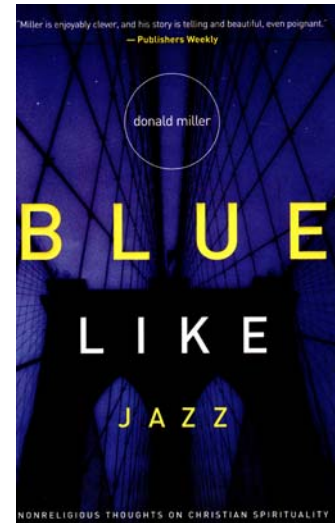


Blue Like Jazz: Nonreligious Thoughts on Christian Spirituality

Donald Miller

Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2003. 243 pages.

- ◆ “I never liked jazz music because jazz music doesn’t resolve ... I used to not like God because God didn’t resolve. But that was before any of this happened.” In Donald Miller’s early years, he was vaguely familiar with a distant God. But when he came to know Jesus Christ, he pursued the Christian life with great zeal. Within a few years he had a successful ministry that ultimately left him feeling empty, burned out, and, once again, far away from God. In this intimate, soul-searching account, Miller describes his remarkable journey back to a culturally relevant, infinitely loving God.”¹
- ◆ “Think of Donald Miller as a cleaned-up, Gen X Anne Lamott with testosterone, and this fresh memoir-like collection of essays as his version of *Traveling Mercies*. Miller (*Prayer and the Art of Volkswagen Maintenance*) shares his journey from a self-described ‘Bible salesman on steroids’ to discovering the freedom of embracing a God bigger than he can quantify.”²
 - See below for an introduction to Ann Lamott’s *Traveling Mercies*.
- ◆ “Although the book is drenched in pop culture references and clearly aimed at a Gen X audience, Miller’s words will resonate with any believer who has ever grappled with the paradoxes of faith.”³
- ◆ Miller has written for many magazines and published several books.



¹ Product Description posted by Amazon.com concerning *Blue Like Jazz*.

² *Soul Language on Paper* by Cindy Crosby. Christianity Today Magazine, June 2003, Vol. 47, No. 7, Page 66. Posted on the internet August, 5, 2003 at <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2003/007/41.66.html>

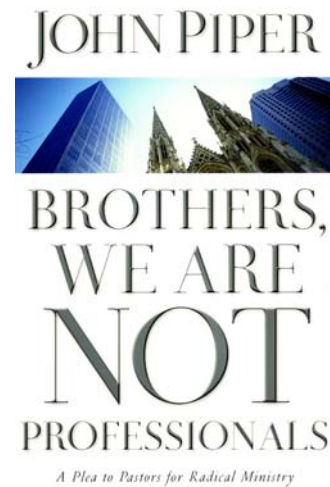
³ Ibid.

***Brothers, We Are Not Professionals:
A Plea to Pastors for Radical Ministry***

John Piper

*Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2002.
286 pages.*

- ◆ “We pastors are being killed by the professionalizing of the pastoral ministry. The mentality of the professional is not the mentality of the prophet. It is not the mentality of the slave of Christ. Professionalism has nothing to do with the essence and heart of the Christian ministry. The more professional we long to be, the more spiritual death we will leave in our wake. For there is no professional childlikeness (Matthew 18:3); there is no professional tenderheartedness (Ephesians 4:32); there is no professional panting after God (Psalm 42:1).”⁴
- ◆ “The world sets the agenda of the professional man; God sets the agenda of the spiritual man. The strong wine of Jesus Christ explodes the wineskins of professionalism. There is infinite difference between the pastor whose heart is set on being a professional and the pastor whose heart is set on being the aroma of Christ, the fragrance of death to some and eternal life to others (2 Corinthians 2:15-16).”⁵
- ◆ Since 1980, John Piper has been the Senior Pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He is the author of more than twenty books.



⁴ *Brothers, We are Not Professionals*, p. 1-2.

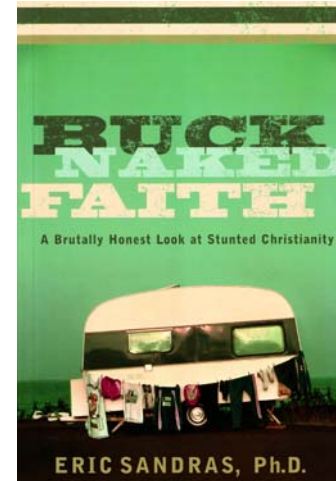
⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

***Buck-Naked Faith:
A Brutally Honest Look at Stunted Christianity***

Eric Sandras

Colorado Springs, Colorado: Navpress, 2004. 156 pages.

- ◆ “It takes a lot of courage to begin a book on Christian discipleship with this sentence: ‘Sex with a stranger wasn’t supposed to end this way.’ That’s the start of this challenging book.”⁶
- ◆ “Once in awhile a book comes along that strips away all of the pretenses and leaves you feeling like you actually heard from God as you read. Authenticity has become a buzzword in the Christian jargon of the day. This books goes deeper than using words, but points out what it means to develop a living, vital faith with Jesus. The raw honesty and experience ranges from the borders of humor to personal pain and points to a great God who loves to exercise grace.”⁷
- ◆ “Honest and gritty, Eric Sanders encourages a generation of believers to drop layers of make-believe nonsense that stunts our spiritual growth. What emerges is a positive alternative to life-crushing counterfeit faiths many of us are trying our best to work through. To do this, there’s no secret handshake or magic formula, but there is vision and encouragement to take the risk and get dangerously real with God. With a pull-no-punches approach, Sandras exposes the naked truth: We need to dress our lives with a real friendship with God and nothing else.”⁸
- ◆ Sandras is pastor of the Olympic Vineyard Christian Fellowship in Port Angeles, Washington. He is a founder of Vineyard’s *Emerging Leaders Initiative* and frequently speaks across denominational lines.



⁶ Comments dated December 11, 2004 by Pat Loughery of North Bend, Washington on Amazon.com on the book *Buck Naked Faith*.

⁷ Comments dated December 12, 2004 by J. Ginn of Omaha, Nebraska on Amazon.com on the book *Buck Naked Faith*.

⁸ Publishers comments on the back cover of *Buck Naked Faith*.

Godric: A Novel Frederick Buechner

New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1980. 178 pages.

- ◆ “Frederick Buechner’s *Godric* ‘retells the life of Godric of Finchale, a twelfth-century English holy man whose projects late in life included that of purifying his moral ambition of pride ... Sin, spiritual yearning, rebirth, fierce asceticism—these hagiographic staples aren’t easy to revitalize ...’”⁹
- ◆ “In the extraordinary figure of Godric, both stubborn outsider and true child of God, both worldly and unworldly, Frederick Buechner has found an ideal means of exploring the nature of spirituality. *Godric* is a living battleground where God fights it out with the world, the Flesh, and the devil.”¹⁰
- ◆ “With a poet’s sensibly and a high reverent fancy, Frederick Buechner paints a memorable portrait.”¹¹
- ◆ You may want to begin reading this book with the *Historical Note* on page 177.
- ◆ This book was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize. Buechner is the author of more than thirty works of fiction and is an ordained Presbyterian minister.



⁹ Publisher’s citation of The New York Times Book Review by Benjamin DeMott, cited on the back cover of *Godric*.

¹⁰ Publisher’s citation of The London Times Literary Supplement, cited on the back cover of *Godric*.

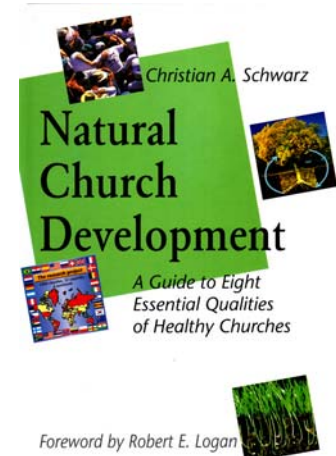
¹¹ Publisher’s citation of The Wall Street Journal, review by Edmund Fuller, cited on the back cover of *Godric*.

***Natural Church Development:
A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches***

Christian A. Schwarz

ChurchSmart Resources, 1996. 128 pages.

- ◆ The book says of itself: “Critics of the church growth movement have often emphasized the need for quality congregations. ‘Don’t focus on numerical growth, concentrate on qualitative growth.’ Christian Schwarz agrees wholeheartedly! Through careful research, Christian Schwarz has verified the link between health and growth.” Schwarz has eight quality characteristics: Empowering leadership, gift-oriented ministry, passionate spirituality, functional structures, inspiring worship service, holistic small groups, need-oriented evangelism and loving relationships. None of these quality characteristics may be missing from a healthy church.
- ◆ “The premise of Natural Church Development is that as obstacles to growth are removed, the church will naturally grow as God has given it the ability to grow. A comparison can be made to a plant. If you plant in poor, rocky soil, provide very little sunlight and no water, the plant will not grow. If you remove the rocks, provide good soil, adequate sunlight and water, the plant will naturally grow, as God has given it the ability to grow.”¹²



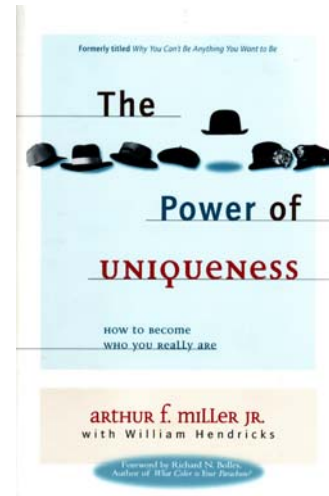
¹² *Natural Church Development: Eight Characteristics of a Healthy Church* North American Division Evangelism Institute, available online at: <http://www.nadei.org/NCD/ncd-overview.html>

The Power of Uniqueness

Arthur Miller with William Hendricks

Zondervan Publishing Company, 2002. 255 pages.

- ◆ “Based on the idea that every person is endowed from birth with a unique pattern of competencies and motivations, or giftedness, this book describes your Motivated Abilities Pattern (MAP), which indicates your personal giftedness and encourages you to pursue your unique calling and live a purposeful life that is highly productive and richly satisfying.”¹³
- ◆ “You can be anything you want to be. Don’t let that lie rob you of your energy and purpose in life! You may function adequately at a job, even forge an impressive career—but unless what you do is lit by an inner fire, you’re just getting by. Because the truth is, you were created with an indelible, highly personal pattern of innate giftedness and motivation. Arthur Miller calls it your Motivated Abilities Pattern, or MAP, and it’s nothing you learned. It’s something you were born with, the thing that makes you tick and determines your successes and failures. In this revolutionary book, Miller invites you to explore concepts far different from anything you’ve ever read in a career development guide. Drawing on nearly 40 years’ experience analyzing the achievements of over 50,000 people, Miller uncovers a discovery about human nature that can literally change your life. If you feel frustrated and unmotivated by your present occupation—if you’ve spent months and even years wondering what to do with your life—this book can steer you in new directions that pack incredible returns.”¹⁴



¹³ *Product Description* cited by Amazon.com

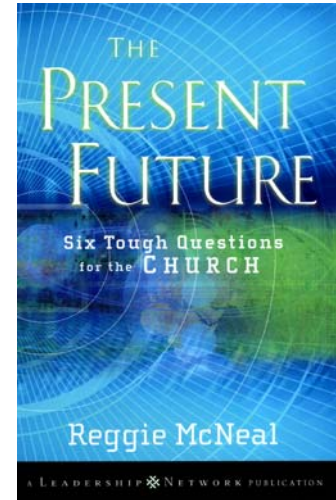
¹⁴ Publisher’s comments on the back cover of *The Power of Uniqueness*.

The Present Future: Six Tough Questions for the Church

Reggie McNeal

San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass, 2003. 151 pages.

- ◆ “McNeal identifies the six most important realities that church leaders must address including: recapturing the spirit of Christianity and replacing “church growth” with a wider vision of kingdom growth; developing disciples instead of church members; fostering the rise of a new apostolic leadership; focusing on spiritual formation rather than church programs; and shift, from prediction and planning to preparation for the challenges in an uncertain world. McNeal contends that by changing the questions church leaders ask themselves about their congregations and their plans, they can frame the core issues and approach the future with new eyes, new purpose, and new ideas.”¹⁵
- ◆ McNeal is the director of Leadership Development for South Carolina Baptist Convention.



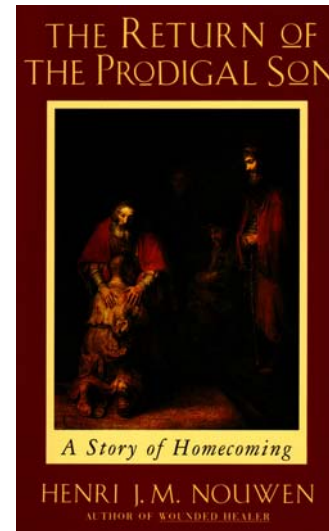
¹⁵ Publisher’s comments on the book jacket of *This Present Future*.

The Return of the Prodigal Son: A Story of Homecoming

Henri J. M. Nouwen

New York: Doubleday, 1994. 152 pages.

- ◆ “A chance encounter with a reproduction of Rembrandt’s *The Return of the Prodigal Son* catapulted Henri Nouwen on a long spiritual adventure. Here he shares the deeply personal and resonant meditation that led him to discover the place within where God has chosen to dwell ... In reflection of Rembrandt in light of his own life journey, the author evokes the powerful drama of the parable of in a rich, captivating way that is sure to reverberate in the hearts of readers. The themes of homecoming, affirmation, and reconciliation will be newly discovered by all who have known loneliness, dejection, jealousy, or anger.”¹⁶
- ◆ For all who ask, “Where has my struggle led me?” or for those “on the road” who have had the courage to embark on the journey but seek illumination of a known way and safe passage, this work will inspire and guide each time it is read.”¹⁷
- ◆ “The internationally renowned priest and author, respected professor and beloved pastor Henri Nouwen wrote over 40 books on the spiritual life. He corresponded regularly in English, Dutch, German, French and Spanish with hundreds of friends and reached out to thousands through his Eucharistic celebrations, lectures and retreats. Since his death in 1996, ever-increasing numbers of readers, writers, teachers and seekers have been guided by his literary legacy. Nouwen’s books have sold over 2 million copies and been published in over 22 languages.”¹⁸



¹⁶ Publisher’s comments on the rear cover of *The Return of the Prodigal Son*.

¹⁷ Ibid.

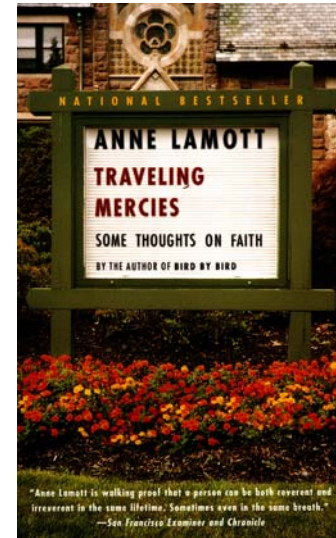
¹⁸ From “About Henri Nouwen,” *Henri Nouwen Society*: www.henrinouwen.org/henri/about/

Traveling Mercies: Some Thoughts on Faith

Anne Lamott

New York: Anchor Books, 2000. 288 pages.

- ◆ This is another one of Annie’s classic soul-bearing essays (pun intended) where she exposes “everywoman” in her writing. Lamott uses her everyday experiences and the people she loves to reveal her faith in God as something very attainable and very present in the small things. Only she has had the courage to bear her innermost thoughts and neuroticisms, laugh both at and with herself, and she makes me feel like it’s terrific to be weird and imperfect. This book inspires you to think that God can and will help you to pick up the pieces if you just give him a try.¹⁹
- ◆ “I had no idea what to expect in this, my first encounter with Anne Lamott. When I’m not laughing at Anne’s great writing and gritty insights, I’m pushing down that lump in my throat. Anne plants and waters the flowers of faith and grace, but pats down their seeds beneath the coarse dirt and smelly manure of life. This woman can write and, boy, does she have something to say. If she steps on your toes to get to the podium, so be it. Hear her out. She writes of a heartfelt belief in Jesus that I share. But she also drags out the skeletons that we born-again Christians are so afraid to let out. Ironic, isn’t it, that those who follow Christ—the most amazing example of love and acceptance and forgiveness to the “unlovely”—are the very ones who insecurely point their fingers at those outside their box. I grew up in that box. I still love Jesus, still consider myself “born-again,” but I, along with Anne Lamott, refuse to live in that box anymore.”²⁰
- ◆ Lamott has authored two bestselling works and has been a recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship.



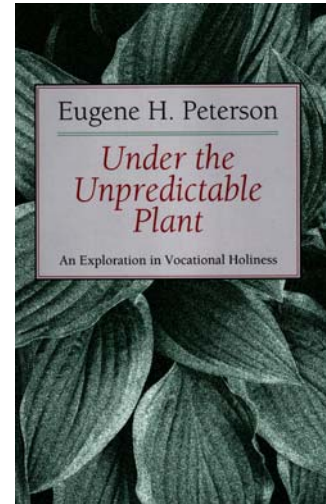
¹⁹ Comments dated October 26, 2000 by Amy T. Ruder of Ludlow, Massachusetts on Amazon.com on the book *Traveling Mercies*.

²⁰ Comments dated April 16, 2000 by Eric Wilson of Nashville, Tennessee, a top 500 reviewer on Amazon.com, on the book *Traveling Mercies*.

Under the Unpredictable Plant: An Exploration in Vocational Holiness

Eugene H. Peterson

Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994. 197 pages.



- ◆ “Peterson uses the book of Jonah as a story-metaphor for what he sees as the ideal way of being a minister ... 1) that a minister must first and foremost be grounded in a spirit-filled life through prayer and; 2) to achieve that, the minister must stay in one church throughout his or her whole ministry to really be rooted in the lives of people in the congregation.”²¹
- ◆ “I am pastor of a United Methodist two-point charge. Two churches. Many headaches. I've been here three and a half years. I am told numerous pastors “start-out” in smaller, typically rural or town churches as mine are. Then we get noticed and we get moved on up the ladder. Better appointment—better pay—more prestige—better location. How many pastors buy into “the ladder”? More than you think. But Peterson does not. This book planted my feet deeply within my call. I wanted to move into bigger, better, different pastorates. Peterson would tell me, “You wanted to go to Tarshish instead of Ninevah.” His book forced me to recognize that the grass is not greener in a different parish. Comparing me to Jonah, Peterson left me no excuse of any theological integrity to leave my two-point charge. So here I stay. But Mr. Peterson, if you read this ... *Under the Unpredictable Plant* is a horrible title. Few of the dozens of people to whom I have recommended your book can remember that crazy thought.”²²
- ◆ Peterson was professor of spiritual theology at Regent College, Vancouver, British Columbia. He served as founding pastor of Christ Our King Presbyterian Church in Bel Air, Maryland. He has written many books, as well as paraphrased the New Testament, *The Message*.

²¹ Comments dated August 17, 2001 by an unnamed reviewer from London, England on the book *Under the Unpredictable Plant*. This reviewer is considering becoming a candidate for the ministry.

²² Comments dated February 2, 1999 from an unnamed Methodist pastor on Amazon.com on the book *Under the Unpredictable Plant*.