

Where Will It Stop?

In January 2017, I felt honoured to be asked by the elders of a church in the Philippines to write a Foreword to their *Manual*. I warned them that my name would not do them a lot of good, but I was willing – and more than willing – to meet their request, as long as I could concentrate on the new-covenant theology aspect of their publication. The following is the result. So strongly do I feel about what I wrote, I have decided to offer it a wider audience. Hence this article.

The issue for me is this: new-covenant theology must not be confined to the realm of theological debate. Like the doctrines of grace – indeed, like the entire revelation of God – God’s truth is not just a feast for the mind. It must penetrate the heart – and warm it. It must reach into the life and the experience – and be lived out, day by day. It must do this for the individual and – and this is very important – we must see thriving *churches* that are new-covenant in practice as well as in doctrine.

With all that in mind, this is the Foreword I gave to the elders in Cebu.

I am delighted to write this Foreword for *New Creation Manual*, a book which has been produced by the elders of New Covenant Church, Cebu, a church which is, in the elders’ own words, ‘a distinctly new-covenant church in the Philippines’. It is this fact – that we are talking about a new-covenant *church* – that especially gives me great joy.

Let me briefly say what I understand by new-covenant theology. It is not covenant theology writ new. It is nothing other than the theology of the new covenant, that crowning covenant brought in by Christ, the covenant which God decreed from before the foundation of the world to accomplish his saving purpose for his elect. He revealed this glorious covenant to men by means of a series of covenants in history – the Noahic, the Abrahamic, the Mosaic and the Davidic covenants – all leading up to, foreshadowing and pointing to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, the great Seed of the Abrahamic covenant. Christ

was born under the Mosaic covenant, and by his life, death and resurrection fulfilled all the promises and shadows of those earlier covenants, to bring in their eternal reality for all his people for all time. New-covenant theologians not only rightly understand the biblical teaching on the continuity of this revelation – which is Christ himself – but they see and declare the great contrasts within these covenants. It is at this point that they disagree so markedly with covenant theologians – those who see all these covenants as being merely different administrations of one covenant of grace. Not so, according to Scripture! New-covenant theologians set out, in particular, the biblical contrast between what the Bible calls the first or old covenant – that is the Mosaic covenant – and the second, the new or better covenant – which is the gospel. To distinguish law and grace is one of the great essentials. New-covenant theology sets out this scriptural contrast along with all its ramifications and consequences for sinners and saints.

In brief, then, new-covenant theology is nothing less than the gospel unfettered by Confessions or man-made formulations. New-covenant theologians want to read, understand, interpret and apply Scripture unfiltered.

But while I am pleased to have witnessed the recovery and world-wide spread of new-covenant theology in these past forty years, especially in a growing number of books, conference papers, articles, videos and all the rest, and while it is gratifying to know that an increasing number of teachers are now openly advocating new-covenant theology, these things in themselves are not enough. We must see the theology of the new covenant permeating the heart and life (as well as the mind) of the individual believer. In tandem with that, we need to see new-covenant churches formed, churches which are new covenant not only their doctrine, but in their practice also. To have new-covenant theology on the platform and in the pulpit is one thing, and to have it in books is another, and both are necessary – indeed excellent – but what we must see is the theology of the new covenant worked out in daily life, both individually and corporately. And this is why I am delighted to endorse this effort to see such a church established in the Philippines. May God

bless it. May many sinners come to salvation in Christ by the labours of this assembly. May the saints be edified, and the fruits of Christ's glorious new covenant be displayed in and among the members in abundance by the Spirit. And may it all be for the glory of the triune God.

David H.J.Gay
9th January 2017