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Editorial

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Editorial

Seward Hiltner is professor of theology and personality at Princeton Theological Seminary. Among the many books he has written, there is one which is entitled *Ferment in the Ministry* (Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, 1969). There are statements made and positions taken in this book which we, in light of our Reformed perspective, cannot accept. On the other hand, Hiltner writes things which we definitely should listen to.

For example, Hiltner writes a chapter entitled "The Ministry as Theologizing." Doing so, he criticizes theology for being overly or solely concerned with that which is distant and past:

To the respectable, what happened then has always seemed more worthy of study than what is happening now. The illusion that the now is either so insignificant and commonplace as to be unworthy of study, or that it is so well known anyhow—without analysis, critical reflection, or even systematic observation—as to be beneath serious notice, has become all too characteristic of a theological tradition that knows perfectly well that we cannot understand either God's grace or Man's sinfulness without in some fundamental sense understanding the other first. (p. 168)

He continues:

The creative theologians of our day . . . have all moved in their content in the direction of acknowledging the importance of analyzing the commonplace, the

near, or even the functional. (p. 168)

There is, I believe, a great deal of truth in the main thrust of the above statements—for other sciences, as well as the science of theology. Indeed, we must be concerned to know and understand history, especially the historical developments in our particular sciences. Further, we must address ourselves to the present in light of past, historical developments. But we also must be concerned with the here and now.

An emphasis upon that which is near and present is important if we are going to succeed in stimulating our students and preparing them for living the kingdom life today. It is also important if we are going to serve the Christian community in its struggle with the issues, realities and spirits of our age.

I had just finished reading Hiltner's book when I received the material for this issue of *Pro Rege*. The first article I read was "Is 'Natural' Better?" by Russell Maatman. In writing his article, Maatman shows that he is aware of and sensitive to the past. But the issues to which he, as a Christian, addresses himself are very much concerned with the here and now.

I don't know if what Maatman writes is what Hiltner had in mind. But, having read what Hiltner wrote, it seems to me that Maatman's article illustrates that that which is close and present is indeed worthy of biblical "analysis" and "critical reflection."

J. B. Hulst