

# Book Reviews

## THE PROTESTANT ESTABLISHMENT

By E. Digby Baltzell. Random House, New York, 1964. Pp. 429.  
Price \$6.95.

The main thesis of this remarkable book is that the American WASP (White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant) Establishment, which has served throughout the history of the United States as the primary leadership element, is well advanced along the road of decadence from functioning aristocracy to parasitic caste. Professor Baltzell of the Sociology Department of the University of Pennsylvania attributes this decline to the exclusion by the Establishment of abler men from the newer component elements of the American population. He argues that, when an aristocracy prevents upward promotion into its ranks, it ceases to be representative of the best and hence forfeits its right to govern politically, control economically, and arbitrate and create in the spheres of art and science.

The historical evidence behind this thesis consists almost entirely of a history of the changing relationship of American Jewry to the established Anglo-Saxon American élite. Dr Baltzell traces this oscillating relationship with great skill and insight until he reaches the post-World War II decade. At this point his ardent political identification with the Roosevelt-Kennedy brand of social democracy dims his analytical abilities and he frequently crosses the thin frontier between American sociology and special pleading.

Baltzell finds that the trend since World War II has been to accept Jews into all phases of American leadership with the exception of the corporate high command, the country club, the college fraternity and the *Social Register*. Moreover, both the rôle and ethnic exclusiveness of the fraternity and club have abated considerably in the past two decades. An analysis I am making at present of the national-linguistic composition of the directors and chief officers of the 500 leading corporations in the United States by means of the name-frequency method strongly supports Professor Baltzell's conclusion.

Baltzell also argues that the freezing of the WASP Establishment into caste rigidity has led to an involuntary abdication of power on its part. Politically, it has become a dwindling minority. The dominant coalition in American government over the past generation has been the traditional Democratic Party amalgam of racial, religious and regional minorities with increasing stress on the youth, the intellectuals, labor, Jewry and the Negroes.

*The Protestant Establishment* has already had considerable impact on American thinking and it is likely to have more in the years to come. This is due to the fundamental truth of its thesis in so far as Jewry is concerned, to its persuasive and deft style, to its appeal to the contemporary articles of faith of American liberalism and to its confusion of categories and spectacular leaps into illogicality.

To concentrate on the last point. In his conclusion, Professor Baltzell states: "... this book has purposely not focused its main attention either on the nature of the Jewish community or on the qualities and personal characteristics of Jews. Rather it has assumed that anti-Semitism and ethnic prejudice in general are largely due to the values and attitudes held by the members of the dominant group."

One hopes that Dr Baltzell wrote this with his tongue in his cheek. Let us agree that it is immoral to exclude any qualified person from a

creative minority on grounds of race. It does not follow that the exclusion will seriously impair the ability of that creative minority to fulfil its rôle. The impairment depends on the creative potential of the excluded group. In the case of American Jewry, this potential is enormous.

Thus, the fact that Baltzell chooses the Jews for his detailed study of the American élite and its exclusive practices, rather than the Negroes, is not accidental, but vital to the persuasiveness of his case.

My second and less important reservation concerning the book is that Baltzell overemphasizes the importance of the areas in which exclusion is prevalent. The only one of these four élites which is functional, rather than a mere token of prestige, is the modern corporation. Here the situation is changing toward a lessening of ethnic and national exclusiveness.

Third, it seems difficult to reconcile the theory that the entrenched WASP Establishment is fighting a last-ditch political battle to hold high the walls of lineage and Nordic pedigree with its fairly general support of Senator Barry Goldwater in 1964. Baltzell himself observes that the McCarthy movement, which probably had majority WASP support, chose as its preferred victims Anglo-Saxons with three names and impeccable pedigrees. Goldwater is half-Jewish and McCarthy was of Polish-Irish stock.

Fourth and last: Dr Baltzell is at his worst when he becomes a mere special pleader for New Deal, Fair Deal, New Frontier and Great Society. He begins with the self-evident proposition that true conservatives favor those reforms necessary to meet changing conditions and to strengthen established institutions. From this, he proceeds to the non-sequitur that Franklin D. Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy and various others were great conservatives. The supposed proof is that they did advocate change, yet did not propose that all institutions be levelled to the ground.

NATHANIEL WEYL.

#### SOUS-DEVELOPPES : SOUS-CAPABLES

By Pierre d'Arribère, François d'Orcival, Henri Prieur and Dominique Venner. Cahiers d'Europe Action, Paris, 1964. Pp. 109. Price F. 5.00.

This paperback publication contains some useful information. While most people in the United States and the United Kingdom suppose that they contribute more than any others to the under-developed countries, this is not the case when the subventions to these countries are worked out in terms of proportions of the national resources. According to these authors, France heads the list with a figure estimated at 3.1 per cent; the Netherlands, Belgium and Portugal all take precedence before Great Britain's 1.32 per cent, followed by Germany, and then the United States with 1.00 per cent. At the bottom is the U.S.S.R. with 0.5 per cent. These figures suggest that the proportions borne by such countries as France and Portugal are really crippling burdens on the national effort and economy, and one wonders how long this underpinning of the economies of the under-developed countries can go on.

The authors point out the misuse of much of this aid, not only in the enormous increase of officials who go on to the wages ledgers of the states, but also in the sheer extravagance and waste on the part of the rulers, dictators and ruling cliques of some of these countries. Some of the aid has been spent on enormous palaces, and in one case even the stonework for the interior decoration was brought in by air transport.

This book is the reverse of the usual book produced today on the subject of aid to under-developed countries: it does not take for granted that aid should be given in greater and greater quantities but, as the title suggests, argues that these countries are under-developed largely because they are incapable of erecting the grandiose states that they and the outside world envisage for them.