



The Protestant Establishment Revisited

By E. Digby Baltzell

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In the latter half of the twentieth century, The American upper class has become less like an aristocracy governing and guiding the nation and more like a caste, a privileged and closed body whose contribution to national leadership has steadily declined. This loss of power and authority has been the focus of the work of E. Digby Baltzell, whose 1964 work, *The Protestant Establishment*, analyzed the fate and function of a predominantly Anglo-Saxon and Protestant upper class in an ethnically and religiously heterogeneous democracy. After 27 years, Baltzell's theory of the structure and function of the establishment remains unique in the literature of class stratification and authority.

Baltzell views an open and authoritative establishment as a necessary and desirable part of the process of securing responsible leaders in a democratic society. Such an establishment is the product of upper-class institutions that are open to talented individuals of varying ethnic and social backgrounds. The values of upper-class tradition include an aristocratic ethos emphasizing the duty to lead, as opposed to the snobbish ethos of caste that emphasizes only the right to privilege. Baltzell regards this as a protector of freedom in modern democratic societies, guaranteeing rules of fair play in contests of power and opinion.

As Baltzell points out, historically, the alternatives to rule by establishments have been, rule by functionaries and demagogues, neither of which has proven satisfactory in protecting freedoms. As against Marxists, who see hegemony as a social evil, Baltzell, following Tocqueville, sees it as necessary to the well-being of society. Hegemonic establishments give coherence to the social spheres of greatest contest. They do not eliminate conflict, but prevent it from ripping society apart.

Baltzell's work provides uncommon insight into the relationship of social class and personal power in contemporary America. This book will be of interest to sociologists, political scientists, historians of urban life, and American studies specialists.

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Editorial Review

Review

"I like to think that were Veblen still with us, he would be leading the applause for this superb and aptly entitled collection of sociological essays which supplement Digby Baltzell's surefooted trilogy on the American upper-class Establishment--itself a work that has done more to illuminate the behavior of caste-bound elites and achieved aristocracy in America than any other since Veblen's enduring classic on the leisure class. [And, incidentally, a work which thrust the acronym WASP into the vernacular.]"

—Robert K. Merton, Columbia University

"This collection of essays is a very welcome addition to [Digby Baltzell's] well-known books. As always, he writes with insight, erudition and wit. This is a volume to learn from and to enjoy."

—Peter L. Berger, Boston University

"Digby Baltzell is the analyst of the American upper class. His essays collected here demonstrate that fact in abundance. No one interested in class in America can afford not to read it."

—Seymour Martin Lipset, George Mason University

"Whether you agree with him or not, a dialogue with Digby Baltzell is always an intellectual feast."

—Lewis A. Coser, Boston College

"Digby was born to the Philadelphia upper class. Through zeal and pluck as well as intelligence he succeeded in rising above class to an elite: the American academic elite where he has become our premier student of upper classes, establishments. WASP's and other havens for the status-hungry."

—Robert Nisbet, American Enterprise Institute

"Everyone interested in the patterns and quirks of American social behavior will be fascinated by the insights of this most engaging, original and literate of sociologists."

—Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Albert Schweitzer Professor, City University of New York

"A critical tour, by one of the nation's leading sociologists, of several of the major problems that have beset American life over the past three decades. Baltzell's reflections on changes within the American upper class in the latter part of the 20 century, and how these have affected American political leadership, are the most creative of his contributions. Schneiderman's Introduction provides a useful, informative overview of Baltzell's life and work."

—Harold J. Bershady, School of Arts and Sciences, University of Pennsylvania

About the Author

E. Digby Baltzell (1915-1996) was professor emeritus of sociology at the University of Pennsylvania. He is

the author of *The Protestant Establishment Revisited* and *Philadelphia Gentlemen*.

Howard G. Schneiderman is professor in the Department of Anthropology and Sociology at Lafayette College.

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