

## RESEARCH AND TEACHING AIDS

*Understanding History: A Primer of Historical Method.* By LOUIS GOTTSCHALK. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1950. Pp. xix, 290. Appendix, index. \$2.75).

Professor Gottschalk's subtitle, "primer of historical method," is an apt name for certain chapters—they are obviously meant for the beginning graduate student who has had little or no training in historical method, historiography, and historical composition. Thus, Part I, "Methods of Historical Research" is clearly an outgrowth of his "Laboratory Course in Historical Method" at Chicago. This part could be extremely useful for similar courses. One might suggest it would be better for such use if he had listed in an appendix other historians who have written on historical methods—some are named cursorily by last name only on page 52—and some of the most universally useful reference books of the types he categorizes on page 72. Also, it might cause his student readers some confusion to have the theory and the practice of footnoting so often divergent. The useful appendix, "Rule for the Guidance of Authors and Translators," prepared by Raymond A. Preston of Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., declares that "good academic usage now tries to avoid the sometimes confusing *op. cit.*," advocates the use of the shortened title, and above all, prescribes uniformity in usage. Yet in actual practice, the footnotes use the *op. cit.* technique and as a result illustrate all too well how confusing it can be, as when one note on page 221 cites a work previously cited only on page 60. Moreover, many footnotes cite only the author's name and the page, without title. (See pages 118, 269, 272, 273, and others.) This is all the more confusing in a book which recommends in its preface the omission of certain chapters by certain types of readers. These are, however, matters that could be remedied in a later edition, and that is the reason for suggesting them.

The rest of the book, Part II, "Objectives of Historians," and Part III, "Theory of History," are not written primarily for the graduate student but for various types of readers—for the general reading public (in Chap. I), for the teacher of historical method, for other scholars, and particularly for social scientists. In fact, a fair amount of the material written on one level in Part I is treated on a different level in the other two parts. Although Professor Gottschalk says in his preface he writes for the "amateur," the reader would have to be the type of amateur who reads the publications of the Social Science Research Council, where many of these chapters originally appeared. That is, they would be the economists, sociologists, psychologists and specialists in international relations who are—or should be—interested in the relationship of history to the other social sciences. Certainly they would benefit greatly by this reading.

These parts of the book deal with some fundamental problems of society in all times, and with some of our most urgent present-day problems facing the social scientist who, as a citizen in a democracy, must decide on the role of the university in world affairs in a time of international crisis.

The final chapter on "The Historian and the Problems of the Present" is the most valuable and the most readable in the book. One wishes our statesmen and journalists could read it, particularly the sections on historical analogies and prediction. It would lead to a wider and a wiser use of history as a guide. Thomas Jefferson's conception of history for the education of citizens: "History by apprizing them of the past, will enable them to judge the future; it will avail them of the experience of other times and other nations; it will qualify them as judges of the actions and designs of men," Professor Gottschalk considers valid, within limits. "Anticipation from historical precedent" can have real practical value in helping us understand certain deep-rooted problems of the present and taking precautions against future contingencies, provided other factors are also calculated and, the "lessons of the past" are taken as clues to possibilities, rather than as prediction.

Another aspect of historical writing treated in this final chapter and throughout the book is of both professional and lay concern. The lay aspect of this was strikingly pointed out in 1944 by the late Carl Becker, one of the author's preceptors, in "What We Didn't Know Hurt Us a Lot" when he pointed to the widespread defeatism, moral confusion and loss of conviction resulting from the relativism of many of the interwar historians, and the popularity of simplistic Marxian and Freudian interpretations of history. Professor Gottschalk performs a valuable service for historians and public alike by reaffirming the value of the "scientific" or "objective" approach to history. This is no naïve optimism: he points out all its pitfalls and its limitations, both in theory and practice. Conversely, he sees the potentialities in history as an art and humanistic endeavor. Certainly he himself takes a pluralistic approach to history, and is more generous to philosophies of history than many historians. Nevertheless, he concludes, the scientific spirit furnishes the best standard for the historian no matter how weak the flesh.

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*Who's Who in Latin America*, Part V. *Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay*. Edited by RONALD HILTON. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1950. Pp. xvii, 258. \$3.50.)

Here is another volume in a series providing good evidence that Latin-American studies have long since come of age and that solid public