

# THE BIBLICAL EDUCATOR

"To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding" Proverbs 1:2

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## DEMOCRATIC TYRANNY

By David H. Chilton

A review of *The American Democrat*, by James Fenimore Cooper, with an introduction by H. L. Mencken (252 + xxvii pp.; cloth: \$9.00; paper: \$4.00); *Democracy and Liberty*, by W. E. H. Lecky (2 vols., 982 + lxii pp.; cloth: \$18.00; paper: \$6.00); *Freedom and Federalism*, by Felix Morley (328 + xxviii pp.; cloth: \$8.00; paper: \$3.50); all published by the Liberty Fund, Inc., 7440 North Shadeland, Indianapolis, IN 46250.

It is often supposed that the American political system is a democracy. One even hears such claims from history professors, who are usually expected to have attained, along with their doctorates, a reasonable competence in their chosen discipline. Yet when the Founding Fathers themselves are consulted, a radically antithetical view confronts us: *Democracy is Tyranny*—"the devil's own government," as one of them phrased it. In fact, the primary purpose for framing the Constitution was, said Edmund Randolph, that "none of the [State] constitutions have provided sufficient checks against democracy." This fear of democratic despotism pervades the *Federalist Papers*, that much-praised and seldom-read classic of American political theory. In what is perhaps the most famous of those essays, James Madison declared that pure democracies "have ever been spectacles of turbulence and contention; have ever been found incompatible with personal security or the rights of property; and have in general been as short in their lives as they have been violent in their deaths" (No. X).

Of course, there is no doubt that the government of the United States has always contained certain "democratic" elements. But democracy in America, as Tocqueville observed, is (or was, anyway) *different*—a *controlled* democracy, varying widely from every other government that bears the name. The American system was designed as a *federal republic*, not a democracy. The framers of the Constitution worked to prevent power from being concentrated anywhere. No institution is ultimate. The American system is one of *competing sovereignties*, counter-balanced authorities, each acting as a check on all the others. When this system breaks down, even (or especially) in the name of "the people," the result is tyranny.

And within 50 years of the ratification of the Constitution, the system did indeed begin to break down. Democracy was on the rise, and few possessed the insight or the courage to denounce it. James Fenimore Cooper was a notable exception to the trend, and he penned *The American Democrat* in 1838 as a warning to his generation. If you know him only through *The Deerslayer* (or through Mark Twain's delightful attack on it—"Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offenses"), you have missed at least half the man. Cooper was friendlier to democracy than I would be, but he saw many of the dangers it held, both small ("the tendency... is, in all things, to mediocrity") and great:

It is a besetting vice of democracies to substitute public opinion for law... No tyranny of one, nor any tyranny of the few, is worse than this. All attempts in the publick, therefore, to do that

which the publick has no right to do, should be frowned upon as the precise form in which tyranny is the most apt to be displayed in a democracy (pp. 83f).

Cooper's exposition is clear, simple and forceful, and the present LibertyClassics edition is really beautiful: even on aesthetic grounds you should not pass it up. It belongs in every secondary-school library, and in softcover it would be an inexpensive and useful text (or supplement) for an introductory high-school class on American Government. One minor caveat: Cooper's brand of Christianity was not exactly thoroughgoing—his rationalism is quite apparent. But that can easily be discussed and corrected in the classroom; and anyway, his perspective is probably more reliable than the democratically-oriented text you've been using up to now.

Another recent addition to the LibertyClassics series is *Democracy and Liberty*, by William Edward Hartpole Lecky (1838-1903). This two-volume set will be too difficult for most of your students, but *you* should read it. Lecky painstakingly analyzes the development of democratic theory and practice in every aspect of modern history: in England, Ireland, France, Italy and America; in its relationship to other forms of government; in its effects on classes, customs, religious freedoms, property rights, labor, and feminism; and in its compatibility with socialism and totalitarianism. A basic thesis is that "some of the strongest democratic tendencies are distinctly adverse to liberty"—that, indeed, "no fact is more incontestable and conspicuous than the love of democracy for authoritative regulation" (vol. I, pp. 217f.).

Democracy... has now become, in nearly all countries, a government of lavish expenditure, of rapidly accumulating debt, of constantly extending State action... Nothing is more characteristic of the new democracy than the alacrity with which it tolerates, welcomes, and demands coercive Government interference in all its concerns (*ibid.*, p. 283).

Lecky's scholarship is staggering, and his prodigious work, though weighty, is richly absorbing. Don't let its bulk discourage you: it requires thought, but it is not at all sluggish. While certain of his theological views are, to say the least, questionable—early in his life, to the church's everlasting benefit, Lecky rejected a career as a theologian—his treatment of political philosophy is superb. It is an outstanding achievement, and will amply repay diligent study. If you teach history, government or economics, read *Democracy and Liberty*.

Under the imprint of LibertyPress, the same publishers have reissued Felix Morley's excellent *Freedom and Federalism*. First published in 1959, its origins date back to a night in 1937, when President Roosevelt delivered a "fireside chat" to explain that the purpose of his infamous courtpacking attempt was "to make democracy succeed." Morley was listening, and was suddenly struck by the fact that "uncritical praise and practice of political democracy can readily be the highway to dictatorship, even in the United States. The collection of material for this book began that evening" (p. 158).

In precise, understandable terms, Morley explains the American doctrine of federalism, contrasting it with the alien heresy of democracy. The Constitution, to repeat, is a *federal* document; and "in many partic-

ulars this organic law sets up roadblocks calculated to frustrate the will of the majority" (p. 18). In much of the book Morley traces the growth of democracy: from Rousseau's notions of an all-encompassing social contract and a "general will" of the majority; through Karl Marx, Thaddeus Stevens and William Jennings Bryan; to Hitler, Roosevelt, and the modern "Service State." In each case he demonstrates that democracy, necessarily based on the concept of a "general will," leads inevitably to tyranny, as the views of "the people" become interpreted, expressed and executed by the ruling elite. As an example, Morley observes the "curious coincidence" that "every war in which the United States has been engaged was both immediately preceded by a political flowering of democratic theory and immediately productive of centralization" (p. 115).

We have retreated a great deal from federalism; here Morley shows us how to regain lost ground. And, as he correctly states, *that* is not simply a matter of recovering certain legal procedures. It is "at bottom a moral issue. . . . The growth of Big Government goes hand in hand with the loss of Big Conviction" (p. 308).

No matter what you teach, get this book. It is an exceptionally articulate, readable account of federalism and its relationship to liberty—one of the most important books you will ever read.

## AN EDUCATIONAL COMMENTARY ON THE BIBLE

By Rodney N. Kirby

### #17 "Concrete Methods"

"And He (God) brought him (Abram) forth abroad and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and He said unto him, So shall thy seed be" (Genesis 15:5).

Before we look at our text for this month, let's look briefly at Gen. 14:22ff. Here, Abram refuses gifts from the wicked king of Sodom, saying that he will take nothing, lest the king should say, "I have made Abram rich." Abram recognized that the king could later make ungodly demands on Abram, saying, "I scratched your back, you scratch mine."

In verse 22, Abram swears to Jehovah, El Elyon, possessor of heaven and earth. Abram recognized that God alone was Lord, and that his allegiance was to be totally to God. Abram did not want to be in a position in which this allegiance would be compromised.

We have the same situation today. Many otherwise fine Christian schools are accepting gifts of one sort or another which place them in a compromising position. Most often, these gifts are from the state—in the form of loans, grants, free lunch money, textbooks, or accreditation. The state thus claims, "I have made these Christian schools wealthy," and makes ungodly demands on the schools. Christian schools must avoid entangling alliances, even as did Abram.

We might also include the matter of tax exemption. While, Biblically speaking, Christian schools should be tax exempt, yet the state is increasingly looking on tax exempt status as a gift to the school—a subsidy. As a result, the state is making demands on tax-exempt schools. Perhaps it would be wisest, at this time, for schools to avoid tax exempt status, in order to give the state less excuse to intervene.

Now, let's look at our text. Here, as well as in Gen. 13:16, God is teaching Abram an abstract, non-concrete truth—that he would have an innumerable number of descendants. In order to teach this abstract idea, God used concrete objects—the dust of the earth and the stars in the sky. God thus endorses, by His own use of it, the teaching method of using concrete objects to teach abstract truths. Let's look at this in more detail.

One of the key questions in philosophy is the relation between the *one* and the *many*. Which one is ultimate? Is it the *one*—universals, general laws, abstractions (as in Plato)—or is it the *many*—particulars, individual items, concrete objects (as in Aristotle)? Historically, philosophers have alternated between these two. One may assume that universal truths are ultimate, and that individual items are derived from these. On

the other hand, one may take the individual items to be primary, with universal laws and properties being derived from these.

Take a common example. We see many different, individual, concrete items called "chairs." Philosophically, we may say that all these items partake of qualities they derive from some universal "chairness." Or, on the other hand, we may say that we observe many different chairs, and thus derive the quality of "chairness" from our observations of these individuals. We either move from the universal, the "one," to the particular, the "many," or vice-versa.

What is a Christian understanding of this problem? A proper understanding of the Trinity shows the answer. God is both *one* and *many* at the same time. The Bible clearly teaches that God is *one*—there are not many gods. Also, the Bible clearly teaches a plurality (three) of persons in the Godhead. Neither God's unity nor His plurality is more ultimate—more basic—than the other. We do not say that God is really just one, and that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are just manifestations of the one God (modalism). Neither would we say that there are really three Gods. No, unity and plurality are equally ultimate in God.

Now, since the creation reflects the nature of God, we may say that unity and plurality are equally ultimate in creation as well. What this means for our present topic is that neither abstract thought nor concrete objects are more basic than the other. Both are important in education. And neither must necessarily come before the other temporally. We may present an abstract concept, and then illustrate it with concrete examples. Or we may present many concrete facts, and then derive an abstract principle from them. Both methods are legitimate.

Here, in our text, God presents a concrete object—the dust of the earth, the stars of the sky—and teaches an abstract concept—the innumerability of the sons of Abraham.

Some Christians, however, have objected to such a teaching (at least, they have to me personally). They say that we do not base our learning on experience (on the particulars, the "many"). They say that God is not learned about through the items of experience. We do not work our way up from our experience to a concept of God. And so our teaching must not be from concrete to universal, but the other way around.

While it is true that we do not formulate our concept of God entirely from experience, yet our experience does give us insight into the nature of God. God is not merely an abstract ideal somewhere "out there," but he is the Lord and governor of all the concrete items in our experience. Thus, our experience does reveal truths about God—His provisions for our every need, His chastisement, etc. And, in a more general sense, we may progress in our learning about any subject from the concrete to the abstract.

Lee J. Cronbach's *Educational Psychology* (Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963) has some useful material:

The teacher cannot expect to communicate if he talks about things that have no connection with the pupil's experience. A sea chantey is "a rhythmic song, sung in chorus by a ship's crew"—but this is a pallid image to the pupil who has never heard one. He still wouldn't recognize a chantey. A rainbow, a banana, or a baby defies description; only experience with the real thing acquaints a person with its characteristics. Many concepts deal with relations or abstractions (heredity, kilowatt, a billion dollars) and the teacher cannot point directly to an example. Even these, however, can be connected to familiar experience ("a kilowatt would run ten light bulbs like this").

Images of concrete objects and events are a necessary background for comprehending an abstract relation. Whenever an activity puts the pupil into intimate contact with real objects, he amasses experiences that can clarify theoretical concepts and principles. The boys who make radios acquire images of objects and operations associated with electricity. They know what an added resistor does; they have seen lights dim and have felt wires grow warm. Consequently, they find physics easier to grasp. The class that sets out to persuade the city council to change its bicycle

ordinance gains a picture of realities of which the formal chart of government structure is only a reminder. . . .

We have said that experience with the concrete situation is the *base* for understanding. This should not be misunderstood to imply that concrete instruction is invariably better than abstract verbal instruction. The advantages of abstract instruction are probably best illustrated in a series of studies. . . . In these studies, some subjects were trained in a situation where they could use concrete cues, while others were required to learn and apply an abstract pattern. So long as the subjects had enough familiarity with the real situation to understand the abstract scheme, the abstract instruction led to more transfer. (pp. 368-369).

The point here is that concrete instruction and abstract instruction must go hand-in-hand. Neither is more important than the other, and neither can be omitted. Abstract instruction alone is often contentless. Concrete instruction alone does not lend itself to transfer. We must teach students concrete facts, as well as the principles governing those facts. The so-called "new math" has as its emphasis an understanding of how mathematics works (abstract). However, it has often been a failure, due to a lack of drill in the basic facts of arithmetic (concrete). This is just one example of how concrete and abstract learning must go together.

## BOOK REVIEWS

E. U. Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism* (University of Chicago Press, 1962).

*Reviewed by Kevin Craig*

In previous issues of *the Biblical Educator*, stress has been placed on the importance and desirability of home education. But there is a place for Christian "Schools." For one thing, Christians must operate "schools" for those children whose parents will not educate them at home. And the most obvious fields where the harvest is plenteous but the laborers few are the ghettos of racial minorities. How would racial minorities accept the idea of education that emphasizes family responsibility, discipline, and hard work? As well as middle-class whites would! (?) More to the point, the full-orbed Gospel is so very obviously the precise remedy for the economic and social problems of the ghetto that even blacks like those described by Essien-Udom have attempted to copy the truly Christian life. Naturally, their attempt in the flesh was doomed to fail from the start. But this eyewitness account of the activities of the "Black Nationalists," (the "Black Muslims," or the "Nation of Islam") during the 1950's and early 60's, from the scholarly pen of a visiting professor from Nigeria, is rich with indications that the Gospel is color blind. The ghettos are ripe for Christian reconstruction.

Can the problems of the ghetto be solved by massive injections of aid from federal anti-poverty programs? That bureaucratic answer is dependent upon a bureaucratic diagnosis of the *problem*. Essien-Udom gives his diagnosis:

In these ghettos, the community's "mood" is uninspiring; enduring friendships are rare; opportunities for moral deterioration and self-debasement are abundant, and only the upwardly mobile, endowed with character, determination, and capacity for self-improvement, seek to escape from the general indifference of the Negro community or from the "facts of being black" in a hostile white environment. Unemployment, broken homes, and sickness are their common experience. Bitterness, frustration, and disillusionment are the constant ingredients of their daily lives. Most are compelled by their feeling of social estrangement and cultural alienation to seek escapist remedies for their problems, to gambling, alcoholism, dope, and crime. Some end up in jail. Others turn to fortune-tellers, to "spiritual" remedies; not a few join a nationalist organization and some join the Nation of Islam. All engage in a continuous search for some way out of their present miseries. They take different routes, most of which, however,

lead to further misery, frustration, and moral degeneration. Few lead to self-enhancement and to moral regeneration. The Nation of Islam is one of these routes for lower-class Negroes who seek to enhance themselves. The Nation points a way out for those who have the capacity and motivation for developing character through self-discipline, hard work, and individual sense of responsibility (pp. 183-184).

Essien-Udom's use of the word "regeneration" shows us the religious nature of the problem. Clearly, the *solution* is all the counsel of God. As one reads this book through the eyes of a reconstructionist, one sees how desperately these people were searching for that which the Bible offers. If one can sift through the pseudo-Islamic rhetoric, one can discern tremendous opportunities. If one reads this book through the eyes of the typical evangelical, who thinks he can conquer the problems of the ghetto with a stack of the four spiritual laws, or promises of "charismatic" experiences, one will miss the point. In fact the Black Nationalists saw through the sanctimonious Southern Baptist mentality that hindered the economic and social progress of the blacks. They called the "old-time religion" the "White Race's Christianity" (p. 164). By failing to take the Law of God seriously, the "Pentecostal Negro religious movements" (p. 84) have failed the blacks. The unBiblical practice of preaching a solely other-worldly religion and neglecting God's command and blueprint for dominion over the earth has exposed the impotence of those groups to truly offer "a way out" of the bleak world of the ghetto. Essien-Udom criticized these worthless churches:

Another defect in the contemporary social situation of the urban Negro masses is the impotence of traditional Negro institutions in dealing with either the psychological or practical needs of their community. For a long time, these institutions and leadership groups have been the interpreters of the social scene for the masses of Negroes. Of these, the Negro church is the most important. There is evidence that the Negro church has lost its significance for the urban proletarian who seeks to define his situation in terms of the church. However, where its influence is still felt, the Negro church is particularly culpable for its general lack of concern for the moral and social problems of the community. Rather than face the problem of the degradation of its people and take positive action for moral, cultural, and economic reconstruction, it has been accommodatory. Fostering indulgence in religious sentimentality, and riveting the attention of the masses on the bounties of a hereafter, the Negro church remains a refuge, an escape from the cruel realities of the here and now. In large measure. . . both the Negro Church and other traditional leadership groups do not seem to appreciate how debased the life of the urban lower-class Negro is, nor the magnitude of effort in thought and action required for the reconstruction of the "Souls of Black Folk" (pp. 331-332).

Reading this book would give whites a great understanding of the black mind, and it is astounding how close the Black Nationalists came to copying the broad points of the Christian life, unaided by a reverent dependence upon the Bible. Many Christian schools, whether they cater to blacks or whites, could learn much from this book. Surprisingly, it is Essien-Udom himself who says that the life-style of the Nationalists was "reminiscent of the New England Puritans" (p. 16). Their lives were not lives of faith, and their system was plagued (naturally) by legalism (that is, unBiblical and hence oppressive law-making). But the similarities are certainly worth noting.

First, the Black Nationalists recognized the importance of a *strong family* in general, and of *strong fathers* in particular. One of the prominent leaders of the Nationalists, Elijah Muhammad, "denounces the matriarchal character of Negro society; the relative lack of masculine parental authority which makes the enforcement of discipline within the family difficult" (pp. 14-15). Strong families are the basis of a strong culture. Essien-Udom describes the Nationalist family:

The Muslims' attitude has shifted from the maternal-centered—characteristic of the Negro subculture—to the paternal-centered. This arrangement, although not peculiar to middle-class culture, is a significant departure from the norms of the subculture. It helps to strengthen the family, the most important unit of socialization. The father is the undisputed head of the family. Responsibility for the welfare of the family shifts significantly from the woman to the man. The writer found that, in theory at least, the Muslim men preferred that their wives should not work outside the home. Brother John W. earns a modest income and believes that so long as he remains employed, he would rather have his wife take care of the home and children. Sister Emma, his wife, was asked how she felt about her husband's attitude. She said she was quite satisfied. Most wives worked because of economic necessity rather than by choice. The Muslim attitude in this respect is unmistakably middle class (p. 118).

Middle class? Well, *Biblical*, anyway. But this life-style and attitude puts to *shame* most middle-class white families—even Christian ones. Decades ago, fathers in this country abandoned their responsibilities as leader and educator for the family. Now, mothers are doing the same, "liberating" themselves from the responsibilities of home and seeking the "glitter" and "glamour" of the corporate success ladder, contrary to Biblical admonition (I Tim. 4:15; Titus 2:5; Psalm 113:9). Black Nationalist educators held that "the Muslim girls must be schooled in their special duties and responsibilities as future wives and mothers" (p. 233). Is your Christian school being swayed by the rhetoric of the ERAers?

In general, the Nationalists "try to make the parents assume major responsibility for the conduct of their children..." (p. 244).

*Second*, the Nationalists urged their members toward *personal responsibility and discipline*, following the Puritans and the "work ethic" (cf. p. 16).

The Muslims disapprove of the expression of undisciplined, spontaneous impulses. The "Laws of Islam"... prohibit the following: extra-marital sexual relations, the use of alcohol, tobacco, and narcotics, indulging in gambling, dancing, movie-going, dating, sports, long vacations from work, sleeping more than is necessary to health, quarreling between husband and wife, lying, stealing, discourtesy (especially towards women), and insubordination to civil authority... (p. 15).

With the exception of some unBiblical requirements, it does sound as if they had been reading the book of Proverbs. And what a contrast to many ghetto residents (including, increasingly, residents of the "ghettos" of middle-class whites). One Nationalist group declared, "there is no room in (our movement) for lazy American Negroes (p. 51). Many Nationalist leaders saw "lack of desire for self-improvement among the Negro masses" as a chief cause of the slum conditions. Anti-white racism, although present at times, was not the primary issue. "Muhammad is convinced that the chief obstacle to overcome is the 'mentality' of the masses of Negroes. This is the true enemy of their advancement and progress. It has helped to produce the moral and material conditions in which the Negro masses now find themselves. The enemy of the Negro people, he maintains, is not simply white people, but also the 'value system' of the subculture" (p. 335).

This led, *third*, to upholding the virtues of *economic responsibility*. Muhammad denounced "the traditional lack of savings-and capital-accumulation habits. Personal indolence and laziness are sternly deprecated. Habits of hard work and thrift are extolled" (p. 15). One of Elijah Muhammad's chief aims was "to inculcate, through habits of saving, a sense of responsibility for economic self-improvement" (p. 166).

Why, this is just the "Protestant Work Ethic!" One certainly cannot expect to achieve "economic self-improvement" without a new heart created in Jesus Christ, but these habits are very definitely taught in Scripture, and should therefore be taught in our schools. Does *your* school teach the virtues of hard work and thrift? Only those who do will produce competent Christians, in or out of the ghetto. In the ghetto, it was the Muslims, and not the Baptists, who got the jobs and held them (to the shame of the Baptists).

The writer feels that in general, the Muslims seem to take their occupations more seriously than before they joined the Nation. Several expressed this attitude. Most believed that they are better accepted and respected by others and by their employers because of their membership in the Nation. They asserted that white employers treat them better than they treat other Negroes "once they know that you are a Muslim and a follower of Mr. Muhammad." Some even claim that employment opportunities are open to them where other Negroes may not be hired. Nearly every Muslim interviewed claimed that whites do not discriminate against them in employment because of their religion. One can well imagine... that employers may regard them highly because they take their jobs seriously, work harder, appear neater, and behave more "reliably" than some lower-class Negroes in similar situations. It is also possible that white employers may accord them some deference over other Negroes (and for that matter lower-class whites) because of their personal comportment and demeanor (p. 116).

This is simply astonishing. These blacks picked up the book of Proverbs (or so it seems), taught their people, and through their practice developed a reputation for solid, responsible character. I know employers who, upon finding out that a prospective employee was a "born-again Christian" would immediately cease considering him for the job. Most "Bible-believing Christians" are "too heavenly-minded to be of any earthly good!" Any "Christian School" that is not producing students with *at least* the competence and character of the Black Nationalists is not providing a Christian education. It is not even providing a *Black Muslim* education! And this is strictly a matter of content and method, for none of the Black Muslims had the power of the indwelling Spirit to aid them in their walk, as many of our students do.

Unfortunately, all the public schools, and the overwhelming majority of the "Christian" schools, do not teach practical Godliness and responsibility. Thus, *fourth*, the Nationalists were forced to *abandon the establishment schools and form their own system*. When the Black Nationalist attacked white social structures, they little realized that their *true enemy* was *White Humanism*. But they did recognize that the systems established by the White Humanists (and accepted by the Black Humanists) could not help advance the blacks. And so *they avoided them*. "Their enthusiastic desire to be independent of white control is demonstrated partly by their willingness to overstretch their resources in order to maintain private elementary and high schools in Chicago and Detroit" (p. 15). In order to emphasize the ethic of responsibility and disciplined character, the Black Nationalists had to establish parochial schools (p. 231).

It goes without saying that we cannot condone all that the Black Nationalists did. But Christians need to read this book and become inspired to take up the task of ministering to ethnic minorities. The history of this group provides a temporal point of identification with which to gain an audience, and it also demonstrates that the Word of God really does provide practical answers to all of man's problems. And isn't it a shame that Christians, failing to recognize the scope of God's authority, are leading lives less exemplary than the Black Muslims?

The Biblical Educator is published every month by the Institute for Christian Economics, a non-profit, tax-exempt educational organization. It is mailed free of charge to those who ask to be put on the mailing list. Subscriptions: P.O. Box 6116, Tyler, TX 75711. Donations are fully tax deductible; checks should be made out to Institute for Christian Economics.