
This latest volume from the pen of the former associate director of the Western Pennsylvania Historical Survey is the distillation of many years of teaching, research, and thought which Dr. Baldwin has recently capped with four textbooks. The volume is made up of a series of interpretive essays which represent the author's personal evaluation of a number of facets of American history. The essays deal with: regionalism, old world origins, colonial foundation, Jefferson and Hamilton (in the larger sense), the West, transcendentalism, technology, the South, the Gilded Age, pragmatism, the corporation, the progressive movement, the New Deal, mass production, and finally, America's role as a world power. Taken together they make up a lucid and mature evaluation of our past; savored separately (as many readers will want to do) they combine the best features of the essay and the monograph.

Dr. Baldwin, in his preface, denied that he is a propagandist. He is, however—in the cause of historical truth (as he understands it, of course). He is painfully honest, even if this means he sometimes contradicts his own sweeping generalizations. Those who look for history as romance will not find it here. Those who look for history as philosophy will be rewarded by some insights they can accept and others which will at least nudge old beliefs, even if Dr. Baldwin's viewpoints are rejected.

If all this sounds ponderous, let it be added that the whole is punctuated with humor and expressed in Dr. Baldwin's usual trenchant style.

Any generalization about a book as complex as this one is bound to be imperfect; but if the author's judgment of the meaning of America can be condensed into a few words it is this: that the possibility exists today for the first time of finally conquering poverty and the political tyranny which springs from poverty; and that the only process by which this promise may be actually realized is democracy.

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