

Letter 109
Amsterdam, 7 September 1877

Dear Theo,

It was a delightful sensation to hear Gladwell's voice in the hall while I sat working in my room upstairs, and to see him enter a moment later, and to shake hands with him. Yesterday we took a long walk through the principal streets and past most of the churches; this morning we got up before five o'clock to see the workmen enter the yard, and then we walked to Zeeburg. We have been to the Trippenhuys twice, and he went alone to Van der Hoop's; he was also at Uncle Cor's gallery (but Uncle was out of town) and went with me to Mendes's. Now we intend to go to Uncle Stricker's (for I am asked there for dinner today, and will risk bringing him with me). I should also like to go with him to Haarlem to see the pictures by Frans Hals, and now he is going there and not to Antwerp as he intended; he'll go to Belgium another time, and limit himself to Holland now.

We also spent a great deal of time in my little study and talked about many things, new and old. Once more as he sits here beside me, I experience the same feeling that drew me to him so often – as if he were a son of the same house and a brother in faith because he loves the “man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” Who is our God and in Whose teachings and resurrection we believe, Whose spirit we seek, and Whose love we beg, that it may suffuse our entire being throughout life and that nothing may ever separate us from it – neither things present, nor things to come. The sorrowing unto God will bring about in him what it has brought about in many men – and is bringing about and shall bring about – that never-to-be-lamented choice of the good part, which shall not be taken away, and the one thing needful to choose; bringing forth the fruits of repentance, worthiness of conversion. He is a Christian and will become more and more so. This morning we read together the story of Elijah by the brook Cherith and in the house of the widow woman, for when we were fellow boarders in Montmartre, we found that the barrel of meal did not waste, nor the cruse of water fail; and yesterday evening, the parable of the sower, and more. Now he will spend some days with you and is looking forward to seeing your little room and the prints you have.

He gave me Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, which is as great an acquisition as Bossuet's Oraisons Funèbres, which I bought very cheaply sometime ago, and a Latin edition of Imitation by Thomas a Kempis which Vos gave me and which I hope to be able to read in the original someday. He read several bits here of Bungener, Esquiros, Lamennais, Souvestre, Lamartine (Cromwell) and has enjoyed the lithographs after Bosboom; we bought one from a Jew, and he has asked me to buy some more for him when I get the chance.

I do hope you have a pleasant evening with him, and I believe that the more you try to find in him, the more you will find.

We talked about many things, and the gist of it was: Many people, arriving at the moment in life when they must make a choice, have chosen for their part “the love of Christ and poverty,” or rather, “give me neither poverty or riches; feed me with food convenient for me.”

The time passed only too quickly for me, and I wished that we might have been together longer; but that was impossible – each of us must go his different way and continue to do whatever comes to hand, according to his call. For my part, I am thankful from the bottom of my heart that it has been given me to see him again and to find in him still what first attracted me. He told me that you would certainly go on that business trip in at least four weeks, so I hope to see you again, too. With all my heart I hope he will keep a pleasant and good memory of his stay in Holland; it was brave of him to carry out his plan in spite of objections.

Give my regards to the Roos family, have a pleasant evening with Gladwell and imagine a firm handshake from

Your loving brother, Vincent

I suppose you have learned that Mrs. Richard is dead; it must have been a fearful night. Would it not be very desirable to know the Bible well and thoroughly and lovingly?