

Cambridge, March 9, 1950

There will be all Bach chamber music concerts on Monday, Thursday, and Sunday of the week of your vacation. Surely you will not be here for all three, but on what ever days you happen to be here, there will be tickets for you, and we can go, unless you have something better to do. You know about the quality which exists in my mind concerning your plans. On all the weekdays I shall be at the library until five p.m. but in the evenings I should have at least a few hours. I must do work now. Do not write more often than you can comfortably spare the time. For me, you know, work now, work now, work now. Surely I am doing stupid things tonight. I had made up my mind to spend the whole evening working; instead I spent over an hour practicing Bach and Mozart on the violin, and now instead of translating Aeschylus or writing an essay on peanut butter, or revising my paper on Zwingli, I find myself writing to you again. I have so very many things to say, because most of my strength is spent in thinking thoughts which I have no other opportunity to express. Many of them, no doubt, are too vague and too immature. Often the feeling comes over me that my study of literature has been nothing but an attempt to flee from my own conflicts, to take short cuts around obstacles in my way, to find in the printed words of others solutions which I have yet to find for myself. As for my fellow-students in literature, I cannot help feeling that they are working under a great delusion and that the patterns of their understanding are very unreal. Sometimes I think that my hunger for comprehensive knowledge is an insidious affliction and that I should learn instead about small and simple things. Sometimes I am very happy to be able to go to Medical School next year, and to learn to work patiently at something which will be very difficult.

Thank you for your letter. You are too good to me in this respect also. You must not say that I look disparagingly upon your religious leanings. I try very hard, you know, to understand them, and if I fail, you should try to explain them to me. I have the impression that they are the expression of a very great need, and my criticism is not of the need, but of the frantic attempt to fill it. The church is a lake designed to receive the living word of God, but it has cut itself off from its true source. It is a stagnant lake, and the suns of science and rationalism have beat down upon it so steadily that the water has almost all evaporated, and the spring is cut off, because faith in God has been almost wholly replaced by faith in human things, - physical science, social science, psychology, progress, and the greatest happiness of the greatest number. What little water remains among the scum and the weeds is polluted. You cannot drink that! You will get sick if you do. To quench your thirst, you must go back to the pure spring, which comes from the mountains above.

For my part, I would rather die of thirst in my search for the source, than to attempt to drink the dirty puddle water from the bottom of the lake in the company of such a multitude. I do not think that I am overweening in my desire. I do not despise the poor people drinking out of puddles. I would help them, if I could. But they do not need either you or me; they need someone who can lead them in rediscovering the spring of their lives, they need someone who will show them the canals they must dig in order that their lake may be overflowing with pure water once again. Sometime in the future, and it will not be long, because men cannot live without water, God will send someone who will lead the people back to Him, but until he does each of us much search, in so far as he is able, to come closest to the source on his own paths, and all that I am saying is that I think I see a better way for me than yours. And since I think that what is good for me is good for you also, I must at least tell you about my thoughts.

Wm. D. 1/20

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for me

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