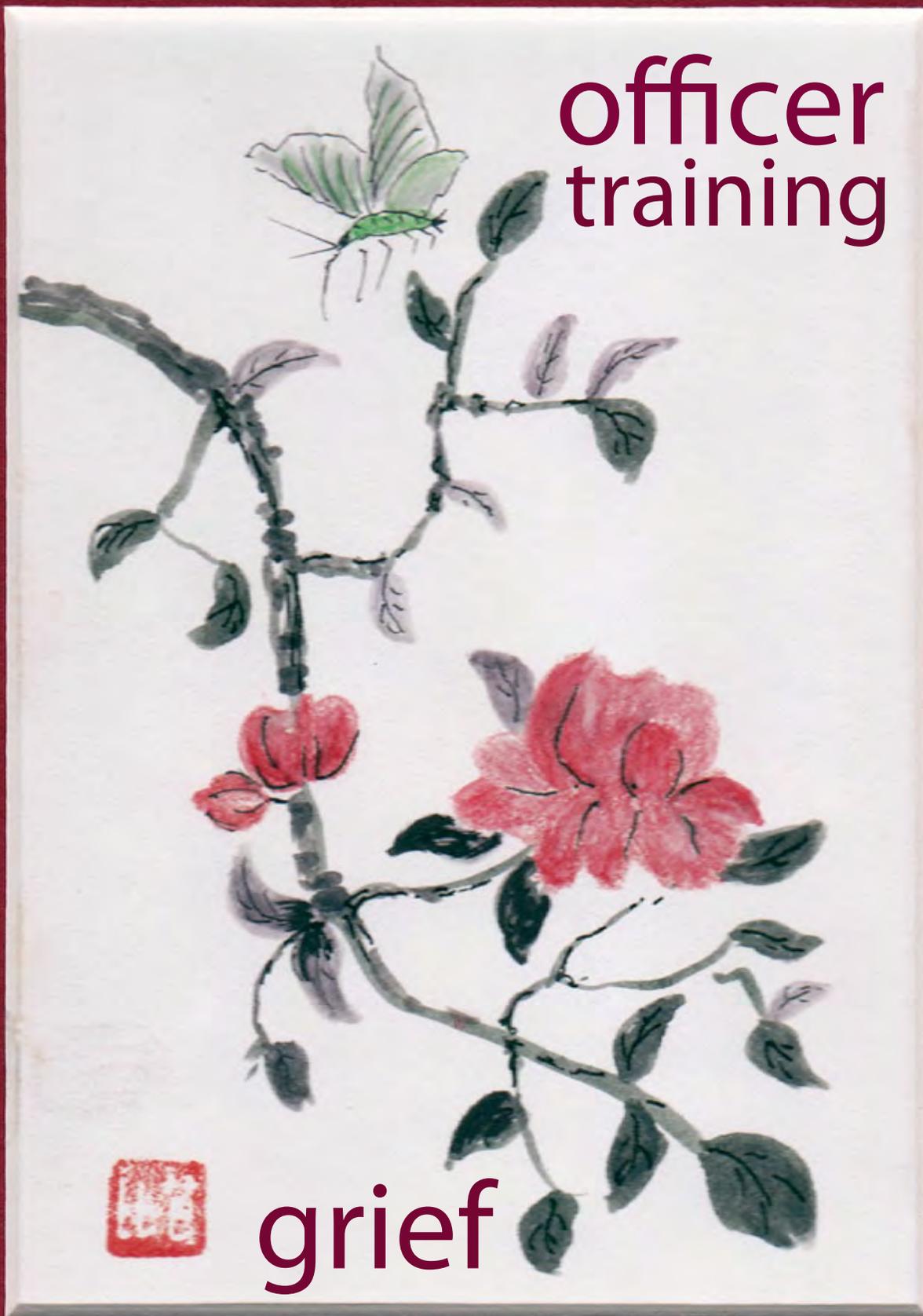


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May 2013

From the Editor

One of the most important things that ministers and elders do is officer training. The recognition of God's gifts and calling for church office is directly related to the issue of maturity. This has ceased to be an ideal in our culture. We need to make sure that it remains an ideal for the church.

The cover photo this month is an original Japanese brush painting by my mother, Barbara Reynolds Gould. She went to be with the Lord at age 91 on the Lord's Day, April 21, 2013. We had planned to have Job 25:19 engraved on her grave stone: "I know that my Redeemer liveth;" and on the morning she died C. H. Spurgeon's morning devotion was on this verse. This nicely ties officer training and dealing with grief together. The loss that death deals us must never be underestimated or glossed over, but the grief of the Christian is never without the hope that our Lord has gifted us with in the gospel. Brad Winsted provides us with the conclusion of his chronicle of grief in "A Road of Grief, Part 3."

As for the importance of officer training, my mother's Japanese technique requires great skill, care, and craftsmanship. So should be the quality of our training, because, when it is done well, the product is truly beautiful, adorning the church with servants of Christ. Pastor William Shishko has trained many officers over the decades of his ministry. I hope you will benefit from his wisdom in his article "Organic Officer Training." Pastor Francis VanDelden gives a very practical way of assessing elders in "Elder Self-Evaluation."

Andy Wilson reviews a helpful new book on covenant theology by Michael Brown and Zach Keele, *Sacred Bond: Covenant Theology Explored*. Pam Malkus reviews an unusual book whose title beckons us to read the book, *The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert*.

Finally don't miss our monthly poem by George Herbert, a man, like his Savior, who was acquainted with grief.

Blessings in the Lamb,
Gregory Edward Reynolds

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- “Indians, Farmers, and Church Officers.” (Larry Wilson) 5:4 (Oct. 1996): 79–80.
- “A Training Course for Elders and Deacons [part 1].” (John R. Hilbelink) 2:1 (Jan. 1993): 3–15.
- “A Training Course for Elders and Deacons [part 2].” (John R. Hilbelink) 2:2 (Apr. 1993): 27–37.
- “Biblical Qualifications for Elders.” (Archibald Alexander Allison) 3:4 (Oct. 1994): 80–96.
- “Qualifications for Ruling Elders: An Historical Survey.” (Mark R. Brown) 10:3 (Jul. 2001): 65–66.
- “A Training Program for Elders.” (Gregory Reynolds & William Shishko) 10:3 (Jul. 2001): 55–58.
- “Avoiding the Dangers of Distance in Officer Training.” (Gregory Edward Reynolds) 15 (2006): 19–21.
- “A Proposed Job Description for a Deacon.” (A. G. Edwards III) 4:1 (Jan. 1995): 3–5.
- “A Training Program for Deacons” (William Shishko) 6:3 (Jul. 2000): 62–70.

Ordained Servant exists to help encourage, inform, and equip church officers for faithful, effective, and God glorifying ministry in the visible church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Its primary audience is ministers, elders, and deacons of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, as well as interested officers from other Presbyterian and Reformed churches. Through high quality editorials, articles, and book reviews we endeavor to stimulate clear thinking and the consistent practice of historic, confessional Presbyterianism.

Servant Training

Organic Officer Training

by William Shishko

Anyone who undertakes the most worthwhile project of working through Herman Bavinck's magisterial four volume *Reformed Dogmatics* will soon pick up Bavinck's frequent use of the adjective *organic* as his way of describing things that grow out of the life of the church. I suggest that we consider the process of identifying, training, and calling out church officers (for our purposes here, elders and deacons) as *organic* officer training, i.e., a process that grows out of the life of a local congregation.

At this point let me say most emphatically that the absence of training of local church officers, or even the careless training of men who are being considered for the eldership or diaconate, should be repudiated. Both the seriousness of the vows that precede a man's assumption of church office (see Eccles. 5:1–7), and the seriousness the Scriptures attach to ordination (see 1 Tim. 5:22), and the work of church office itself (see 1 Tim. 3:1–14, Titus 1:5–9, and 1 Pet. 5:1–4) should be sufficient to constrain sessions to make every effort to see that this work is done thoughtfully, carefully, and thoroughly.

How, then, should sessions approach officer training organically?

Above all else (although this is often sadly absent), there must be prayer by existing church officers and within the congregation that God would raise up and form men of his choosing for all church offices—ministers, ruling elders, and deacons. Our Lord mentioned very few specific things that should occupy our prayers, but one of those specifics is for laborers: “Pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into the harvest” (Matt. 9:38, cf. Luke 10:2). While the primary reference here is to shepherds, i.e., pastors (Matt. 9:36), most certainly we should also be praying for those who labor as evangelists, teachers, ruling elders, and deacons. All have their vital places in the fields that are white unto harvest. If the congregation you serve is in need of more officers, do you pray regularly for the Lord of the church to supply them?

It was the common counsel of older Reformed and Presbyterian writers that time should be provided at every session/consistory meeting for the consideration of men in the local congregation who might be worthy church officers. Many congregations have a formal process by which congregation members submit the names of men whom they believe would be good elders or deacons; but, in most smaller congregations, it would seem that this very formal process would be better replaced by an *organic* one. Elders, do you lead the congregation you serve in encouraging gifted men to “earnestly desire” (1 Tim. 3:1) church office? Do you cultivate church life in which men speak to you about their interest in church office? Has the congregation been taught what it means to look out for men who possess the raw materials necessary to serve as ministers, elders, or deacons? In this climate, regularly allow time at officer meetings so that you can consider men who might well be future elders, deacons, or ministers.

Once such men are identified, sessions should agree on training programs that really train men for church office. Such training must include (for both elders and deacons) sufficient instruction in the church's doctrinal standards that the men can conscientiously “sincerely

receive and adopt the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures.”¹ While the issue of confessional subscription has some difficult aspects, it should be obvious that no man who would serve in church office in a confessionally committed church should disagree with the affirmations of that church’s doctrinal standards. Especially in the training of the initial group of officers in a young congregation, ministers should allow ample time for prospective officers to study the church’s doctrinal standards, and to personally work with them on technical and distinctive issues.² Never slight the time for this. It is an investment that will bear much good fruit for any congregation the man may serve.

For the training of deacons, it would be good for the prospective officer to consider the work of the diaconate through the grid of the church’s doctrinal standards.³ Along with that, ministers should acquaint prospective deacons with the actual work that deacons do in the congregation. It is helpful if these men in training could attend actual deacon’s meetings. In every case, it is imperative that deacons in training should be given ample opportunities for service in the congregation. “And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless” (1 Tim. 3:10). This is a divinely given requirement for organic officer training. Congregations should know that this requirement has been honored. Ordination to office does not confer commitments and abilities that were not present before the act of ordination.

In addition to thorough grounding in the church’s doctrinal standards, elders in training must receive instruction in the nature of the work specific to that office. Those two elements are *rule* (1 Tim. 5:17) and *shepherding* (1 Pet. 5:1–5). It is imperative that both the officer in training and the congregation understand that the serious act of calling out an elder is nothing less than calling out a man who serves with a pastoral role in that congregation. For this aspect of elder training, I recommend the use of material I have developed for the pastoral theology course that I teach for both Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary and the Ministerial Training Institute of the OPC. It presents the material in accordance with OPC standards and is available in a format that makes it easy to use in elder training.⁴

Officer training for both elders and deacons should not neglect treatment of the specific graces and gifts required of church officers in 1 Timothy 3:1–13, Titus 1:5–9, and 1 Peter 5:1–5. Remember that church office is bestowed, above all else, because of recognized character in a man. It is highly beneficial for ministers to work through these texts carefully (applying them to themselves first), and then to devote at least one full session of officer training to work through these with prospective officers. (It is also a healthy exercise to periodically review these with sessions and boards of deacons.)

In the case of both elder and deacon training, keep in mind that one of the vows an officer in the OPC must take is, “Do you approve of the government, discipline, and worship of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church?” (FG 25.6.b(3)). In our officer training we require that men in

¹ *The Book of Order Form of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church*, Form of Government 25.6.b(2) (2011), 70.

² One helpful approach is the program for training elders developed some years ago by Pastors Gregory Reynolds and William Shishko. It, together with other resources of pastoral theology and officer training, is available through the website of the OPC, Franklin Square, NY: www.opcli.com, Officer Training and Pastoral Theology Resources.

³ One model for this is given in the Deacon Training Program which has been used for many years at the OPC, Franklin Square, NY. It is available at www.opcli.com.

⁴ These items are also available at www.opcli.com under the titles of “Elder Training—Rule”, and “Elder Training—Shepherding.”

training take an “open book test” that is designed to acquaint them with The Book of Church Order of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.⁵

Throughout this process, the congregation should be reminded that men are being trained for church office. Congregation members should be urged to pray for God’s work through the training time. They should be encouraged to observe these men (especially as prospective ruling elders are given teaching assignments, 1 Tim. 3:2, “able to teach,” cf. Titus 1:9; and as prospective deacons are given service assignments), asking themselves if they believe that Christ, the king and head of the church, is forming them to be his representatives as elders or deacons. That is the seriousness of this holy process! Further, they should be speaking with these men, expressing to them any concerns they have, and also encouraging them in their training. It is not proper that the expression of these concerns should wait for the congregational meeting at which there will be a vote to call these men to office.

Our standards require that a session certify “those nominees whom, upon examination, it judges to possess the necessary qualifications for office” (FG 25.4). Our session does this during a regular meeting or at a special meeting called for this purpose. I cannot overstate how important this is: It is an aspect of church rule that both prevents unworthy men from being certified, and also declares, with Christ’s authority, that those entrusted with the work of rule believe that a man possesses the biblically required gifts and graces for church office.⁶ Prior to this meeting the session should secure some testimonials (usually from a co-worker, supervisor, or neighbor) that a prospective elder is “well thought of by outsiders” (1 Tim. 3:7), i.e., non-Christians who know the man.⁷ (The emphasis on “must” in this passage should alert a session that this is non-negotiable in its work of certification.)

Once the announcement of the certification of men for office has been announced to the congregation (and this should be announced with some explanation of the process and the procedure that led to this point), a time should be set for a congregational meeting during which there will be an actual vote on these candidates. The congregation should be taught that our model for “voting” is not at all like what we experience in the civil realm. Voting for church officers is not a popularity contest! It is a solemn recognition that either Christ has clearly gifted and graced a man for the office of elder or deacon—and for service in that congregation—or that, in some way, there has been neglect or fault in the training and certification of the man. Perhaps the highest aspect of “the power which Christ has committed to . . . the whole body,” i.e., to the church, is “the right to acknowledge and desire the exercise of the gifts and calling of the special offices” (FG 3.1). When congregations understand that their “vote” is to represent the voice of Christ who has equipped and formed a man for church office, elections to church office are transformed from formalities to festivities. The ordinations become, as they are meant to be, the crowning validation of a man’s call to church office.

Organic officer training is one of the great joys of healthy church life. May the Lord of the harvest give us delightful seriousness as we go about that work to his glory and to the health and well-being of each local church, presbytery, and the church as a whole.

William Shishko, *a minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, is the pastor of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Franklin Square, New York.*

⁵ Available at www.opcli.com under the title of “BCO Exam.”

⁶ A session should develop a list of certification questions to use for this critical stage in the work of officer preparation. A sample can be found at www.opcli.com under the title of “Certification Questions for Officer Candidates.”

⁷ Suggested form is available at opcli.com as “Reference Form for Elder.”

Servant Work

Elder Self-Evaluation

by Francis VanDelden

One of the “advantages” of term eldership is that elders get a regular “vote of confidence” from the congregation, and elders who are not living up to their calling are quietly removed from service. This is certainly attractive, although the better way would be to do the hard work of talking to the elder about his service. However, since our congregation has lifetime elders, there is no built-in review or evaluation.

In an effort to stimulate each other to better service, to promote honest communication, to sharpen and encourage each other, and to prevent small frustrations with each other’s work from growing, our elders thought it wise to meet together annually to have a frank evaluation of each elder’s strengths and weaknesses.

The following “Elder Self-Evaluation” was used for each man to reflect on prior to that meeting. At the meeting each elder in turn was asked to evaluate himself, giving several strengths and several weaknesses. The other men were invited to speak to or point out any other strengths and weaknesses. This brought to light areas of praise and areas where that elder had to grow in the coming year.

The risk in doing something like this is that we can wound one another, and that the meeting can turn into an unloving “attack” on various elders. However, as Christ’s undershepherds we all have the same goal—to take great care of his sheep. And in that spirit, realizing none of us is the “Chief Shepherd” with all the gifts, strength and wisdom, we committed to coming together to serve each other by being honest. May the Shepherd strengthen you as you serve his flock.

Elder Self-Evaluation

General

Reflect on your character in light of 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:5–9.

Do you think people see you more as a “father of the household of God,” “shepherd of God’s flock,” or “ruler in God’s assembly” (Matt. 13:52; 1 Tim. 3:5; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2; Heb. 13:7, 17; 1 Thess. 5:12f)? What needs work?

Do you think people perceive you as a servant? Why or why not?

Are you encouraged in your elder-work or are you tired, frustrated?

Do you feel united/close to the other elders? To the membership?

Are you delegating? Urging others to take up responsibilities and use their gifts?

Knowing

Do you personally know those in your shepherding group?

Do you know their strengths and weaknesses?

Do you have a strategy for regular, personal contact? How effectively are you using it?

Feeding

Are you attending worship regularly? Sunday school? Shepherding group?

By what other means are you growing?

How are you spiritually feeding your family? Your shepherding group?

What do you do for spiritual leading in the home (family worship)?

Are you involved in mentoring anyone? Discipling anyone? Teaching?

Do you regularly practice hospitality?

How do you capitalize on interactions with congregants to feed them?

Leading

Can you replicate from memory the gist of our church's vision statement?

How are you working toward the three goals set by the session at its retreat?

How proactive are you in leading the committee (or ministry team) you're involved in?

Where are you strong in leading by example? Where are you weak?

Gives examples of how you lead in personal godliness, family life, church commitments?
Where do you need to improve?

Are you counseling anyone?

Do you regularly encourage people by noting God's work in their lives?

Have you noticed the sheep using their gifts? Have you encouraged them to do so?

Protecting

Are you protecting individuals by warning them of their own sin? Are you involved in any Matthew 18 steps with any of the sheep?

Are you pursuing any wandering sheep? Should you be? What is your plan to restore them?

How have you overseen the preaching? How have you encouraged the pastor in his work?
How have you sought to strengthen his weaknesses?

Are you protecting people by guarding your tongue, avoiding gossip/slander?

Francis E. VanDelden *is the pastor of New Hope Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Frederick, Maryland.*

ServantLiving

A Road of Grief, Part 3

Grieving Well (January 2012)

by Brad Winsted

It is now over a year and a half since Fawn's death. Life certainly has moved on. We often say that "time heals"—this is only partially true. I have found in my journey that time *alone* doesn't heal, but, if we lean into our grief, then God can use it as a grateful, sanctifying experience.

This poem (author anonymous) is so apropos:

I walked a mile with Pleasure, she chatted all the way.
But I was none the wiser for all she had to say.
I walked a mile with Sorrow, and ne'er a word said she.
But oh, the things I learned from her, when Sorrow walked with me.

In the weeks and months following Fawn's death, I became increasingly convinced that God might have made a mistake in taking her—it should have been me. After all, she was the better parent, the better person, the better teacher of our children, the better grandparent; surely I should have died and not her. My youngest boy, twenty-two years old, replied to this analysis of mine by saying, "Mom was ready for heaven; God still has a lot more to do with your sanctification here on earth, Dad." I understand that all of this is a part of God's work to shape me into the kind of person who can serve him and others better and more consistently.

I truly want to honor Fawn by "grieving well" as a Christian who believes that there is a God who rules and overrules in the destinies of us all; who ultimately has our best in mind and loves us no matter what the outward circumstances. My bedrock of faith must be that God does all things well for those called according to his purpose (Rom. 8:28–29). The horrible alternative is that the universe is random and meaningless; everything being ultimately "out of control," and things just happening without any kind of universal or eternal reason.

I have talked to many people who have gone through similar experiences. I have attended Grief Share weekly seminars: a wonderful, nationwide, faith-based program that helps us through the grieving process. I have seen a Christian, trained grief counselor for about a year, usually once a month. I have written a book, "My Dear Wife Fawn," about our lives together with much of the information gleaned from the many letters we wrote each other when I was in the Navy and away on long deployments. I have read many books of others who have experienced the same thing I have. I have kept a daily journal of my walk through this "valley of the shadow of death." In this journal I record my daily

thoughts after my quiet time in God's Word. All of these things have assisted my leaning into the grief process.

One thing I have gleaned is the role of the various "Ts" of grief recovery: Tears—to shed them openly and often, accepting the reality of our loss and the extent of our feelings. We grieve deeply because we loved deeply. Talking—to God first in prayer and meditating upon his Word (starting with the Psalms and the Gospels), and then to others who have ears to hear, individually or collectively. Turning—to God for the answers, letting him lead me through this dark valley and gaining an eternal perspective—not grieving as people who have no hope since our hope is Christ and eternity. And Time—time does heal if the other Ts are embraced.

There are countless books available on grief, but the one I found most helpful was J. I. Packer's *A Grief Sanctified: Passing through Grief to Peace and Joy*.¹ In this excellent, but largely unknown book, the great theologian tells us how a grief experience, especially one of a beloved wife, can be truly sanctified by God. Here are some summary snippets:

1. Bereavement reminds us of truths we might otherwise forget or not take seriously. Some of these truths are: the reality of God's sovereignty, the reality of our own mortality, and the reality of heaven and hell.
2. Grief should lead us to the exercise of thanksgiving for all that we valued and enjoyed in the other person whom we have lost; and for the believer, the happiness to know that he/she has been promoted. It should also lead to the exercise of submission to God as we resign to him the loved one he has taken from us; and the exercise of patience, which is a compound of endurance and hope, as we live through our bereavement on a daily basis.
3. Do not let your grief loosen your grip on the goodness and grace of our loving God.
4. Tell God your sadness, pray as you can, and don't try to pray as you can't.
5. Avoid well wishers who think they can cheer you up, but thank God for people who are content to be with you and do things for you without necessarily even talking to you.
6. Cry; there is nothing biblical about a stiff upper lip.
7. Talk to yourself about the loved one you have lost.²

I recommend this fine book on grieving.

Each person will have a different grief experience. Grief is a jagged road filled with detours, ups and downs, and dead-ends. Ultimately this road should leave the valley of the shadow of death for the meadow of thanksgiving to God for the life of the lost one. From this place of thanksgiving, we can look forward to heaven, while called to continue to live and work on earth.

Brad Winsted is the director of Children's Ministry International in Tucker, GA. He has been a ruling elder in six OPC churches. Currently, he is Coordinator for Children's Ministries at Midway Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Powder Springs, GA.

¹ J. I. Packer, *A Grief Sanctified: Through Sorrow to Eternal Hope*, (Grand Rapids: Crossway Books, 2002).

² Packer, *A Grief Sanctified*, 171.

ServantReading

Sacred Bond: Covenant Theology Explored

by Andy Wilson

Sacred Bond: Covenant Theology Explored, by Michael G. Brown and Zach Keele. Grandville, MI: Reformed Fellowship, 2012, 168 pages, \$16.00, paper.

One of the great benefits of covenant theology is that it helps us to see the unity of Scripture while also giving due attention to its remarkable variety. This dual benefit is demonstrated throughout the pages of *Sacred Bond*, an introductory-level text on covenant theology by ministers Michael Brown (URCNA) and Zach Keele (OPC). The book is both clear and well organized, making it ideal for use in an adult Sunday school class or small group study. *Sacred Bond* contains chapters on eight biblical covenants: the covenant of redemption, the covenant of works, the covenant of grace, the Noahic covenant, the Abrahamic covenant, the Mosaic covenant, the Davidic covenant, and the new covenant. Each chapter follows the same basic outline, with the following sections: (1) a brief theological description of the covenant under discussion; (2) an examination of the biblical evidence for that covenant; (3) an explanation of how that covenant has been expressed by Reformed confessions and theologians; and (4) a consideration of how this covenant is relevant for the Christian life.

After an introductory chapter in which the concept of covenant is defined, the authors focus upon the three overarching covenants that are at the heart of covenant theology: the covenant of redemption, the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace. In these chapters, Brown and Keele carefully examine the key biblical texts that led the church to formulate these overarching covenants. This is extremely helpful, because it is sometimes argued that the Reformed schema of covenant theology is artificially imposed upon the Bible. For example, one biblical scholar contends that

although “Reformed” or “covenant” theology has correctly underlined the centrality of the covenant concept in biblical theology, it has tended to go beyond the exegetical evidence. The primary example of this tendency is the introduction into the discussion of non-biblical terminology and ideas (e.g., covenants of redemption, creation, works, and grace). Such hypothetical covenants are without solid exegetical support, and primarily serve to bolster the unnecessary premise that all God’s actions must be understood within a covenantal framework.¹

The problem with this kind of argument is that it fails to see the importance of the principle of “good and necessary consequence” (WCF 1.6) in the formulation of biblical doctrine. Not all of the doctrines revealed in the Scriptures are set forth explicitly in the

¹ P.R. Williamson, “Covenant,” *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, T. Desmond Alexander, Brian S. Rosner, D.A. Carson, and Graeme Goldsworthy, eds. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 420.

Scriptures. Some need to be inferred and pieced together from a number of passages, as with doctrines like the Trinity or infant baptism. The same is true when it comes to covenant theology. The writers of *Sacred Bond* convincingly argue that the Bible needs to be understood through the lens of covenant because it is built on a covenantal framework. Covenant theology is not a matter of trying to make all of God's actions fit within a manmade framework. On the contrary, it is necessary because "covenant is the very fabric of Scripture. It is God's chosen framework for the Bible" (11).

In the remainder of the book, Brown and Keele explain the unique aspects of the individual biblical covenants while also showing how they relate to the overarching covenants that summarize the plan of redemption. The chapter on the Noahic covenant explains that it is a non-redemptive, common grace covenant with all creation that provides the stage upon which the drama of redemption is carried out. The chapter on the Davidic covenant explains how it connects the conditions that were laid down in the earlier Mosaic covenant with the promise of a King who will fulfill those conditions on behalf of God's people. And the chapter on the new covenant explains that this covenant is new in relation to the Mosaic covenant, with which it is contrasted in Jeremiah 31:31–32: "I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke." In other words, the newness of the new covenant centers upon the fact that it is a covenant of promise rather than a covenant of law (137).

This relates to a key emphasis in *Sacred Bond*: the significance of the distinction between the unconditional and conditional elements in the various biblical covenants. Not all biblical covenants are gracious in nature. While it is certainly true that God's dealings with man before the fall were completely unmerited on man's part and free of any obligation on God's part, the covenant of works promised God's blessings to man if he fulfilled the condition of perfect performance of what God commanded. The operative principle was not grace but merit. By way of contrast, the distinguishing feature of the covenant of grace is that it has God bestowing his blessings upon those who have only merited his wrath and curse.

This distinction is also seen in Brown and Keele's treatment of the Mosaic covenant, which they understand to be in one sense a "republication" of the covenant of works. Because the Mosaic covenant made Israel's tenure in the Promised Land dependent upon their performance of the covenant stipulations, it served as a typological picture that God set up to demonstrate the futility of trying to obtain his blessings through the covenant of works. This is how the Mosaic covenant led God's people to Christ. It is important to clarify that Brown and Keele are not saying that the Mosaic covenant taught that salvation could be obtained on the basis of works. The Mosaic covenant was ultimately an administration of the covenant of grace, but it also had a works-principle. Brown and Keele explain this by saying that the Mosaic covenant was an administration of the covenant of grace in its *broad* sense and an administration of the covenant of works in a *narrow* sense. They write:

The means by which God led Israel to Christ was through his demands of obedience to the terms of the covenant upon which physical blessings or curses were received

. . . The Mosaic covenant is God's law covenant with Israel, wherein he graciously leads them to Christ by showing them the perfect righteousness that only Christ could fulfill to redeem sinners. (103, 106)

While not everyone who embraces covenant theology is comfortable with the notion of republication, there is no getting around the fact that the Mosaic covenant had a conditional element that stands in contrast to the unilateral promise found in the earlier Abrahamic covenant, a contrast that Paul sees as extremely significant in Galatians 3 and 4. It should also be noted that republication is consistent with the teaching of the Westminster Confession of Faith (see WCF 19.1–2) and that many Reformed theologians have held to some version of republication. John Owen said that the Mosaic covenant “is no other but the covenant of works revived” (111). And Robert Shaw concluded that “the law, therefore, was published at Sinai as a covenant of works in subservience to the covenant of grace.”²

Sacred Bond is made even more useful by the inclusion of study/discussion questions at the end of each chapter, a glossary of key terms, and a Scripture index. I cannot think of anything negative to say about this book, except that it might have enjoyed a broader readership if it had been published by a better-known publisher. That being said, thanks are due to Reformed Fellowship for giving us such a fine introduction to covenant theology.

Andy Wilson is the pastor of Grace Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Laconia, New Hampshire.

² Robert Shaw, *The Reformed Faith: An Exposition of the Westminster Confession of Faith* (Ross-shire: Christian Focus), 256.

ServantReading

Secret Thoughts of Rosaria Butterfield

by Pam Malkus

The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert: An English Professor's Journey into Christian Faith, by Rosaria Champagne Butterfield. Pittsburgh: Crown & Covenant, 2012, 154 pages, \$12.00, paper.

A little more than ten years ago, Dr. Rosaria Butterfield was a tenured English professor and head of the women's studies program at Syracuse University. She was a leader in the lesbian and gay communities and an articulate spokesperson for their causes. Ken Smith is a grandfather to several children and pastor of the Syracuse Reformed Presbyterian Church (Covenanter). How and why would they ever meet? Only the Lord knew and planned it! My husband and I know Ken and Floy Smith, and if we had been asked to comment on the title of Rosaria's autobiography, we might have changed the subtitle to "*Converted via an Unlikely Witness.*"

Rosaria tells the reader her conversion was not the stuff of "church testimonies"—she was happy and a successful leader of others in her alternate lifestyle. She was not feeling desperate need or looking for change. In fact, her editorial in the local newspaper about the hypocrisy and awful verbiage of the evangelical right was the mechanism that God used to draw the local pastor to send a letter to her with a gentle offer for "clarifying discussion" face-to-face.

She threw away the expected letters of evangelical vitriol and others that were "atta girls" by gay correspondents generated by her editorial. Pastor Smith's reply, however, was different. It was characterized by a peaceful tone and a spirit of compassion and love. She couldn't throw it away, and it stared at her from her desk top for weeks. Finally, her curiosity about him and his letter drove her to contact him. He invited her to his home for dinner and further discussion with his wife as well. She *finally* came . . . and that was the first of many meetings. The rest of her book is about her "train wreck" conversion (like the apostle Paul's) and the joy, surprise, and pain that proceeded from that conversion.

"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways," (Isa. 55:9) the Lord tells us. No church program was involved in the conversion and discipleship of this very highly visible personality in Syracuse, New York. It was only an alert and compassionate pastor and his wife, along with other similar members of his congregation who were used mightily and as Rosaria writes "gratefully" in her new life.

She became an astute observer of "regular church life" and an articulate, and at times humorous, commentator on her own stumblings and bumbings in the Christian "walk." She is now a pastor's wife with a surprising and amazing family of her own, no biological children among them.

Many of her “secret thoughts” which followed conversion were theological queries and meditations. One of these concerned what she learned about repentance.

I learned . . . that repentance requires greater intimacy with God than with our sin. . . . Repentance requires that we draw near to Jesus, no matter what. . . . And for many of us, intimacy with anything is a terrifying prospect.

During one sermon, Ken pointed to John 7:17 . . . ‘If anyone is willing to do God’s will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from myself.’ . . . Obedience comes before understanding. I wanted to understand. But did I actually will to do his will? (21–22)

As she continued to read the Bible, she made further discoveries:

These passages also convicted me that homosexuality—like all sin—is symptomatic and not causal—that is, it tells us where hearts have been, not who we inherently are or what we are destined to become.

These passages forced me to see pride and not sexual orientation as the root sin. In turn, this shaped the way that I reflected on my whole life, in the context of the word of God. (32)

A final sample of her secret thoughts:

Biblical orthodoxy can offer real compassion, because in our struggle against sin, we cannot undermine God’s power to change lives.

Healing comes through God’s work . . . How did the Lord heal me? The way that he always heals: the word of God got to be bigger inside me than I. My natural inclination was to resist, so like a reflex, I did this. God’s people surrounded me. Not to manipulate. Not to badger. But to love and to listen and to watch and to pray. And eventually instead of resisting, I surrendered. (24–5)

Read her story and you won’t be sorry. You may even find that it will enrich your own story!

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ServantPoetry

George Herbert (1593-1633)

Death

Death, thou wast once an uncouth hideous thing,
 Nothing but bones,
 The sad effect of sadder groans:
Thy mouth was open, but thou couldst not sing.

For we considered thee as at some six
 Or ten years hence,
 After the loss of life and sense,
Flesh being turned to dust, and bones to sticks.

We looked on this side of thee, shooting short;
 Where we did find
 The shells of fledged souls left behind,
Dry dust, which sheds no tears, but may extort.

But since our Savior's death did put some blood
 Into thy face,
 Thou art grown fair and full of grace,
Much in request, much sought for as a good.

For we do now behold thee gay and glad,
 As at Doomsday;
 When souls shall wear their new array,
And all thy bones with beauty shall be clad.

Therefore we can go die as sleep, and trust
 Half that we have
 Unto an honest faithful grave;
Making our pillows either down, or dust.