÷Robert Hawker (1753-1827): Zion's Warrior

**Expository gems**

Great Christian writers are often remembered more by their commentaries than their other works. This is the case with Matthew Henry, John Gill and Thomas Scott and perhaps reveals the Christian's greater longing to have the Word of God explained to him directly, verse by verse, rather than in essay, biography or story form. Food for the soul which is cut and served for immediate digestion is a delight indeed. Robert Hawker's commentaries provide such a delight. Though Hawker authored numerous theological works, school text books, readers and primers, it is to his commentaries that Christians today still turn. His Poor Man's Commentary and Poor Man's Morning and Evening Portions are still considered gems of exposition. Indeed, modern booksellers have noticed that Hawker is increasing in popularity and second-hand prices are growing with the demand.

**Robert studies with a view to becoming a surgeon for his mother's and aunts' sake**

Robert Hawker was born on April 13, 1753 in a house near Mary Steps Church, Exeter where his grandfather, an Alderman, had practised as a surgeon and where his father had now taken up that calling. In keeping with the covenant beliefs of his parents, he was baptised at Mary Steps on the following May 14. Hawker never knew his father who was carried off by a disease caught from a patient when his only surviving child was still a baby. This caused his mother and two aunts to take special care of little Robert and they made sure he grew up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, teaching him to recite, read and write Scripture portions at a very early age.

Hawker attended the Free Grammar School, learning Greek, Latin and Hebrew. From his earliest years, he longed to become a clergyman, composed sermons and preached in secret but his mother, who had striven to keep up something of her husband's practice and worked as a midwife, begged Hawker to take up his father's profession. Hawker's aunts also felt that he could do the most good for his fellow creatures in the family profession. Having no heart to disappoint them, young Hawker was placed under the supervision of an Alderman White of Plymouth to be trained as a surgeon.

The young surgeon's apprentice developed into a most mischievous imp and did not leave his practical jokes outside of the church. One day, he smuggled himself into a service and set off a firework whilst Henry Tanner, the Evangelical minister, was preaching. Hawker never forgot this silly prank and when Tanner died, he supported his destitute widow and published Tanner's memoirs and works on her behalf.

**A marriage made in Heaven**

Though only nineteen years old, Hawker fell in love with Anne Rains, a girl of seventeen, whom he married at Charles parish church on January 6, 1772. Tongues wagged concerning their youth but the marriage proved of the Lord and the couple enjoyed over forty-five years of married life until Anne died in 1817, ten years before her husband. Robert and Anne had eight children, four boys and four girls. Three of the boys became ministers of the gospel and one a surgeon, three of the girls married well, Anna, the second eldest daughter, remained single, caring for her father until his death.

Hawker studied at St. Thomas's before obtaining a three-year post as surgeon in the Royal Marines. Stories are told how Hawker later went abroad with the army and was converted but John Williams, one of Hawker's biographers and a convert of his, claims that most of these stories are quite untrue and that Hawker never joined the army. He did become an army chaplain when Vicar of Charles and wrote a book called The Zion's Warrior, or Christian Soldier's Manual in which army life was compared to the spiritual life. These facts may have given rise to the supposition. There are no records of Hawker's conversion and it is probable that he entered the ministry without a deep awareness of God's grace in his life.

**Hawker studies for the ministry**

Nevertheless, Hawker's longing to become a minister never left him and, in May, 1778, feeling he had done his duty to his mother and though he had a wife and family, he entered Magdalen Hall, Oxford with a view to be trained for the ministry. His proficiency in the subjects studied was so great that the Bishop of Exeter ordained him as deacon in September that year. A few weeks later, Hawker was called to take over the curacy of his home church in Charles where he stayed forty-nine years until his death in 1827. The first sermon Hawker preached at Charles was on November 22, 1778, his text being 2Co 5:20, 'Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.'

Hawker kept up his matriculation and occasionally visited Magdalen for lectures and examinations. He received priest's orders in 1779. He now began to publish his sermons but complained later that they contained no more knowledge of the truth than the bats and the moles could have supplied.

**Becoming the Vicar of Charles**

Two years later, Hawker's vicar, John Bedford, died. By one of the strange historical quirks of the Church of England, the living did not rest in the hands of the congregation but was under the patronage of the Mayor and corporation and Hawker, backed by his church, found that a stranger had put in a claim for the living. Mr White, Hawker's former employer was now Mayor and he quickly took Hawker's side so that when it came to the vote, there was only one 'nay' to all the 'ayes' and Hawker received the Bishop's seal to the vicarage of Charles on May 20, 1784. A new note now appears in Hawker's preaching. The fine eloquence and language is still there but it is more suited to the ears of the ordinary man and there is far more Scripture in it. Hawker began to teach the children and, instead of spending his evenings with musical entertainment and card-playing, he visited the sick, the aged, the spiritual needy and the poor. He also set hours aside for social prayer and testimony. His teaching shows that he had obtained a deep understanding of the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. We note, too, that Hawker began to invite such people as William Romaine to preach. At first, Hawker felt he had to correct Romaine's 'unguarded expressions' but gradually came to realise that Romaine's words were pure gospel.. In his work Visits to and from Jesus, we find Hawker looking back on his previous thoughts concerning free grace and God's sovereign, electing love with dismay, saying:

"How long and how daringly violent did I myself oppose this glorious truth, which now, through thy grace subduing my rebellion, and teaching my soul its blessedness, is become my greatest joy and delight. Lord! thou knowest well, with what bitterness of a fallen nature, I contended against the sovereignty of thy grace, in thy free-will election; while in the very moment audaciously insisting upon my own power in a free-will ability of serving thee! Oh, what mercy hath been shewn me on the recovery of my soul from a delusion so awful!"

**Opposition from the Establishment and Dissent alike**

Hawker was opposed by Presbyterians, Anglicans and Baptists alike. The Presbyterian pastor in Charles was a man of ability who challenged Hawker's credentials as a man of God and his congregation as a true church. He, himself, preached Socinian notions enthusiastically so that in 1790 Hawker began to preach a series on Christ's divinity to protect and instruct his own flock. Hawker discovered that his preaching on the divine nature of Christ also angered many an Anglican minister so he decided to print his sermons for general distribution. So skilled was his reasoning and so successful was the spread of true Trinitarianism through the sales of the book that, two years later, the University of Edinburgh awarded Hawker a diploma as Doctor of Divinity. It is a tribute to the understanding of the university that a work that led to the conversion, edification and education of numerous souls received such formal acclamation. The Dissenting church intensified their efforts to de-throne Christ and, under the leadership of a Mr. Porter, declared themselves to be Arians and published a Defence of Unitarianism complaining that the writers of the New Testament were not inspired by God and had misunderstood Christ. This caused the Evangelical Magazine to write, "While a Porter disseminates the pernicious dogmas of Socinianism and infidelity, a Hawker opposes to him, and with success, the wholesome doctrines of grace and truth, which came by Jesus Christ."

**Hawker takes on task after task**

Next Hawker published a companion volume on the Holy Spirit and a critique of rationalism. He founded several charitable works for the poor and provided for the relief of the families of soldiers who had died in service or from a fever which had spread through the Plymouth area. By 1798, he was busy building an orphanage and a school. He now preached three times on Sundays besides holding numerous weekly teaching, prayer and testimony, meetings. He also preached two or three times a week for the soldiers and visited the military hospitals, never accepting a penny for his services. As the military buildings were miles apart, this witness consumed much of Hawker's time and energy in all weathers. Hawker also started a work amongst destitute women who had chosen a life of sin as a means of income.

Sadly, such evangelistic work drew protests from within the Church of England and a Cornish minister by the name of Polwhele campaigned to discredit Hawker. He felt his chance had come when Hawker journeyed to Falmouth to fetch his daughter home after a visit and accepted preaching invitations from three churches on the return journey. Polwhele complained to the Bishop of Exeter that Hawker was carrying out a 'Quixotic expedition' in his area, teaching blasphemy. Hawker's theme had been the imputation of Christ's righteousness and Polwhele had protested that if what Hawker preached were true, in the eyes of God the believer stood as righteous as Christ Himself because he had been clothed with God's own righteousness! Hawker had expounded Rom 3:22, 'Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe,' so Polwhele had faithfully reproduced Hawker's teaching. Yet Polwhele's knowledge of Scripture was so poor that on hearing this truth, he thought it was blasphemy! Polwhele also accused Hawker of itinerancy and neglecting his own flock. Actually Hawker had been absent from his pulpit only three Sundays in twenty years, twice due to illness and once when he preached for a friend. He was the only minister in the whole diocese with such a record! The good Bishop, the army and marine authorities and their chaplains all took Hawker's side and ignored Polwhele's protests.

**Hawker's literary pilgrimage to Zion**

In 1798 Hawker started writing for the Zion's Trumpet, a periodical founded by himself and Evangelical friends with a keen mission to spread the Word, record the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Christians and defend the Thirty-Nine Articles. The word 'Zion' was to be attached to a number of Hawker's works, such as his Zion's Warrior and Zion's Pilgrim. In the latter, a pilgrimage of meditations along the paths taken by John Bunyan's hero, Hawker gives us insight into his own spiritual history, lamenting that he only became a true pilgrim after he had 'passed a very considerable portion of time in the life of man.' On viewing the whirlpool of time that draws many a sinner into its vortex and drags them doomed out of a life which ought to have been lived in repentance, Hawker says, "Can I call to mind the past danger, and the present deliverance, unmoved with pity over the unthinking throng, and untouched with gratitude to thee the sole Author of every mercy? I feel (blessed be the grace that inspires it!) the rising hymn of thankfulness in my heart, while the tear drops from my eye: 'Lord, how is it that thou hast manifested thyself unto me, and not unto the world!'" Hawker loved to muse on the pages of John Bunyan and John Milton. Like John Newton and Thomas Scott, he published notes on the Pilgrim's Progress and, like William Cowper, wrote a commentary on Paradise Lost. If we wish to find the heart of Hawker in his writings, it must be in Zion's Warrior, published in 1801. Here he defines the blessings of what it means to be a soldier of Christ, fighting the good fight with all his might, clothed in the armour of God. We also find him bemoaning the times spent as 'a deserter from the standard of Christ Jesus.' It is inspiring, when reading Hawker, to find him a man of flesh and blood as ourselves, yet one who was greatly used of Christ to proclaim His righteousness.

**Hawker on missionary work**

In 1802, we find Hawker distributing free Christian literature to the poor. He did this under the pompous title of The Great Western Society for Dispersing Religious Tracts Among the Poor, though he was the sum total of committee members, their chairman, treasurer, secretary and editor! During this year Hawker was invited to preach before the London Missionary Society and preached on The Work of the Holy Ghost essential to give success to all missions for the Gospel based on Rom 10:14-15. Hawker emphasised this need because the enormous fund-raising campaigns of the missionary societies were creating the impression that the more money raised, the more souls would be saved. He feared that the work of the Holy Spirit in the soul of a man, equipping him for the Great Commission was being reduced to a commercial enterprise that was doomed to waste money and neglect true soul-winning. Hawker also believed that true missionary work was church planting, each church having its own ministers and not to be ruled by an absentee committee thousands of miles away. Hawker withdrew his L.M.S. subscription but remained a praying and giving friend to a number of church-based missionary enterprises and supported missionaries such as W. B. Johnson at Sierra Leone, privately. Johnson's correspondence with Hawker reveals, contrary to the modern criticism that the doctrines of grace cripple evangelism, that preaching such doctrines is highly successful in converting sinners.

**Hawker goes on his first preaching tour**

In 1803, after twenty-five years at Charles, Hawker made his first preaching tour which lasted four weeks. Nowadays pastors seem happy to spend a month a year on holiday but Hawker never felt that such luxuries were necessary and preached twenty-five times on invitation during his month's leave of absence. The London ministers were glad to have Hawker at first as he filled all their pews and also the aisles. When, however, the doors were broken down by the sheer weight of the hundreds trying to get in and the masses outside caused a traffic chaos they began to fear Hawker was too much of a crowd-drawer for them. Notwithstanding, this Five-Point man whom many were calling an Antinomian and a Hyper-Calvinist received invitation after invitation to evangelise so that he had to plan a similar tour each year for the rest of his life. Yet modern critics of Hawker's doctrines invariably argue that such doctrines destroy evangelism! This is proof enough that such criticism is merely judgemental, and has no basis in true Christian experience. One tires nowadays of hearing the new, doctrinally wishy-washy, Reformed Establishment tell us that great preachers such as Tobias Crisp, Richard Davis, John Gill, John Ryland, James Hervey, William Romaine, Augustus Toplady, William Huntington, William Gadsby and, of course, Robert Hawker, believed doctrines that drive away the crowds, when history tells us that they were the very doctrines and the very people which drew them in their thousands.

**Dealing with the 'righteous over-much'**

Now Hawker worked hard on his penny commentaries for the poor. Dr Williams says concerning their teaching, "It was said of two celebrated commentators, Cocceius and Grotius, that the one found Christ everywhere, and the other nowhere. Dr. Hawker is of the former school." One well-bred lawyer, heartily disagreed with Hawker's testimony and in 1808 published an anonymous pamphlet to show that evangelical preaching encourages sin as it makes a man rely fully on Christ so that he does not strive to mend his own unrighteousness. Christian authors should therefore preach man-centred moral reformation. Needless to say, Hawker was soon telling the nameless man that in finding Christ he had also been taught the lesson of "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." Seeing a man after his own heart in the nameless barrister, Polwhele rejoined the opposition, particularly after he had read Hawker's A Prop Against All Despair which even brings hope to those who feel they have sinned beyond all chance of pardon. It soon became obvious that these men's fight was not against Hawker but Christ Himself as they gradually revealed their Unitarian tendencies. Again, the church authorities and the Christian press stood fully behind the Vicar of Charles and we can thank God for such enlightened times.

**Christ, our sole perfection**

Now aged sixty-five and a widower, Hawker sent his last volume of his Poor Man's Commentary to the press. He professed that he had written the work "to hold up and hold forth the Lord Jesus Christ as God's Christ, and as the sole perfection of all his people." This endeavour met with mixed feelings in the churches. The perfectionist doctrine of progressive holiness was rampant owing to false teaching concerning the law and gospel. The believer's gaze was taken away from the Christ who had clothed him with righteousness. It was an effort to change fallen Adam into the New Adam by works of holiness. The folly of the view that the old man can become purer as the days go by, is well illustrated by Paul's testimony after many years serving the Lord, 'I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing,' (Rom 7:18). On the other hand, we read of the new man 'which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.' The believer is created unto good works but even they do not sanctify him progressively, he is wholly such already by God's grace. Good works are the fruits of holiness and not their seed. If fruit occurs, then it is a sign that Christ has made the sinner whole. We are called to mortify the body but this is not progressive holiness but the testimony and effects of the sanctified new man in Christ.

**The Biblical teaching of the sanctifying work of the Spirit in the soul of man revived**

Hawker revived the Biblical teaching of the sanctifying work of the Spirit in the soul of man and spent much of his final years writing on the Person, Godhead and ministry of the Spirit. He wrote several works on the Spirit for the needs of the labouring class but did not neglect their physical needs. He bought bread in bulk and sold it to the poor at half price. The Vicar vainly thought that he could preach to the crowds as they came to buy bread but so great was the rush and commotion that even his powerful voice could not be heard. He thus hit on the idea of giving a tract of his composition with every loaf sold besides a short word of admonition.

Hawker's energies grew with his age as he published one work after another. The more he published, the more opposition grew alongside his great popularity. He had a penetrating effect on ministers who were orthodox on the outside but nurtured some secret error in their hearts. When debating with Hawker, their true selves invariably came out, displaying Socinianism, Sabellianism, Arianism or worse.

**The Sonship controversy**

The harshest criticism came from those who seemed doctrinally close to Hawker. He had, for instance, experienced sweet fellowship with the Old School Particular Baptists who were one with him on the doctrines of atonement, election, imputed righteousness, justification and sanctification. Unexpectedly, however, John Stevens of York Street Chapel, London, who had done tremendous work for the gospel, and was currently protecting his churches from the onslaught of Grotianism and New Divinity teaching, attacked Hawker furiously, not only for being a member of the Church of England but for not believing in the pre-existence of Christ before the incarnation. The accusation was ludicrous and the charge rebounded on Stevens who had to give a reason for his bizarre claim. It turned out, under scrutiny, that Stevens believed that Christ already possessed a human soul before His birth and merely took on Himself a human body at the incarnation. This hypothesis, of course, Hawker questioned and asked Stevens for Biblical proof. Stevens, arguing from Rev 3:14, stepped full-scale into Arianism by stating that Christ was the first of God's creation, mistaking Christ's office as the origin and author of creation for his being a created person. Hawker had no difficulty in demonstrating that the idea that Christ was created as a soul before time and as a body in time was quite unscriptural.

**Hastening with joy beyond the boundaries of time**

Still writing and preaching powerfully at seventy-three, Hawker was obviously thinking more about leaving this world than the time spent in it. As two of his children and three of his grandchildren died shortly after one another, he longed for the Lord to speed on the chariot. The first signs that the chariot was ready came in 1826. On the first Sunday of the year, Hawker preached on Isa 3:10, 'Say ye to the righteous, it shall be well with him'. After the service, Hawker was stricken with inflammation of the lungs and spent twelve weeks as an invalid. He strove to preach on March 25 but realised that his strength was failing and was ill for a further eighteen weeks after which he stood before his congregation again to tell them that his last days were his best days. In his preface to a new work on the Holy Spirit, he confessed that he was "fast hastening towards the boundary of time . . . with more joy than they who watch for the morning.--For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.' Like the church of old, I can and do say, 'make haste, my beloved, until the day break and the shadows flee away.' Hawker's condition deteriorated and he continually vomited blood, so his daughter took him to Totness for a change of air. Though very weak, Hawker testified, "My soul is overfilled with joy; my spirit hath not room for its enjoyment; I am full of glory." As his condition worsened, Hawker asked to be taken home to die. Immediately on reaching home, he called his family together and gave them his departing blessing, expounding Eph 1:6-12. After this, Hawker laid his head on his eldest daughter's shoulder and his other children took his hands in theirs. He seemed to drop soundly to sleep. There were no physical signs of any kind that ushered in the silent hand of death. It took some time before the loving children realised that their father had fallen asleep in Jesus. As John Kent described the scene:

Death was to him as harmless as a dove,
While floods of glory overwhelm'd his soul.

A brief look at Hawker's works

Perhaps the reader will not be averse to reading a review I wrote shortly after the publication of the above in New Focus under the title Hawker's Guidebooks to Zion: Gen 33:12. It was written as I was very conscious of the growing demand for Hawker's works and the fact that they were now available in an inexpensive edition:

Robert Hawker (1753-1827) combined sound Biblical doctrine with intense evangelistic fervour. Wherever he ministered, crowds longing to hear the Word of Life thronged to hear him. Hawker preached with great feeling and compassion because he knew that his labour was not in vain and God's Word never failed in its purpose. Some years ago, longing for more of Hawker's works, I approached an international 'Christian' bookseller who had a complete set for sale. His price would have rigged me out with a complete computer system so my fond idea was dropped. Then I heard from a friend who had actually been given a set. How envious I was! But the circumstances of the gift made me wonder what the Christian world is coming to. A certain denominational library had once treasured their set of Hawker's works but now they felt the books were an embarrassment to them; indeed dangerous for their modern-minded readers so they gave the gospel-bearing books away! The library's action is symptomatic of the present down-grading of sound gospel principles which once led thousands to Christ and were held in honour by eighteenth and nineteenth century Trinitarian denominations.

These thoughts led to my New Focus article on Robert Hawker: Zion's Warrior. When I received issue No. 05, I was overjoyed to see a Gospel Standard advertisement adjacent to my article listing Triangle Press reprints of Hawker at #2.75--#3.45 per volume. I immediately sent off my order and the books arrived speedily and what a blessing they proved to be!

This article is more a recommendation than a review as twelve volumes have now been published which hardly allows for a detailed analysis. First I delved into Hawker's The Divinity of Christ and the Divinity and Operation of the Holy Ghost, bearing in mind modern erroneous teaching featuring a Godhead halting between two opinions on salvation and the inane idea that the Spirit breathes contradiction and contention into the Scriptures.[1] In arguing for dissension within the Trinity concerning man's salvation and a breach in the logical harmony of Scripture in bringing this salvation home to the sinner, such writers are tearing the churches apart and actually boasting that such disunity fosters church growth! What has Hawker to say to these modern contenders for forked paths to heaven? His readers will find that his message is a God-given antidote to this modern plague.

Hawker was confronted with the very same heresy in his day. This prompted him to write on the Trinity. His opponents left the field with their tails between their legs, doing the only honest thing they could. They became Unitarians. This is why it is of the utmost importance that Hawker is read once more. As God's watchman and Zion's Warrior, he has proved his value in showing how gospel truths prevail. It will be sad to see modern tension and paradox preachers joining the Unitarians, but as their views of Christ and Scriptures are so low, they will feel more at home there and leave true religion to get on with its true work. Read Hawker on the unity of the Godhead as displayed in the salvation of His people. It will not only thrill your heart and soul but equip you for proclaiming the truth and combating error. If you are a child of God, it will certainly make a convinced Trinitarian of you.

Coefficient to the work of the triune Unity is the operation of the Holy Spirit in rendering the work of salvation effectual in the application of what the Father has wrought out in His Son, regenerating corrupt and fallen sinners. Indeed, Hawker argues that it is through the unity of the Spirit-breathed Word that the sinner sees the unity of God's nature in preparing salvation for him and the unity of the triune action in effectually redeeming him. Hawker argues that if such a work had been referred to in a Bible of irreconcilable, conflicting passages, and had not the unity of action been insisted on in every part of God's Word, then some apology might be made for the incredibility of mankind respecting it. However, as the Scriptures refer to the work of the Father Son and Holy Ghost in their joint and uniting enterprise of saving sinners and as thousands can testify to being born of God through this work, we see how trustworthy is the entire testimony of the revealed Word and the folly of men striving to find disharmony in the word via a reasoning which is in disharmony with God.

Union and Communion with Christ was written to prepare believers for the communion service and deals with the believer's standing in Christ. Christ is the Vine and we are its branches, He is the Head and we the body. Together we form a holy Temple and are members of one with another as the Bride of Christ and the family of God. I have rarely experienced the mysterious union we have with our Lord from eternity to eternity so sublimely taught as in this gem of a book. Hawker's advice on how to be assured of the unity one enjoys in Christ is pastoral care at its very best.

Hawker lays great stress on prayer and in his Prop Against All Despair, the writer coaches the believer lovingly through the most difficult of Christian exercises but perhaps the most rewarding. Hawker shows how prayer in the Spirit opens Heaven's doors. Few books have blessed their readers as Hawker's Zion's Pilgrim, The Sailor Pilgrim and Zion's Warrior. To believe that one is a stranger and pilgrim on earth but marching onwards to Zion is not just the theme of a revival hymn but the teaching of Scripture and the experience of every believer. Hawker shows in these works how the path upwards is strewn with grace, mercy and love from beginning to end. There is much personal testimony given here and I was left with the assurance that God had strengthened my weak faith by my following Hawker's advice on how to keep on Zion's true track. Hawker's testimony is so strong that, whilst reading, I actually imagined myself going on the way arm in arm with this great saint, feeling all the better for his company. Few books have such an effect on me.

Hawker was not only a parish pastor but a chaplain to the forces stationed at Plymouth and his book Compassion for the Sick and Sorrowing is based on a harrowing experience he had. Ship after ship entered the port full of troops dying of the fever and Hawker and his church did all they could to relieve them, converting barns into hospitals, but a thousand men died during the three months run of the epidemic. Though Hawker had a heavy schedule in his parish, he spent hours each day comforting the dying and burying the dead. Anyone terminally ill without knowing whether they are bound for Zion or anyone wishing to help the dying over the threshold of death should read this book as there is not a theoretical word in it but sheer practical experience and genuine comfort from cover to cover.

The above works show Hawker at his desk and in his pastoral work, his two volumes of Village Sermons and Sermons on Important Subjects reveal his faithfulness in the pulpit. The words contained in Hawker's memorial tablet sum up Hawker's prowess as a preacher: 'The elegancy yet simplicity of diction, the liveliness and brilliancy of imagination, the perspicuity and vigour of thought, the depth and compass of Christian knowledge and experience, with which he was talented and blest, are still extant in his sermons.'

Hawker was a didactically gifted man and improved the quality of Christian education greatly. As a school text-book author and curriculum writer, I approached Hawker's Catechism for Children with what we might call 'professional interest.' Though the Heidelberg Catechism is prescribed in our schools (North-Rhine Westphalia), it is little used because of its ancient language. Hawker's language should be no problem for modern English-speaking children over the age of eleven or so and the book would still make an excellent addition to Scripture lessons and family worship. Some Christians object to 'putting words into children's mouths' in catechetical work but have no objection to their children learning parts in plays and singing songs and hymns learnt off by heart. Hawker's questions and answers are Scriptural throughout and as Scripture is the language that tunes the heart to God, Christians should surely not cavil at this means of evangelising their children. Furthermore, Hawker's catechism provides pupils with a thorough knowledge of the history of the Jews as also a detailed knowledge of the two Testaments and the way of salvation. The Great Commission compels us to make this way known to all mankind, especially to children. I cannot recommend these soul-saving and edifying works enough. The modern equivalent of a widow's mite is sufficient to purchase a single volume, but the spiritual value of each book is so enormous that it stretches from here to Heaven.

Taken from Mountain Movers ?Champions of the Faith (pp 347-362), George M. Ella, GO Publications, The Cairn, Hill Top, Eggleston, CO Durham, DL12OAU, England 1999

[1] See especially David Gay's Preaching the Gospel to Sinners: 2, Banner of Truth, Issue 371-372 and his review of Iain Murray's Spurgeon v. Hyper-Calvinism, ET, August, 1996, p. 19. These articles laid bare the tendency to Socinianism in the British evangelical establishment and pioneered the negative re-evaluation of Spurgeon spreading through the churches which is doing nobody any good.