

Transformers of the Nations



With the right theology these students can change the world.

As we listen to the claims of most politicians, especially in this election season, it would appear that our future rests on great secular leaders who can organize and inspire the people. But for those willing to think through the lessons of history, the theological state of our nation is of far more lasting importance than the existential analyses of those in the spotlight.

When the founders of mighty nations are discussed, many different names come to mind. Alexander the Great, Caesar, Charlemagne, Napoleon, and George Washington are examples. Conquerors and generals, politicians and potentates seem to take center stage when nations rise to greatness. But, in truth, the most powerful historical figures in the birth and development of the world's freest and richest nations have been Christian theologians and missionaries.

Matthew Henry, the premier Bible commentator of America's colonial era stated it clearly: "The mighty heroes of the world...conquered nations for themselves and made them *miserable*; the apostles conquered them for Christ and made them *happy*." To the student of history the above observation is not a surprise. But to a generation largely unaware of any significant, culturally relevant theologians, this truth is difficult to understand.

The fact is that the nation-transforming power of theology has been pervasive throughout history. For example, who brought hope and order out of a collapsing Roman Empire? The answer is the great theologian, Augustine of Hippo. And who united Ireland in the fifth century, making it a Christian nation? It was the Liberty Man, Patrick of Ireland who brought truth, freedom, and Christian civilization to the pagan tribes. Who gave the semi-pagan Angles and Saxons their unifying identity as Englishmen? The quiet scholar, the Venerable Bede, forged their united Christian identity as a people. Who virtually created the nation of Germany and developed her modern language through his Bible translation? The reformer and theologian, Martin Luther, has that distinction.

Who was the forgotten founder and guiding inspiration behind the development of the leading free and prosperous governments of the world? This nation builder was the theologian,

John Calvin. Who freed Scotland from medieval tyranny and clannish barbarism? The theologian and preacher, John Knox, united Scotland under Christ. Who was the theological bulwark of the English Civil War and Oliver Cromwell's constant mentor? The foremost Puritan theologian, John Owen, aggressively applied his great mind to give the people of England the biblical rationale for resistance to tyranny and a heart for liberty. Who was considered the greatest intellect in colonial America and the one who unified the people's thinking, setting the stage for independence? The theologian and leader of the Great Awakening, Jonathan Edwards, was that "Freedom Man."

These great spiritual leaders were the forerunners of liberty and they all shared a common view of God and theology. They were uncompromising believers in Jesus Christ as "the Ruler of the nations." (Ps. 22) They studied the inerrant Word, the Bible, and discovered the strategy for successful personal and cultural life. They then mentored leaders in all fields, including civil magistrates, to follow God's biblical path to freedom from conversion of the soul to voluntary obedience to God's law in society.

The truth is that the study of God as revealed in the Bible and the application of this study to people and cultures is the determining factor in the rise and fall of nations. **Politicians and military leaders enter the scene late with their parts already orchestrated by the theologians that have come before, setting the worldview of the people and their leaders.**

If American's faith in the God of the Bible would become as strong as it was in early America, then tyranny would be restrained. In contrast, if a people's theology is weak and their view of God is distorted, then they become easily misled and eventually enslaved.

America (and every nation) needs theologians again who will thrust biblical truth and practice right back into the mainstream of culture. We should remember that these transformers of nations (theologians) do not materialize instantly as mature reformers. They are trained to maturity and prepared for leadership by godly parents and mentors who direct their minds to the diligent study of God. An army of young, committed biblicists who take God's truth to the marketplace, courthouse, and legislative hall can once again lay the foundations of Christ's kingdom which will lead us back to true freedom and prosperity.

America's political, economic, and religious liberties have been compromised because we as a people have allowed our view of God and His sovereignty to diminish. In the 20th century, secular humanism became the established religion of public education, government, and pop culture. This heresy is based on a false belief in the innate goodness of man, as opposed to the biblical teaching of the sin nature of man. In this utopian scheme there is no place for the forgiving Savior or for a biblically based constitution that limits the power of civil leaders. In reality these experimentations with humanist theologies in the last century have *all failed*. They have brought our major institutions to a point of collapse.

But there is great hope. As we renew our understanding of the loving, all-powerful Creator and His plan for our good, there is great reason for optimism and faith in better days to come. Nothing can stop the sovereign God and His people from discipling the nations. Charles H. Spurgeon proclaimed his faith in the future in 1874 when he said: "We look for a day when the dwellers in all lands shall learn righteousness, shall trust in the Savior, shall glorify His name."

- Marshall Foster