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THE REVEREND JOEL WINCH—  
PIONEER MINISTER

SELECTIONS FROM HIS DIARIES

*Edited by*

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*Our search for a diary that would give a firsthand glimpse of the place of religion in any of its denominational forms in a small, pioneer Vermont community came to an end in the original, neatly penned diary of the Reverend Joel Winch. In the selections we offer our readers we find a lad of tender years, not averse to meeting halfway some of the attractive temptations of youth, pondering the problems of faith, studying doctrinal variations in his community, then going on to find a path for himself which led to the ministry. Here, also, we believe, are entertaining glimpses of an early community and certain characters who live again for us in Mr. Winch's sincere pages. We have introduced a limited amount of punctuation and some paragraphing; otherwise, the text stands as Mr. Winch wrote it in 1802. Selections to follow will continue his story. Editor.*

I WAS born in Roxbury, Massachusetts, in the year Seventeen hundred Eighty, December Seventeenth. My Father by occupation was a tanner. He profest no Religion, yet he owned what was called the half way Covenant, and so got his Children Baptised as was the

fashion in them Dayes. He determined if possible to have the Riches of this World, and after much labour he obtain'd a decient interest, but he lost nearly all by the fall of Paper Money. Soon after which he was taken sick with a Feavor which held or kept him confind for one year and that with other sickness which he had in his Family divested him of what little Property remaind with him. He then moved to Fittswilliam in New Hampshire whare he set up his Trade again where he lived for a few years. He was then burn't out there which brought him into exceeding low circumstances.

He then concluded that he would leave his trade and try Farming. He therefore sold his little seat in Fittswilliam and mooved to Hartland County of Windsor State of Vermont where he purchased a small Farm, and haveing nothing to pay for it with and having a Family of small Children to moove on to an intire new Farm, he was brought in to the necessity of labouring verry hard. He was not yet discouraged but was determind to be rich if possible. He frequently would work out by Dayes works, after which he would come home and work the chief of the Night on his own Farm. On the Sabbaths he would call us all together and pray, and my Mother would lern us the Catecism, and so tell us that God has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass. But they both being determind to be rich, they took every lawful method to obtain it. But still they took no pains to lay up treasurs in Heaven, therefore the Lord did not prosper them. They could not bring any creature onto the Farm but what it would die. They having no Cow took one for which they ware to give two at the end of three Years, and in two weekes after she was drove home she died with the Murrain, but the owner made no allowance for that. They also bought a few Sheep and the chief of them died also and a number of other things which I shall not mention. However, they ware striveing for the God of this World but the God of Eternity was against them.

They now began to see that they ware wrong and had been wrong all there Dayes. I one morning heard my Father say that he had ought to seek first the Kingdom of Heaven and its righteousness.

I was now between ten and eleven years old and was naturally given to think much of what I heard. I would frequently ask myself what such and such things could meen. One day my Father told me that no one could go to Heaven unless they ware Converted. He told me how Christ had died to save Siners &c.

After this I youst to think much about dying and often did git

away alone and cry. Before this I youst to think I should love to be a Preacher. I youst to git my mates to gether by our selves and so I would be the Minister and preach to the rest. This I conclude arose from pride. I had no thought that I could be a Preacher any more then I could be a God, unless I went to Colledge for I thought that was the place where all the Ministers were made.

I now felt offul to think that I had made sport of such things. I youst to dream of dying & seeing God and some times I youst to dream of hell & of Heaven &c.&c. Not long after this I went to hear a Baptist Preach by the name of Grow [?] he Preach'd, but God sent it to my heart. I kept it hid from all and got home as I could. The Subject was, See theat ye grieve not the Spirit of God. That night I went with my Father to a Congregationalist Conference, but I got no good there. (My Parents had as they thought both Experenced Religeon and had joind the Congregationalist Church and I know not as I have any reason to doubt but that they professed it.) As I was on my way Home with my Father my heart was so full I could hardly walk, and I kept thinking that I should grieve the Spirit of God if I held my peace. At length I spoke and as I spoke I burst out a crying. I confest to my Father every thing that I could think of which I had don that I thought was wrong. I then felt deliverd from a grate part of my distress which I had before but I had not found Religeon. My Father I supose told my Mother how I had talked to him, for a few weaks after it so hapened that I did not please her so well as I had ought and she being a quick woman twited me of my pretending to be good. O how it sunk me down and from that moment I began to think there was nothing in Religeon, yet I youst to git a way and weap once in a while and so I lived till I was thirteen years old. O how careful ought Parents to be with Children! Had my Mother a given me a Motherly reproofe it might a been of grate worth to me, but as she had jest before Profest Religeon and then speaking to me as she did caused me to think that there was no Religeon in her, and if so, I concluded there was none any where. I believe that Parents do more harm then what they think of by speaking in an improper way before there Children.

When I was thirteen years of age I went to live with one Samuel Aboat of that Town. He belonged to the Congregationalist Church but his wife was a Baptist. And she youst to freequently talk to me on the Subject of Religeon which caused me to think more of what

I had felt. I could read some and so I was frequently called upon by Mr A— and his Wife to Read in the Bible. I went there the first of November and in December about the time of my Berth day I read Mr. Russel's Seven Sermonds which deapon'd the work of Conviction in my Soul. I worked Chiefly in the Shop that Winter, and I repeatedly observed when there was a small Snow so that I could [*sic*] that there was a Womans track to and from the Shop Erly in the Morning and what it ment I knew not, but I deturmind to know if possible; so I went and locked the dore when I came out at Night; but this was soon disapproved of. I then found that Misses A— went there Evenings also. I then went and hid myself in the shop and found that she youst to go there to pray. This settled it in my mind that she was a Christian. I then concluded that the Congregationilists ware not so faithful. So I began to watch Mr. A— and I found that he practised going in to the Sullar to pray.

I now began to think that it would not do for me to be as I was. I deturmind that I would pray and leve off all things that I found to be wrong; so I went to work with all my might, and soon I became an excelent saint in my own esteem. I began to justify myself for I fasted & prai'd oft &c. And I suppose that I was as good as many profesers of Religeon altho I had no Religeon at all.

Hear I lived till about the Middle of Jenewary, I then went to hear a Baptist man by the name of Hibbord. I heard him Preach on Monday tuesday and wendsday & saw him baptise four by which time I got tourned from my sandy foundation. I went home to see my Father, but I got no help. I returnd to Mr. A—s in as grate distress as I could bare up under. That night I thought I would try to pray again (for I had left off praying for the Devil had made me believe that it was wrong for me to pray becaus I was trying to git to Heaven by my works. But he never told me that I should be Dambd for disobedience). So I went out but dare not go to the Barn as my custom was for it appeard to me that the Devil would carry me off Bodily. However I went round behind the woodpile and kneel'd down. It seemed as though the Devil stood jest behind me but insted of praying like the Pharisee it was more like the Publicane Lord have Mercy on me a Sinner! Lord have mercy on me a sinner! O Lord have mercy on me a Sinner! I was now under more convictions then ever before but I kept them as much to myself as posibel. Soon after this I went to a Baptist Conferance to one Timothy Grows in which I requested them to pray for me. And in

a few dayes they had one at Mr. A—s Hous. I offerd a hymn to be sung. When the meeting was ended, Mr. Daverson the Baptist Deacon and my Father set back and began to talk (not thinking that I was hearing for the Hous was full of People talking) and they both agreed not to say any thing to me about Sentiments on Joining any Church for which I was glad. I now determind to watch them and see if they kept there word. As I was going out of the Hous, I heard some one call me. I did not answer but lisened. I heard Docter Jones (that was a young man of the Baptist Church who has sence became a Preacher) say that he was a going to stay there that night on purpos to talk with me. So I stept in with my Parents and went home with them, for I was unwilling to have any person talk much with me. Next morning I returnd. They wondered at my going off, but I sed but alittle.

A young man who lived in the Famely told me that Mr. Jones said he did not think I cared much about Religeon or I should not have gone off, but I knew my own feeling best. I now continued seeking and the Lord showed me my heart plainer and plainer. My sins ware placed before my eyes night and day. I had no pleasure in eaghting drinking or sleaping. I was company for no one. I was like a stranger to all because I knew that I was to much a stranger to myself. By times I hardly dared turn myself on my bed lest I should fall to Hell. No one can tell how bitter the Wormwood and Gall is unless they have tasted it them selves. One Morning after I had had a weresom night I arose, gave Mr. A— & his wife to understand how it was with me and Mr. A was for haveing me go to talk with Deacon Daverson, but his wife saide no Joel go to the Lord. I knew but little how the work I was about went on that day.

Next morning I retired to the Barn in deep distress and tried to pray. I confest to the Lord and promised the Lord to never give over till I found Religeon. And that morning which was about the middle of February 1795 the Lord broke into my Soul. I was on my way to the House, the Sun had jest risen, the Sky was clear, the trees ware coverd with frost, O how Heavenly all apeard to me, the Mountain of sins in a moment went from before my eyes, my gloomy feelings ware taken away, I felt light, I felt hapy, I knew not what it was, but the things I once hated I now loved. That was a hapy day to me. Next morning I told Mr. A & his wife that I thought I loved the Lord. They asked me some questions but I gave them careful answers.

It got round that Joel Winch was converted. I was now called to duty. I dare not think that all was well if I disobade. I was all alone. I had no young person to talk with, and the Congregationalist Professers would take no notis of that which the Lord had don for me. But the Baptist began to talk with me; some of them incouraged me and some discouraged me; at length Deacon Daverson came to talk with me. It was him that made that a greement with my Father not to say any thing to me a bout sentiment. He examined me the closest of any I had ever talked with. I was glad to have him examin me close, but after he had don he asked me if I did not meen to join a Church? I told him, when I saw my way clear I ment to, if a Church would recieve me. He then went on and in an indirect way pointed out what he thought ware errors a mong the Congregationalist Churches. He then wished to know which Church I loved best. My knowing what he had said to my Father made me unwilling to tell him, so I said the Church of God. Well said he where do you feel the most at home? in secret Prayer said I. He then explaind what he cald baptism.

It is true I loved the Baptist Church the best and should have joint it had it not been for there being unwilling to let all that they owned to be Children of God come with them to his table, and Deacon Daverson, I suppose, did say that if he knew that Christ communed with a person he could not unless they ware baptised by plunging. I now went home to live with my Parents. I freequently had talkes with them on baptism. The Baptist said that I was not baptised but the congregationalists said that I was. So I took to reading the Bible. I read and wrote down all that I found on Baptism and marked the places &c. till I got through, and nothing could I find of the manner how it should be performd. Baptism I found to be plain, and I found that every person whose sines ware forgiven, or in other words every one who was not guilty of actual sins had a right to the ordinance of baptism. The baptist told me that the scripturs said that we must believe and be baptised, but I have never found it yet.

I studed about a year in which time I got careless and began to join with my mates in youthful folies. I lost the enjoyment of Religeon, yet I did not go into such practises as many did. I did not dance nor play cards nor yet sware, for I knew that I could not have the name of being religious if I did, and as I wished to have that name, I took grate care to do nothing that I thought would prevent it. I therefore made professers my rule and what I saw them do I took liberty

to do; also I knew in my soul I had not that religion which I once had. O what stumbling blocks lukewarm professors are! How many young people are thinking all is well if they live as well as professors do, and yet they are following the worst of them because it suits the carnal heart, and therefore go on with them blindfold to Hell. O Lord undesieve such people.

My Parents had now become quite formal in their duties, and said but a little about Religion. And the church was in great difficulty too for they were at war with their Priest whose name was Brick. And after much labour, and great talk, and a few Councils they hired him to hold his peace. I doubt not but he was a man that had known religion, but I doubt whether he was ever called of God to preach the everlasting Gospel. However they got clear of him. He then went abroad to preach, but not making out to his mind, he returned and became a Justice of the Peace; and so got in to Town business and proved of some use. They now lived without preaching except now and then they would pick up a transient Preacher for a day. I now lived like the rest. I increased in Devilry as I increased in years. I studied the Bible and having the use of my tongue full equal to common Boys I sought to love to talk on the Scriptures: but for no other intent only to see how far I could hold an argument. I therefore would be always on the opposite side, yet I had rather have what I thought to be truth on my side: but rather than not have a dispute I would vindicate a lie: but it was very hard for me to own beat on any account, which I was sometimes obliged to do or do worse. About this time the Church was trying to hire one Samuel Chiever. He had been a Doctor of Physic, but he now had been a Preacher in the west Parish in Windsor for a year or two. They obtained their wish but much to the disapprobation of their former Minister and his Wife.

This Doctor Chiever (for so he was called) was a smart Preacher. He did not read and call it Preaching: but he Preached. And his words were with power; he gained the attention of the People more than any that had been there before him. There were a few warm fatalists that said he was an Arminian because he held forth free salvation. The Church now met and renewed Covenant as they called it, and all that did not come in with them were considered as not being of them. Squier Brick's Wife and one or two more stood off. Of course they became unchurched. The Covenant in Mr. Brick's day read so that they did not wish to mend it much, only renew it,

but the Articles of Faith they thought best to mend, for they concluded that it or they ware to strong upon the Hopkintion Plan for it read as follows (viz.) "We believe that God has from all eternity Elected some to everlasting life and hath left others to work out there own ruin by sin." So the Church to make it better and to have it more reasonable aded the following words (viz.) "but not in such a sense as to exclude marvel agency or free will in the Creature." Another claus of them ware (viz.) "for a more full and clear declaration of our faith we refer to the Assembly of Devine's shorter Catecism which contains a good sumery of Christian doctrins founded alone on the word of God." They now thought they would answer well. There were a grate many joint the Church and the peopel in general ware thoughtfull.

I now was visited of the Lord again. My Mother one night began as follows "Joel, dont you think you have become as wicked as any of the youngsters." This came like thunder to me as it was unexpected. I told her I knew not that I had done anything bad. She said that Mr. Abbot and Wife ware quite unesey about me to think that I should live like the Wicked World after the Lord had don so much for me.

I in a moment felt conviction fall on upon my mind in such a manner that I could but jest keep them hid. So like a wicked child I told her that if the Neighbeors had Religeon, they would tell me when they had anything a gainst me and not go and tell it to them. I felt displeased with myself and all the rest. My Father took the matter up and talked solum to me, and I like Jonah began to think that I did well to be angry, for both Neighbors and Parents ware notising me and observeing my wickedness. I got up in haste and went out of the House. I neither talked nor slept much that night, for I thought if I was so bad that I was notised by the Neighbour, it was time for me to take notis of myself. Next day, I went out to work by myself, but I was some of the time on my knees, and when I was not I was crying, graiving, and pleading for mercy. I thought what hours I once injoyed

*When warm in my first love  
I only lived my God to adore  
And seek the things above*

But now with the Poet I must cry out and say

*Ah! but where am I now?  
And why was it, or how,  
That I fell from my heaven of grace!  
I am brought into thrall;  
I am stript of my All;  
I am banish'd from Jesus's face!*

When Convictions first sease the mind, nature rises against it. This is the caus why people persecute. When my Mother first began, I felt convictions fall on a pon me, then that nature which was Devilish awrose against it hear. I had my liberty to feed or tolerate which I pleased. And this is mans guilt becaus he jestifies that which he ought not. I now deturmind to give myself no eas till I found my backslidings heald. I found that the Lord had said return unto me o backslider, and I will heal thy backslidings which Glorious promise I claimed, and as soon as I was heartily willing to turn from all my vanities and so turn to the Lord he was willing to turn to me and heal my wounds. I now was about the age of seventeen and knowing no Churches but the Baptist and Congregationalist I knew not which to offer myself too. I conversed with the Baptist about there close Communeion, but found them stiff in there former rigedness which I could not believe to be the will of God. I found that there close communion stood upon Baptism. They disbelieved all but plungeing, and if a person was not baptised that way, they thought them not baptised at tall, therefore they would not commune with them. This I thought to be wrong: for it apeard to me, when they refused to commune with one that was a christian, that they made them selves or held themselves, to be better then him whome they called there Master: for they would own to me that they thought there ware many Christians in the Congregationalist Church. Now, thought I, if this is the case Christ most certainly does commune with them. And I knew of no part of the Bible that jestified one part of God's Famely in telling the other part of God Famely to keep away from there farthers table.

I still felt hapy in God. My dayes past sweatly by. I found grate blessings in secret prayer. I frequently talked with my Father on the subject of religeon. I believe that my Parents ware now both alive in Religeon. And there was quite an ingethering of Members to the Congregationalist Church, among which ware some that ware young altho not so young as myself. The Minister, Doctor Chiever,

lived but a little way off, and when they renewed Covenant the Church chose my Father to be there Deacon; of course there youst to be many meetings at our House. And I like thousands of others who think that what the Minister and Father said must be trew concluded that that Church must be the rightest of any. I was certain that it was not an Hopkintion Church, for they had alterd the Articles of faith on that account, but I was as ignorant of the Scripture Docturens as one could be: except the Doctrin of Baptism. Docter Cheaver, being a very sociable man, he would often talk with me. He truly gave me good advice and often affected me so that I could not speak without tears. He found how I was in my mind: and after hearing how the Lord had delt with me, he told me that I had ought to join the Church. At first I was surprisid at the thought but after waying it a while concluded it was my duty. I therefore went to see Mr. A— & his wife whare I had lived, those that ware unesey to think I lived so luse, for they had heard that I talkd hard about them while in my backsliden state. I heartily askd there forgivness which they willingly gave. I then went to the Church conferance and offered myself to the Church to be recieved for this was the way that they took members into the Church. After telling my experence they called a vote and all being a greed I was propounded the next Sabath. This I think was in July 1794 the Summer after I was seventeen year old.

My Brother Asa had been under convictions for some time. One day when my Father & Mother & all the rest were gone, he began with me as follows: Joel, what is the reason that Dady dont talk with me about Religeon as well as with you and so burst into tears. This set me to weaping and so we both cryed for some time. I then told him that I supposed that Dady did not know that he wanted to be talked to about Religeon. Well said he, he ought to talk to me if he thought I did not want to hear. (Said he) it seems to me as though he does not love me, for he talkes to you and tries to have you go to Heaven, but he dont care what becomes of me. I acknowledge that I never had been more straitened to know what to say then I was at this time. I felt Glad to find him as he was. I talk'd to him as well as I could, we then joind and praid. I told him that he must pray which I believe he did. I afterwords found out by his talk that he was struck under convictions by the Preaching of one Mr. Satrip a Baptist. After I had joind the Church he came forward to the next Church Conferance & was recieved. He

was twenty monts younger then my self. It made some talk to think two boys like us should join the Church.

That Summer I lived hapy in God. The chief of the time My brother and I set grately by each other, but we ware but Boyes. We sometimes scuffled with each other but not in anger. We frequently wounded our own soules, but we were willing to own our falt to each other and then pray for forgiveness from God. One Church conferance day in the Month of August (if my memery serves me right) we ware in hast amowing: my Brother, with myself, ware ingaged to cut down a certain piece of grass; it was on the side of a Hill. We had jest been and ground our Sithes, and my sithe had a very long snathe to it. As we went up the grass, I began to strike at it. My Brother stood close by with his face down Hill, and as I began to strike at the grass, my sithe snathe come nearly into his face, and like to have hurt him; he put forth his hand, and took hold of the snathe, which prevented my hiting the grass. I spoke to him and said, come, we must make haste, and cut it down before Conference time, and as I spoke I stood drawing to rescue the snathe from his hand. I was not sensible that I was drawing very hard till he let go of a sudden which made me turn round quick: for as I stood wringing it from his hand not thinking of any harm and his leting it go so sudden caused me to turn nearly round which brought the point of the sithe with fourse against his left leg jest above his calf and laid the cords, the two grate cords bare under his knee: the gash was by measure 5 inches one way and four and a half the other. He cried out! Joel you have cut my leg off, you have killed me, and so fell down the Hill to the Ground. I was very much frightened, yet I did not see the sithe when it struck him. I hallowed for help at which my Father came runing. As he came up he said what upon Erth have you been a doing? I told him to let that be till we had taken care of Asa, at which we both took hold one on each side and carried him in to the House, it being not more then 12 or 14 rods off. We went through a spot of thistles that ware tall and thick I was bare foot but did not feel them at all. As soon as he was in the House I went for the Doctor. I never run so far befor nor since without being tierd or trubled to breathe. When I got back I saw he was pale. I concluded he would bleed to Death. I whisperd in his ear and told him to pray for himself and for me which caused the tears to roll from his eyes. My fears at length were hushed. He began to a mend. He then told how it hapened himself which pre-

vented my being blaimed so much as I should other wayes have been. However it went abroad that Deacon Winches two Boyes that had joind the Church got to fighting and one had cut the other almost to Death with the Sithe. This was grating to me, but I knew that I had been so much to blame that I had ought to be humbled some way.

I still felt determind to serve the Lord. I now was resolved to leve all my Boyesh wayes and be more watchfull of my words and actions. I took to reading the Bible at all lasure moments and my Brother being lame I was obleaged to work very hard. So I lived till Winter. I then went to School and being to careless I neglected my secret prayers. I therefore grew negligent in performing evry other duty. This is the natural consequence for any person that leve off or forsakes secret prayer will be careless in all other things also. Prayer is food to the Heavenly Soul: yes it is like bred the staff of life. I joind with my mates in some of there plaies, and to be short before Spring I got as luce as any of them except I would not join weth them in Drinking Gambleing nor Danceing &c. But the reason why was becaus I knew that I should be, or at least thought I should be turnd out of the Church if I did. I did not use profain talk as some of my Bookmates did. I youst to be powerfully convicted for living as I did and frequently make new prommisses to do better, but sometimes I forgot them and sometimes I broke them knowingly. I freequently used to git away by myself and pray. I youst to be so deaply operated upon by the spirit of God that my tears would fall down my close while I would make new Covenants with the Lord. And sometimes I have slept but a trifle while under conviction for my folly for a number of Nights to gether, yet being a person so much given to lightness that it seemed imposible for me to keep from it. I had no reproofes from my Bretheren but was often reprooved by the wicked although they did it not for my good, yet there word come to me like leaden balls. I could not say much for myself, but I would smile to keep them from minding it although I youst to feel the blood flash in to my fase.

In 1799 March the 4 I went to Plainfield, New Hampshire to live with one Joseph Kimball Junier for Eight Monts. He and his wife profest Religeon, but I did not think that he had any yet. He was a clever man. I have reason to respect him for his kindness to me. My life was truly unholy that Summer; I youst to be contrary to all that talked with me. I sometimes went to Mr. K— to his

meeting to hear the Baptist and sometimes I would go to the Meeting Hous and hear the Congregationalist Minister by the name of Short. And some times I youst to stay at home and serve the Devil any way he pleased, for I lived without restraint almost. I concluded that there was but a little in religeon and I heard but a little about it. Professers or non professers all lived alike as it apared to me. I boarded with the old folkes, Mr. K—s Parents; the old Lady was his Mother in Law and he did not agree with her nor yet she with him, for they would have some wonderful talkes; it pleased my old nature to hear it. The old gentleman was more of a Diest then any thing els.

In October if my memery serves me right I went home to live with my Father in Hartland. Soon after I got home my Mother and I fell into a dispute. I talked unbecoming for a child to talk to a Parent. I felt like a Devil tormented within and I behaved like one incarnate. O the mercy of a kind God who kept me out of hell! I have been astonished to think that God should let such a Heven dareing God provokeing creature live on the Erth. Evry time I backslid I was more hardend in sin, more bold in Deviltry, more subttle in my plans, more ingaged to pursew what I undertook. I was afraid of nothing but jestis. I youst often to be gone anights. My Parents thought that I was on such bisness as many young Men ware at that age: although they did not like it, yet they found no particular falt with me. But instead of being on that bisness that they supposed, I youst to be serving my master another way by opening People doars, turning Cattle into other lots, makeing all manner of noises &c. It soon got round that there ware witches about, for People sometimes found there well curbs flung off and the poles of there Carts run down the well with the Wheels standing a cross it. And some times they might find a cow in the pig penn and pigs in the Cow pen &c. &c.

There was much such conduct carred on in Hartland which I had no hand in, but I cannot say that I was clear of all. At this time there was nothing said to me about Religeon. I did not go to Balls nor use profain language nor yet do anything that they knew of that they could git hold of me for.

I frequently would be in disputes although I knew but a little about an argument or reason. I delighted in giting any two professers to dispute with each other on any subject.

In December I began to go to School and on the Seventeenth day

I was Nineteen years old which day was kept to the Devil, for I had as gaye time as possible.

One evening there ware some of my young friends came to our Hous to make me with my Brothers and Sisters a Visit. Among them was one Young Woman that had joind the Baptist. So we all went into a room by ourselves. I soon began to lead on in meriment. I felt afraide that that Baptist would begin to talk to me as I had done to others when I was alive in religeon. I therefore determind to serve her as I had often got served myself when I was in Company. For I had often been determind to reprove my mates for vanity, but ere I was aware I got into or gave away to vanity myself, and then I dare not say any thing to them. I tried all waies to git her in to vanity in like manner. I first told a religeous story and so led on to storyes of vanity, but she would not be led into the servis of the Devil by me. It was seldom that I got disapointed on that ground, however; if I could not git anything new, I determind to be redy to meet her with something old; so I got some of her former vanites redy in my mind. This was Devil like jest like me. However it so hapened that she said nothing to me.

One night my Father being gone my Mother cald on me to pray in the Famely; so I said my Fathers Prayer nearly as he said it himself. I expected She would talk to me for it and therefore preparad this for an answer (viz.) that I thought she kneed not find falt if I praid as well as my Father who had been so long alerning: but she said nothing to me about it. At another time when my Father was gone and there was a Woman that belonged to the Church at our Hous I was cald on to pray and how it hapened I never knew, but I could think of the Scripture as fast as I wanted. I therefore praid chiefly in Scripture language. I afterwords heard that she said that I was the most remarkable person that she ever saw. This also made me feel more of my Devilish nature. I was all this time very contrary to my mother; I youst to feel the most condemned for that of anything that I did. I truly loved her, but it seemed almost imposible for me to live in the hous but what we would be aposite to each other. I knew that I was grately to blam: but I shall not say that she was.

One Night my Mother began to talk to me for my bad conduct and wished to know how I dare conduct so seeing I was a Church Member. Said she Joel when you joind the Church I did not think you was agoing to live so; I expected said she that you was agoing to be an obedient Boy especially to your Parents. I must own that her

talk took some hold on my mind. I dared not to do as my common way was when she began to talk to me, for I youst to have some comical quear turn to it which would make her laugh, for she was as subject to laughter as I was. But instid of trying to make her laugh I owned that I did not live as I had ought, and so I turned the discour round and began to talk how this one lived and the other and so brought it round on her, and I then told her that I thought she did not do right in this thing and that thing. I talked as affecting as I could. I wept some, but my desire was to git her to weeping, for then I could tell her anything I pleased and all would be well. She soon began to weap, so I came off with little being said to me [*sic*] this made me love my Mother better and myself less. I hear determind to behave better for the futer and not dispute her, however it might be against me, which I believe I did. O how much good might Parents do to Children if they would talk more to them in a solum heart feeling way. Seldom can a Child keep from tears when a Godly Father or Mother begins to talk with them about things eternal. Never did my Parents begin any such subject with me, but it took more hold of me then anybody els. People are apt to think that it will do but little good for Parents to talk to Children on them subjects, but it is all a temtation of the Devil. Parents when you talk on such subjects with your Children mind and pray first and mind and talk with a loving spirit, find but a little falt if any at all at such times, or if you do git your child to weeping or listning first. Unless you git through ear gate you cannot come at heart gate.

O Parents talk more to your Children.

I youst to twist the Scriptures. One time I had been gone all Night and as I returnd the next Morning being asked whether I had amind to git Maried I told him yes, but said he Brother you are to young to be Maried yet. I supposed he was a going to give me a triming talk so I told him that I thought I was none to young to die. True said he. Well then, said I, it is best to be prepareing and we are told that unless we take Wife & Children we cannot be the Lords Deciples; so I must git them as soon as I can so as to hate them before I die. A little while after I went about three miles with one of my mates William Airs by name to a Singing School. It was taught by B<sup>r</sup>. Simonds a man with whom I had a good understanding. I believe he then had Religeon. He began his School with Prayer and at the close he calld on me to pray. I went up in to the place that was made for the Master some what like a Pulpit and did

the best I could without the spirit of God and you may judge how well that was. One Saturday there came a storm of rain and it froze as it fell which made all things as slippery as it could be. It was therefore quite dangerous walking. My Father rode to meeting on Sabbath morning, but my Brother Asa and myself with two or three of our Mates went on foot and a frolicsome time we had of it to, for all being so slippery we ware sometimes on our feet and sometimes on our backs or hands and feet and all wayes. I have often wonderd that God in Judgement did not caus us to brake our necks and send us to Hell for our wickedness. However we got to the Meeting Hous: but the Minister did not come it was so bad, so we set out to come home. As we came out of the Hous in which we had been waiting, one of my Mates slid away on the ice one or two rods. I then set out after him and on my way I turnd. I rememberd my feet's slipping out from under me which was the last that I knew till they had got me all most home. When I came to think of the matter, I thought it was a warning to me to do better. I felt determind that I would: but this determination like others that I had made proved abortive. At another time I fell out of my shop chamber and hurt me so that wen I got up I could not find the doar. I did not git over it for some time: but still I kept my old ways.

My Father owned a share in the Meeting Hous Library in Hartland and altho I was but a poor reader and had weak eyes, yet I read considerable. We had out Mr. Watts Sermonds Mr. Blare's Sermonds and Dadenridge's, also we had what is called the Fool of Quality and some vols. of the Stack House. I had heard a few Methodists. The first I ever heard was Jese Lee. He called at E.S.Q. Grows of Hartland in our Neighbourhood and offered to Preach at witch his Famely took there Horses and notifide the People. Now I had heard but a little about Methodist only that they ware very strict and had a grate deal of Religeon and spent all there time in traviling about to Preach and that they ware all made in England &c. &c.

I went and there ware many People together. He was to preach in a Chamber so I took my seat and watched the doar to get the first site at him. I did not expect him to look nor behave like other people. While I set looking the doar opened and behold! a Methodist came in sight. And sure enough he was not like other Men, for he was much larger, his Clothes ware made different from any that I had ever seen, he looked the neatist that I ever saw a man and his

voice was different from any I ever heard, it was uncommon hevey. He preached with eas and so that a Child might understand him. He was admired by all that heard him both by the Priest and People. The next that came was Mr. Nickolas Sneathen. I thought he was truly a Brother to Mr. Lee in all things but one—he did not Preach in so easy language as Mr. Lee did for the people to understand. However the Minister liked him and spoke well of him. They both of them preached in the Meeting Hous after that grately to the satisfaction of the people. The Minister exhorted after them both and told the people not to refuse such preaching. After them Mr. George Pickering and some said that he was the gratest speaker they ever heard. Then Mr. Lorenzo Dow came along and he preached at us all and told a number of people there carrecters, some thought one thing and some a nother. In his Sermond he made a digression and went on to prove the posibility of falling from grace. He began at Genesis and went to Revelation quoting Chapture and verse and repeating the words the Peopl thought that he knew all the Bible by heart. And had it not have been for Doctor Chiever the Priest I think that some of the old stedeys would have got flung off of there sandy foundations: but as soon as Mr. Dow had done the Doctor got up and opposed him testifing that there was no such thing as falling from grace. I now had got hold of something. I therefor began to study for the truth of it. Doctor Chiever heard of it and took opitunity to talk to me. He cured me and I rested, contented that there was no such thing, yet I could not but think of it when I read some places in the Bible. Soon after this I went to hear Mr. Joseph Crawford at the same place. It was in the evening and there ware a number of Methodist Members came from West Windsor. So the meeting began. They ware all in among the People and I stood like the rest of my Brethren while Mr. Crawford was praying. And presently I heard some one say Amen. I supposed it was one crazy Liscomb who lived in town for he used to say Amen in meeting time, so I stept carefully towards him to see, and while I was giting towards where I heard the nois, I heard him on the other side of me. What that ment I could not tell; neither could I tell which way to go next to find crazy Liscomb. So I stood still and lisened to hear him again. No one appard to mind it but myself. Soon I heard him again on my right hand. I had not more then turned my head round before I heard him again on my left hand. I was truly disturbed about it, for what it ment I knew not. When prayers ware ended I found

that it was the Methodist that said Amen. I now felt some disgusted and thought I never should like them.

In April 1801 I went to work with Oliver Daverson (he was Deacon Daverson Son that I mentioned in the first of my writings). He lived with his Father. He profest Religion and had thought that he was called to Preach before this, and when I went there he told me some of his feeling, but I feared lest he should find out mine. I soon found that Deacon Daverson & his Son Oliver with whome I lived did not agree with each other. I youst to frequently talk with the Deacon on the subject of Baptism but we did not agree at all. One night I began to talk favorable of plunging for baptism. The D—n concluded that he should win me over to the faith of a baptist. He therefore told me that I had got to leave the Congregationalist Church and join the Baptist and be a Baptist Preacher yet before I died. I said nothing to the contrary so we got to talking on Doctrins. I asked him if he believed that God had foreordaind whatsoever came to pass. He pretended that he did not hold so & went on to show me how he did hold, but it amounted to the same. He told me what he held I should find in the Bible if I would only read it carefully, so I read, but the more I read the more inconsistent his arguments looked to me, for I found that God had commanded all men to love him & to love him with all there hearts; he had also Commanded men not to steal nor take his name in vane. Now I found that it came to pass contrary to those Commandments. I then said has God foreordaind whatsoever comes to pass? if so he hath ordaind contrary to his own Commands & such a God as that is a self contradicting God. The old D—n tried to make it look plain to me, but I could not see it, he therefore told me that the Church I belonged to held so as much as he did. No said I, for they altered the Articles of Faith for that reason not to distroy the freedom of the will, but he still affermed that I profest as strong fatality as he did. I youst to frequently read my Bible or study till the Cock crew for day. One day I went to se my Minister & told him some of my mind & also what the D—n said about the Church. He told me we ware both wrong, for one holdeth it to strong & the other not strong enough. So he soon set me right. I went home satisfide, but to my sorrow I could not make my Bible talk like my Minister, for when I began to read I found that Mr. Davis Doctrin was true (viz.) that a person might fall from jestifying grace & perish everlastingly, but my minister said that if a Soul was brought into a