BLUE LIKE YOUNGER EVANGELICALS

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Category: Reviews



Some years ago I was on a train in Switzerland, reading a book. I like reading books. The book was by a guy and it was called Leadership Jazz. It was a good book, but I don't remember what it said anymore. A few months ago, I was looking at the Amazon website - I do that when I want to buy things from Amazon. The website told me that I would enjoy a book called Blue Like Jazz. I thought this was because I'd already bought Leadership Jazz, so I didn't buy the blue book. I don't like Jazz that much. Anyway after this I went to America and I saw Blue Like Jazz in a bookshop and saw that it's subtitle was Non-Religious Thoughts on Christian Spirituality, that sounded cool to me, and nothing to do with Jazz or leadership, so I bought it , and then I read it.

The book is the story of this guy called Don, who wrote the book and about how he wants to be more like Jesus. I think it's an excellent book and I really enjoyed it, although Don's prose style is really strange - and nothing like my attempt to reproduce it!

> *My most recent faith struggle is not one of intellect. I don't really do that anymore. Sooner or later you just figure out that there are some guys who don't believe in God and they can prove He doesn't exist, and some other guys who do believe in God and they can prove He does exist, and the argument stopped being about God a long time ago and now it's about who is smarter and honestly I don't care. I don't believe I will ever walk away from God for intellectual reasons. Who knows anything anyway? If I walk away from him, and please pray that I never do, I will walk away for social reasons, identity reasons, deep emotional reasons, the same reasons that any of us do anything. (p.103)*

I don't think I've come across a better description of belief in a post-modern context anywhere. If you want a good read about how to work out the Christian faith in our current cultural climate then Blue Like Jazz by Donald Miller is a superb place to start.

Blue like Jazz has the great advantage of being a narrative and because of that you can read it in bed without immediately falling asleep. It also means that it can sneak in some fairly deep and complex concepts without drawing attention to them and even without explaining them. If you want a book which actually examines the same issues of postmodern evangelical spirituality more objectively, then The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World by Robert

Webber is worth a go.This is a well researched, well referenced and thought provoking book and covers much the same ground as Miller, but in a very different style. For instance compare Webber on the subject of reason and faith to the quote above:

> *The weakness of the fundamentalist argument is that it attempted to prove its view of the bible through reason and science. This made Christianity subject to the scrutiny of reason and science. Consequently the way to Christianity for the fundamentalist was not by faith merely but first proof which generated faith.Â (p.90)*

Donald Miller recently came to notice in the US and elsewhere when he led the Democratic Convention in prayer. I would like to see someone praying like this during the British party political season - but I don't suppose for one moment I will. Mind you, after reading his book, I didn't expect to see Don Miller wearing a suit and tie - what a let down.