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[We have had the honour to receive the following letter and enclosure which we gladly publish because this is a time of heart-searching for us all, in which it is desirable that we should help one another by sharing our most private thoughts.—ED.]

Australia, June 27th, 1916.

Dear Miss Mason,—I am doing rather a strange thing—sending you a letter of my husband's without his knowledge! I thought it might possibly interest you as an expression of the searching after a solution of the present terrible mystery by a man who is not a clergyman, but just a scientist engaged in very arduous and anxious work that has to do with the defence of the Empire. He would gladly be at the front, but he can serve his country more effectively in this way. It necessitates his prolonged absence from home in another State, and so instead of hurried snatches of talk that was all there seemed time for in his very busy life when at home, I sometimes have from him a long "think" on paper. His daily work has to do with very solidly material things, but you see the spiritual still seems to him the most important.

He has no idea of my sending this to you, but I wondered if you would think it would be in any way helpful in the REVIEW. Perhaps his thought in prayer—which does not satisfy me—might lead to some expression of belief on the other side. Of course if you print anything our name will not be given?

X.Y.Z.

I don't know that I can tell you what I am thinking because it is so difficult to crystallize it—it is so elusive and so puzzling

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as well. But I am beginning to get some glimmering of what seems to me to be the meaning of the war and the reply to the puzzling questions that keep coming up. Why is war allowed? Why doesn't some supernatural visitation punish the wickedness and cruelty and falseness and inhumanity that is devastating the world? But isn't this just a phase of the whole problem? Why is wrong of any kind allowed at all? Why isn't the world all good and right? Why is there any bad? Why is there pain and sorrow? Why does wickedness prosper? Why do the evil flourish like a green bay tree? Isn't it the old, old question that has puzzled men since the world began?

I think part of the answer is that our perspective of life is wrong. Aren't we like children making sand castles and brokenhearted because their treasure of the moment is destroyed? Aren't we mistaking often things that really ought not to count for the precious things of life? Rupert Brooke says:

"We have found safety with all things undying,
The winds, and morning, tears of men and mirth,
The deep night, and birds singing and birds flying
And sleep, and freedom and the autumnal earth.
We have built a house that is not for Time's throwing,
We have gained a peace unshaken by pain for ever.

War knows no power. Safe shall be my going,
Secretly armed against all death's endeavour,
Safe—though all safety's lost; safe when men fall,
And if these poor limbs die—safest of all.”

Isn't this the very essence of the true thought of life? Not just the superficial explanation that death has no terror for the Christian, but that he has grasped the true meaning of life—oneness in spirit with the undying things. Away up on the mountain with the world's work and worries small in the distance and close to the Spirit that is in all and through all. This makes life worth living and life takes on a fuller, larger, peaceful meaning that is not touched by the troubles that often seem so big. And to end this life means only fuller, more complete, more perfect sympathy with the undying things that are part of the Kingdom of Heaven and more perfect knowledge of the Spirit that is in all and through all. I don't mean this in any pantheistic sense—the undying things are only means of understanding the great thought—means of closer sympathy with and communion with the God whose thought made them so. Nor [p 777]

do I mean it in the way the Brahmin thinks—there is nothing of the hermit in my ideal except in his own soul. It is too hard to get clear even in my own thought, so I can't hope to make you know just what I'm trying to think out. But if we could get this view, which I feel is nearer to the true philosophy of life, our perspective becomes changed so that the meaning of life and its most precious things is very different. I don't mean that these things would not count—we cannot but be human beings with human affections, and I think they are part of the undying things that should be precious to us, but it seems as though even they, in some way, become part of a greater life in which all is lifted to a higher plane.

Then the answer to the world problem of evil is all wrapped up in the fact that we are men and women and not automatic machines, or even as the beasts of the field. We can do what we like, we have control of our lives given to us, we can think and choose and do as we will. No one could imagine such a kingly gift. No human being would ever give such power to any creature, if one could imagine man with the power of creating. No human being could be so generous or so wise.

A father lets his boy do only what is right and good for him so far as a father can control things for him, and this is of course right while the boy is a boy; but if the father tried to do so always the boy could never become a man. For isn't the difference between a boy and a man just this—the man chooses for himself utterly? But the time comes when the father realizes that the boy must live his own life, must learn to use the power that belongs to him—the God-given freedom to live his own life in his own way. And while the father may advise, may persuade—he cannot—he must not coerce—the boy must learn to be a man, live a man's life, and do a man's work. He accepts the responsibility of himself, and that freedom is the real test of the boy's fitness to be a man. If he abuses it he may break his father's heart, he may ruin his life; but the father must not, dare not interfere. If he could and did the boy would never become a man, never rule his own soul, never live his own life. If he were by some means prevented from doing wrong he could only become a spineless neutral, without any will and without any power. The goodness or badness comes from within and cannot be given from

outside either of choice or by compulsion. “The Kingdom of Heaven is *within* you” is a bigger truth than we sometimes think.

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And what is true of the individual is true for the many individuals collectively—and true for the nation.

If a man chooses to do wrong he will not be stopped except by other men, and if a nation chooses to do wrong it will not be stopped except by other nations. If this were not true men would not be men, and because it is true they are more than men, they are gods. For when God made men *in His own image* he gave them this power of choice which makes them gods—the power to will and choose. And this is man’s greatest glory, and for that very reason it is, as it always is, possible to become his greatest curse. The one cannot be without the other. Good can only exist if bad is possible. There cannot be a higher unless there can be a lower, and wrong and sin is choosing the lower instead of the higher. You cannot put any limit on the power of doing good or doing evil without taking away from man the possibility of the uttermost—the possibility of greatest glory must be the possibility of greatest shame. Isn’t it a kingly gift— isn’t it a gift beyond human thought—the possibility of the highest—and only an all-wise father could dare the risk of the shame to make possible the glory.

And the greatest glory is not yet, but I scarcely know how to put this into any definite words.

Illustrations are dangerous, but you will know it is only to try to get the thought clearer. Australia was first a colony with little self-government. Now it is self-governing. Suppose England had kept Australia a colony, how it would have stunted our national life. We would have had laws given us and we would have had to obey them, we would have had no voice in the making of the laws, and even if the laws were all wise and good we could not have become a nation. We would have been either servile, not thinking or choosing for ourselves, or we would have been in a constant state of rebellion. But because England gave us freedom to choose our own national life, make our own laws, just so has it been possible for us to live out our own ideals and become a nation ourselves. Often we have made a mess of it, but if we had been stopped even when going wrong, we could never become a self-governing, self-controlling, self-choosing, self-living people. And no one can doubt which is the higher or nobler life to give a people. But one might answer, Australia has not perfect freedom. From the deepest thoughts of England we are shut out. We do not know what England is doing in the war, what her plans really

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are, why she chooses so, what she thinks. True, and just because it is true, complete and perfect national freedom is not ours, the highest national life cannot be ours, and because this is so some people talk sometimes of breaking away from the old land. But there is another way for Australia to realize the highest ideals, and that is in the Empire Parliament that wiser men are working for. This would give us part in the highest government, for we would be part of a great Empire knowing just what the Empire thinks and why it acts, thinking, willing, choosing as one great whole—an England that will develop the world—one living, thinking unity. And our fitness to become part of this Empire and share equally in its knowledge and power is made possible by the liberty we now have, and our fitness will be measured by the way we use the

freedom we have and the kind of nation we are growing into, the way we think and choose and act in Australia as it is to-day.

And men are, I think, somewhat the same. At first children, like colonies—then with the freedom of men self-governing, self-controlling. But there are many questions we do not understand like this question of wrong and cruelty and sin in the world, and just as Australia now can only trust England and help all she can, so we have to say, “God’s in His heaven, all’s right with the world.” And as we hope some day to be part of the great Empire—when England takes us into her innermost secrets—so we hope, if we live worthy of our freedom, we shall become part of the Kingdom, and each know the thoughts and designs that govern the Kingdom, for we shall be more completely one with Him and He will have taken us to be with Himself *of Himself*. Isn’t that a thrilling thought?

Now can you see that while this thought of the war helps, it also in a way makes prayer more difficult? I cannot pray for supernatural help even indirectly—that help must be spiritual. I cannot think of material help. I can pray for spiritual help for our men, for understanding of the great principles at stake, for the knowledge of safety, for comfort, for power to endure, for courage, for all that can be helpful and give *all* men the freedom to still choose rightly or wrongly. I like the little book you sent me—some of it very much. But just now I feel that the spiritual is the only thing I can ask for, for our nation and for our men—perhaps I am wrong. I cannot explain or understand many things—“*all these things* shall be added unto you.”

I fear I haven’t made anything clear after all. It is a great puzzle, and the light is only a glow of dawn to struggle towards through the dark.

Y.Z.