

Jews in the Protestant Establishment, by Richard L. Zweigenhaft and G. William Domhoff. Praeger Publishers, New York, 1983. 133 pp.

The authors set out to test two hypotheses of E. Digby Baltzell ("The Protestant Establishment," 1964): that the Protestant establishment was in danger of decay because it was not assimilating members of new groups; and that new arrivals to the upper elite tended to lose their group identifications.

But their most persuasive findings may have to do with the relationship of social interaction to business success. It was always conventional wisdom that exclusion from private social clubs meant exclusion from the business elite. "The private club is where the deals are made." There is evidence here that the clubs may not be all that crucial today.

Zweigenhaft and Domhoff, one a political sociologist and the other a social psychologist, amass much of their original material by looking at the *Fortune*-level board membership among three elite Jewish groups: the Harmonie Club, the Standard Club and, of course, the governing board of the American Jewish Committee. They also analyzed Jewish identifications in "Who's Who," interviewed 30 business-elite Jews, and examined other pieces of research.

Jews are present in the corporate elite in a proportion twice that of their population, although slightly lower than their proportion of college graduates. In that sense, they have "made it." But they still tend to be disproportionately absent from such centers of corporate power as banking. And they often made it, not by going up the corporate ladder, but by forming their own businesses to begin with.

One way or another, exclusion from the private clubs has apparently not been a major disability. More often, anti-semitic corporations used the private club as an excuse; and corporations which were not anti-semitic did not find the private

clubs a reason for not promoting Jews. Besides, as the authors convincingly document, there are now other means of social interaction at rarefied levels, including joint activity in cultural institutions.

As to findings supporting Baltzell, that upper-class identity tends to squeeze out group identity, that's not exactly news. More interesting would be an examination of why Jews at that level *maintain* their Jewish identity more insistently than most other groups. "Israel" seems to emerge, between the lines, as the answer to that question, but is not pursued. Nor is the nature of the ailment, which is epitomized by the statement of one elite Jew, who said that he was on the board of the Jewish Theological Seminary but was not religious.

The other Baltzell thesis, that the Protestant establishment would decay by not assimilating newcomers, is not really tested because the authors unaccountably confuse the Protestant establishment with the economic establishment in the end. But that is the thesis of least interest to Jewish life *per se*. This book, while it does not pretend to be definitive -- is useful grist for those who work the mills of power structure research, discrimination or Jewish identity.

Earl Raab, Executive Director
San Francisco Jewish Community
Relations Council