

state of affairs. It accepted the false and unnatural life of men and offered them a salvation within that isolated industrial life that they were leading. It offered an *ersatz* loaf, a scientific, evolutionised bread to those starving men. It provided an artificial soil and a sense of wholeness and unity which seemed to bring back the moisture of humanity to dehydrated man.

These books approach the problem of dehydrated man on the natural level, aware of the break that has been made with nature. The fact that they do not recognise the fullness of the life of Christ in the Church must not allow us to overlook the bread they offer. They are not Marxist, and they recognise the reality of what the Marxist offers. They should help all Christians to approach the appalling devastation of this uprooting with open eyes. And if then they give to *A Land* and *man's Needs for Roots* the true finality of the Word, in whom all things exist, made flesh, they will find a soil fit for the growing of their own life.

In short, if those who are concerned about divided Christendom and the need for a 'united front' against Communism would concentrate all their thought and action on doing what Christ would have us do to modern man—I was thirsty and you gave me to drink, I was uprooted and you planted me again in my land—then it will be found that mankind is also rooted in God and the one true Church will have a new opportunity to flourish.



## THE DEATH OF A PROTESTANT

GRAF HELMUTH JAMES VON MOLTKE

[The following letter dates from eight years ago. Graf Helmuth James von Moltke, whose home had become a focal centre of resistance to the then German Government, was arrested early in 1944. The letter, to his wife, was written in prison in the course of the one day intervening between the Extreme Penalty as demanded by the Public Prosecutor and Sentence of Death as finally pronounced. Translated by kind permission from *H. J. von Moltke, Letzte Briefe* (Henssel Verlag, Berlin) by R. G. L. Barret.]

**M**Y DEAR—To begin with the ending: at about three o'clock the sentence was read out: Moltke, death and deprivation of estate; Father Delp, the Jesuit, the same; Reisert and Speer, ditto; Fugger, three years' penal servitude. The

defence had their say, all of them really quite decent, nobody malicious. When it came to the last words of the accused, your husband was the only one to waive his right. The best of the so-found verdict is: that we 'had no design of using violence' is now established: established, that we made no slightest move towards organising, spoke with no single person about his or her taking on a post. All we did was to think, and not all of us did that, just Father Delp, s.J., Gerstenmaier and I, the others counting as passengers. And the thinking of these three men, their mere thoughts, are so disturbing to the National Socialists, that anything so contaminated must be wiped out. Talk about a compliment! We are to hang, because we put our thoughts together, thoughts without intent of violence, and the upshot of them, again a thought, namely: how make Christianity a sheet-anchor in chaos. This thought alone is demanding its toll of heads tomorrow.

Dear Heart, first let me declare that quite plainly the last twenty-four hours of life are in no way different from any others. I had always imagined the shock it must be to tell oneself: this is the last time you will see the sun go down, the last time you will be going to bed. Nothing of the kind. I may be a little overwrought, I daresay I am. A sense of exaltation has certainly come over me. May God in heaven preserve me in this uplifted state, for I am sure the flesh would find it easier, dying so.

How graciously the Lord has dealt with me! It may well sound extravagant, but I am so brimming with gratitude, there is literally no room for anything else. His leading during the two days of the trial, how firm, how clear it was! The whole courtroom might have been roaring and raging like Herr Freisler, the four walls might have rocked, it would have left me entirely unconcerned; in very deed, as it stands in Isaiah, so it was: 'When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee: and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.'

Thanks, dear Heart, thanks above all to the Lord, thanks, Beloved, to you for your prayers, thanks to all the others who have been praying for us, for me. Your husband, your weak, cowardly, complex and most ordinary husband, yes, he has been privileged to experience that. Were freedom to be offered me

now, I own that I should have to readjust myself, so tremendous has been the demonstration of God, his presence, his omnipotence. Leaving me dumb, my Love, except to say and to pray: may God be as bountiful to you as he has been to me, then even a husband's death—what of it? I suppose I ought to be taking my leave of you—I cannot; where are those tears and fears I should be feeling for your days and nights to come?—I have none. Presumably I should be remembering the burdens now about to fall on you—I cannot. There is only one thing I have to tell you: if you receive the feeling of being absolutely safe, if the Lord God bless you with that—something not to be attained by you apart from this time and its approaching close—believe me, I am bequeathing you a treasure immune from all confiscation, and compared with which even my life weighs next to, nay, less than nothing. These poor beggars, like Freisler: they would not even come within sight of comprehending how little it is in their power to take.

A lengthy pause, during which we had a visitor in the person of the Catholic prison chaplain, and I was given a shave, and also had coffee and rolls and cakes. To resume our talk. The critical statement in my case was the following: 'One thing only, my Lord, Christianity and we National Socialists have in common, and it is this: we require the whole man.' I wonder whether Freisler was aware of what he was saying? Think of it, the marvel of God's preparing this unworthy vessel of his: in the nick of time, when a danger arose that I might be drawn into the action of planning a *putsch*, I was taken into custody, to keep me quit of any connection with the use of violence. Again, he implanted in me that socialist trend which frees me as a big landowner of any taint of representing a class interest. Further, he brought me so low, that now at length, in my thirty-ninth year, I understand my sinfulness, am able to beg for his forgiveness, can completely confide myself to his mercy. In addition, he gives me time and opportunity to put my affairs in order as far as may be, so that all earthly cares may drop away. Then he causes me to know to the depths the pain of departure and the fear of death and the terror of hell, to the end that these also may be behind me. Moreover, he provides me with faith, hope and love, and with a riches in these things which exceeds all measure. And it is your husband who is chosen to be attacked, Protestant that he is, and condemned, primarily because of his friendship with Catholics. For which

reasons I stand before Freisler neither as a Protestant, nor as a big landowner, nor as one of the nobility, nor as a Prussian, nor as a German, but as a Christian, and solely in that character. For what a towering task your husband has been selected: all the multiplicity of labour which the Lord God has lavished upon him, the unending coil of redundant roundabout ways, the twistings and thwartings of perversity, of a sudden in the hour of my condemning they find themselves explained. Looking back, it all coheres, to a meaning which was hidden. In the end a single hour suffices to make all intelligible. For this one hour the Lord has taken his infinite pains.

I cried a little just now, not in sadness or in regret or because I want to turn back, no, in sheer gratitude and travail of emotion at this documentation of God. Not ours to see him face to face, but we must needs be overwhelmed when, in a flash, it comes home to us, that a whole life long he has been going before us as a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, and is permitting us, suddenly, in a moment of insight, to perceive it. There is no more can happen now.

My Love, my life is finished, and I can say of myself: he died old and having lived his fill. Not but what I would be happy enough to live on a while, glad to accompany you along another stretch of the road. But that would imply a new commission from God. The task for which he created me is accomplished. If he wishes to give me a new assignment, we shall be informed.

I will make an end; indeed, what more is there to say? I have mentioned no names. You know without my telling you whom to greet from me, whom to throw your arms—our arms—around, whom to give what message to. Our voices, our familiar sayings, are all in my heart, in your heart. But in conclusion I say to you, in virtue of the treasure which has spoken out of me and which fills this homely vessel: the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.