

world of money in state politics, something previous generations could only dream of.” *The Indianapolis Star and News*, owned by former vice president Dan Quayle’s family, have led the way, showing in hard-hitting series how the Indiana legislature had been “hijacked” and “plundered” by “an extraordinary coalition

of about 40 big-business interests, led by the Indiana Chamber of Commerce.” “As editors seek alternatives to ‘boring’ governmental process stories,” say Layton and Walton, “database journalism (despite a name that suggests geeks-at-work) has the power to rivet readers with accounts of how democracy operates.”

Consider the Alternatives

“Chaining the Alternatives” by Eric Bates, in *The Nation* (June 29, 1998),
33 Irving Pl., New York, N.Y. 10003.

In the good old antiwar days, “underground” weeklies such as the *Phoenix New Times* were the proud “alternative” to the tame “establishment” press, and their mission was clear: not just to write about the world, but to change it. No longer, observes Bates, a staff writer for *The Independent*, a locally owned alternative weekly in Durham, North Carolina. Grown so prosperous that corporate chains now compete fiercely to buy them, many alternative papers have put their radicalism behind them. Instead of fighting capitalism, they are embracing it.

Founded by college students and dropouts in 1970 as a vehicle of antiwar protest, *New Times* has evolved into a national chain, New Times Inc. It owns eight alternative weeklies, from Miami to San Francisco, as well as an advertising group that represents six other papers. In the early years, *New Times* was put out by a nonhierarchical collective, whose members each made \$55 a week. Today, writers for the chain’s papers get annual salaries of \$35,000 or more, while in 1995 cofounders Michael Lacey and Jim Larkin, according to an internal memo, each pulled down \$300,000.

New Times Inc. “still takes on everyone from corporate polluters to corrupt politicians,” Bates reports, “but it also takes pains to distance itself from its radical past.” Not all alternative papers had any radical past to shed, Bates notes. “Many evolved from free shoppers, campus entertainment listings and record store promotions, devoted to cashing in on the young, hip,

urban demographic that movement papers had helped forge.”

In the last four years, *New Times*, *Stern Publishing* (which owns seven papers, including New York’s *Village Voice*), and other corporate chains “have snapped up alternative weeklies in major markets like Seattle, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Minneapolis and Montreal, and have begun expanding into mid-size cities,” Bates says. Of the 17 million “alternative” readers, more than half are now served by chain-owned weeklies.

The trend, Bates says, “is being driven largely” by the prospect of advertising revenues, which since 1992 have nearly doubled, to \$345 million. With publications in multiple markets, chains are able to attract national advertisers, notably cigarette and alcohol advertisers. “They understand how to reach 18- to 34-year-olds efficiently,” notes Richard Karpel, executive director of the Association of Alternative Newsweeklies (AAN). Over the last two years, national ad revenues for the 109 AAN members have almost tripled, with nearly 70 percent of the money coming from the tobacco industry. (Another major source of revenue for alternative papers is graphic sex ads.)

In *Advertising Age* two years ago, AAN assured potential advertisers that the alternatives’ “primary mission is journalistic, not political, and they are all in business to make a profit.” If that is so, asks Bates, “then what makes them alternative?”

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

Kantian Christianity

“The Christian Democracy of Glenn Tinder and Jacques Maritain,” by Robert P. Kraynak, in *Perspectives on Political Science* (Spring 1998), 1319 18th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036–1802.

For much of its 2,000-year history, Christianity was indifferent or hostile to democ-

racy. Today, however, virtually all churches and Christian theologians are its champi-

ons. Christianity's central moral teaching, according to the modern view, is the dignity of the individual person, and a commitment to democratic government necessarily follows. Kraynak, a political scientist at Colgate University, begs to differ.

The modern view, he says, has been expressed by Glenn Tinder, a Lutheran, in *The Political Meaning of Christianity* (1989), and by French Catholic philosopher Jacques Maritain (1882–1973), in *Christianity and Democracy* (1945) and other works. Tinder claims that the conception of “the exalted individual” underlies Christian social and political thinking, while Maritain defends the “dignity of the human person” and a political theory of “personalist democracy.” The outlook of the two philosophers, argues Kraynak, amounts to “Kantian Christianity,” in which Immanuel Kant's theory of human dignity is imported into Christian theology. (Maritain was an avowed opponent of Kantianism, Kraynak allows, but his Thomistic thought “ends with a Kantian or liberal notion of freedom.”)

Kant's moral ideas, Kraynak notes, have many aspects that strongly appeal to Christian thinkers: “the universalism of the categorical imperative and the lofty notion of duty pitted against selfish inclinations, the emphasis on individual free will, and the idealism of striving for perpetual peace based on a just world order. Underlying these ideas is Kant's notion of the duty to treat everyone as a ‘person’ rather than a

thing—to see the infinite worth and dignity of all persons and to respect their autonomy.” The political imperative then becomes to create democratic government that promotes human rights and individual autonomy.

There is a nobility in this modern view, Kraynak admits, especially when it is used to defend liberal democracy against totalitarianism. But, he maintains, exalting the individual “often encourages a debased democracy of self-expression rather than a more noble or more spiritual society.”

The traditional Christian view, Kraynak believes, had a less exaggerated notion of human dignity and a more realistic appraisal of human depravity. The view of Saint Augustine and the other great theologians of the past, he says, rested on the traditional Christian doctrine of the “Two Cities,” the City of God and the Earthly City. “All regimes of the Earthly City are tainted by original sin and are more or less corrupt,” Kraynak explains. “Accordingly, the goal of politics in the fallen world should be lowered: ‘the tranquillity of order’ rather than justice.”

Such an approach need not rule out democratic government, Kraynak points out. Indeed, it enables the case for democracy to be made on firmer, more realistic grounds. As the Protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr once wrote, “Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible; but man's inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary.”

The Future of Zion

“At Last, Zion: Israel and the Fate of the Jews,” by Charles Krauthammer, in *The Weekly Standard* (May 11, 1998), 1150 17th St., Washington, D.C. 20036–4617; “Jews against Israel,” by Susan Greenberg, in *Prospect* (June 1998), 4 Bedford Sq., London, WC1B 3RA, England.

For more than 2,000 years, the Jews have survived persecution, defeat, and exile. They succeeded in returning to their homeland after the fall of the first temple and Babylonian exile in 586 B.C., and again after the fall of the second temple and Roman exile in A.D. 135. The latter return occurred only 50 years ago, with the founding of Israel. Yet, argues Krauthammer, a political commentator, that second return has put the Jews in greater jeopardy than ever before.

Israel is the cultural center of world Jewry and it is quickly on its way to becoming its

demographic center as the Diaspora declines. This loss of dispersion, Krauthammer fears, will leave the Jews without the “demographic insurance” that permitted them to survive numerous onslaughts in the past. “To destroy the Jewish people,” Krauthammer writes, “Hitler needed to conquer the world. All that is needed today is to conquer a territory smaller than Vermont.”

The Diaspora's decline began in Europe, long the main refuge of world Jewry. On the eve of World War II, Europe was home to nine million Jews; two-thirds of them perished in