

Book Review

Title: *The Church of 80% Sincerity*

Author: David Roche

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Reviewer: Laura Kati Corlew

The *Church of 80% Sincerity*, by David Roche, is a charming and heartwarming look into the mirror by which we view ourselves. Roche is a motivational speaker and a person who is facially disfigured. He begins the book with a description of face, to satisfy audience curiosity from the get-go. Three paragraphs later, Roche is free to dive into the good stuff: namely, a life philosophy in which people strive to be good, but go easy on themselves when that does not work out. Roche's metaphorical church was built slowly throughout his life after learning such valuable lessons as "The principle of delayed understanding... [which] states that you cannot understand what is going on while it is going on" (p. 50). Rather, understanding happens long after (sometimes decades after) events have passed. Thus, perfect understanding within the moment is simply beyond the reach of humanity. Roche argues that people should not feel incompetent by this lack of perspective, but should take comfort in the fact that perspective comes to us all, eventually.

The philosophy guiding Roche's church is that we can get it right about 80% of the time, at best. "It's in that 20 percent area where you get some slack and you can be yourself" (p. 7). Roche lays forth this philosophy of self-acceptance while narrating his own winding path. As a child he experienced nothing but warmth and love from the adults around him, but from them he also learned denial—that he must never talk about his face. As an adult he was unequipped to express his experience or emotions regarding his disfigurement; he struggled to stand up for himself when confronted by the random cruelty of strangers or the dispassionate "care" of doctors who looked at his face without seeing a person.

The audience follows Roche on his journey as he learns the importance of compassion, fleeting moments of grace, and a healthy dose of cutting yourself a break. At every turn, the reader empathizes with Roche because his conversational style calls to mind the audience's own trials and triumphs. He tells the story of love at second sight, an endearing tale of love winding its roundabout way through years of friendship before evolving into a loving marriage. He talks about learning to speak out, which helps him recognize and conquer humanity's most powerful motivation – to avoid embarrassment. Roche explains how people often see themselves in his life story even when he himself can see no such similarity. But through connection to others, one can come to see oneself.

The Church of 80% Sincerity is at turns thought-provoking, poignant, and wickedly funny. The book provides a new outlook on life for those of us (humans, that is) who never quite manage perfection. It is an easy, lighthearted text that is written with a frank style and everyday language which gives the reader a sense of sharing stories over coffee. This is a greatly enjoyable book.

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