

THE PROTESTANT ESTABLISHMENT by E. Digby Baltzell. *Secker & Warburg*, 42s.

Early in the last century, political analyst Alexis de Tocqueville observed: 'The French nobility, after having lost its ancient political rights, and ceased more than in any other country of feudal Europe to govern and guide the nation, had, nevertheless, not only preserved, but considerably enlarged its pecuniary immunities, and the advantages which the members of this body personally possessed; while it had become a subordinate class it still remained a privileged and closed body, less and less an aristocracy, as I have said elsewhere but more and more a caste. . . . Wherever the feudal system established itself on the continent of Europe it ended in caste; in England alone it returned to aristocracy. It is curious to note how the English nobles, pushed by their ambition, have known how, when it appeared necessary, to mingle on familiar terms with their inferiors. . . . Most certainly the English aristocracy was by nature more haughty than that of France and less disposed to mingle on familiar terms with the lower classes, but it was reduced to do so by the necessities of its position. It was prepared to stoop to conquer.'

It is this book's thesis that de Tocqueville's diagnosis of the French decline may well apply to the United States, Dr Baltzell contends that any society requires an aristocracy: a group of families possessed of both authority and status, which will provide the mainstock of leadership for the nation and serve as the stable vehicle of traditional values in the culture. In the healthy society, a position of power (in government, finance, the Church) will confer corresponding prestige and dignity. As the democratic process gradually allows men of talent and ambition to rise into the elite of national and local leadership, these new emergents will be absorbed also into the high-status upper class. The result is what the author calls an open aristocracy, wherein achievement is normally recognized by status. The system breaks down, however, if the upper class refuses to assimilate new

members of the leadership elite because of their ethnic or racial or religious origins, and degenerates from an aristocracy into a caste. Power and leadership are then wielded by alienated and rootless opportunists, resentful of their exclusion from the privileged class. The upper class, at the same time, abdicates its task of maintaining continuity of power and authority, anxious only to exclude the talented and qualified members of unacceptable minority groups newly risen to leadership.

For the first half of its existence under the Constitution, American culture was dominated by the White-Anglo-Saxon-Protestant (WASP, in sociologese) pattern. The aristocracy was peopled almost entirely by proper WASPs, yet was supple and open enough readily to accept as status-mates those few non-WASPs who rose to positions of influence. Even when the first tidal waves of mass immigration washed onto the American shores in the mid-nineteenth century, little change was seen, for these were an unpretentious effluvium, who 'knew their place'. But round about the 1880s the sons of these first immigrants began to make their way in the New World. The WASP aristocracy was then faced with the prospect of an influx of qualified and civilly distinguished yet ethnically alien membership. The reaction was negative. The Club arose as a safe enclosure wherein proper Anglo-Saxons could take their ease in the company of none but their caste-fellows. And Herbert Spencer's Social Darwinism found ebullient popular expressions like that of William Graham Sumner: 'The millionaires are a product of natural selection, acting on the whole body of men to pick out those who can meet the requirements of certain work to be done' (p. 103). Eugenics societies, racist movements, and WASP-weighted restrictions on immigration likewise provided the superior gentlemen with an ideological defense of their caste system.

Meanwhile, outgroup minorities were swel-

ling in numbers and in functional power. As they emerged from the public school system, the more talented sons began to find their way in an open and egalitarian society in the University which their fathers had been denied in the Clubs. The New Social Science repudiated the old Darwinism, suggesting that J. P. Morgan, Henry Ford, and their like illustrated the survival, not of the fittest, but of the foxiest. The Social Gospel spread the conviction that withheld opportunity, not inferior heredity, explained lagging performance of immigrant minorities. Then with the advent of the New Deal these minorities suddenly discovered themselves coagulated into a majority, possessed of national power yet shunned by the dispossessed but prestigious patricians. Thus the author's thesis: 'that in order for an upper class to maintain a continuity of power and authority, especially in an opportunistic and mobile society such as ours, its membership must, in the long run, be representative of the composition of society as a whole. . . . A crisis in moral authority has developed in modern America largely because of the White-Anglo-Saxon-Protestant establishment's unwillingness, or inability, to share and improve its upper-class traditions by continuously absorbing talented and distinguished members of minority groups into its privileged ranks' (pp. xi, x).

This study betrays its venue (author Baltzell is associate professor of sociology at the University of Pennsylvania); one wonders whether ethnic identity has the same forceful effects in the rest of the nation which it has in the various 'ports of entry' (New York, Boston, Philadelphia, etc.), where the first and second generations of most immigrant groups co-exist in massive ethnic blocs, before moving out into the more amalgamated society in the rest of the land. Also, the book chooses to give heavy emphasis to the anti-semitic features of the

WASP establishment, with much less attention given to anti-Catholic and none to anti-Negro features. This last would have been particularly interesting, since the Negro, unlike the Jew or Catholic, has been denied access, not only to the upper class, but also to the leadership elite.

Sociology today has split into two breeds: statistical and anecdotal. Dr Baltzell here presents an almost pure strain of the anecdotal variety. It is certainly more pleasant to read and evaluate his fetchingly presented catena of personal vignettes, conversations overheard in tearooms, and comparisons of *Who's Who* with the *Social Register*, than to suffer through successions of graphs and tables. Yet in the absence of systematic experimental control, one is always afraid that this is education by parable, rather than by evidence.

Lastly, this reviewer wonders how desirable and indeed how feasible would be the sort of aristocracy herein praised. In any aristocracy, wealth is hereditary but talent is not. In the post-feudal world, wherein education was guaranteed to the wealthy but not the talented, advancement, power and leadership would naturally tend to accumulate within the aristocracy. But since the educational system has been completely restructured to provide maximum advantages for the talented, has not mobility of advancement been accelerated to such a point that new leaders will rise so fast as not to leave much room for the mediocre sons of the previous leaders? Opportunity now provides so swift an access to the leadership elite that one doubts the capacity of any hereditary group to provide for conservation and transmission of cultural values. The French nobility, though withdrawn into a caste, long survived, it is less probable that an American WASP caste will long maintain even an anachronistic prestige before being swept aside.

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WE JEWS AND JESUS by Samuel Sandmel. *Victor Gollantz Ltd. 1965 28s.*

*We Jews and Jesus* is the concise work of a liberal rabbi and professional scholar. It is destined to help thoughtful Jewish people and especially college-age students to a better understanding of Jesus and a reasonable Jewish attitude to him. The 'recurrent Jewish and Christian question: Who and what was Jesus?' is discussed in non-technical language *sine ira*

*et studio*. The gradual reversal of historic attitudes in the last 150 years necessitates the treatment of the subject in three distinct sections: A resume of pre-modern Jewish approaches; an account of the findings of Jewish and Christian biblical scholarship of the last century and a half, and finally some comments on the implications of that approach