

Cambridge, May 6, 1950

Dear Margaret,

Thank you for your letter. Your writing regularly means more to me than you might think, except that your letters, no matter how often I read them, will never come alive and be a substitute for you. I often imagine what it would be like if you were here and my thinking of you always terminates in a vague and painful longing to have you around me, in spite of all the contradictions your being close entails for me. I don't know whether it is wise for me to express such things so emphatically, but since it is ~~only~~ truth, I think it should be said.

I have been trying to work very hard ever since you left, and probably I have succeeded better than I realize. I am aware only of the incompleteness of my work, the fact that I can never learn all the things I have planned. One of my great mistakes is that I start studying for my examinations far too early, and in that way I spread out what should be the work of one or two weeks over several months. Now I am far ahead in all my courses, and I am very tired of them. From now until the night before the examination I will be working more or less continuously - except for Bethlehem, - on things which seem so very insignificant to me.

What else could I do, - when I have no sister whose wedding could distract me. I play violin fairly often, and every time I play I feel very foolishly that I should be working instead. I worry about many things which I cannot change, and I write you such strange letters as the last one. I know I must not think such things, and yet rationally I can come to no other conclusions. Perhaps reason is not always right.

You see, this is not turning into a nice letter either, - I knew when I began that I would have difficulty finding something sufficient to say. Nothing appropriate comes to me, it is far too hot and the air is too stale for such random inspiration. The two things that are in my mind are quickly said: I wish you were here; I have a great deal of work. Today I brought the books for Bethlehem home from the library. Mother and father wrote me ~~to~~ as if they definitely planned to come. Please do not act as if you had never seen me before and do not run away to speak to all sorts of strange people. I hope that sometime we may have a chance to be alone and to talk. In the midst of so many people, I will have few words but very strong feelings for you. Please let us be together whenever we can; please don't abandon me.

If I can still look at myself objectively at all, I must suppose that these weeks, past, present, and to come, are very difficult for me. The insufficiency which once attended all my work and all my ambition has become detached and concentrated and looks for its fulfillment only to you. And this is very sad, since I know that in the end I cannot be helped in this way. As the Hand of God led the Children of Israel through the Red Sea, so love would lead me through an ocean of impossibilities into some promised land. When I look up, I see contradictions like cliffs of water, and I do not know why they do not collapse over my head to destroy me.

Dein  
Jochem