  There shall be love and the God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and all thy mind, and all thy strength.  If thy neighbour is thyself?-"Do unto others as you would, that they shall do unto you."  "Be ye perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."  "Out of the heart proceed all evil desires.
...you are another brother, as fully all the laws of X. These
summons other precepts equally clear, simple, you think
true, are not infinitely more for the regulation of con-
duct, as guides to duty, than the most elaborate system
of moral, or the wisdom of men ever framed, or ever
have been. They are plain, unequivocal, unshadowing
rules: there is no escaping from them, but by denying
their authority. And it is worthy of observation that
the truths of the Bible are preparatory to, and are
the same book, for instance, I have the command:
love not the world; whereas, I suppose, I am not the com-
manded by teaching me that the things of the world are
comparatively but empty hopes and insufficient for happy-
ness; for whilst they were their brightest colours,
We have the precepts, 'Thou shalt not kill,' 'Thou shalt not
bear false witness,' 'Thou shalt not covet,' 'Thou shalt not
commit adultery,' 'Thou shalt not steal,' 'Thou shalt not
bear false witness,' 'Thou shalt not covet.'
We have the precepts, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour.'
And they are the same truths of His divine
character and office, of His mighty acts of sublime revelation,
of all that we enjoy or hope to enjoy through His medi-
ation. The Scriptures first teach us the best truths,
and then give us the purest precepts. Such says X are the
rich treasures of instruction which the Bible presents with
respect to God, as to our duty: I tell you, do you not find
an almost powerless motive to induce you to study
the Bible?—If the Scriptures give you all that is good
and elevating, if instructing in your views of the
Army, all that is clear, direct, and commanding in your views of
life, if they teach you the path in which you must walk, have given
you that the path leads to the very center of your heart.
Fath, or high, or low you will not go to them, as the fountain
of life, place your heart under their tutelary influence?

2. Another reason for reading the Bible with earnest atten-
tion is that it presents the only history of what we can have of
the unperceived, marvelous dispensations of God to man.
What have been the dealings of the Army towards his earthly
children? This is a question, which should make every
interest, every hope, every feeling within us. This question
is answered in the Scriptures. If we take a deed in cord in
these books of common interest, as tells us of the case, of some
death of a state, of its conversion, if we come to look back to
days that once were so dear to us in imagination with
the rise of the great, who appears in the far distant ages of
past time; if in that we learn much that is useful for
the conduct of man to man; with how much more eager-
ness and delight should we pursue the history of the conduct
of God to man, with what more ardent attention should we study
these pages, when we record the mighty and marvelous interpositions
of
The providence of God, in behalf of the spiritual improvement and eternal happiness of this present sinful children. Not only the mind of man never has a more noble or more sanctifying employment, than when it is occupied in tracing through the lapse of ages the times of the Almighty’s play, as they appear in the path of his dealings towards the beings he has created. And this path is fully disclosed to our view in the Bible. The scriptures then this operative representation of what God has done for man with the history of that period of probation. Operation. Where from darkness & confusion this world was called into existence. Then the spirit of God moved on the face of the waters. The elements were mingled & balanced. The lands were assigned to the different orders of creation. The gates of Paradise are then opened to us, we see there the origin of the human race. But in this state of felicity the first pair did not long continue. They disobeyed the command of Him who placed them there; like all other disobedient sinners became miserable. Then the tide of vice & corruption rose upon the world; it produced the hard, heart & stiff leg of men, that God saw fit to send the deluge on the earth to engulf away the wicked race. From the general destruction one righteous patriarch & his family were saved. He became the instrument of God's grace in going forth after the noted deluge. Let the waters head outwards to people again the earth. The next important fact recorded in the second volume, is the selection of the Jewish nation to be the depositories of that knowledge of these truths, which our Lord Faith. In his abundant mercy designed gradually to enlighten all families of the world. This was the tree of life planted by the hand of the Almighty. Though sometimes its growth was stunted & its beauty marred, still it was kept from its branches & struck deep its roots. So the time would come when all nations shall rejoice under its shadow & taste its fruits. It is delightful to observe the dawning of beaming light upon the world in the commencement of the Jewish dispensation. After the account of the selection of this people, the history of the Bible is what should contract it to be confined almost entirely to the wonderful dealings of God with these a over He and chosen. With an outstretched arm & with great judgments did God deliver his people from the slavery of Egypt & lead them, overcoming & subduing as they went, through the pathless wilderness to the promised land of rest & happiness. For them He did cleanse the fountain of
appears to regenerate the world, to introduce a new religion by a spiritual worship, and to bring to men the blessings of Heaven. At the predicted time this dispensation of Jehovah’s love did appear. The numerous apprentices of the sound truth was broken down; yea, from all nations, no one to speak over the whole earth. We have the history of the life of Jesus, of what he did, taught, suffered, died, and rose again; and now we have the history of the Apostles, of those who went forth in the might of the Spirit to preach in its name. Such is a very imperfect sketch of the historical parts of the Bible, considered separate from its other parts. And now, my dear, are you not ready to confess that, if it were for anything else but for this great history, the Church might well claim our best and most devoted attention? Looking out of view the grand doctrine of the sublime spiritual instruction with the Bible contains, are not the facts about disbelief respecting the highly God Second of God’s Providence, or the world, worthy of interesting all our attention? All that best feelings in the study of the sacred books? Not certain, they are. The books record the history of man’s actions. But the Bible is...
cords the history, do to speak of the actions of the first man. If thou wouldst deeply feel what it is, to be thus examined, go to the Scriptures; study them with all thy heart, with all thy soul.

38. Another is still more particular reason for reading the Bible is, that it gives to us the way of salvation by our Saviour; it gives us the most powerful supports, the richest consolations amidst the trials of our lives. The Church, as she wills, she dispenses, for they are only the dispensers. This is their peculiarity, their common excellence; they tell us that we must trust in Christ, that we must have faith in Christ, that we must follow Christ, that we must believe in Christ. When we speak of the subject in this sense, because we refer more particularly to the writings of the New Testament, it is evident the consolations of the glorious revelations disclosed in the Scriptures; it is the Holy of Holies to all the other parts of the Bible may be considered as avenues sentences. Our debt, it is true, did not come to instruct us in the knowledge of every thing not curiosity might prompt the most learned. But what is of far more consequence, the faith, and to mankind in their highest capacity, as the rational, accountable subjects of God, is as capable of present & future happiness & misery according to their behavior. This is the chief subject, not the only design of the divine revelation, to give us a clear view of our nature & condition, of the dispensations of the Judge of all the earth. We are the immediate objects of the purity of God, & the immediate objects of the purity of our souls. We are guilty of our own guilt; therefore we can have no true consolation without the hope of pardon & immortality. Hence it is evident that the chief use & excellence of the doctrines of Christ must lie in the influence they have when the individual revelation of our hearts. Christ, in Himself clearly expresses the searching influence of His truth. "Sanctify them, not, by the truth, but by the word of truth." We shall soon be placed distinctly the way in which we may hope for the favors of God, against which we have sinned, for the favor of the God, against which we have sinned. It teaches us that the chief & sincere, sinfulness or the human condition, is sinfulness of soul, in the last, in its essential, intrinsic, vileness of soul, in the last, in its essential, intrinsic, vileness, is the visible & evident, in all its doings, laws, statutes, sanctions, it must move every sentiment of good and evil, essence & grateful advice. Now it is the foundation...
ought to communicate to us these sublime truths, they give us the
exalted hopes, and will persuade when every thing earthly
is arched in ruin around us, that the triumphant figures
we teach us, as we have a soul, and are may be saved.
Will you not then, if you have a heart of faith, that would
be satisfied, will you not study these deep things? Besides,
you have another reason to love the Bible. In
the last night of sorrow it brings consolations to you; it is
the mourner's dearest companion, the best friend of the
alcohol. Not infrequently in the sweetest
life and in deepest sorrow your heart is to be consoled by
the bitterness of our sins and the comforts of repentance,
thieves of the soul that sin on it. It may be a consoled
or it is the best, that shortly of the consolations of
the Gospel, when it breaks the heart and mourns the
clouds, it brings to the soul of sweetness, joy, the
bowl of death, the bowl of triumph. Many an eye has been
closed peacefully in death, and had not been, for the
instructions of the sacred book, might have looked
in vain for joy. Many a heart has gone down to the
grave angry, because till it ceased to beat, it was filled
with the sin influences of the Gospel. Nigh shall we
not love the study that keeps the mind in its best
needs to know? For if not, its truths are as the suns and
beams of its pages as the charter of our usefulness.

These, his, are but a few of the motives we have to
study the Bible. Many more might be suggested, if the
world, you as an able writer, if you are to...
the more we shall see & feel the hand of God in them.  

Thus far, let not this sacred book be neglected, but let it not be laid on the shelf, as if it were useless, to be taken down but once a week. Some portion of it should be read every day, for every day we need its directions and help. Let us then search the scriptures, for in them we have eternal truths, they only testify of them.

Dec. 1819/20

Like of wisdom, we those who love you, are extremely affected by the light of revelation, we would thank the Lord with fervent gratitude for those treasures of grace with whose most open to us in the sacred scriptures. We bless the God that in the volume of truth that has been divinely laid open to us, the character of God, that he has taught us of what his servants did, what the last prepared shall do, and that through his grace, we have been given a sense of grace and the hope of glory. We pray that our minds may ever be open to the good impressions of the love of God, to the influence of divine truth, that we may study the Word of God with a spirit of docility, and receive it, in faith, with hearts believing, and become as candidates for eternity, as beams of an unclouded light. Ever remembering that the law of the Lord is perfect, confirming the soul, that the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple, that the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart, that the commandment of the Lord is pure delight, ening the eyes, may we search the scriptures with delight, knowing that in them we have eternal life.
may our hearts become purified & sanctified, that we may be prepared to receive the inheritance of saints in light.

[Signature]

Melrose, Dec. 12th, 1819, afternoon.