CHAPTER SIX

SALVATION AND COVENANT

With the exception of Caleb Watson’s sermon on January 17, and the Woodbridge sermon of February 1, chapter 6 is built around Isaac Foster’s sermon series taken from Hebrews: chapter 2 verse 3. The first sermon in this chapter is also the first in the notebook from Hartford’s schoolmaster Caleb Watson. Watson’s sermon is included in this chapter because he and Foster preached on the same day.

The opening text for the Caleb Watson sermon that follows is from Malachi, which played an important role in Puritan theology because of its prominent covenant themes. It is also an interesting text within the framework of late seventeenth century New England, and the declension of the Puritan spirit that prevailed. According to the Geneva Study Bible, Malachi spoke to people whose “vision of the coming messianic age did not materialize. Instead, they experienced poverty, drought, and economic adversity, and they became disillusioned with God and their faith. Malachi’s word confronts a people skeptical of the promises and therefore indifferent in their commitment to live in the light of those promises and to worship and serve the Lord with all their hearts.”

Six months later, Watson revisited the same opening text in a sermon that also echoes declension. Increase Mather’s Reforming Synod was held only one month prior to that sermon, in May of 1680. It was a Synod that took New England’s ministers to task regarding New England’s declining spiritual state. Caleb Watson’s sermon is the first in the notebook to implore Hartford to resist the declension of New England.

Mr. Watson. (Saturday) January 17, 1679. (3 Malachi 6) “For I am the Lord: I change not, and ye sonnes of Jaakob are not consumed.” For I am the Lord. I change not therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed. We have a prophesy of John baptist to prepare the way for Jesus Christ. 2 A prophesy of Christ who forth with comes as soon as John had prepared the way. 3 The manor of his coming is terrible to the wicked comfortable to the godly. (43 Isaiah 4) The powerful Effects of Christ’s coming upon

---

1 New Geneva Study Bible, 1485.
the godly and wicked: to the godly he makes their offerings acceptable to God, 2 to the wicked to consume and to destroy them. In the text we have a description that God gives of himself. I am Jehovah I chang not. 2 A conclusion therefore you chang not. I am Jehovah God that an Eternall. It noats his existance and giveing being [to] all. It noates God's giveing rest, there is no rest to be had but in God. It allso God's imutability in his being and decre. He is unchangable. The conclusion yet you sons of Jacob are not consumed though I am a God of justice. Yet I am a God of mercy.

Doctrine: that God is an immutable and unchangable being. All other beings are changeable. Commonwealth, kingdom, nations, [ch s], Famalys and persons are subject to changes. Our Fathers [ r] are they and our prophets doe they live Forever? So riches, honor, they do fade, but Jehovah is the same. Without change. With him there is no variableness nor shadows of change. You oh Lord shalt endure for ever, and thy remembrance to all generations. (1 Hebrews 10.11)

1 Example. How is God Immutable and unchangeable? 1: in his Essence and in his nature. Unchangableness and his being is the sam according to his name. So he is I am that I am. (8 [ ] 58) Before Abram was I am. God is immutable in his attributes properties and divine perfections. His mercy and loving kindness is unchangable and shall Endure Forever. Let Isrell say his mercy Endureth forever. (103 Psalm 15.16.17) His power and strength is imutable and so a fit object for to rest on. (26 Isaiah 4) His love is unchangeable, he loves to the end. His faythfulness, goodness, wisdom, holyness, and righteousness is unchangeable: 3 God's decres, counsells and purposes are imutable: the councells of the Lord (33 Psalm 11) they do stand for Ever, (8 Isaiah 10) and the thoughts of his heart to all generations. Men's thoughts perish but God's doe stand. (14 Isaiah 23 Verse) As I heard purposed so it shall stand. (5 Job 12) The Lord doth disapoynt the devices of the crafty. Nothing can hinder what he hath determined. God is of one minde and who can turn him? (19 Proverbs 20) The councill of the Lord shall

3 The Westminster Shorter Catechism is a document that New England's late seventeenth century preachers would have been familiar with. It contains a definition of God that is quite similar to that of Caleb Watson. “Question: What is God? Answer: God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.” William Stacy Johnson ed., Reformed Reader: A Sourcebook in Christian Theology (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 82. Whether the Westminster Shorter Catechism directly influenced Hartford's preachers is difficult to say, but many Reformed documents spoke with a similar voice.