

to baffle the reader. Yet Hamann possesses some historical importance both for his relation to the *Sturm and Stress* movement in German literature and as, in some respects, a forerunner of Kierkegaard. And he is interesting as a man and as a Christian thinker. Hence we can be grateful to Professor Gregor Smith for providing us with this study of Hamann's life and thought, accompanied by some selections from his writings. There is indeed a fine recent German edition of the Wizard's *Works*; but the ordinary reader is not at all likely to consult it. Further, life and writings go together. As Professor Gregor Smith remarks, Hamann's 'writings must be read as a reflection of this life, or as a witness to it'.

Hamann has a special interest for English readers owing to the fact that he underwent a religious conversion when in London in 1758. Moreover, he took a lively interest in English thought. He had a weak spot for Hume. 'Hume is always my man, because he at least honours the principle of belief and has taken it up into his system.' Whether Hamann always clearly understood what Hume was about is open to question. In fact, Hamann questions it himself. But the Wizard of the North, in spite of the title which he traditionally bears, had his feet very much on the ground. 'Not *cogito, ergo sum*, but the other way round.' When relating how he had postponed reading an instalment of Kant's first *Critique* in order to do his stint of Voltaire for the day, he adds that when he came to turn his attention to Kant he prepared himself beforehand by taking a dose of Glauber's salts. And he remarks about Kant, not without some perspicacity, that 'without knowing it, his enthusiasm for the intellectual world beyond space and time is worse than Plato's'. Not that Hamann lacked concern with supersensible reality; far from it. But he insists that the approach to God is through the world and history. Or, to put matters the other way round, he insists that man hears the word of God, if he has the faith to hear it, in the world, in life, in history. In a sense faith is less of a leap with Hamann than with Kierkegaard.

In Hamann's writings one comes across remarks which have an astonishingly familiar ring. 'I am inclined to think that our whole philosophy consists more of language than of reason, and the misunderstandings of countless words . . . have produced a whole world of questions which have as little reason to be raised as to be answered.' And he alludes to the 'hereditary defect and leprosy of ambiguity' which clings to metaphysics. But if he expresses scepticism about metaphysics and the scope of reason, he obviously does not do so with a view to encouraging religious disbelief. Reason shows us our ignorance and sin; the saving truth is 'historically revealed'.

Hamann was a Lutheran. But it is interesting to read in Professor Gregor Smith's account of his life of the spiritual help which the Catholic Princess Gallitzin received from her conversation with him.

FREDERICK C. COPLESTON, S.J.

SOME PROBLEMS OF THE CONSTITUTION. By G. Marshall and G. C. Moodie. (Hutchinson; 21s.)

THE ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL SYSTEMS. By D. V. Verney. (Routledge; 28s.)  
Recent events, at home and abroad, have made Englishmen more aware

than usual, at least in general terms, of that Constitution which was the toast of their ancestors and which today has, it is claimed, at least stood the test of time. Fewer, perhaps, are aware that it has stood the test of time precisely because it has moved with the times, found new answers to old problems and adapted itself to new situations. It has come a long way since Dickey wrote; and there is every reason to think that it is now entering a period of comparatively rapid evolution.

And here, for the ordinary reader as opposed to the university student, lies the interest of Dr Marshall and Mr Moodie's book. One would like to think that it will be read by a large number of men and women who have no personal interest in passing examinations, and whose motive is that in-expert yet serious and sustained personal interest in the political institutions of their country which is the essential life-blood of parliamentary democracy as we have it today. To begin with, the book is of the right length, scope and arrangement for such a reader, and it provides him with a most useful list of reference books for further reading. The 'problems' with which it is concerned are precisely those of which he is aware but which he rarely sees clearly formulated. They almost invariably crop up whenever public affairs or political administration are alluded to, or are under discussion. As Sir Oliver Franks has said, "The amount of time that people are willing to waste in hearing each other talk is a very important constituent of our public life". Dr Marshall and Mr Moodie will do much to reduce the waste and increase the importance.

Mr Verney's book provides in a sense a companion volume; and again it is concerned with a number of problems of which many readers will be aware but of which far fewer will possess any very clear appreciation. For instance, we are constantly being told that what really matter in the business of politics are oligarchies, élites, 'establishments': and here is the best short, and yet comprehensive, discussion of the thesis which I have yet seen. Again, the age-old debate between the requirements of good government and the demand for popular participation has acquired a new urgency in a world in which many states had no political existence half a century ago, and in which a decisive part may well be played and a real influence be exerted before the end of the century by states which have yet to be born. How have the main theories of government helped to guide the men who have been constructing constitutions? What are likely to be the long-term political consequences of Communism? It is with these and allied problems that this book is concerned, and the analysis of them with which the reader is presented is exactly what the man with a real interest in politics needs today.

T. CHARLES EDWARDS

**COMMONSENSE ABOUT AFRICA.** By Anthony Sampson. (Gollancz; 12s. 6d.)

Mr Anthony Sampson has tried to do two complementary things: to give social and historical information about the countries he discusses, and to offer explanations of, and therapeutic suggestions about, the more or less critical situation in each of them. Unfortunately he does not quite succeed