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21 November, 1996

Christopher Cowan
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Dear Christopher

I have been meaning to write since 8 October to thank you for inviting me to the celebration for Jane and Francis. It was a moving and uplifting occasion. I cannot think of any more wonderful way for a gifted teacher such as Jane to be celebrated by so many of her pupils talking about her, performing brilliantly and movingly (Steven Isserlis) and then in concert performing her arrangements with you as conductor.

I feel so sad that Francis was not part of that wonderful celebration. The account of his life that was handed to me on arrival made me realise what a quite remarkable man he was with his many gifts at such a high level.

I am glad that you have Lucy with you to give each other support in the inevitable moments when you miss both Francis and Jane. I realise that Jane's release from Alzheimers was probably a cause for gratitude finally, as I imagine that she was far removed from the dynamic woman I knew as a child and as described by her pupils and friends.

To lose your son suddenly is something I can only guess at, having two of my own. I really do grieve for you, Maeve and Lucy.

I gather from Maeve's message that was read out, that she has become interested in or perhaps now practises Buddhism. My younger son, Mark, is well down this road too. Whatever the religious path, my own conviction is that there is an afterlife and that we meet our nearest and dearest again in some recognisable way. I have read many accounts of near death experiences which confirm this. This being so, I find it an enormous comfort particularly when the death is untimely, such as Francis's and as were the deaths of Jonathan and two of my other first cousins who died in car crashes.

With very real sympathy

Ian