



The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert

Rosaria Champagne Butterfield

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert

Rosaria Champagne Butterfield

The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert Rosaria Champagne Butterfield

Rosaria, by the standards of many, was living a very good life. She had a tenured position at a large university in a field for which she cared deeply. She owned two homes with her partner, in which they provided hospitality to students and activists that were looking to make a difference in the world. There, her partner rehabilitated abandoned and abused dogs. In the community, Rosaria was involved in volunteer work. At the university, she was a respected advisor of students and her department's curriculum. And then, in her late 30s, Rosaria encountered something that turned her world upside down-the idea that Christianity, a religion that she had regarded as problematic and sometimes downright damaging, might be right about who God was, an idea that flew in the face of the people and causes that she most loved. What follows is a story of what she describes as a "train wreck" at the hand of the supernatural. These are her secret thoughts about those events, written as only a reflective English professor could. Conversion put me in a complicated and comprehensive chaos. I sometimes wonder, when I hear other Christians pray for the salvation of the "lost," if they realize that this comprehensive chaos is the desired end of such prayers. Often, people asked me to describe the "lessons" that I learned from this experience. I can't. It was too traumatic. Sometimes in crisis, we don't really learn lessons. Sometimes the result is simpler and more profound: sometimes our character is simply transformed. -Rosaria Butterfield

The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert Details

Date : Published September 6th 2012 by Crown & Covenant Publications (first published 2012)

ISBN :

Author : Rosaria Champagne Butterfield

Format : Kindle Edition 169 pages

Genre : Christian, Biography, Nonfiction, Religion, Theology, Autobiography, Memoir, Faith

 [Download The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert Rosaria Champagne Butterfield

From Reader Review The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert for online ebook

Steven Wedgeworth says

I really didn't like this book. I am certainly thankful for Mrs Butterfield's testimony and the powerful work done in her life by God. Still, the book is not a good book. It is written in a very clunky manner, complete with cliches, awkward analogies, typos, and pedantic translations after any latin or technical term (the worst was the translation of "nota bene"). The first two chapters are the ones relevant to most readers, as they deal with the issues of sexuality and conversion. Had the book ended there, it would have been a much better book and a more effective tool of introspection.

The rest of the book, however, is a sort of journaling, mixing autobiography with reporting on the internal world of RPCNA seminary and church culture. Several of the characters, among both protagonists and antagonists, seemed stock, and the pre-conversion Butterfield was even reported to have said, "I'm a postmodernist. I don't believe in objectivity." Most serious postmodern academics will find this more than a little patronizing. I don't want to pile on the criticism here, but I'm not sure that this book would exist if it were not for the current sensational/fashionable moment that sexual-identity politics are enjoying, and thus this book can be pitched as a relevant counter to them. The similarities between the pre-conversion gay worldview and the post-conversion RP worldview were also interesting: everything reduces to presuppositions, niche positions are still held with sense of superiority, Mrs Butterfield retains "expert" status, and the community and culture take priority to actually reasoned-out argumentation. She even highlighted the parallel between the gay "coming out" story and the Evangelical testimony.

The one part of this book that I did enjoy and find very beneficial was the description of the first RP pastor, pastor Ken, and his personal and relational methodology. There is much to learn from his example. He seemed to have a kind and confident approach, and I do believe that he had the correct approach to reach someone who was in such an extremely opposite state.

Eric Chappell says

An important book that many in the Christian community (maybe particularly Reformed & Presbyterian) should read. Basically, this book is an autobiography of radical, leftist university professor who found herself in a Small, conservative, psalm-singing denomination by God's (intruding & disruptive) grace. The book tracks roughly 15 years of her life: from her days as a university prof to her current life as a pastor's wife who homeschools their several adopted children. Overall, I liked the book. She has some very insightful, very helpful reflections on everything from evangelism to adoption to psalm-singing to church culture. I liked it. The first 3 chapters were worth the price of the book. While it was interesting to see how Butterfield dons her new identity as the wife of an RPCNA pastor, I wasn't as interested in the last couple chapters.

Things I learned:

- 1) Don't treat your post-conversion sin as if it is less offensive to God than your pre-conversion sin. I appreciated how Butterfield continued to express throughout the pages of her Christian journey the struggle with sin she had and continues to have, and the daily necessity for repentance.
- 2) the LGBT community sees me as a follower of Christ as a close-minded, bigoted, hate monger who because I know Jesus won't read things out of my comfort zone and attends gay pride marches with "God

hates fags" banners. In short: they see me as exclusive, judgmental, scornful, and afraid of diversity. How, through the gospel, can I overcome and show them what being a Christ-follower is really about?

3) As a Christ-follower, I'm often prone to using in-house language and relying on pat answers like "the Bible says." Be a rooted, thinking disciple and throw out the catch phrases and cliches.

4) Work from your strengths and cultivate resilience.

5) Evangelism to the lost must at some point involve worldview engagement.

6) Evangelism should consist of hospitality, gentle opposition, loving people, not peddling the Word.

7) True conversion will involve change of everything (26).

8) The Sin of Sodom was its pride, not first its distorted sexuality. Jesus doesn't want people to be heterosexual sinners. He wants a new creation, new sexuality, centered on His Person and Work.

9) Sanctification is always personal and communal. We need others.

10) Church is not a shopping mall whose existence depends on disseminating the latest, sexiest fads; nor is it a museum where ideas are valued because of tradition alone and where you can look but never touch.

11) I need to develop two kinds of ministry: one to those inside the church to foster fellowship; the other to those outside the church as a ministry of meeting the stranger at the gate.

Favorite quotes:

"Christians still scare me when they reduce Christianity to a lifestyle and claim that God is on the side of those who attend to the rules of the lifestyle they have invented or claim to find in the Bible" (5)

"There is a core difference between sharing the gospel with the lost and imposing a specific moral standard on the unconverted" (7)

"Living according to God's standards is an acquired taste" (30)

Passage on sexual sin (83)

Jesus is an equal opportunity Prophet, Priest, and King (107).

We in the church tend to be more fearful of the (perceived) sin in the world than of the sin in our own heart. (115)

There is no greater enemy to vital life-breathing faith than insisting on cultural sameness (115).

Trice says

2/2/2014: just as impactful the 2nd time round.

3/20/2013: finally listened to GenRef's podcast interview with Rosaria and Pastor Ken together - so great to hear them both.

4/24/2013: This discussion of the book on the new podcast "Mortification of Spin" made me laugh

11/2/2012: There's a great interview with the author on David Murray and Tim Challies Connected Kingdom podcast: The Testimony of an Unlikely Convert

September 2012: So I gave in and grabbed an electronic copy directly from Crown & Covenant after reading the beginning on amazon. Sort of wish I had the hard copy, but as that's not possible at this point I was glad I could still read it now due to all these lovely electronic options.

It's not a long read page- or time- wise. It also doesn't feel like a narrative with a straight line through it - each chapter is very much its own piece, though as with any life, there are strands of common reflection and, of course, the open honesty and intensity that characterizes Rosaria. And it is this that in some ways makes it a difficult read because, as she lays out her own soul struggles and interpersonal encounters, she challenges us to do the same in a real, true, authentic, soul sifting way.

Wishing so much for a chance for more conversation with her. I don't agree with all her conclusions, but I admire her willingness to look honestly at her own opinions, at both her hermeneutic and her worldview, and revise these, not without agonies, but with a thoroughness that is not common. I can say honestly that this is internal terrain I often shy away from, at least to the extent that she has gone, knowing the pain that awaits. I pray for the courage and increasing understanding of the grace of God which alone allows one to look into the dark places of one's soul and re-emerge.

In so many areas her words haunt me now and send me to God in prayer that I would see His will and heart and DO it... trying to see where some of it is related to gifting and calling, while some of it is related simply to who we are and are to be in Him. In particular in the area of being open to the fellowship with its shared intellectual questioning and exploration, and along the way healing, that she encourages and oh-so-naturally grows around her. Is it something about the way she approaches people that she is able to bring others to that openness, to that truth seeking, to the discussion of the real and the true, that it seems so difficult to find in church circles? Why is it so often that if people find this (and that's a big 'if') it is only with others who are like them and so lacking the challenge and the growth that she seeks for herself and to share with others? She meets people in a different way. I think. ;)

There's a lot of intellectual and academic territory hinted at here that I've been mulling over in a couple different contexts which she seems to have been working at considering in light of the Bible, and that too, I wish we could delve into.

Well, these are not all I'm thinking about, but some of it.

Prior to Reading:

Personal acquaintance would inspire me to read this (she is both an insightful and an inspiring person); the background of the author would inspire me to read this; but this review, had I not already added the book to my 'To Read' list, would definitely cause me to add it to the top. Carl Trueman, on the Reformation 21 blog, ends his review, Much Better Than The Daily Mail with these words:

This autobiography is the launchpad for numerous sophisticated reflections on the nature of life, faith, sexuality, worship, education and other matters. As one would expect from a lover of

nineteenth century literature, the book is also beautifully written with many a well-turned sentence; and as one would expect from someone schooled at the highest levels in critical theory, it eschews simplistic pieties for stimulating analyses of both Christian and non-Christian culture.

1st read: Sept 14-15, 2012

Douglas Wilson says

Gosh, what a book.

Galen says

In this book I found a friend who was also a stranger.* Many readers will perhaps experience something similar - a story with many familiar scenes but shown from a different angle, revealing things previously un contemplated. And many scenes that one would expect to feel strange but find to be suprisingly resonant.

In a word, this book will get inside of you. You will want to listen, to argue, to laugh, to apologize, to question, to pray, to ponder . . . and before you know it, you'll be turning the last page and wondering how to begin to process everything that has been churned up within you.

Of all the audiences Dr. Butterfield could have written for, she chose one close to home. People in many different places in life will benefit from what this story illuminates. But those most likely to benefit from her loving descriptions and blunt critiques are folks who have grown up comfortably in evangelical and Reformed churches. She exposes blind spots as only a sometime-outsider can do. And she minces no words about the costs and struggles and difficult truths that we'd rather ignore.

But at bottom, this is more a story of the author's God than the author herself. For that is who she really wants to introduce you to, whether you think you know him or rather wish he/she/it didn't exist. And the unflinching honesty of the personal portrait will lead you there.

*Disclosure: I count the author a friend and experienced a couple years of this story personally. Reading these "secret thoughts" now just makes me wish I had been ready to hear more of them then.

Kris says

Only the first couple chapters are about her conversion. The majority of the book is about the effects of Christ on her life after her conversion.

It was great to see how God used Butterfield's past experiences to make her a powerful force for good in today's Christian circles. But the title makes this story sound more dramatic than it really is. It's much more than "secret thoughts" or her "conversion." It's about how God transformed her and taught her things. It's got

long tangents about education, parenthood and adoption, church worship, etc. It's all connected tangentially, which is good, and it's an enjoyable and insightful read -- but the title could be seen either as an annoying misnomer or a extra helping of blessings in disguise.

Rebekah Courter says

This is such a powerful book. It touched on a lot of things I've been thinking out. What sort of Gospel do I have? How can I reach a dying world if I don't have compassion for them? Is Christ really evident in me, that everyone knows He is living IN me?

One of my favorite quotes:

"We in the church tend to be more fearful of the (perceived) sin in the world than of the sin in our own hearts. When fear rules your theology, God is nowhere to be found in your paradigm, no matter how many verses you tack on to it." p.115

Kirk says

I try to be fairly judicious with my five-star ratings, but this little autobiographical sketch of one woman's journey from her place in life as a lesbian, radical-feminist English professor to a stay-at-home-Psalm-singing-homeschooling-foster-mom-pastor's wife earned every bit of the five stars. While many pop-evangelical conversion stories are written in an often-clunky style that yields a narrative arc that reads something like "bad, bad, bad, bad - JESUS - problems solved", Dr. Butterfield's story is honest, glorious, wise, and a punch in the gut. Her story is one that reveals Jesus of Nazareth as no tame lion but also as the perfectly resplendent and irresistible Bright and Morning Star.

But what is, in this reviewer's opinion, equally important as the spiritual transformation that Dr. Butterfield chronicles is the neighborhood the reader gets to know along the way. For instance, for those of us who have no concept of what life is like inside the gay and lesbian community, we are treated to a respectful description of that community and the virtues that are inherent in it from a person who was leaving it. There is no sense of bitterness or contempt toward the gay community in Dr. Butterfield's account - no sour grapes - just a visceral recollection of the personal agony caused by leaving it juxtaposed with the irresistibility of the call of Christ on her life.

As a part of her exodus from the gay and lesbian community, Dr. Butterfield is folded into a Reformed Presbyterian church community that walks alongside her through her pain. But it is this same church community that gives her her deepest wound - a wound that she receives just as she seems to be finding her footing in Christ's church. This reader wondered for a time if the grace of the cross and the empty tomb would be enough to sustain her. Ironically though, it was this deep wound that helped her regain her "safe person status" in the eyes of the gay and lesbian community, thus granting her opportunities to minister Christ to those who felt she had betrayed them. As one lesbian neighbor said to her, "I didn't give a damn about who God was to you in your happiness. But now that you are suffering, I want to know: who is your God? Where is he in your suffering?" (pg. 60)

The middle and end of this autobiography is a description of her growth in Christian maturity, but she engages the reader quite well so as to prevent the narrative from becoming tedious or difficult. The portion where Dr. Butterfield is the most critical (and appropriately so) is where she helps us see where our spiritual formation is too often superficial and how the church frequently allows us to frolic in our biblical

immaturity. She uses her experiences as a visiting professor at Geneva College, her time trying to minister to college students in a small church plant in Virginia, the heart-rending life of a foster-to-adopt family, and the highs and woes of the world of homeschooling to walk her readers through the lessons of life that helped form Christ in her.

There is so much to be learned from Dr. Butterfield's story that no review could ever highlight all that is valuable in it. There is so much to enjoy in her beautifully written prose that I can't imagine only reading this once. I found her story a little bit like that Narnian lion: it is good but not safe. Dr. Butterfield will make her readers want to sing and repent, to tear down the vapid and vacuous parts of our lives while showing us the uncommon grace that is obvious in our own experiences if we only have the courage to look for and embrace it by faith.

Banner says

After reading such an amazing book, wherein the author articulates her thoughts with such a command of language; I want to give a thought provoking review that at least makes a pretense to simulate the authors work.

But the only word that comes to mind is, "Wow".

Seriously, "Wow".

I guess I should be a little more serious, but the book really is that good. Her use of critical thinking and examination of worldview as it applies to Christianity and our culture as a whole; is truly refreshing.

Please hear what I'm about to say.....

Regardless of your current views, faith or for that matter whatever position that you may be leaning toward in our culture's current war of values; you should listen to what she has to say. This is a very personal story that enables us to see the thought process of a intelligent and well-educated person as she examines faith in Jesus as it applies to her life. This book is nothing if not raw and honest.

One of my favorite quotes that I think exemplifies the authors attitude. "One of God's greatest gifts is the ability to see and appreciate the world from points of view foreign to your own, points of view that exceed your personal experience." This attitude enabled the author to examine some of her own deeply held convictions. But also know this, she continues to examine her new convictions just as critically .

By the way, in case your worried about stereotypes; don't. This book is not anywhere near "preachy".

Jeanie says

Got a notice of a price reduction on this book. Excited to start this one...

One word refreshing! Now for the longer version, this book is amazing. It is written well. Written with intellect and experience and compassion. Mrs. Butterfield reminds you of what true evangelism, starting with her encounter with the truth. It did NOT start with condemnation, but questions with what she believed and why. We can always believe something to be good and right, but then when you start with the reasons why

you believe, you start to see how superficial or shallow our belief is. Mrs. Butterfield's lifestyle at the time was a deep seeded so answering a few questions would not be suffice to change ones lifestyle, however, encountering the source of truth and with a surrender compeltely foreign to her, she had a train wreck with the living God. However, this is only a small part of her conversion. She went thru a whole identity crisis which lead to a faith crisis, which ultimately lead to her good. She speaks of community, being a pastor's wife, a mother of adopted children and homeschooling.

A interview with Rosaira Buttefield is here.... http://www.jdgrear.com/my_weblog/201...

Be ready to think deeply, to ponder and to revel in who God is.

Nathan says

This book has a lot going for it. The first half was why I read it, and the second half is why I gave it only three stars.

If the book were only her conversion experience, it would be one of the best books on the subject of dying to self and receiving new life in Jesus one could hope to come across. Here's what's so great about that first half:

- It shows in a dramatic way where the heart of evangelism is: hospitality. I heard Rosaria Butterfield interviewed on the radio recently, and she very provocatively said, "If you only ever have church people in your home, that is not hospitality; it is fellowship." A moment's reflexion will reveal to you that she is absolutely right. This is convicting for me. It has made me commit myself to having strangers in my home a lot more often. To make it concrete for me, I have decided to have unbelievers in my home once a month at least.
- People outside of the church live in messy environments, and we should expect that. Hey, Christians often have pretty messy lives, too, did you notice? Why are Christians so scandalized by the sinful lifestyles of unbelievers? It's because we're comfortable with some sins (like the ones I commit) but other sins, well, they're just wrong. We need to wake up to this. People who have gay sex are still made in God's image, and your sin is just as ugly as theirs.
- Unbelievers are not the absolute pit of evil Christians think they are. Really. The militant pro-gay crowd REALLY believes they are doing the right thing. They see themselves as fighting for the cause of the oppressed, and they are sincerely doing this. Before we go gay-bashing, how about listening to their concerns and desires first? Our words need to be seasoned with salt, not poison. That doesn't mean they are RIGHT to believe the way they do, but we could do so much better with our witness if we would not condemn out of the box. Ready, FIRE, aim! is a bad way to operate.
- Coming to faith means dying to self. Her coming to faith was like a train wreck. She lost everything. Christianity ruined her life, but she had no choice but to come to Jesus. Christians need to be ready to support people who come to faith, because their world is crashing down around them. They are starting over, how can you help?

We win people to Christ gradually through establishing and maintaining real relationships with them. It's hard work, but it is rewarding.

The book stopped being good when she started writing about her theology, church, family, homeschooling, etc. It is nice to see how things turned out for her, but she could have summarized all that stuff in a few paragraphs. I am thrilled she ended up in the RPCNA. She didn't need to give a defense of why exclusive psalmody and the regulative principle are her favorite things. All she needed to say was she's in the RPCNA because that's the church where she heard the gospel. But she kept writing. She even said at one point that

the OPC doesn't sing Psalms. That's news to me. Every OPC I've been to has copies of the RPCNA Psalter in the pews and uses it for worship. If the OPC doesn't sing Psalms, neither does the RPCNA by that logic.

The stories of adoption are interesting. I liked how she linked it up with the gospel, but again, the stories of family life take away from the real punch of the book.

So go read the first half of the book, up to the chapter called "the good guys". It isn't really worth reading from that point. But that first half, man, it packs a wallop.

Erik Lee says

I'm not ashamed to say that I nearly bawled my eyes out as I finished this book.

I picked up this volume not only because it was under the free download section for prime members on Amazon, but also because it seemed to be recommended by all corners of evangelicosphere.

Honestly, I wasn't expecting much. From first couple of chapters, I saw the transformation of a former feminist/lesbian English professor to Christ-embracing, sinner who was now redeemed. The chapters unpacked the clashing worldviews for Butterfield and how a rejection of her old self and acceptance of Christ meant the utter destruction of her life pillars. From resigning her privileged position as a college professor to faithfully engaging the roles of a pastor's wife, Butterfield exemplified the radical nature of conversion. Throughout the book, it was clear that unlike the neatly fashioned conversion stories whispered into the mic's in the suburban youth ministries of today, a real conversion--one wrecked by an encounter with Christ--changed lives and those around them.

But the story doesn't end there.

Throughout her journey as an adult-convert--to a reformed tradition, mind you--Butterfield documents her growth in the knowledge of her savior. Such development translates into her self-sacrificial outpouring of love towards those that have been traditionally marginalized and outcast (like she had been). It's at this transition in the story that I began to count my breath as I flipped (clicked) through each chapter.

What is truly remarkable about her journey, as well as the tone in which she illustrates her pilgrimage, is that not only had she gone from a tenure-track professor to an adoptive pastor's wife of four kids, but she also managed to fully permeate her worldview with Christ-centeredness that not an ounce of her testimony hinted at self-interest.

In the end I cried and repented because my Christianity was tame; it was benign and not offensive. My conversion was only natural, its results not easily counted. In the closing pages, my heart pounded heavier and heavier as the words pierced my dull soul into recognizing a real-life follower of Christ: one who considered everything a loss compared to knowing Christ.

I concur with Doug Wilson who gave a resounding recommendation for this volume. If you want to read something that will warm and convict your heart, this is the book for you. Secondly, if you want to see doctrine displayed in the theater of doxology, this book is for you. May this book lead you to your knees and to the Word, as it did for me.

Amy Kannel says

This started out so strong; I was sure I was going to love it. But after the account of her background and her conversion, I ended up disappointed.

I felt like she made the leap from "former lesbian feminist professor, reluctant/resentful convert" to "homeschooling pastor's wife" too quickly in the narrative. I would have liked to read more about *how* she transitioned into this new life. How did she lose the job at Syracuse? How did her relationship with her pastor-husband develop? What became of her relationships in the gay community that were initially strained but still important to her early on? How did her faith in Jesus transform from resenting His meddling in her life, to actually embracing faith in Him and feeling joyful about it? Meanwhile, instead of really delving into these things, she spent an inordinate amount of time arguing for the Regulative Principle of Worship and defending her particular denomination, which I found unhelpful, unnecessary and off-putting. The parts about her experience as a foster parent and adoptive mother were inspiring, but the story arc as a whole felt sort of jarring, with too many missing pieces.

I still think she has valuable insights to offer the church, especially with regard to evangelism and community. Hers is a unique perspective as both "outsider" and "insider," and she has sharp, poignant critiques that Christians should take seriously. But in the end this book wasn't what I thought it would be, and I was dissatisfied that it fell short of what it easily could have been.

Mitch Nichols says

What I appreciated most about the book was the glimpse into how love, patience and relationship building was the true apologetic that allowed the Gospel to take seed and eventually germinate into a life radically changed by Jesus Christ. Just the first two chapters alone make the book worth reading as the reader gets a small idea from a human perspective how truly devastating it can be for someone to give up their complete identity and world-view to follow Christ. I also appreciated some of Butterfield's comments related to the challenges of a new believer being integrated into the Christian subculture and how the church in America struggles to appreciate diversity in it's politics, schooling, child-rearing and ideas on race. Chapter 3 had a really excellent critique of the excuses people use to leave churches because of the "theology of fear" we have unwittingly accepted. The section on the Regulative Principle seemed unnecessary and unwelcome, and for that I could only give the book four stars. Some thought provoking challenges on Christian's being active in adoption and foster children that are worth considering.

Hope says

This is a very unusual testimony and a very important book for Christians who want to learn how to break down barriers that hinder them from reaching non-believers.
