

lent painting." He dilates on Whistler, Home, Eakins, and Cassatt. He ends the American chapter with Sargent, saying he made "one serious error of judgment," accepting a commission to provide a series of religious murals for the Boston Public Library. He holds out the hope that they may come to be recognized as major works, but meantime he says the "misplaced commission must be regarded as one of the most painful tragedies of twentieth-century art..."

Johnson does not fail to get his revenge on Picasso, dealing with him in a chapter called "The Beginnings of Fashion Art." He says Picasso "raises problems of appreciation which are unique in the history of art, and it is important that everyone should make up their own minds about him." Certainly Johnson has made up his. Noting that Picasso and Braque are jointly credited with the invention of Cubism, he suggests that Braque "produced the intellectual content ... Picasso provided the rest of the kit, including the publicity." He makes much of Picasso's financial success and of the fact that during World War II he was permitted by the Germans to continue working in Paris. "Picasso must have been one of the few who emerged from the war richer than when he entered it," he says.

To close his book Johnson offers a chapter called "The Dangers and Opportunities of Twenty-First-Century Art," in which he remarks on, among other things, the fact that the "studio chain, stretching back to the early Middle Ages, along which knowledge was passed from master to assistant or apprentice over countless generations, has been broken. At the heart of the process whereby beautiful objects are produced there is an abyss." Yet he rejects the idea that this is cause for despondency. "The human need for art," he writes, "is greater than ever, for the world is more chaotic and the demand for the ordering process which art supplies is rising." As if history were but a painting in progress on which someone fumbled a loaded brush, Johnson writes: "All mistakes in the last century can be corrected." He comes back at the end to the point on which he began, lamenting that though more students are studying art, fewer are learning to draw. Drawing is clearly something that matters for him. Picasso's *Boy Leading a Horse* doesn't rank even for

a mention in this magisterial volume, nor did the youngster's left foot. Johnson's father would have been proud. ❄

Created Unequal

Human Accomplishment: The Pursuit of Excellence in the Arts and Sciences 800 B.C. to 1950

by Charles Murray (HarperCollins, 688 pages, \$29.95)
Reviewed by Alfred S. Regnery

FEW OF US ACCOMPLISH ENOUGH during our lives to be remembered after we have quit this veil of tears. It is these very few achievers on whom Charles Murray, author of *The Bell Curve* and *Losing Ground*, focuses in his new book *Human Accomplishment: The Pursuit of Excellence in the Arts and Sciences 800 B.C. to 1950*.

Although our ancestors appear to have been around for some 200,000 years, they didn't accomplish much, in the development of the sciences and culture, for most of that time. By 8000 B.C., human beings looked about the same way we do now, had well-developed languages, and were beginning to figure out that crops could be planted and harvested. But we still had 7,000 years to wait before civilization had its first stirrings.

The arts and sciences reflect civilization and culture. Literature, music, art, technology and invention, scientific discovery, medicine, and philosophy are among the disciplines that define human development, and which reflect the refinement of the human mind. But there have been very few people—those whose abilities far exceed the norm—who have created what has become the world's culture and civilization. Stand in St. Peter's in Rome, look carefully at a Dürer woodcut, listen to Beethoven's Opus 132 string quartet, read Aristotle, Shakespeare, or Dante, and you realize that these are works of colossal achievement.

To be exact, Murray identifies just over 4,000 people as the originators of and most significant



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Alfred S. Regnery is publisher of The American Spectator.

contributors to the arts and sciences from 800 B.C. to 1950. In making his list he rules out almost entirely heads of state and members of government, businessmen, and religious figures. It is an exclusive club, and Murray makes a strong case that it is an objectively defined one.

The egalitarians and multiculturalists will not take kindly to Murray's argument, and the predictable lefties will, I suspect, pick up where they left off in their criticism of *The Bell Curve*. They will hate Murray's new book for two reasons. First, because it is a celebration of inequality. Excellence in its true form exists very rarely, but the inequality of excellence, Murray convincingly shows, has enabled a few people to enrich the lives of all.

Second, they will hate it for exactly the same reason they hate the "Great Books" tradition: those who made Murray's list are overwhelmingly dead, white, European men. He concludes that among mathematicians and scientists, 94 percent and 91 percent respectively of the most accomplished, throughout history, are Europeans and Americans. Indeed, of the great achievers on Murray's list, 72 percent of those who lived between 1400 and 1950, are British, French, German, or Italian.

Human Accomplishment will be accused of Eurocentrism despite its use of the most scholarly and all-encompassing sources, and its inclusion of Arab, Indian, and East Asian scientists, artists, mathematicians, philosophers and the rest. Still, the numbers do not lie. The list of 4,000 includes only 80 women, and try as he might to change the criteria to include more women, Murray finds it can't be done without retroactive affirmative action. There just have not been many Madame Curies. Admittedly, for most of the 2,750 years covered by Murray's book, women were precluded, for one reason or another, from doing many of the things that resulted in extraordinary accomplishment (aside from giving birth to all the men on the list). But that is addressed as well: Murray finds that between 1901 and 1950, 4 percent of those who received a Nobel Prize were women, whereas between 1951 and 2000, when most of those impediments had been lifted,

only 3 percent made the cut.

Murray gives a rating to each of his 4,139 significant figures, based on an elaborate and seemingly unbiased methodology that he developed, within each of the disciplines examined. Mozart and Beethoven get 100 and 98 points respectively, and Brahms gets a paltry 35. When he further isolates those at the very top of his combined lists—those with a score of 90 or more—the list shrinks to a mere 30 people.

Perhaps the more interesting side of the story is

not who these people were, or where they came from, but why. Why is it that European men who lived between 1400 and 1800 created so much of the world's culture? (That is not to say that the period before 1400 was a wasteland. Although genius of the type discussed in the book was scarce, there were some giants, in fact some of the most significant achievers of all time.)

There are the obvious reasons, of course. Peace (with some significant exceptions, like the Thirty Years' War) and prosperity, the development of cities and the concentration of knowledge in universities and other compact

areas, and freedom of action all play a significant role. Money—the availability of resources to commission works of art and music, and to finance inventors and science—is a large factor, at least in terms of keeping talented people fed and clothed while they work. But paying for clothes and food is not inspiration, which only comes from within or from God, and even in times of want and strife great strides are made. Mozart, for example, during the summer of 1788 lived in a city that was experiencing bread riots and in a country that was mobilizing for war. He was completely broke, to the point where he was forced to pawn all his belongings. His six-month old daughter died in June. Yet in June, July, and August he composed two piano trios, a piano sonata, a violin sonata, and three symphonies. But then he was Mozart, and one of a kind.

As unpopular as the notion is these days, there is no escaping the fact that the greatest impetus to accomplishment is inspiration that comes from a belief in, and devotion to, God, specifically the God

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of the Bible. Consequently, Christianity may be the reason that then-Christian Europe played such a dominant role in the development of the world's culture. As Murray says, "The Greeks laid the foundation [for Western achievement] but it was the transmutation of that foundation by Christianity that gave modern Europe its impetus and differentiated European accomplishment from that of all other cultures around the world."

Roman Catholicism, which dominated Europe for most of the time in question, developed the philosophy, engendered by St. Thomas Aquinas, that human intelligence is a gift from God, and that God wanted us to use that intelligence and our creativity to discover the world around us. Protestantism played a role as well, encouraging the growth of individualism, of methodical and persistent self-interested action, and even of the development of the scientific method in England. One need only consider what inspired Michelangelo to design the Sistine Chapel, or Bach to write his Mass in B Minor or the Passion of St. John, or St. Augustine to write his *Confessions*, to realize the impact of Christianity on developing a culture conducive to excellence.

If Christianity played an important role, the extent to which Jews are represented on Murray's lists is even more interesting. Prior to the early nineteenth century, there are not more than a handful of Jews who qualify by Murray's standards, probably because, at least in Europe, Jews were nearly excluded from participating in the arts and sciences, and were largely forbidden by law from entering universities and the professions. But as these restrictions were lifted there was an explosion of accomplishment. There are 1,277 significant figures in Murray's Western inventory for the period between 1870 and 1950. Had Jews been represented strictly as a percentage of the population, 28 of the 1,277 would have been Jewish. In fact, there are 158, more than five times the norm. Freedom, prosperity, inspiration, access to cities and universities all played a role, but so, certainly, did a strong sense of purpose.

Murray concludes with a story of the medieval stonemasons who carved the gargoyles on the great Gothic cathedrals of Europe. Many of the gargoyles would be hidden from view when the cathedral was

finished, but the masons carved them as carefully as those that would be seen. It was said of them that they carved for the eye of God. And that, "written in a thousand variations, is the story of human accomplishment." ❧

Way of the Dross

Persecution: How Liberals Are Waging War Against Christianity

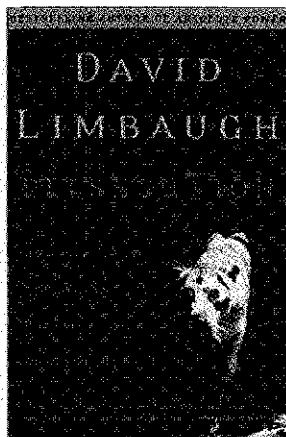
(Regnery, 416 pages, \$27.95)

Reviewed by Mark R. Levin

WITH FEDERAL COURTS interpreting the Constitution to ban the posting of the Ten Commandments in public places, to purge "under God" from the Pledge of Allegiance, and to prevent prayer at high school graduation ceremonies and football games, the recent American legal bias against Christianity was a subject crying out for a lengthy response. In *Persecution: How Liberals Are Waging War Against Christianity*, David Limbaugh (full disclosure: he's a friend) ably documents the dilemma that the faithful are facing.

Persecution begins by exposing the fallacy underlying the legal assault on Christianity—the so-called "wall of separation" (or "separation of church and state") argument. Limbaugh explains how key framers, like George Washington, were unapologetic Christians; that the First Amendment's Equal Protection and Free Exercise clauses were intended to protect religion, including Christianity, from the federal government, not ban religion from the public square; and that several of the states that ratified the Constitution, and later the first Ten Amendments, actually had official religions.

Limbaugh explains how education in America originally consisted mostly of religious instruction. The chief textbook was the Bible and class was held in either homes or churches. The Constitution is silent on education, which was left to the states under the Tenth Amendment. And in the states, education was largely private. As Limbaugh



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