

the basic facts of modern Western Civilization, a fact which has changed world history, yet the author seems to have no knowledge or appreciation of it. Indeed he shares the shortcoming of practically all of the authors in the *Rivers of America* series in viewing history as drama rather than process.

All of this may be mere carping on the part of a professional historian—a member of a notoriously hard-to-satisfy craft. *The Ohio* will give a week of satisfying evenings to the general reader. The illustrations of Edward Shenton—apparently scratchboard—are pleasantly done even though they show some failures in technical knowledge of river craft.

One curious omission. Though the author acknowledges indebtedness to the University of Pittsburgh he does not in his bibliography list a single one of the Western Pennsylvania Historical Survey's historical series, sponsored by the University and the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, even though some of them would considerably have enriched his views.

*University of Pittsburgh*

LELAND D. BALDWIN

*Understanding History—A Primer of Historical Method.* By LOUIS GOTTSCHALK. (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1950. xxii, 294 p. Index vii p.)

From the days of Ernst Bernheim's *Lehrbuch der Historischen Methode* and of Charles Langlois and Charles Seignobos' *Introduction to the Study of History* (English translation), American writers have published books on historical methodology. The roll of such writers is a distinguished one. Offhand, one thinks of John M. Vincent, Fred Morrow Fling, Homer C. Hockett, Allen Johnson, and Allan Nevins. Works of definite merit were produced, but none of them succeeded in matching the value of the nineteenth century works of Bernheim and of Langlois and Seignobos.

In this volume of Gottschalk is found the latest conspicuous effort in this field, with however a difference in that he deals not only with historical criticism and methodology but also with historical research and writing, or with what may be called real historiography as distinguished from a study of the history of historical writings. Has Professor Gottschalk written a manual which will displace the commonly used but very old work of Langlois and Seignobos?

Certainly, like some of the earlier American authors in this field, this latest enterprise has distinct merits. It is interesting, it contains many fine concepts and passages, and it is relatively easy to grasp. Except for the lack of space in a short book review, mention might be made of many highly meritorious statements on various aspects of the subject. Particularly valuable analyses are found on pages 35, 44, 143, 150, and 176. Considerable reading and thinking has produced some excellent theory. This book would be a valuable purchase by every young graduate student in history and by any untrained historical researcher and writer. It is well worth its price.

Nevertheless, *Understanding History* is probably not the long desired substitute for the manual of Langlois and Seignobos. It is not a satisfactory manual in either of the two fields of historical criticism and methodology or of the history of historical writing. It does not indeed claim such merit. It is acknowledgedly a product of a laboratory course in historical method, and it might serve well as an inspirational guide in such courses elsewhere. Its main strength is in the important field of historical research and writing.

Unfortunately, not only for the author and the publisher but also for the historical guild, the shortcomings of this volume are both serious and numerous. It is not well organized, not at all systematic. It lacks perspective, sequence, and coherence. It does not leave with the most careful reader a clear mental picture of the general subject of the volume. In this respect it falls far below the level of Hockett's *Introduction to Research in American History*. The work is highly eclectic, a series of short essays, brief comments, and random gatherings. Some of the comments and gatherings border upon naive facetiousness and inappropriate flippancy. Unfortunately, also, Professor Gottschalk violates at times his own theory and pronouncements. Objectivity, in research and also to some extent in composition, is advocated, but subjectivity is clearly apparent in this treatise. Theories and pronouncements in the treatise are violated, as for example in the mention of items not yet elucidated but consciously deferred for fuller consideration in later pages. In this respect, particularly, *Understanding History* is not a systematic manual of historical method, but a collection of comments on the subject. Lack of service to the user is observable in a relatively useless "Index of Names," whereas a subject index was badly needed.

Particular defects of the volume are few but not without signifi-

cance. The first four pages on "History and Patriotism" are an extraordinarily weak beginning for the discussion of such a serious problem or topic as historical method. The transition (p. 19) from matters of footnoting is almost absurdly artificial. The word "contradition" (p. 141) is either an invention or a misspelling.

The reviewer laid aside *Understanding History* with mixed feelings. On the one hand there was a disappointment that it failed to qualify as a replacement for the old manuals. On the other hand was recognition of the intrinsic value of the volume, a compilation well worth publication. Veteran historiographers may profit from it, and others, many of whom work in other subjects, might benefit greatly from careful attention to *Understanding History*.

*University of Pittsburgh*

ALFRED P. JAMES