

Review: Surprised by Doubt

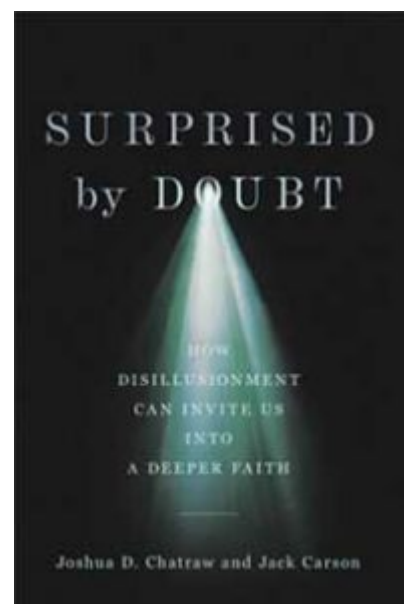
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Surprised by Doubt: How Disillusionment Can Invite Us into a Deeper Faith

By Joshua D. Chatraw and Jack Carson (Brazos Press)

Authors Joshua Chatraw and Jack Carson have written a Christian apologetics book for people who typically don't like books about apologetics—of which I am one. They begin by acknowledging deconstruction—critically looking at inherited faith and asking hard questions about it—is not necessarily a bad thing. In fact, it can lead a person out of the narrow confines of parochialism and into the open air of historic Christian belief.

Chatraw and Carson use the metaphor of a house to describe Christianity. C.S. Lewis and others have used the same word-picture to talk about Christianity as a single house with many rooms—divided by walls of specific practices or denominational emphases but united under the same roof by a common set of basic beliefs. But Chatraw and Carson acknowledge many who feel the need to deconstruct their faith grew up not in a room, but in the cramped space of the attic, where questioning the walls is perceived as calling into doubt the reality of the house itself.



The authors urge those who are rebelling against “attic Christianity” to resist the temptation to jump out a window and find another house. Instead, they encourage those who have lived stooped over in the attic, believing it was the whole house, to move into the broad expanse of the main floor. They urge seekers to examine the historic foundation and load-bearing walls of the house that has Jesus Christ at its center. They challenge doubters to explore the central doctrines that historically have characterized the Christian faith.

As a starting point for those who are new to the mystery of spiritual experience, they suggest participation in holy moments such as holding a newborn baby, celebrating a wedding and attending a funeral. For those who struggle to find their own words to pray, they prescribe praying the Psalms. They encourage seekers to “practice” their way through doubt, allowing God’s Spirit room to work.

Surprised by Doubt is written in a conversational tone that is neither condescending nor pedantic. It is a remarkably helpful book that treats honest doubt as a potential step toward faith, not necessarily a retreat from faith.

Ken Camp, managing editor

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