



Preparing and Equipping the Leaders of Leaders¹

Ted Ward

The central concern of social philosophy lies in one's concern for others. A reasoned and coherent view of life—from origins to awareness, to concerns, to values, to purpose, to responsibility, and ultimately to truth itself, is dependent on a person's view of others. How we see ourselves in reference to others, those who have gone before us, those who are affected today by what we do and say, those who support us, those who contribute ideas that affect the future of understanding, and those whose values interact with ours and contribute to the flow of history, constitute the framework of our self-consciousness and thus for the meaning of our lives. For the Christian, these meanings will be best perceived in the beliefs we hold, the goals we set, and the outcomes we value. Thus we understand the purposes of the Christian in the world in terms of the meaning of the Gospel, the tasks of its mission, and the responsibilities of the church. This journal, and especially the series of articles in this issue, is particularly focused on the educational mission of the church. The Christian educator views mission in terms of its responsibilities for teaching and learning. We are preparing and equipping the leaders of leaders.

Our most pressing responsibility is to critically separate two images of that task. The first image is unfortunately common: that of preparing people who will be grounded in formal theology, able to preach and to officiate in the modes and ceremonies of religious activity they believe to be most common based on their own experience, and fitting as they have experienced it in the nation or region in which their own religious experiences occurred. The second image is much closer to the biblical mandate: that of developing leaders who are grounded in biblical truth and skilled in cultural and linguistic adaptation, so that their lifestyles, language patterns, and interactional skills are flexible, sensitive, and responsive. Toward this end, the missionary's experience will need to grow larger and more diverse in order to accommodate and embrace religious practices common to Christians of the less familiar culture. This sort of expansion and transformation of cultural perspective will require human interactions, including hours, days, and weeks of comprehensive dialogues with a wide variety of new friends.

The material in this volume reflects my commitment to the second of these two images of the educational task. I have come through experiences and have lived in close affiliation with elegant exemplars of this image. For their wisdom, choices, and mentoring I thank God. Nevertheless the road has not been easy; it has often been lonely and uncomfortable but ever so profoundly rewarding!

¹ Ted Ward. Preparing and Equipping the Leaders of Leaders. Introduction to Issue. *Common Ground Journal*. Vol. 10 (2) Spring 2013: p. 11. Used with permission. www.commongroundjournal.org