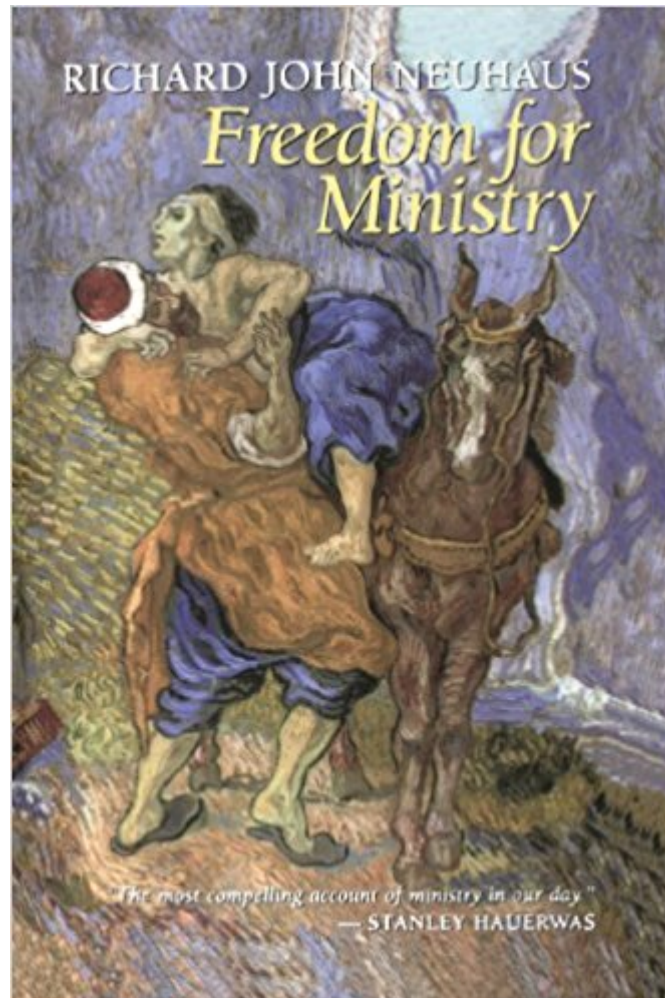




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Freedom For Ministry



Synopsis

Taking a look at today's Church and religious situation, Neuhaus argues that there is a necessary awkwardness about Christian ministry because we are ambassadors of a "disputed sovereignty". Neuhaus also discusses the minister as leader of worship and the art, discipline, and "absurd responsibility" of being a preacher.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

There's a deep refreshment in revisiting books read years before, specifically books that have claimed space in, and scribbled concepts on, one's heart. And so it has been a pleasure to revisit, after 10 years, the 271 page paperback, "Freedom for Ministry" authored by Richard John Neuhaus, who was at the time of the original edition a Lutheran pastor and later became a Roman Catholic priest, who was also founder and editor of the journal "First Things" and founder of the Institute of Religion and Democracy. First published in 1979, it was reproduced for print with only a new "Preface". The dog-eared, etched, annotated pages became familiar again, to remind and add renewed clarity. It is a book that was written for ministers across the Christian family, but holds a high regard for word, sacrament and ecclesiology. The primary theme throughout the volume is that for ministers, pastors and priests "there is a necessary awkwardness about Christian ministry because we are ambassadors of a "disputed sovereignty." (x). This motif molds the whole manuscript. The author walks ministers through this ministerial awkwardness reminding clerical readers that "we are justified by grace in this situation; we do not need to justify this situation" (22).

He addresses ecclesiology, minister models, authority, sacraments and liturgy, community, preaching, and pursuing holiness. And from front to back, over and around each classification covered, Neuhaus points out how in every aspect of our service we are people of faith that Jesus is Lord no matter how much this is disputed in our denominations or our democracy. As the author works this overarching subject out through different aspects of Christian ministry, there are valuable insights on various topics that surface in surprising places and ways. It must be remembered that Neuhaus walked with Martin Luther King, Jr. in Selma, pastored a predominately black and Hispanic Lutheran congregation in Williamsburg, Brooklyn; and was arrested as part of a sit-in at the New York Board of Education headquarters, where he was demanding integration of the public schools. This is the man who then wisely observes that it "is much easier to call for social transformation than to be personally transformed. Critics who rail against the dishonesties of government or corporations may be tempted to cheat on the love and justice owed to their families and the People of God" (242). "Freedom for Ministry" is a sensible, sane and shrewd approach to Christian ministry, written by a man who had walked the path for many years in inner-city work. Instead of younger and older ministers snatching up "How-to" manuals on church growth and effectiveness, this volume should be the first thing they read. And it needs to be a companion that they return to often to help reorient and restabilize, especially in this time of cultural vertigo. Take heart, fellow ministers, for in "declaring the sovereignty of Christ, now disputed, we declare the future of the whole world" (132).

After first reading the book in 1994 and having a mixed experience of being a minister, I recently re-read sections. I was surprised how much I'd absorbed; how many quotes had become my own vocabulary. Every page of this book has a quotable quote because it deals with the reality, the paradox and the vicissitudes of ministry. Starting first with our common misconceptions of the church and then correcting them, Neuhaus then moves into how we can sustain hope when its so difficult ministering to selfish self centered people. He deals with the basis of our ministerial authority and the minister's role as celebrant of the sacraments. He is scathing of the psychological mov't's impact on our training and points to the classical roles of spiritual direction and pastoral care which Eugene Peterson would pick up & expand later. The chapter dealing with the search for community should be read by every Emerging Church devotee before leaving the Institutional Church. The value, often now dismissed, of the role of preaching is given two chapters and finally, the need for character in the minister founded on a lifestyle of holiness. My favourite quote: One of the troubling things about the ebullient testimonials of the "born again" is that the birth seems to have been without pain, without scars, without sacrifice. Neo-Pentecostals in particular, but not

Neo-Pentecostals alone, make the new birth sound more like winning the lottery than walking the way of the cross and resurrection. The payoff we are told, is family harmony, business success, sexual fulfillment and a host of other goodies." (p. 139)~ ~ The Contemplative Pastor: Returning to the Art of Spiritual Direction"

Freedom for Ministry is a very good book for protestant, evangelical, and even reformed evangelicals to read and apply to their lives and ministries. I was required to read this book for a seminary course, Church in the World, by Dr. Richard Horner at Reformed Theological Seminary. I knew before reading it that Neuhaus was respected by evangelical leaders but I did not know the man and his rich wisdom for ministry as a Christian. I recommend this book and plan to reread it in the near future and apply some of it's principles to my own ministry.

I recently finished reading this book by Neuhaus. I am studying to become a minister in a protestant denomination, and my professor (who served as an excellent pastor for over two decades) absolutely loves this book. As do I. Neuhaus does not get caught up in detail, but hits the subject of ecclesiology and why we minister right on the head. This book is a must for anyone seeking to enter the pastorate.

No accurate description was given. I thought it was the revised edition from the 90's. No luck! It was the older edition from the 70's.

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