

Note to the Reader

In this booklet I have brought together the two articles that I wrote in response to Peter Masters' work on the covenants, which he published in 2016 in the *Sword and Trowel*. Although Masters showed he had moved somewhat from covenant theology, alas, he also revealed that he still held to the terminology of that system as well as to some of its fundamental tenets. Hence the word 'muddle' in my chosen title, and 'good in parts' for my verdict on his publication.

Masters is not alone in trying to distance himself from some of the worst aspects and consequences of covenant theology, while holding on to its basic system and jargon. Some 17th-century Baptists made a similar mistake, as I have shown in my works on Robert Purnell, Thomas Collier and John Bunyan, for instance. This is not a question of mere words, however. Confusion of a vital biblical topic, accompanied, as it is, by very heavy consequences, is not to be dismissed as a trifle.

My booklet, like my articles, is in two sections. In Part 1, I deal with Masters' muddle in general. Part 2 is devoted to Masters' mistake over Deuteronomy 30. This is not a storm in a teacup since Paul uses that chapter when addressing the Romans on the cardinal doctrine of justification by faith. In exposing Masters' mistake over this Pauline use of Deuteronomy 30, I have aimed to bring out the positive truth taught in Romans 10, and this, not as end in itself, but because it has a large bearing on the doctrine of the two covenants – the old and the new. So I pray this little work of mine will help those who want to explore this matter. As I say, large consequences flow from it.

To bring this 'Note to the Reader' to a close, here is the paragraph that I intend to put on the cover of this volume. It expresses my feelings in a fairly small nutshell, and will set the tone for what follows.

Covenant theology, devised in Germany in the second half of the 16th century, confuses the vital biblical doctrine of the two covenants – the old and the new. This is not a matter of words. The consequences are severe. And it is always good to come across someone who appreciates this, and publishes work to try put it right. Peter Masters edges in this direction. But, alas, I am convinced that his work on the covenants is only ‘good in parts’. So I have responded to it in the hope that I might help others get clearer light on the covenants; in particular, that they might come to see more of the glory of the new covenant for the believer; above all, that they might enjoy that liberty in Christ for themselves, and enjoy it to the full.