

Sir,—While appreciating the not in-temperate tone of Mr. Bruce Mason's letter, I think he is somewhat unreasonable in expecting a full-scale discussion of his own two brief poems in a 500-word review of an anthology containing almost 100 pieces—a review which, furthermore, gave its fair number of "likes" and "whys." In any case, he has mistaken the reason for my references to "Georgian" and "Imagist" characteristics. As the context seems to me to make plain, I was concerned to question the editor's claims for the originality, independence and "daring to be themselves" of his new poets, by pointing out that a good number of them had written pieces which look back to the moods and styles of earlier modern schools, and which would not be out of place in, say, *Kowhai Gold*.

This is not, in itself, a bad thing. Both good and bad "Georgian" poems are being written today, as they have been in the past. But I find it significant that this style, and similar ones prevalent in the New Zealand poetry of the first 20 years of this century, should be so marked among poets claimed to be discovering new horizons, and moving in new directions from a supposed "continuous tradition of formalism." In much the same way, even the faults of several poets "old" and "new," are curiously reminiscent of older modes, that of the "Spasmodics," for instance.

For the information of the entertainingly ill-tempered Robert Thompson, the "Spasmodics" were a group of 18th Century versifiers, Bailey, Dobell, Alexander Smith, and others, whose work was characterised by modish vagueness, a pretentious vocabulary, debasing of the poetic coinage (my illustrations of which from *Poetry Year-Book* Mr. Thompson has naively Freudianised), and perhaps most significant of all, in its relation to much current New Zealand verse, the mistaking of the materials of poetry for poetry itself.

J. C. REID (Auckland).

FLUORIDATION

Sir,—Does Dr. Turbott really believe that all his listeners have a mental age of 12? Let us examine the text of his recent talk on Fluoridation. First of all, what does he mean when he says "U.S.A. is so convinced of the correctness of hardening the teeth . . . with the proper amount of fluorine . . . ?" Certainly he cannot mean the people of U.S.A., because 15½ million is only about one-tenth of the total population, and in any case, the people are not consulted by the local authorities. Next, Dr. Turbott says, "The law allows a local authority to treat a water supply for purity and for the advancement of the people's health." What statistics are there to show that fluorine advances the people's health? Again, Dr. Turbott states that "with fluorine round about 1 part per million or higher (my italics) the teeth keep decay at bay much better." On the contrary, Dorland's American Illustrated Medical Dictionary (20th Edition, p. 494) says that fluorosis (mottled discoloured, pitted teeth) occurs in communities drinking water that contains 1 part or more per million (my italics) of fluorine."

Now let's have a look at some of the statements by "out of date" authorities. Dr. Bronner, of Los Angeles, distinguishes between organic calcium-fluorophosphate which is absorbed through

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plant life, and used for building and hardening our bones, and sodium fluoride which the local authorities propose to use in our water supply. This is an instant poison, water-soluble and a most efficient rat killer. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has recommended that no fluorides or fluorine be added to water or feed of brood sows because it does something to the pigs that are unborn. Lastly, Dr. Paul Manning, also of U.S.A., says that what may be a harmless dose of fluorine to one person may kill another. In other words, an average dose in the water supply might be dangerous.

Let us have the facts so that they can be assimilated by intelligent adults. If there is no satisfactory answer, I suggest that the whole scheme be dropped as harmful or probably harmful to the health of New Zealanders.

W. H. THOMAS (Auckland).

"BORIS GODOUNOV"

Sir,—Your correspondent, I. Levy, apparently misread my comment in *New Recordings* regarding the availability of an original Moussorgsky version of *Boris Godounov*. My suggestion was that there were probably not enough first-class singers this side of the Iron Curtain familiar with Moussorgsky's original music to make a recording of this practicable in Western Europe or in the U.S.A. The recording by the Bolshoi Theatre was made in Russia. Not only is it available in U.S.A., but, with any luck, it should be round in New Zealand at least by the end of this year.

OWEN JENSEN (Wellington).

Sir,—Owen Jensen says, "Once having heard Moussorgsky's originals . . . one cannot be wholly satisfied with the Rimsky-Korsakov refurbished version." Mr. Jensen cannot have heard the original, otherwise he would not make this criticism.

About 25 years ago an attempt was made in London to revive the original version and a good deal of criticism was levelled at Rimsky-Korsakov for his "presumption" in altering Moussorgsky's score. Contrary to expectations, the venture was a flop and was not accepted by critics or public. Through the courtesy of Chester's, I was able to peruse a good deal of the score.

Since that time the Rimsky-Korsakov version has been universally accepted. In fact, we have to thank him for his interest and efforts, without which the opera might not have been publicised.

M. T. DIXON (Christchurch).

SCIENCE AND RELIGION

Sir,—Your leading article, "Believing Scientists," is only factual in part. It is impossible in my opinion to determine a significant correlation between science and religion, and any attempts to harmonise them can only be accounted for in terms of apologetics. Whether a scientist professes a belief in a God or not, he is an atheist in practice. His science compels him to be so. And that is true of the whole range of science. Science is, in fact, atheistic or nothing! It knows nothing of God (or gods); it does not bother about God; its triumphs are achieved by leaving God out of account.

It can only be because irrationality has a traditional right of place in religion, that theologians persist in their

attempts to relate the two. I will concede that a small percentage of scientists have achieved a synthesis of both; but, sir, I submit they are very much in the minority. In 1934 Professor Leuba conducted a searching inquiry into the matter. It was significantly revealed that out of 2000 leading professors of science, or heads of laboratories, museums, etc., only 12 per cent believed in a God, 70 per cent were atheists or agnostics. We are entitled to assume that the remaining percentage who did not reply were sceptics; and since scientific men, teachers and some professional men are still liable to be penalised for an admission of scepticism, the case against religion is stronger than we can statistically determine. The conflict will continue, but there is no doubt in my mind, and I am sure in countless others, that science is, in the words of Comte, conducting God to its frontiers.

P. CAMPBELL (Auckland).

Sir,—In his talk from 2YC on May 3 the Rev. James Torrence rightly suggested that the scientific outlook and the religious outlook are complementary; but surely the point at which they meet is where the scientific attitude questions why the religious outlook commits itself to belief without analysis. Clearly, religious faith is not accepted by conscious process of reasoning. What then, we may ask, are the emotive urges which here override the critical faculty?

In the Communist movement, for example, the bargain of self-commitment seems to work as follows: On the one hand you accept uncritically the basic idea that the workers are the only people who really matter. You stifle, more or less, without thinking, any "ifs" and "buts" that might otherwise arise, because it is made quite clear to you that class-consciousness is a condition of full acceptance as a comrade; and acceptance brings with it some deep emotional satisfactions. In return for the above commitment you receive, in "the capitalists" and "the system," a convenient butt for hatreds, frustrations and inadequacies in your own system and a sanctioned method of working them off in action. You receive a sense of high purpose and the certainty of being—ultimately—on the winning side. And you gain also the warm comradeship of all other members.

The contradictions and limitations in the creed of a Communist are shut off from his conscious attention by his developed appetite for these emotional satisfactions; but if they do break through to his notice and he speaks out about them he threatens the balance in other members; so that if he persists, the "friendship" quickly sours into ostracism, and he finds himself outside, alone and ineffective. In this way Communists are tied by forces which they cannot see to beliefs which they cannot criticise.

Now I certainly don't want to suggest that religious experience is nothing more than a handful of personal mechanisms. But the reality of the spiritual experience common to all faiths is a very different thing from the act of commitment to this or that creed which divides them. And if it should be found that the basic dogmas of other faiths besides that of Communism are perpetuated by a similar balance of subconscious forces, wouldn't that be a matter not for distress but for great rejoicing? Is there not here the beginning of a solid foundation for a peaceful and lasting in-

tegration of the East and the West on a new level of self-understanding? I believe there is.

By what detailed practical steps we shall go forward from here to there we shall probably have to find out as we go along. An explorer, even a team of explorers, cannot hope to travel on tar-sealed roads. What does matter is that there should come into being as quickly as possible a team of men and women prepared to explore.

DICK SOUTHOON (Auckland).

"PASSING ON"

Sir,—Your correspondent A. H. Reed is not the first, and probably will not be the last, to say "There is no death." The very first one to express these sentiments was the serpent in the Garden of Eden and since that time the punishment of death which came upon Adam and Eve, because of disobedience, has been overlooked in an effort to comfort the bereaved by a belief in that serpent's lie.

Referring to the book which your correspondent mentions so warmly, but allows to be paraphrased for him, the Psalmist David says, "In death there is no remembrance of Thee (God): in the grave who shall give Thee thanks?" The King Solomon says, "For the living know that they shall die, but the dead know not anything . . . their love, their hatred and their envy is perished." No reference to "passing on" here. The hope of these men was the hope of Paul—resurrection from death at the return of Christ to the earth. "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise. . ." At this time the "meek shall inherit the earth," and not a place of retirement in the heavens which has only a mythological and not a scriptural foundation.

Well done, "Sundowner"! Let us clear away these meaningless expressions which have been built over years of ignorance and superstition.

S. JACKSON (Tawa Flat).

COINCIDENCE

Sir,—On Wednesday, April 28, I listened to John Nesbitt at 7.15 p.m. on 1ZB on the subject of "Coincidence." He instanced the explorer Nansen, who left the Fram with a solitary companion to try and reach civilisation. The Fram was icebound and the remainder of the ship's company stayed with the ship and it was assumed that they perished. Nansen's companion died and the coincidence was that Nansen literally ran into the American explorer Jackson amid thousands of miles of frozen waste. This saved his life and John Nesbitt indicated that he (Nansen) was the only one of the Fram's company who survived.

Later in the evening I listened to the BBC feature "The Slowest Journey in the World" from 1YZ at 10 o'clock. This was an account of the Nansen expedition and it transpired that both Nansen and his companion reached civilisation, and the Fram, with the full company, was eventually released from the ice and returned to Norway.

As both these features are taken to be authentic, it would be interesting to know which is correct. It might be a coincidence that these two items were broadcast on the same evening!

A. J. RUTLAND (Auckland).

ANSWER TO CORRESPONDENT J.G. (Dunedin).—The series starts from 3YC on June 21, and will be heard later from other stations.