

Author Interviews

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William Boekestein – Interview

We recently had the opportunity to interview Pastor Boekestein about this series of books and the importance of training our children in the historic Christian faith.

1. Why did you write these stories?

I want to see these books help children understand the context of the Reformed confessions, ultimately, so that they can flourish in their relationship with God. I believe that with God’s blessing, the ideas contained in the confessions can make our children more mature and disciplined followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. But especially young children better grasp ideas that are connected to people. If you wanted a child to catch a vision for the idea of service embodied by Rotary International it might help to begin by telling them stories of famous Rotarians. The adventures of Admiral Richard Byrd (the first explorer to reach both poles by air) or aviation pioneer Orville Wright would provide concrete expressions of service in action. Similarly, my hope is that children who have learned the stories behind the Confessions, will have a greater desire to learn about and live out the principles taught by the historical characters.

Confessions have the unfortunate stereotype of being “dry and dusty.” My hope is also to dispel that myth for a new generation of children who experience these stories. For many children (mine included) books are not dry and dusty; they are not simply read and then set aside. They live out the books they read. It’s not uncommon for our son to say to his sister things like, “Eva, you be Lady de Winter and I’ll be Dartagnon” as they play out a scene from *The Three Musketeers*. Or, “I’ll be Henry and you be Bessie” as they reenact a chapter from Elizabeth Prentiss’ *Henry and Bessie*. In a similar way, I would love to have a young generation of kids wanting to “be Guido (or Caspar or Zacharias).” I believe that connecting life stories to our confessions will serve our churches well as children become introduced to Reformed theology.

2. What can Christians today learn from Christians in the past?

In a way that only he could say it, C.S. Lewis warned against “chronological snobbery.” The chronological snob cuts himself off from a wealth of wisdom that can be mined from the past. It is almost impossible to limit the number of ways the study of church history benefits us today. But let me highlight just a few.

Church history can expand our thinking beyond currently accepted norms.

It has become common, I think, to assume that today’s minister is too busy to do much personal visitation. In many large churches today, ministers do almost no visitation. Instead, “pastoral care” is accomplished by small groups. If a pastor does need to meet with a parishioner, he can first “meet” the person thanks to church management software. The example of the nineteenth century Scottish minister Thomas Chalmers may be just what we need to revive us from such modern thinking. When Chalmers became pastor of the Tron church in Glasgow, he set out to visit every family in his parish. The parish may have contained 10-12,000 families! Our children, too, can become trapped by a modern idea of what is normal. Church history helps them break free from that trap.

Church history can help us appreciate God’s sovereignty.

If you were to spend just one hour reading an accurate overview of church history, you might wonder how the church has continued to exist at all. From the Roman persecutions of the

first three centuries to the Spanish Inquisition of the 16th century to the Armenian genocide in the 20th century to the unholy war presently being waged against North African Christians, the church has undergone tremendous opposition. The study of Church history helps us understand Christ's words when he said, "I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18, Cf. Belgic Confession, Art. 27).

Church history can help us resist being captivated by fads.

Author Brett McCracken has outlined the modern church's obsession with trendiness. Many churches today are desperately trying to overhaul their image to be more hip. Churches seek to impress by embracing cultural fads of style, technology, music, movies and even shock-jock approaches to sexuality. Responding to this approach on behalf of the younger generation, McCracken says with confidence, "When it comes to church, we don't want cool as much as we want real. If we are interested in Christianity in any sort of serious way, it is not because it's easy or trendy or popular. It's because Jesus himself is appealing, and what he says rings true. It's because the world we inhabit is utterly phony, ephemeral, narcissistic, image-obsessed and sex-drenched—and we want an alternative. It's not because we want more of the same."

Church historian Bruce Shelly explains that "Church history tends to [help us] separate the transient from the permanent, fads from basics." To paraphrase Isaac Newton, Christians transcend fads by standing on the shoulders of the giants of the faith who have gone before.

Church History can help us live courageous Christian lives today.

Studying the history of the church soberly reminds us that we take our place in the ranks of the army of God. We take up the same battle-beaten armor that the saints of old used. We use the same weapon, the gospel of Jesus Christ. And we fight, not only to continue our heritage but to leave a lasting legacy for future generations as well.

3. Do you see Christians rekindling an interest in confessional statements?

It was almost inevitable. For a few generations creeds and confessions have been criticized as harmful to the pursuit of a vibrant Christian life. This model has brought disastrous results. Churchgoers are woefully ignorant of basic Christian doctrine. The doctrinal minimalism of modern churches has produced a Christianity that is a mile wide but an inch deep. Thankfully, many of those who have grown discontent with superficial religion are beginning to drink from the deep, clear, refreshing spring of historical Christianity. They are finding in the confessions a helpful guide back to the word of God.

4. How can parents and teachers integrate the primary task to teach Scripture with helping children become familiar with creeds and catechisms?

Actually, the confessions themselves helps us do this in a few ways.

The confessions help dispel the myth that they have equal authority as Scripture.

The Belgic Confession, after listing the sixty-six books of the Bible affirms that, "We receive all these books, and these only, as holy and canonical, for the regulation, foundation, and confirmation of our faith" (Article 5). Later the Confession insists that, "We believe that those Holy Scriptures fully contain the will of God, and that whatsoever man ought to believe unto salvation is sufficiently taught therein...Neither may we consider any writings of men, however

holy these men may have been, of equal value with those divine Scriptures, nor ought we to consider custom, or the great multitude, or antiquity, or succession of times and persons, or councils, or decrees or statutes, as of equal value with the truth of God” (Article 7).

The Confessions help introduce us to Scripture.

Although they do reflect the historical situation of their day, they were drawn from Scripture by eminently qualified theologians. I mention in *The Glory of Grace*, that the delegates to the Synod of Dort swore an oath to conduct their business “using no human writing, but only the Word of God, which is an infallible rule of faith.” Because the confessions are amply footnoted with Scripture texts, parents can show their children the Scriptural basis for the confessional statement they are teaching.

5. Are you working on any other titles in this series?

I have written a little story on the history of the English Reformation leading up to the Westminster Assembly but it will not be part of this series. Along with Joel Beeke, I have written a little book on the incarnation which should be available later this year.

<http://www.ligonier.org/blog/reformation-new-generation-interview-william-boekestein/>

Christopher Bogosh – Interview

(Matthew Claridge)

If you read sermon collections anytime before the 20th century, you will find many covering the topic of “preparing for death.” Honestly, when’s the last time you heard a message on that? Martin Luther’s famous sermon on that theme made the following exhortation: “what more should God do to persuade you to accept death willingly and not to dread but to overcome it? ... [God] lays your sin, your death, and your hell on his dearest Son, vanquishes them, and renders them harmless for you.” Luther’s phrase “accept death willingly” might seem innocent at first until it’s set against modern marvels to extend and preserve life for much longer than ever was possible before. What does it mean to “accept death willingly” today? Christopher Bogosh, a registered nurse at Community Hospice of Northeast Florida and a regular teacher at New Hope Baptist church, address this question head-on. Far from being simply a personal preference, Mr. Bogosh explains in his new book, *Compassionate Jesus: Rethinking the Christian’s Approach to Modern Medicine*, that there are two different worldviews vying over what it means to die. Lacking our fore-bearers reflection on these matters, its possible we have bought into a perspective on death that’s alien to our Christian testimony.

You speak of there being two distinct worldviews vying over the nature and procedure of medicine. The one you call the “modern medicine” worldview and the other the “compassionate health care” worldview. What are the differences between these two?

Modern medicine has chosen to root its science in philosophical naturalism, humanism, agnosticism, and evolutionary theory. These assumptions are not scientific and they contradict a biblical approach to medical science that affirms supernaturalism, theism, absolutism, and redemption.

While Holy Scripture asserts the existence of matter it insists on *real* entities that are supernatural (e.g., angels and souls). After Jesus died, the Bible says he gave up his spirit (i.e., soul or life force) and his body lay without life for three days (John 19:30). Modern medicine has adopted brain-death criteria, which essentially says if there is no detectable activity in the brain then death has occurred. This view of death challenges the very heart of Christianity, namely, the death of Christ, his *three-day* burial without life, and his bodily resurrection (after his soul returned to his body to reanimate his life). If one assumes the validity of brain-death criteria, then he or she has to adopt a form of monism (or is an inconsistent dualist) and Jesus did not die, he just swooned for three days.

Holy Scripture also presents a worldview that is theistic in orientation not humanistic. Holy Scripture directs human affairs, morals, and ethics. Humanism places humans at the center and God and his revelation on the periphery, that is, if it acknowledges God and the Bible at all.

The Bible is not agnostic about the existence of one true God, judgment, heaven, and hell, whereas, modern medicine uses agnosticism as a way to accommodate private beliefs, so that people may be better able to cope in the midst of a medical crisis while they receive real help from medical science.

While Christians affirm microevolution, that is, one species evolving or mutating within a species group (e.g., a bacteria becoming resistant to an antibiotic), we reject macroevolution one species changing into another species (e.g., a monkey becoming a human). Modern medicine affirms the latter and its effect on modern medical science is extremely pervasive. Evolutionary theory is not simply the *a priori* position for biology, however, it is also at the root of

psychology, sociology, and various schools of theology—it is the metanarrative for modern medicine. In an evolutionary context, humans evolved from biochemical substance and life is lived between the points of viability and non-viability, as determined by utilitarian ethics, with no ultimate purpose but survival. On the contrary, the Bible’s metanarrative is redemption set in the context of creation, fall, salvation, and restoration (Eph. 1:3-14). God creates human beings in his image to redeem some in Christ and to reprobate others so that he will glorify himself in mercy and judgment. The problem with the world is sin (not disease and death), the entity from which humans need redemption to find everlasting healing. Jesus took the punishment we deserve for our sins in order to redeem us, and he will return one day to restore the world and complete redemption. Redemption stands in stark contrast to evolutionary theory.

These are two radically different starting points for the application of medical science. The goal of modern medicine is to eradicate disease, stop aging, and seek to prolong life at all costs. Although these goals seem admirable, they are not biblical. Rather, these ends are rooted in the evolutionary drive for survival and they totally ignore the real problem at the bottom of all disease, aging, and life—sin and the curse. The goal of a biblical approach to medical science is compassion, not cure, and spiritual restoration, looking forward in hope to physical healing at the second coming of Christ. The Bible sees the goals of modern medicine as hopelessly misguided, idealistic, and arrogant. At the same time, the Bible calls Christian medical professionals to exercise dominion over the creation by seeking ways to treat disease, not to find cures (Jesus will bring the cure at his second coming), to manage symptoms in order to show compassion and encourage spiritual restoration.

Frankly, I think many Christians will be disturbed by your idea that we are not obligated to extend life for as long as possible. To do anything less, they might think, moves us in the direction of assisted suicide. Your response?

Jesus willingly died around thirty-three. He did not seek to prolong his life as long as possible. Stephen could have avoided death by keeping his mouth shut about Jesus. James, the Lord’s brother, Peter, and Paul, according to tradition, were willingly martyred. Many throughout the centuries of the church received death at a young age because they refused to deny Christ. They could have extended their lives but they choose death rather than idolatry. I use the example of martyrs and our Lord because they loved God and his will more than their own lives, and this is the crux of the whole matter. If one seeks to “extend life as long as possible,” he or she may actually idolize his or her life, exercise self-love, and ultimately not follow God’s will (cf. 2 Chron. 16:12).

Consider Thomas (a fictional character), a loving Christian husband and father of four diagnosed with Stage 4 cancer. He decides not to have treatment to avoid the miserable side effects and to spend quality time with his family to prepare them for his death. This does not sound like someone seeking assisted suicide but wise planning, selfless living, trust in God’s sovereign care for his family, and a bold assurance of being with Christ in heaven after he dies. “For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s” (Rom. 14:7-8, NKJV).

In your view, what are some of the consequences to a Christian’s testimony when he or she adopts a “prolong life at all costs” mindset?

I believe there are three major consequences. First, the Christian may not be a good

steward of his or her body. Aggressive treatment to prolong life at all costs may address the disease but it may also destroy the body and create other problems. Second, the Christian may cause those close to him or her to suffer physically, emotionally, spiritually, socially, and financially. The Family Caregiver Alliance recently reported that caregivers have a 63 percent higher mortality rate than non-caregivers, they neglect themselves, and they have a higher rate of depression. Third, the professing Christian may be self-deceived, thinking he or she is a Christian when the reality is the person is not. Although death may be fearful, the Christian should desire to be free from sin and misery, the world, Satan, and want to enter into the visible presence of Jesus—death accomplishes these things for the Christian.

Destroying the body to eradicate a disease, loving one's self before others, and not desiring to go to Jesus in heaven are a poor testimony to the saving power of Christ. Rather, the Christian should be a good steward of his or her body (which may mean receiving treatment to manage symptoms with the result of prolonging life), love one's neighbor before one's self, possess the hope of being free from sin and misery, and long to be with Jesus in heaven—this is the testimony Christians need to have.

Being an “organ donor” seems like such a compassionate and reasonable thing to do in light of the many people out there in need of transplants. What could possibly be wrong with it?

The problem is not with donating or transplanting organs. It is with today's definition of death. In 1981, Congress created the Uniform Definition of Death Act to address advances with life-support techniques. This Act defines death in two ways: brain death and cardiopulmonary death. Brain death is a legal definition of death, thus, doctors may pronounce people dead without allowing cardiopulmonary death to occur. Most transplanted organs today are from “brain-dead” victims. These depersonalized humans, now renamed “cadavers” in the medical literature, have their organs cut out, flown via Life Flight to eager recipients around the nation, and donor family members receive succor with the promise of saving the life of others.

Here is a recent article that speaks volumes about this unethical practice. On July 9, 2013, ABC News reported on an organ donor, Colleen Burns, who woke up on the operating table just prior to having her organs cut out! The title of the article says it all, “Patient Wakes Up as Doctors Get Ready to Remove Organs.”

It's very common for medical needs to dominate prayer requests in churches. What is your advice for how Christians should approach both the prevalence of these requests and the desire for them to be met?

I think it is important to place these prayer requests into the context of God's sovereign care and providence. These afflictions are not random and God is still in control. I believe a better way to pray is to ask the Holy Spirit to draw sick Christians near Jesus through the means of grace, and to ask for wisdom and guidance concerning the will of God. I have found during our prayer time as I frame requests and pray in this manner people have become more thoughtful in their praying. For example, most of them have stopped telling God to heal Aunt Betsy (a fictional character) from her dementia, but, rather: “Father be pleased to draw Aunt Betsy near Jesus in her confused state, and grant her family wisdom and guidance as they care for her. Amen.”

In what ways do you think a Reformed theological perspective informs our approach to medical ethics and end-life-issues?

First, the Reformed view of Scripture summarized in the Latin phrase *sola Scriptura* (i.e., Scripture alone). While broad evangelicalism affirms Scripture as the Word of God, how this comes across in interpretation and practice is wanting. There is an attempt in Reformed camps to carefully interpret Scripture with Scripture and apply these findings to a comprehensive biblical worldview to inform every aspect of life, which includes medical ethics and end-of-life issues.

Second, the Reformed faith takes seriously God's preordained purposes before time began. Ephesians 1:3-14 (et. al.) clearly teaches that God planned to redeem specific people in Jesus Christ before the beginning of time. This has significant implications on the way we understand why God created all things, ordained the fall and his purposes for sin and misery, established salvation in Jesus Christ, and how he will bring all things to completion in Christ at the end of time. The Reformed understanding of the first and second Adams and the unfolding progressive covenants centered on the Immanuel principle (contra dispensationalist thought) is hugely significant as well. History is truly HIS-story beginning before time began, and, therefore, our medical ethics and how we view end-of-life matters needs to fit within this redemptive context.

Third, closely aligned with God's redemptive program is the Reformed concept of "already, not yet." Christ has already completed everything during his incarnation but he has yet to finish it. This concept is extremely important because it helps us apply medical ethics and address end-life-issues in the context of redemptive history and God's providence in the midst of our present circumstances. Our focus at present is on spiritual restoration looking forward in hope to physical healing at the second coming of Christ. Christian medical ethics must be in line with Scripture and the goals of sanctification; and how we view end-of-life issues must take into account Christ's second coming, the bodily resurrection, restoration of the creation, and the future state of glorification.

Simonetta Carr – Interview

Born in Italy, Carr has lived and worked in different cultures, written for newspapers and magazines around the world, and translated the works of several Christian authors into Italian. I corresponded with the former elementary school teacher about how she got started writing biographies for kids, how she chooses which events to include and omit, what she's learned, and more.

1. What led you to begin writing biographies of historical Christian figures for children?

I saw a need for this type of book and desired something comparable to the many good biographies available about presidents, artists, musicians, and so on. I wanted information rather than hagiography, and I wanted quality and visual appeal. I also wanted something for readers younger than 12, since few Christian biographies exist for that age group. As the 500th anniversary of Calvin's birth approached (in 2009), I made a mock-up biography with some childlike illustrations and tried to convince someone else to write it. Finally, someone suggested I just write it and send it to some publishers, which I did. I'm grateful for the staff at Reformation Heritage Books, who carried my initial vision even further.

2. Why is church history necessary—even for young kids?

You can get a fuller answer to this question [here](#), but in a nutshell church history is necessary to help children understand God's providential hand on his church and on the development and refining of Christian doctrine. With my books I want children to understand their heritage and their ties with Christians of the past, and to appreciate how the church has worked to formulate its doctrines and protect believers from error.

3. How do you go about researching for and writing these books?

And given the youth of your intended readership, how do you choose which events to include and which to omit?

Some people are surprised by the amount of research that goes into each book. This is largely because I'm first a mother, not an author. And without a degree in church history, I can't rely on anything I've learned before. Each time I begin a new title I get every book I can find on my character and his or her times. It's fascinating study, and I love every minute of it, even if the amount of information and different takes on various issues can at times feel overwhelming.

After I have a pretty good idea about my character, I read some of their writings—especially their most significant works. I also read some letters or sermons to help me get a better understanding of their thoughts and passions, which is what makes a biography come to life.

While reading this extensive amount of literature, it's crucial to keep focusing on the book's purpose. I keep asking: “Why am I writing about this person? Why is he or she important to us today?” I aim to consciously focus on each character's importance to the church and development of doctrine. I also contact experts in the field who graciously agree to help me as I write and to read the manuscript to ensure it's accurate.

Since each book is only about 63 pages (including photos and illustrations), I have to keep the story simple. For example, while writing about John Knox (the next title in the series), I had to skip his controversial ministry at Frankfurt because it didn't really move the story forward. In other books, however, I covered controversial issues because they provided a clearer picture of the situation or had repercussions on the later development of the church or its doctrine.

After the manuscript is complete, the research isn't finished because I still have to give instructions to my illustrator, Matt Abraxas, and so many funny questions come up at that time. Did Anselm have a beard? There are no pictures of him from his time, but we know he shared the Normans' dislike for long hair on men. And since Normans generally disliked beards, we opted for no beard in most of the pictures.

4. What have you learned as you've written these books?

On a practical level, I've learned to check and double-check every fact, even if I have an excellent editor. I've also learned not to rely too comfortably on the advice I get from experts. I normally consult at least two experts for each book, and I've learned (the hard way) that if one gives a bit of information I've never heard before, I should check with the other.

On a personal level, I've come to appreciate more than ever the men and women of our Christian tradition. Delving into the intricacies of our past—good and bad—has helped me gain a deeper grasp of certain issues and situations instead of remaining content with superficial and often simplistic views. This has given me a much greater appreciation for the work of God's providence in the preservation of his church and its doctrine.

Writing these biographies has also helped me become better informed in discussing issues related to our past and to handle with greater competence the perennial criticism of Christianity that finds justification in the abundance of human mistakes. In fact, I have a strong desire to bring these books outside Christian circles. I discuss the issues in each work with my students (I teach Italian to adults). Two of my books have also become finalists at the San Diego Book Awards, which has opened the door for their inclusion in public libraries.

I pray the Lord will continue to use my books to instruct and inspire young readers for his glory.

<http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/your-kids-need-christian-history-too/>

Simonetta Carr – Interview (Redeemed Reader)

Simonetta Carr recently published *Anselm of Caterbury*, the sixth in her *Christian Biographies for Young Readers with Reformation Heritage books*. The books fill an important niche in Christian publishing—picture books about church history. They are not simple books by any means; they immerse kids and adults alike in the story of a church father, incorporating historical context, theological ideas, and memorable stories from the subject’s life. As such, occasionally the stories may be difficult for young readers to follow, but for older readers and even adults, they provide a rich, thoughtful introduction to church history. (Younger readers can still enjoy the book, perhaps a little at a time, with an adult’s help.)

Recently, I had the opportunity to interview Simonetta about *Anselm* and her biography series. Here’s what she had to say.

1. Who was Anselm, and why did you choose to write about him?

As you know, the overarching goal of this series of books is to give children a historical understanding of the doctrines they believe. I want to make them think about what they believe and why they believe it.

I remember years ago in Sunday School, I tried to explore with my 2nd and 3rd graders the truth behind the statement, “Jesus took away my sins.” That’s a typical answer to the question, “Why did Jesus die on the cross?” But do children really understand what it means? I asked my students, “How did Jesus take your sins? What did he do with them? Could he just erase them?” Of course there are theologians who say he did just that, erase our sins with no consequence for him or us, but is it really consistent with God’s perfect justice? And did Jesus really need to die in order to do that?

Anselm pondered similar questions. I hope my readers will understand that these doctrines were not formulated lightly. Anselm took years and years to write his *Cur Deus Homo*, and structured it as a discussion with another monk where—in typical scholastic manner—he tried to leave no stone unturned.

The doctrine of Christ’s atonement is a foundational tenet of our historical confessional faith, but has been repeatedly challenged over the centuries. I hope my readers will take it seriously and I hope their parents will help them to realize its implications in our daily lives.

2. You include a lot of metaphors that Anselm himself used in describing his life and Biblical ideas. Did you have a favorite?

Not really. Generally speaking, I like how Anselm seemed to come up with metaphors for just about anything. I think it opens a window on his character. Not only was he always thinking about God and spiritual truths, but he was extremely observant about everything around him, and could draw his illustrations as easily from the life of kings as from that of peasants.

Of the metaphors I mentioned in the book, probably children can relate the most to the one of the child chasing butterflies (which Anselm compares to the lure of material things).

3. Do you see this book (and all of your books) as filling a niche in Christian publishing? If so, how would you describe it?

I think this question can be better answered by the parents of my young readers. I know I started this series because I felt there was a need for this type of biographies for young readers—something factual and informative, comparable with contemporary children’s biographies about presidents, artists, scientists, etc.—instead of fictionalized stories. Mostly, as I said, I wanted to focus on the history of Christian theology, emphasizing God’s providential preservation of his church and doctrine rather than moral or inspirational examples.

4. How might this book benefit classical schoolers studying the middle ages?

Actually, classical education has also inspired the making of these books because I had started using similar methods in my homeschool before I even knew about the classical education movement. It just made sense to base the curriculum on the study of history. As we studied each time period, I wanted to include the history of Christian theology but I couldn't find age-appropriate books on that subject. So this series is written with that vision in mind.

5. What do you think Matt's illustrations add to this particular story? Why did you choose an artist with his particular style?

I will start with the second question because there is actually a great story behind it. For the first book, a friend of mine from Italy, who is a professional artist, agreed to help me with the illustrations to get me started. By the way, if you wonder why that book (John Calvin) has black and white illustrations, it's because the first publisher I contacted told me that no one would ever publish my book with color illustrations. When I finally contacted Reformation Heritage Books, the illustrations were already done in black and white. After the first book, they asked me to continue in color.

Anyhow, if you look at the cover picture for John Calvin, the illustration is done very well, so I had to find another very good artist, and it was not an easy task. I contacted many illustrators and basically said, "I want very high quality for little money." Providentially, I found someone who accepted my poor offer for the second book, Augustine of Hippo. Right at the same time, however, my pastor told me his brother was an artist! After I saw his art, I knew he was the right person.

Illustrators have a lot of difficult tasks on their hands. They have to interpret a text and translate it into a visual expression. Especially in a short biography that focuses on facts with little room for detailed descriptions, the illustrations contribute to bringing the characters to life, emphasizing their humanity and placing the story in the correct context of time and space. They also create a mood by a choice of colors, contrasts, postures and expressions. On top of this, illustrators have to immerse themselves in the time period they are covering, study the details, and—maybe the most difficult task of all—work peaceably with the author. In fact, this last task is so difficult that most publishers prefer to appoint a graphic editor to deal with the illustrators instead of leaving that communication to zealous and often uncompromising authors. Matt fulfills all these tasks wonderfully, and he adds to that a passionate commitment to beauty and accuracy and a rare artistic sensibility.

6. Finally, should Protestants and Reformed families be concerned about Anselm's admiration for the pope? How would you approach that aspect of the story with your kids?

A hierarchical system of church government (eventually headed by the bishop—or pope—of Rome) was virtually accepted for many centuries before the Reformation. Initially, even the Reformers had a general desire to work within the church structure and maintained respect for the pope until they realized the church was unwilling to modify its stance on vital doctrines.

We can help children understand that Anselm's obedience to the pope (I believe it was obedience more than admiration) was a normal part of Christian life, just as I respect and obey the elders in my church. The problems didn't come necessarily from that obedience, but rather from the pope's increasing abuse of power and gradual imposition of unbiblical doctrines. These intensified during and after the Reformation, to the point that it's impossible to read our conception of papacy back to even the 11th and 12th centuries.

In this book, I have mentioned only the problems most intimately related to Anselm's life—for example, the idea that separating from the world to live as monks or nuns led to a more spiritual and meritorious life (prompting people to "buy" their prayers) and the church's desire to obtain temporal

powers. Parents may choose to broaden this explanation. My upcoming books on John Knox and Martin Luther will fill some of these gaps.

There are also some issues about Anselm that I chose not to mention in the book in order to focus on the main points. For example, some of Anselm's prayers were directed to Mary or to the cross. Parents may choose to point this out, especially if they decide to read some of his other, beautiful prayers to their children.

It's important, in my view, to avoid extremes, such as seeing Anselm as a reprobate Roman Catholic, or, conversely, as a committed Protestant. He was neither. He was a man of his times, a Christian passionate for the knowledge of God, who made great contributions to our historical creeds while living within the structure and culture of his age.

<http://www.redeemedreader.com/2013/10/anselm---an---interview---with---simonetta---carr/>

Paul Washer – Interview

(Tim Challies)

You probably know Paul Washer as the man who preached the infamous “Shocking Youth Message,” a sermon that has tallied over one million views on YouTube. But there is far more to the man than that one sermon. For ten years he was a missionary in Peru and in that time he founded the HeartCry Missionary Society to support Peruvian church planters. He is also a pastor, an author, a conference speaker and now serves full-time with the HeartCry Missionary Society. I recently asked you to help me interview him and today and tomorrow I will share what turned out to be a fascinating interview

Can you tell me the five people who have most influenced your faith and the five books that have most influenced your faith?

The person that I most admire is Jesus Christ. He is the only perfect Person. There is simply no comparison. The difference between Him and all other men is not merely quantitative, but qualitative. He is in a category all to Himself. The most precise and thoughtful scholar is limited in what he knows and wrong in some things that he affirms; the most devoted saint is stained with sin and full of error; the bravest heart among us will fail and break; but Christ is altogether lovely, holy, and unfailing. With regard to saints in history, I have gained the greatest benefit from George Muller, Charles Spurgeon, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, George Whitefield, and John Calvin. But these are only a few. To borrow a phrase from the author of Hebrews, “What more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of...” all the Reformers and Puritans from whom I have benefited: Bunyan, Boston, Brooks, Edwards, Flavel, Goodwin, Murray, Newton, Owen, Ryle, Sibbes, etc.

The book that has had the most influence on my life is the Bible. This goes without saying for every genuine Christian, but it should always be emphasized, even at the risk of redundancy or cliché. It is the Book of books, the very Word of God, and the only written document that possesses the power to save and transform lives. Other than the Scriptures, the most important book in my life has been *The Autobiography of George Muller*. It sits on the right-hand corner of my desk; its cover is worn, and its pages are yellow and torn from much use. It has been a great help to my faith throughout nearly thirty years of ministry. The second most important book to me is *Pilgrim’s Progress* by John Bunyan. This book sets forth the doctrine of salvation with amazing clarity and insight. The third book is *Today’s Evangelism* by Ernest Reisinger. As a young man, I always knew there was something wrong with the way I was doing evangelism. God used Reisinger’s book to expose the superficiality of my message and methodology. Halfway through the book, I was full of fear because of the way I had been preaching the Gospel. That day, I promised God that if He would let me live, I would never preach the Gospel in a superficial manner again. The fourth book is actually a collection of books entitled, *The Complete Collection of E.M. Bounds on Prayer*. The fifth book is *Pentecost Today?* by Iain Murray, which is one of the best treatments of revival and the power of the Holy Spirit I have ever come across. It most closely resembles my beliefs with regard to this doctrine. Finally, I must also mention a video series that greatly impacted my life when I was a young missionary in Peru — *The Holiness of God* by R.C. Sproul. I watched portions of that series on my knees. At times, I would have to pause the tape and simply lie prostrate on the floor. It was a pivotal moment in my life.

Many people first learn about you through YouTube and the “Shocking Youth Message.” Can you tell how that message came about, and how it came to be a YouTube hit? What has the message meant to your life and ministry?

As I walked up to the pulpit, I was unusually burdened and was unsure about what to preach. It seemed that there were thousands before me who were resting in a false assurance. There was a message burning in my heart, but I knew that it would be offensive. As I began to speak about the influence of culture on the church, the people in the auditorium broke forth in applause. They had no idea that I was speaking about them. At that moment, I took up my text in Matthew 7 and began to preach. It was as though I was being carried and pushed along by strong wind that I could not resist. I felt broken into a million pieces, and yet I was fearless about the consequences. Immediately afterwards, I thought I would collapse, and I was full of fear. Many people were angry with me that day. I remained troubled about the sermon for the next few weeks. While I was preaching, I had no doubts; but afterwards, I was besieged by doubt. Had I done the right thing? Several months passed, and I eventually put the whole thing out of my mind. I never saw a copy of the video, nor did HeartCry put it online.

After several months, we began to receive emails from all over the world. People were sending in testimonies of how they had been saved through “The Shocking Youth Message.” All of us at HeartCry were bewildered. We had no idea what message the people were writing about or if I was the one who had preached it. Finally, one of my fellow staff members went online and found it. I was shocked probably more than anyone. Radio stations began calling and asking for interviews, and debates were going on all over the Internet either for or against what I had preached. Even after all these years, we still receive testimonies from around the world of people who have been converted through that sermon.

The message has affected my life in many ways. Positively, it has allowed me to preach and write about the Gospel and the nature of genuine conversion. Also, it has opened the door for people to see the work that God is doing through the HeartCry Missionary Society and indigenous missions. Negatively, it has led some young reformers to hold an unbalanced view of the kind of preaching that is needed for true revival. The message I preached was hard, very hard, but it was the exception and not the norm of my preaching. There are times when a “hard word” must be preached, even to God’s people. However, the church and the individual believer do not grow by daily helpings of “hard words,” but by being nourished and encouraged by the full counsel of God. The greatest catalyst for spiritual maturity in the truly converted is a greater revelation of the love of God in Christ. Another thing that “budding prophets” need to understand is that a preacher carries a sword, a basin, and a towel. He is quick to use the basin and towel with great joy. But he is slow to use the sword, and he always does so with tears and fear and scarred knees.

Can you tell us how it came to be that you ended up in Peru for ten years? Obviously the answer lies in the Great Commission, but why did you choose Peru? How did you know that is where God wanted you?

In my last year of seminary, I made a list of possible directions for my life, and then I left the bottom blank because I realized that God’s will for my life might be beyond anything I had written down. Should I continue in the street ministry where I had been laboring? Did God want me to return to the Philippines or Peru, the two countries in which I had ministered for a time? Every day, I prayed over the list and waited upon the Lord. Sometimes I would erase an option from my list, only to put it back the next day. Eventually, my desire to go to Peru grew. It kept

growing until it eclipsed all the others. In addition to my inward desire, God began to open doors and orchestrate things so that it started to become obvious that this was the direction that I should take. Finally, one day on the stairs between the second and third floor of the seminary library, I was given an overwhelming confidence and joy that Peru was the place. Through the years, I have discovered some essential principles in discerning God's will: First, by God's grace, we must be firmly committed to seeking first the Kingdom of God and His glory. Secondly, we must establish a life discipline of renewing our minds in the Word of God. Thirdly, we must seek godly counsel from mature believers. Fourthly, we must watch for signs of God's providence opening doors and closing them. Finally, we should consider the desires of our heart. God gave me a growing desire to evangelize the people of Peru and to minister to their needs. When I started HeartCry in order to reach other nations, I was driven by a similar new desire.

What can you tell us about the state of the church in South America? What are some of the encouragements and concerns you see there?

In South America, like any other place in the world, there are both encouraging signs and great concerns. The encouraging signs are the number of people who are being converted and their zeal to evangelize the lost — those not only of their own people, but also of the other nations of the world. There is a providential openness to the Gospel that would astound most believers from the States. A street evangelist can share the entire Gospel with more people in one day in Peru than in a month in the United States. Another encouraging sign there is similar to what we are seeing here. Many preachers and students of the Word are rediscovering the great doctrines of the church, the sufficiency of Scripture, and the importance of expository preaching.

The concerns in South America are something of a reflection of the problems that we find in the United States. First, there is a superficial Gospel which promotes easy-believism. Secondly, there is a lack of expository preaching and biblical counseling. Thirdly, the growth of false prophets and marginally Christian sects has risen. Whenever there is a genuine work of God, we can be sure that the devil will multiply the counterfeit.

Family worship is one of the disciplines most Christian families want to succeed at, but find they struggle with. What is your experience with family worship? Could you describe how you lead your family in worship?

Family worship is a non-negotiable essential for the Christian family. Several years ago, I read a statement from Dr. John MacArthur about raising children. I cannot quote him word for word, but the central truth that I remember was this: Teach the Scriptures to your children daily, discipline your children consistently, and love your children unconditionally. If you do these things, you will have acted biblically. This truth has been a foundation stone to my family life and the raising of my children. Usually five times a week, my family meets in the evening for devotions and prayer. I have three children, aged twelve, nine, and six. During our devotion, we study through books of the Bible, and we pray. Each night, we advance a few verses in Proverbs and a few verses in whatever other book of the Bible we are studying. For example, at this moment, we are studying in Proverbs 16 and Luke 11. We do line-by-line exposition. One child will read the verse, and I will teach. Then the next child will read the following verse, and I expound upon it. In the midst of this, there are also comments and questions by my wife and children. We are now going through Proverbs for the third time, and we have gone through the following other books: Matthew; John; Romans; Ephesians; Philippians; Colossians; I & II Thessalonians; I & II Peter; and I, II, & III John. Usually, we spend about half an hour in study

each evening. However, at times when the children's interest has been peaked, the devotions have lasted an hour. I am careful to follow what is happening with my children during the devotion. Devotions should not be drudgery, but the highlight of the day.

There are many of your fellow Christians who look up to you and admire you. How do you handle praise from others? How does the Lord keep you humble?

If I were to answer this question the way it is now worded, it would be an indictment against me, for it presupposes either that I am humble or that I believe myself to be humble. Pride is a terrible and dangerous thing. It can take so many forms; it can even assume the appearance of humility. Pride can lead not only to self-exaltation, but also to self-abasement. It is a dangerous worm of many disguises. The key to battling pride is not found in struggling against thinking too highly of ourselves or in striving to think of ourselves as lowly. The key is found in simply not thinking about ourselves at all, but setting our minds on Christ and the needs of others.

Having said that, I can share a few things that may be helpful in our fight against pride: First, we ought to seek to grow in our understanding of the doctrine of God and the doctrine of man. The more we understand who He is and what we are in comparison, the more pride is defeated. Secondly, it is wise to surround ourselves with those who know us and love us enough to speak into our lives with words of correction and rebuke. Thirdly, after extensive travel, we should always make our way home as soon as possible. People who only listen to preachers have a tendency to put them on a pedestal, but those who live with preachers recognize that they are just common men. Lastly, if we judge our lives by what we know or by what we say, we can easily deceive ourselves into thinking that we are something we are not; it is wiser to evaluate ourselves by the amount of truth we actually live. This is very humbling.

You are often associated with what has become known as New Calvinism. What are some things you see that encourage you and concern you as you look at this movement?

This is a hard question to answer because there are so many definitions of "New Calvinism." Some use it as a title of honor and others as a derogatory remark. For this reason, all such titles are misleading if not outright dangerous. In the last decade, there have been many young men and women who have embraced the doctrines of the Reformation. If we are speaking of these, then I do see some encouraging signs and some concerning ones. I'll begin with those that are encouraging.

First of all, this generation's renewed interest in the great doctrines of the Scriptures that were clearly set forth in the Reformation is encouraging. Evangelicalism has suffered a great deal because of its abandonment or neglect of biblical truth in favor of pragmatism. Christianity is a "truth" religion. When its truth becomes undefined, Christianity becomes vague and powerless. Even worse, it quickly becomes syncretistic and absorbed with worldly culture. The return of some of today's evangelicals to a proper definition of truth is heartening. Secondly, this generation's rediscovery of the Five *Solae* of the Reformation — *Sola Scriptura*, *Solus Christus*, *Sola Gratia*, *Sola Fide*, and *Soli Deo Gloria* — is encouraging. These doctrines are non-negotiable essentials to a biblical Christianity, a sound foundation that has often resulted in reformation and revival among the people of God. Thirdly, this generation's recognition of the importance of church history is encouraging. The belief in "*sola scriptura*" does not negate the necessity of comparing our interpretation of Scripture to that of the great confessions of the

Church and the countless godly believers that have gone before us. This is one of the most effective means of detecting how much of our own culture has crept into our interpretation. Fourthly and finally, this generation's rediscovery of the great theologians and preachers of the past is encouraging. We must admit that the superficiality, lack of discipline, and hunger for entertainment and ease which abounds in our culture is not an incubator for great thinkers with deep spiritual experience. When we read the works of the great saints of history, we are able to draw from a well deeper than our own, to recognize how far we have fallen, and to set our sight on a ground higher than that which our own time would demand or even expect.

While I see much that is encouraging, I also see much that troubles me. In many ways, a movement will pass through the same errors and dangers of any one of the individuals who are a part of it.

My first concern is the tendency toward extremes. When a young man begins to take seriously the importance of doctrine, he can be led astray by extremes and by overemphasizing one doctrine to the demise of another. Possessing a correct interpretation of each individual doctrine is not sufficient; we must also learn to hold each doctrine in harmony with the others.

My second concern is the tendency to deny or eliminate mystery from the person and works of God. We must remember that the heresies regarding the Trinity (for example) came from two distinct fountains — from those who sought to deny it and from those who sought to explain it. A young man can easily fall into the great danger of giving his own inferences the same weight or authority as Scripture. In doing so, he creates a theological construct with more inference than truth. Our pride would rather eliminate mystery from God and boast of its accomplishment than acknowledge mystery and humbly worship the One whose judgments are unsearchable and whose ways are unfathomable.

My third concern is an empty intellectualism. This occurs when the mental comprehension of a doctrine becomes the final goal rather than the means to a greater goal — the application of that doctrine in our own lives to the glory of God and the benefit of God's people. When a young man begins to teach things and boast of things that have yet to become a reality in his life, he can become blind to how little he understands the truth he explains and how meagerly he lives what he supposedly knows.

My fourth concern is a theological tediousness that trumps love. If we are growing in the truth and advancing in Christianity beyond our contemporaries (Galatians 1:14), we must ask ourselves, "For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?" (I Corinthians 4:7). Our growth in truth ought to lead to our growth in humility and mercy toward others, especially toward those who believe. When a young theologian snickers at a sign that says, "God loves you!" simply because he knows that the one who wrote it does not understand the full complexity of the statement he has written, something is terribly wrong. Jesus said, "See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven continually see the face of My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 18:10).

My fifth concern is the willingness of this younger generation of reformers to embrace the great doctrines of the Reformation while being unwilling to let go of the unbiblical models of ministry and church life that are ingrained in modern evangelical life. We must realize that much of what is wrong with current evangelical practices has to do with a departure from the biblical theology that was set forth in the Reformation. If we truly grasp these doctrines, especially *Sola Scriptura*, then it demands that we conform our organizational structures and methodologies of ministry to the Scriptures, not the other way around.

My sixth concern is the comprehension of Reformation and Puritan theology without the practice of their piety and devotion to God. The Reformers were men who knew God and walked with God. Their prayer closets were just as familiar to them as their libraries. They longed to be conformed to the image of Christ. They were by no means perfect men, but they painstakingly sought to conform every aspect of their lives to the dictates of Scripture. The transformation in their theology produced a transformation in their doxology and praxis. The lifestyle of at least some young reformers borderlines on an antinomianism that flaunts its supposed freedoms and shuns rigorous piety as little more than bondage to the Law.

My seventh and last concern has to do with the attempt of many young reformers to appear contemporary, hip, cool or even *avant-garde*. This flirtatious relationship with culture is dangerous, and it makes it very difficult for the world to take the minister or his message seriously.

Why did you choose to write a series of books on “Recovering the Gospel?” Who should read these books, and what do you hope these books will accomplish?

First of all, I chose to write on the Gospel because it is the one controlling passion of my life. In fact, I could preach the same message of the atoning death of Christ every time I step foot in a pulpit and not grow tired of the theme. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the foundation of the church and the greatest revelation of the glory of God. Secondly, there is a real sense in which the Gospel has been lost in the evangelical church. This statement might seem exaggerated to some, but this losing of the Gospel has occurred throughout history, and all the indications point to the fact that it has happened again in our generation. When we compare the Gospel that is primarily preached today to that which was preached by the Reformers, the Puritans, Edwards, Whitefield, Wesley, Spurgeon, and Lloyd-Jones, we see a great contrast. It becomes evident that we have reduced the Gospel to little more than a few spiritual principles or an empty creedal statement. This demonstrates the importance of doing our theology in the context of church history. The great confessions and creeds of the church, as well as some of her most devout preachers and theologians, can help us understand how far we have strayed. Many dear and genuine Christians have told me that they discovered truths in the books I have written that they had never heard before. They are often shocked when I tell them that these truths would have been common knowledge to anyone who sat under evangelical preaching in the past. Thirdly, I wrote this series on the Gospel because I wanted to set forth its great truths in the language of the man in the pew and with copious references to Scripture. The great truths of Christianity do not belong to the professional theologians alone, but to every person who calls upon the name of Christ.

In *The Gospel’s Power and Message* you say, “Those who believe and show their faith by their public identification with Christ through baptism will be saved.” I am sure you would affirm that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone. On that basis, could you clarify what seems to say that baptism is a requirement for salvation?

This is an interesting and helpful question. I unequivocally and adamantly affirm the doctrines of *sola gratia* and *sola fide* — salvation by grace alone through faith alone. I agree wholeheartedly with the 1689 London Confession, which states, “Baptism is an ordinance of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, to be to the person who is baptized — a *sign* of his fellowship with Christ in His death and resurrection...” (Article 28).

Having affirmed this truth, we can now look at some other points of interest. The

language that I used in the above statement is biblical. In Acts 2:38, Peter declared, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins...” Similar phraseology can also be found in Mark 16:16, Acts 22:16, and I Peter 3:21. We should never be afraid of using biblical language. This relationship between salvation and some external action (like baptism) can also be seen in Romans 10:9, “If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart... you will be saved.” Is this text teaching that something more than faith is required for a person to be saved? Is salvation by faith alone, or by faith and confession, or by faith and baptism? In our noble efforts to protect and defend the doctrines of *sola fide*, we may be guilty of denying another important truth — the faith that results in salvation will also result in identification with and confession of Christ, even when it is perilous to do so. In the West, identification with Christ through public baptism and vocal confession has lost much of its New Testament meaning. As a result of having passed through several generations in which Christianity was not persecuted, baptism has become a delightful occasion affirmed by family and friends; even unbelieving family members may attend to join in the celebration. However, in the New Testament and in many parts of the world today, baptism is the most difficult decision a person may ever make. It is that great moment when he publically identifies with Christ and forms a break with family, friends, and culture. Because of this decision, he will lose his job; become an outcast from society; and perhaps even be hunted, imprisoned, and martyred. In this case, his baptism was the proof of his faith and his salvation. Only those who are truly regenerated will identify with Christ at such a cost. This is the reason why both baptism and public confession of Christ are so closely related to faith and salvation in the New Testament.

You mentioned in one of your sermons that you have “more metal in your body than a Tonka truck.” At the same time there are some rumors that you are unwell. Are you able to address your health?

I was born with a genetic malformation, and yes, I do have a lot of metal in me. My boys call me “robo-preacher.” I have had a total hip replacement in both hips, my left wrist has been broken three times, has been operated on twice, and is held together with a special pin. My left knee has been operated on three times, and I have had herniated disks and bone spurs in my neck. Before my hip surgeries, I suffered almost constant pain. It made it very difficult to concentrate, sleep, and trek up the Andes Mountains. The difficulty with chronic pain like that is not just the actual pain, but the weakness and overall nausea that comes with it.

Until two years ago this last April, I was steadily declining. The pain was growing worse, and insomnia was taking its toll. I would often sleep on the floor in the living room because I moved so much in the night that my wife could hardly sleep. Then one morning, I woke up with a start, as though someone had shaken me or slammed a door. I jumped to my feet and in an instant felt that much of my pain was gone. I told my wife that it seemed like the Lord had given me a good day. I thoroughly expected the pain to return, but the next day, I felt even stronger. A few days later, I was walking in the yard, and my son Ian threw a Frisbee in my direction. Without thinking, I jumped and caught it (my definition of “jumped”: my heels were no longer touching the ground). When I turned around to throw the Frisbee back to Ian, he exclaimed, “Dad, did you see what you just did?”

Afterwards, I went into my room and prayed. I told the Lord that if the pain were necessary for my sanctification and protection, I would gladly have Him return it to me. But until then, I would be a good steward of what He had done for me. With renewed hope, I changed my

diet and began to exercise with my boys. Two years have now passed, and I continue to improve. Last year in Atlanta, I challenged Voddie Baucham to three rounds in the cage. I think I could have taken him because he was laughing so hard that he could not have possibly defended himself.

There are two lessons that can be gleaned from all this. First, I did have serious physical problems, but I believe that I compounded them over the years by worry, stress, and overwork. All of these are symptoms of unbelief and/or pride. The Christian ministry is difficult, and we must not be lazy or trite. However, we often place burdens upon ourselves and make demands upon ourselves that are not according to the will of God. The more I know God and understand His perfect work on my behalf, the more I am able to rest. Secondly, I would not trade the difficult years for all the prosperity in the world. God knows what each one of us must suffer in order to be conformed to the image of Christ.

I know that many Christians love to pray for you. What are some specific ways that these people can pray for you, your family, and your ministry?

I cannot tell you how much I appreciate the prayers of God's people. The prayers of others are the means through which God strengthens His ministers. I most covet prayer with regard to conformity to Christ and steadfastness. I am entering into a dangerous stage of life. Both Noah and David fell after they had walked with God for many years and fought many battles. My goal is to be faithful until the end. My wife's great desire is also conformity to Christ, manifested in kindness, mercy, and patience, especially with regard to home schooling our children. For our children, our greatest desire is that they come to a biblical assurance of salvation and that they love the Lord their God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength. For all the staff at HeartCry, we desire integrity and wisdom to administrate according to the will of God.