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## RESOURCES FOR THINKING CLEARLY

*E*vangelicals . . . regard as the only possible road to the reunion of the churches the need of biblical reformation. In their view the only solid hope for churches which desire to unite is a common willingness to sit down together under the authority of God's Word, in order to be judged and reformed by it.

JOHN R. W. STOTT

*T*heology is the responsibility and practice of the Church. Those who are concerned for theology must be responsible to the whole of Christian tradition, not just a sectarian part. The core is expressed in the earliest ecumenical creeds. These creeds do not "teach" the whole of that faith but they do provide a necessary framework for what really matters. Here the church leader can see what really matters. Here the minister can root his life and calling in the received faith of the whole Church.

JOHN H. ARMSTRONG

*A*ll heresies, when thoroughly looked into, are found to harbor dissent in many particulars—even from their own founders. The majority of them do not even have churches. Motherless, houseless, creedless outcasts—they wander about in their own essential worthlessness . . . In their discipline, we have a measure of their doctrine. They say that God is not to be feared. Therefore, all things are in their own view free and unchecked.

TERTULLIAN (A.D. 197)

### *THE DUEL: HAMILTON VS. BURR*

Carl Byer and David Mrazek, writers

Carl Byer, producer

PBS Home Video (2000)

Running Time: 60 minutes

*I*t is often argued that the two-party political system of the United States is part and parcel of Constitution orthodoxy. Many still fear that if this arrangement were otherwise we would soon be paralyzed as a government. In this case the truth is much more interesting. In the infancy of the nation not only was there not a two-party system, but political positions were often argued and held with great passion—a passion that sometimes became inflammatory beyond anything seen in recent decades. The most noteworthy illustration of this is the famous duel between two founding fathers of the republic, Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr. It is hard for moderns to imagine a political debate, such as that between Al Gore and George W. Bush, escalating into a duel to the death by gunshot, yet this is precisely what did happen on July 11, 1804.

Alexander Hamilton, the Secretary of the Treasury who had created our system of federal finance and thus spared the struggling young nation from bankruptcy, was nothing short of a genius. He was an illegitimate child born to a woman of ill repute in the West Indies. He was sent to the colonies to study, and eventually rose to become a framer of the Constitution while still quite young. George Washington considered him indispensable in the early years of his presidency.

Aaron Burr, who in 1804 was Thomas Jefferson's vice-president, had come within an eyelash of becoming the third president himself. Only after thirty-five deadlocked votes had been taken in the House of Representatives was Jefferson

finally declared president over Burr. Burr, the grandson of Jonathan Edwards, came from an esteemed family and was a masterful politician, though not Hamilton's equal in terms of sheer genius. The charismatic and suave Burr seemed continually thwarted by Hamilton, who moved in similar circles of power. For this reason, the duel was all but inevitable as history played itself out in the careers of these two famous men.

On the fateful morning of a July summer day in 1804 Burr and Hamilton met to settle their dispute the way men defended their honor in such times. From a distance of twenty paces they stood ready to shoot. At the appropriate count of three each could fire one shot. There is debate as to Hamilton's shot. Some say he intentionally fired so as to miss Burr. This much is sure: Burr had an easy target in front of him and chose to fire directly at Hamilton, who died several days later. The sad fact is that Burr may have lived to see another day but his political career, bright and hopeful still, was over from that day forward. The public never forgave him for what he did.

One of the sad reflections to be made about Aaron Burr is how defiantly and deliberately he rejected the Christian faith. In this case blood lines did nothing to make him sympathetic to the historic Christian faith in which he had been nurtured in as a child.

This is a very well-done documentary drama that gives good perspective on a different day in American history.

JOHN H. ARMSTRONG  
Editor-in-Chief

***NOT FOR OURSELVES ALONE: THE STORY OF ELIZABETH  
CADY STANTON AND SUSAN B. ANTHONY***

A Film by Ken Burns and Paul Barnes  
PBS Home Video (1999)  
Three hours and thirty minutes

**I**n the 1872 presidential election Susan B. Anthony, along with a small group of women, was arrested and fined for

voting. This incident powerfully underlined an issue that grew in importance over the next decades, but would not result in women voting legally until forty-eight years later!

In June of 1873 Susan B. Anthony gave an address titled: "Are Women Persons?" In this now memorable speech she asked if the preamble to the Constitution was to be taken seriously or not. She said:

It was we, the people; not we, the whole male citizens; nor yet we, the male citizens; but we, the whole people, who formed the Union. And we formed it, not to give the blessings of liberty, but to secure them; not to the half of ourselves and the half of our posterity, but to the whole people—women as well as men. And it is downright mockery to talk to women of this enjoyment of the blessings of liberty by this democratic-republican government, [without] the ballot . . .

Ken Burns, a masterful craftsman who has produced and directed a number of extremely well-done video stories shown on public television (PBS), gives a stirring account of the rise and development of the women's movement in this recent series. Burns' most widely acclaimed series was on the American Civil War. That series "put him on the map" for many who value serious visual presentation of historical narrative. Burns followed his magisterial Civil War series with an equally good one, at least to my mind, on the story of baseball. What red-blooded American would not remember the first time they heard all three verses of the famous old song: "Take Me Out to the Ballgame?" (Don't laugh too loudly but the father-daughter first dance at my daughter's wedding last year was to the Carpenter's rendition of this very song!) And what fan of the game over sixty can not remember the famous radio call in 1954, "The Giants win the pennant! The Giants win the pennant! The Giants win the pennant!" This series is filled with such memorable highlights.

This newer series on Anthony and Stanton deals with the dramatic, but little-known, story of the friendship between two nineteenth-century women that is nothing short of amazing. Most Americans do not realize that the nation only gave

the voting franchise to women by means of a constitutional amendment in 1920. Even fewer know that this constitutional decision took a full seventy-two years of tireless labor. The effort was principally led by two visionary and tireless women: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony.

The nineteenth amendment is a simple statement of only twenty-eight words. Yet it took the tireless labors of political and social revolutionaries seventy-two years to get it adopted into the Constitution of the United States.

The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.

Stanton and Anthony tirelessly gave more than fifty years of their lives, night and day, to make the adoption of this simple amendment a success. The tragedy is that very few women, and even fewer men, know anything at all about this long and arduous struggle to change the social fabric of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century America. Perhaps an even greater tragedy is that the modern feminist movement has radicalized important issues into ethical tragedies that have destroyed millions of unborn children and countless marriages and families.

Until I viewed this series I did not know that the final vote to approve this amendment was cast by the youngest member of the Tennessee legislature, the state of my birth and childhood. The man who cast this decisive vote had come to the Nashville legislature that fateful day to vote "no" but then took a note from his mother out of his pocket. She instructed her son to cast a vote that would honor the dignity and intellect of women with the right to vote. Listening to the plea of his mother he broke the stalemate with the vote that finally approved the amendment! This is only one of dozens of interesting stories recounted by this outstanding series.

Stanton and Anthony were born in the early nineteenth century into a world governed entirely by men. Women had no basic human rights. Not only were they denied the vote, in what was ostensibly intended to be a representative democracy, they had few or no rights in divorce proceedings and were

treated by civil law and social mores as distinctly inferior to the male counterparts both socially and intellectually. Stanton and Anthony began, in 1848 at Seneca Falls, New York, a movement that sought to better the lives of the majority of American citizens. Whether one agrees with all they did, or wrote, is not the point. I find both women strangely compelling, on one hand, while spiritually confused and bereft of meaningful faith. One must keep in mind, however, that one of the institutions that most stridently opposed their efforts from the very beginning was the Church.

Two individuals could not be more opposite, in some ways, than Stanton and Anthony. Stanton married, happily it appears, and had seven children. She loved her children, indeed she doted on them and showed little discipline in rearing them. Anthony was strongly committed to singleness almost from the beginning of her life. She was often disappointed in women in the movement who married and displayed a maternal desire. At the end their lives Anthony seemed to have more faith and hope about the future than Stanton. These two were the first social feminists, in terms of a movement, but if this is the only category you have for their efforts you will miss the greatness of their contribution to the common good of our national life.

One very modern debate in the Church surrounds an issue which is closely connected to the women's movement of the nineteenth century. For several years we have heard men tell us that translating words in the New Testament, that do not demand a gender specific translation, as "brothers and sisters" or "men and women" is unnecessary because we have always understood "men" to be a generic term for mankind, thus clearly including both sexes. This is simply not true. If the use of "men" always meant "males and females" then the nineteenth century would demonstrate this use. The preamble to the Constitution uses the familiar words that "all men are created equal." If the common argument made by some today were true then this would have meant males and females. The fact is quite different—the early suffrage movement argued this very way. The result was that both popular opinion and

the courts ruled that the "all men" who were created equal in terms of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" in the Constitution was all "males." This is a simple fact of history, which the record plainly bears out.

This engaging series includes the comments of several historians of the women's movement as well as numerous pictures and quotations from the speeches and letters of both Stanton and Anthony. It moves briskly and engages you in the story of both the women and their movement. One of the saddest parts of this story, to me, is the connection between the abolition of slavery and the rights of women. After the Civil War the abolitionists were satisfied that black males could now vote. In the process they abandoned their female supporters allowing the momentum for serious change to take place. The tragedy was that the failure of following through on the just agenda for equal rights led to the Jim Crow laws of the old South that, in effect, kept many blacks from voting until the Civil Rights era of the 1950s and beyond. Sadly, America has often been resistant to needed moral and social change, choosing rather to protect the interests of a few over the whole. The record of the Church has not always been good. I soon learned this by experience, in the 1950s, in the Civil Rights Movement in the deep South. I heard many conservative minister's say, "This is the way things are; God doesn't want you tampering with this so leave it alone!" I never found the case consistent or compelling. After viewing this excellent series, I find the same to be true with regard to how men in the Church have often responded to the cries of their sisters.

*JOHN H. ARMSTRONG*  
Editor-in-Chief

### *JESUS: HIS LIFE*

A & E Home Video (1995)

100 minutes

Executive Producer: Bram Roos

Marketed by: New Video Group

136 Fifth Avenue

New York, New York 10011

Video presentations on the life of Jesus abound. Almost none satisfy everyone, but some prove more valuable than others. This particular treatment is brilliant in some places but exasperating in others. It will satisfy neither the serious scholar nor the faithful orthodox Christian believer. At the same time it will stimulate good discussion if the viewer is discerning.

The great strength of this A & E production is that it gives a marvelous visual introduction to the Holy Land. The cinematography is, at times, striking and the narration superbly done. A good sampling of the Synoptic Gospels are liberally sprinkled throughout. Some are placed in visual contexts that are moving.

A glaring weakness is the sheer absence of scholars with a high view of the Holy Scriptures. The comments of John Dominic Crossan, toward the last third of the presentation, are very bad and almost undo some of the real good of the earlier part of the biography. If the viewer understands the simple fact that no single scholar on the historical Jesus agrees with another then the presentation will prove more useful than harmful.

The Church needs a much better grasp of the Jesus who lived in the real historical context of the first century. The Jesus so many conservative Christians read of in the Gospels is inconsistent with the Jesus of history. For this reason alone presentations such as this one have a role to play in educating the Church at large. Wise ministers might preview this video first and then be prepared to discuss some of the strengths and the flaws in this particular biography.

There is a minimal amount of "action" in this presenta-

tion, so it is much more of a documentary about the present understanding of the historical Jesus than a life of the man revealed in the New Testament. In spite of this I found it a useful introduction. This single video is part of the popular ongoing series of biographies produced by the A & E Network.

JOHN H. ARMSTRONG  
Editor-in-Chief

### FOUNDING FATHERS: THE MEN WHO SHAPED OUR NATION AND CHANGED THE WORLD

Four Videos (50 minutes each)

Narrated by Edward Herrman

Produced by The History Channel (2000)

This mini-series is a good overview of the rise and development of the United States, from 1760 until the final victories over Great Britain in the Revolutionary War (1775-1783). It traces the rise of the two men who most influenced the cry of liberty, Samuel Adams and John Hancock. It stresses throughout that all of these men were truly human, not superheroes with a larger-than-life persona. This may well be its greatest contribution as a series.

The first volume is titled "Rebels with a Cause." Here we meet Samuel Adams, a pugnacious individual who failed at many different professions before he found his place as a revolutionary with a knack for inciting crowd response to the issue of liberty. John Hancock, a wealthy, aristocratic merchant was also a wine-smuggler who had a major economic interest in breaking away from the ties the colonies had with Great Britain. These two men, called "the political odd couple," established a unique relationship that sparked the fires of rebellion already smoldering within the British colonies.

The second volume is "Taking Liberties." After heavy British taxes followed the Boston Massacre the political situation in the colonies grew tenser. More and more people longed for liberty. The orator Patrick Henry employed his gift

in the service of the growing cause and his famous line, "Give me liberty or give me death" was parlayed into an open "call to arms." (Henry learned to speak so well by listening to the great Presbyterian revival preachers of the First Great Awakening a few decades earlier.)

Benjamin Franklin spent over a decade in London trying to heal the growing breach that had opened between King George and the Americans. When Franklin returned to America he soon joined the cry for liberty. He would later go to Paris to enlist the French as America's most important ally.

George Washington is presented in this volume as a retired soldier with a very average military record who maneuvered the Continental Congress to become the leader of the rebel forces in battle. (For weeks upon end he wore his military uniform every day so the delegates would notice his qualifications!) And what shall we say of Thomas Paine, the writer of the earliest best seller of the Revolution, *Common Sense*? Well, for one he was an alcoholic who had failed at many attempts to make something of his life. For another he was a critic of revealed religion and the supernatural redemptive claims of Christianity. (This influence did considerable harm to the impulse of historic Christianity at the time.) His writing was inflammatory and his efforts important to causing many to support the rebellion. Nearly twenty-five percent of the population either read his inflammatory tract or had it read to them.

When the colonists finally made a formal Declaration of Independence in 1776 it was the young Thomas Jefferson, a Virginia planter who suffered from regular migraine headaches, who meticulously wrote the document in a number of different drafts. (Copies of these drafts reveal some of the important changes made during the process of deliberation in Philadelphia.) It is safe to say the Declaration was in no way a Christian statement, contrary to popular myth. Judeo-Christian ideas were clearly at work but so were Enlightenment ideas and other democratic notions that had a long history.

While the framers of the Declaration were at work, George Washington was establishing an army, which badly failed in

its first attempts to fight the British. By the end of 1776 the future for the colonies was at its lowest point. Washington was wintered with poor rations and clothing, and his troops were disheartened and ready to leave on December 31 when their term of service was up. What happened then has a mythical quality to it that stirs many Americans deeply.

An oft-forgotten part of the founding story is the role Benjamin Franklin played in getting the French to financially support the American cause, no small matter since the colonists were fighting for freedom from King George and France was still ruled by a monarchy. Franklin's efforts, which included methods that would make many blush, was granted success and the result was a strengthened army and a renewed desire to fight on.

The final video ends with the story of the drafting and approval of the Constitution. After the final defeat of the British at Yorktown, in 1781, the thirteen colonies were now in a unique position. How do you take thirteen very different states and make them one nation while retaining the individuality and independence of these same states in the process? The answer was eventually incorporated into the Constitution. A young James Madison, clearly the father of the document, saved the day. A nation without money, a people without a sense of unity, and the lack of a cause that united them the way the War of Independence had, all complicated the situation immensely.

During these important years Thomas Jefferson was sent to Paris to strengthen American ties with the French government while the nascent nation was forming. While in Paris Jefferson engaged in two scandalous affairs, one with a married woman and one with a young slave girl, demonstrating again that many of the founders were anything but consistent practicing Christians.

There are better video resources on the American Revolution, but I felt this series was well worth my time. I would recommend it to anyone who has little knowledge of the real humanity of the founding fathers. In this case, knowledge of the basic facts would aid any present discussion about our

nations early history and the intellectual forces behind the birth of our democracy.

*JOHN H. ARMSTRONG*  
Editor-in-Chief

### *A HISTORY OF BRITAIN*

3500 B.C.–1603 A.D.

Written and Presented by Simon Schama  
3 Video Cassettes (100 minutes each)  
BBC/The History Channel (2000)

This six-episode video presentation presents a definitive history of the land of Henry II and Edward I, Shakespeare and Chaucer, Elizabeth and Victoria. It is based on the written work of historian Simon Schama, whose massive, marvelously-illustrated, three-volume history of Britain was recently completed (2002). The video series does not live up to the written work, but who would expect it to, given the format and time allotted?

Tracing the bold strokes of British history, the first video addresses two formative influences: "Beginnings" and "Conquest." The visual story opens with Schama at Skara Brae, an embryonic village discovered in Scotland by modern archaeology. Generations followed these early village people that were largely indigenous. When the Romans finally came to the isles they found a host of different peoples. The Romans began what was to be a trend for many centuries, an invasion of Britain that resulted in a change of leadership that was never followed by massive migration. The second part of this first video addresses the conquest of the famed William the Conqueror (A.D. 1066). Schama argues that had it not been for this strategic event Britain might well have become a province of Scandinavia. Instead, following the Norman conquest, Britain turned from the north to the south, thus becoming a part of an Anglo-Norman empire that eventually overcame even the great kings of France. (Did you know that part of what is modern France was once land that was claimed by Britain?)

The second tape includes segments dealing with "Dynasty" and "Nations." The great Norman dynasty was slowly torn asunder as cousins fought over who would rule. One battle after another literally fills the fields and valleys of the island with human blood. During this era three of the best known and, Schama maintains, misunderstood kings came to power: Henry II, Richard I, and his brother John. At the center of this medieval history lies a burgeoning connection between Church and State, most powerfully expressed in the relationship of Thomas Becket and Henry II. It was Becket, who became an archbishop, who was struck down by a sword blow that literally split his head open before a worship celebration in the Canterbury Cathedral. The intrigue of these days has long fascinated students of early British development.

In the second part of Volume II Schama explores how the people of Britain developed a spirit of nationalism. He suggests the voice they raised "was proud, defiant and nationalistic." And so it was. The language itself arose as a response to subjugation in the campaigns of Edward I when he expanded his rule into Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. Most Americans have little appreciation of the centuries-old spirit of antipathy that exists between the English and the peoples of these three distinct nations. Schama's presentation will convince you beyond serious doubt that these feelings are rooted deeply in a spirit of defiant nationalism against the English rule regularly advanced into these smaller countries.

The final videocassette contains episodes titled "King Death" (which addresses the impact of the Black Death upon the 14th century) and "Burning Convictions" (which deals with the question of how Roman Catholic Britain became Protestant). The Black Death decimated the population of Britain and forever changed the social and political landscape. Feudalism all but disappeared during this era, demonstrating once again that providence often has a role in society far beyond the free actions of humans alone. The changing political environment created by the plague joined with the rise of the printing press prepared the way for the Reformation and, later, the Industrial Revolution.

In "Burning Convictions" we meet Henry VIII and his desire for a divorce that eventually led him to move the Church away from the pope. Schama is not sympathetic to the Protestant Reformation in Britain suggesting that Anne Boleyn, Mary I, and Elizabeth, along with Thomas Cranmer and Oliver Cromwell, "bribed, tortured and cajoled a nation largely at peace with its Catholic soul into accepting Protestantism." This observation is partially true but the real story is much more complicated. This approach will surely offend ardent Protestants who should honestly realize that the errors made by their forefathers, who are often turned into heroes without flaws through hagiography, are very real.

This series has some truly high points, but overall I found it much more disappointing than the three large volumes written by Simon Schama and recently published. Schama is not a great narrator and his mannerisms often detract from the visual presentation. One would get both a narrow and flawed overview of British history if this were their sole introduction to the subject. Schama's Jewish secular presuppositions underline many of his conclusions.

*JOHN H. ARMSTRONG*  
Editor-in-Chief