

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

the Holocaust. The European Jewish population has continued to decline, to little more than one million, the smallest it has been since the late Middle Ages. The world Jewish population has “yet to recover” from Hitler’s genocide, hovering at some 13 million, compared with 16 million in 1939.

The United States replaced Europe as the center of the Diaspora after World War II, but the population of American Jews, who constitute about 40 percent of world Jewry, “is now headed for catastrophic decline,” Krauthammer says. The Jewish population has decreased from three percent to two percent of the U.S. population in the last half-century. The biological replacement rate among American Jews is only 80 percent, so that there is a 20 percent population loss with each passing generation. Assimilation also takes a toll. In a poll conducted by the *Los Angeles Times*, only 70 percent of Jews said they were raising their children as Jews. Clearly, Krauthammer notes, “a population in which the biological replacement rate is 80 percent and the cultural replacement rate is 70 percent is headed for extinction.”

Greenberg, the editor of *MindField* (a

series of books on current issues), also fears that Israel has increased the vulnerability of the Jews, but for very different reasons. Before the founding of Israel, she says, the need to maintain an identity apart in various host countries fostered flexibility and a sense of openness in the Jewish culture. Greenberg argues that the equation of Jewish identity with the state of Israel, which increasingly emphasizes conformity and a uniform definition of Jewish identity, is sapping the culture of some traditional strengths. “Jewishness cannot be reduced to Israeli-ness,” Greenberg insists. Jewish identity must be severed from Israel if the Jewish people are to survive.

Krauthammer, however, sees a strong Jewish state as the only hope for the future of the Jews. Much is made of the Jews’ two returns, but those only “defied the norm.” There would be no third return. Modern Jews are descended from Judah, the southern kingdom of Israel. They should not forget what happened to the Jews of the northern kingdom of Israel, the legendary 10 “lost tribes” who were overrun by the Assyrians in 772 B.C., exiled, and lost forever.

## SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

### *When Sciences Converge*

“History and the Scientific Worldview” by William H. McNeill, in *History and Theory* (Feb. 1998), Blackwell Publishers, 350 Main St., Malden, Mass. 02148.

Craving universal and unchanging truth, historians and social scientists have long looked wistfully at the natural sciences, with their imposingly objective, quantitative character. But the revolutionary transformation of physics and cosmology over the last half-century has made the natural and social sciences much more alike, contends historian McNeill, author of *The Rise of the West* (1963).

At the beginning of the century, physics and astronomy, being exact, cumulative, and predictive, were the ideal toward which not only social scientists but even scientists in other fields, such as biology and geology, aspired. But then, in the 1920s, the old, Newtonian certainties began “to crumble with the emergence of quantum mechanics,” McNeill notes. Three decades later, “the universe as a whole became open-ended and unstable . . . when a coalition of

cosmologists and small-particle physicists began to compose a new and very surprising story of how it all got started and proceeded to evolve across the past 10 to 15 billion years.” Instead of the predictable cosmos, obeying universal mathematical laws, that scientists between the 17th and 19th centuries had seen, there was now an expanding universe that had begun with a Big Bang and in which “the ultimate limits of our familiar matter, energy, space, and time are sporadically approached, or perhaps even crossed, in the neighborhood of Black Holes, quasars, and the like.”

This very different cosmos, McNeill observes, “begins to resemble the chaotic and changeable world that biologists and social scientists have always struggled to understand.” In their effort to obtain eternal, objective truths, historians and social scientists have always been hampered by “the role of