

## CHAPTER 54 : HUNGARY AND TRANSYLVANIA'S RELIGIOUS DECLINE

In a previous chapter we recounted the success of Calvinistic Protestantism in Hungary and Transylvania. A synod at Erdod had adopted the Lutheran Augsburg Confession in 1545, and by 1567 the Synod of Debrecen adopted the Reformed Heidelberg Catechism and the Second Helvetic Confession. And the majority of Hungarians adopted this Reformed faith. But, alas, the era of secular humanism brought many sad tidings to those lands. Roman Catholics understood better than reformed Protestants that there was a great spiritual battle, and inevitably one party would rule over the other. Toleration was merely a siren song of the naïve. While it would have been wrong to use Rome's methods, principled methods should have been employed to suppress false religion and false worship, including that of Rome. Let's then take up our history where we left off.

In 1656, Ferdinand III of Austria (who was also Holy Roman Emperor) died in the flower of his age, and was succeeded by his second son, Leopold I, then a youth of seventeen. Destined by his father to be Bishop of Passau, Leopold, till his brother's death, had been educated for the Romish Church. He had as preceptor the Jesuit Neidhard, who, eventually returning to his native Spain, there became Grand Inquisitor. Leopold was fitter for the confessor's box than for the throne. While yet a lad his delight was to brush the dust from the images of the saints, and to deck out mimic altars. In him the Jesuits had a king after their own heart.

Every morning he heard three masses, one after the other, remaining all the while on his knees, without once lifting his eyes. On fete-days he insisted on all the ambassadors at his court being present at these services, and those who were not so young, or whose devotion was not so ardent as his own, were in danger of succumbing under so lengthened a performance, and were tempted to evade the infliction by soliciting employment at the court of some sovereign less "pious" than Leopold.

His appearance was as unkingly as it is possible to imagine. Diminutive in stature, his lower jaw protruding horribly, his little bald head enveloped in an immense peruke, surmounted by a hat shaded with a black feather, his person wrapped in a Spanish cloak, his feet thrust into red shoes, and his thin tottering legs encased in stockings of the same color, "as if," says Michiels, "he had been walking up to the knees in blood," he looked more like one of those uncouth figures which are seen in booths than the living head of the Holy Roman Empire.

He had a rooted aversion to business, and the Jesuits relieved him of that burden. He signed without reading the papers brought him. Music, the theater, the gambling-table, the turning-lathe, alchemy, and divination furnished him by turns with occupation and amusement. Sooth-sayers and miracle-mongers had never long to wait for an audience. It was only Protestants who found the palace-gates strait.

A puppet on the throne, the Jesuits were the masters of the kingdom. It was their golden

age in Austria, and they were resolved not to let slip the opportunity it offered. The odious project drawn up thirty years ago still remained a dead letter, but the hour for putting it in execution had at last arrived. But they would not startle men by a too sudden zeal. They would not set up the gallows at once. Petty vexations and subtle seductions would gain over the weaker spirits, and the axe and the cord would be held in reserve for the more obstinate. Austrian soldiers were distributed in the forts, the cities, and the provinces of Hungary. This military occupation by foreign troops was in violation of Hungarian charters, but the Turk served as a convenient pretext for this treachery. "You are unable," said Leopold's ministers, "to repel the Mussulman, who is always hovering on your border and breaking into your country; we shall assist you." It mattered little, however, to keep out the Turk while the Jesuit was allowed to enter. The troops were no sooner introduced than they began to pillage and oppress those they had come to protect, and the Hungarians soon discovered that what the Court of Vienna sought was not to defend them from the fanatical Moslem, but to subjugate them to the equally fanatical Jesuit.

When a great crime is to be done it is often seen that a fitting tool for its execution turns up at the right moment. So was it now. The Jesuits found, not one, but two men every way qualified for the atrocious business on which they were embarking. The first was Prince Lobkowitz, owner of an immense fortune, which his father had amassed in the Thirty Years' War. He was a proud, tyrannical, pitiless man, and being entirely devoted to the Jesuits, he was to Hungary what Lichtenstein had been to Bohemia. At the same time that this ferocious man stood up at the head of the army, a man of similar character appeared in the Church. The See of Gran became vacant, and the Government promoted to it an ardent adversary of the Reformed faith, named Szeleptsenyi. This barbarous name might have been held as indicative of the barbarous nature of the man it designated.

Unscrupulous, merciless, savage, this Szeleptsenyi was a worthy coadjutor of the ferocious Lobkowitz. As men shudder when they behold nature producing monsters, or the heavens teeming with ill-omened conjunctions, so did the Hungarians tremble when they saw these two terrible men appear together, the one in the civil and the other in the ecclesiastical firmament of Austria. We shall meet them afterwards. Their vehemence would have vented itself at once, and brought on a crisis, but the firm hand of the Jesuits, who held them in leading-strings, checked their impetuosity, and taught them to make a beginning with something like moderation.

In 1562 a Diet was held at Presburg, and the petition which the Hungarians presented to it enables us to trace the progress of the persecution during the thirteen previous years. During that term the disciples of the gospel in Hungary had been deprived by force of numerous churches, and of a great amount of property. These acts of spoliation, in open violation of the law, which professed to grant them freedom of worship, extended over seventeen counties, and fifty-three magnates, prelates, and landowners were concerned in the perpetration of them. Within the three past years they had been robbed of not fewer than forty churches; and when they complained, instead of finding redress, the deputy-lieutenants only contrived to terrify and weary them.

To be robbed of their property was only the least of the evils they were called to suffer; their consciences had been outraged. Dragoons were sent to convert them to the Roman faith. The superior judge, Count Francis Nadasdy, harassed them in innumerable ways. On one occasion he sent a party of soldiers to a village, with orders to convert every man in it from the Protestant faith. The inhabitants fled on the approach of the military, and a chase ensued. Overtaken, the entire crowd of fugitives were summarily transferred into the Roman fold. On another occasion the same count sent a servant with an armed force to the village of Szill, to demand the keys of the church. They were given up at his summons, and some days after, the bell began tolling. The parishioners, thinking that worship was about to be celebrated, assembled in the church, and sat waiting the entrance of the pastor. In a few minutes a priest appeared, attired in canonicals, and carrying the requisites for mass, which he straightway began to read, and the whole assembly, in spite of their tears and protestations, were compelled to receive the communion in its Popish form.

The active zeal of Nadasdy suggested to him numerous expedients for converting men to the Roman faith; some of them were very extraordinary, and far from pleasant to those who were the subjects of them. The Protestants who lived in Burgois were accustomed to go to church in the neighboring town of Nemesker. The count thought that he would put a stop to a practice that displeased him. He gave orders to the keeper of his forests to lie in wait, with his assistants, for the Protestants on their way back. The worshippers on their return from church were seized, stripped of their clothes, and sent home in a state of perfect nudity. Upon another occasion, having extruded Pastor Stephen Pilarick, of Beczko, he seized all his books, and transporting them to his castle, burned them on the hall-floor.

The Bible was reserved for a special auto-da-fe. It was put upon a spit and turned round before the fire, the count and his suite standing by and watching the process of its slow combustion. A sudden gust of wind swept into the apartment, stripped off a number of the half-burned leaves and, swirling them through the hall, deposited one of them upon the count's breast. Baron Ladislaus Revay caught at it, but the count anticipating him took possession of it, and began to read. The words were those in the fortieth chapter of Isaiah: "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the Word of God shall stand for ever." The Count Nadasdy, turning pale, immediately retired. Not fewer than 200 Protestant churches, on his estates, did he contrive to ruin, either partially or wholly. "For these feats," say the historians of the Protestant church of Hungary, "he became the darling of the Jesuits at the Court of Vienna."

His good deeds, however, were not remembered by the Jesuit Fathers in the hour of his calamity. When shortly after the count was drawn into insurrection, and condemned to die, they left him to mount the scaffold. Before laying his head on the block, he said, "The Lord is just in all his ways." These words the Jesuits interpreted into an acknowledgment of the justice of his sentence; but the Protestants saw in them, with more probability, an expression of sorrow for forsaking the faith of his youth.

In Eisenberg county, Count George Erdody turned the pastor of Wippendorf out of doors

in the depth of winter, and threw his furniture on the street. All the Protestants on his estates were ordered to return to the Church of Rome, under penalty of banishment, with only four florins for their journey. When this threat failed, the rude Wallachian soldiery were billeted upon them; and such as still proved obdurate were thrown into the dungeons of his castle, and kept there until, worn out by cold and hunger and darkness, they at last yielded.

The Jesuits finding that their plan, though it emitted neither flame nor blood, was effectual enough to make consciences bow, resolved to persevere with it. In Neusiedel, in the county of the Wieselburg, there went forth an order from the landlords, John and George Lippay, commanding all the Protestants to worship in the Popish church, and imposing a fine of forty florins for every case of absence. No Protestant widow was permitted to marry. At no Protestant funeral dare psalm be sung. No Protestant could fill any public office; and if already in such he was to be extruded. Foot of Protestant pastor must not enter the gates of the now "orthodox" Neusiedel, and if he chose to disregard this prohibition, he was to pay the penalty of his presumption with his life.

The corporate trades of Raab and other towns declared it indispensable to enrolment in a guild, or the exercise of a craft, that the applicant should profess the Romish faith. No Protestant could make a coat, or weave a yard of cloth, or fabricate a pair of shoes, or mould a vessel of clay, or wield the hammer of the armorer or execute the commonest piece of carpenter's work.

Jealous over the orthodoxy of their lands, and desirous of preserving them from all taint of heresy, the bishops drove into banishment their Protestant tenantry. Nuns were very careful that neither should Protestant plough turn their soils, nor Protestant psalm be sung on their estates.

The great magnates showed themselves equally valiant for the Romish faith. They banished Protestants from their territorial fiefs; they threw the Protestant population of entire villages into prison, loaded them with chains, and kept them in dark and filthy cells till, worn with sickness and broken in spirit, they abjured their faith. Many churches were razed to the ground; others were appropriated to the Romish worship. While Divine service was being celebrated in the Church of Mishdorf, the soldiers broke into it with drawn swords, and barricading the door, made a priest sing mass. This sufficed to make the congregation "Catholic." Mass had been said in their presence, and both people and church henceforth belonged to Rome. If a Jesuit thought the manse of a Protestant pastor better than his own, he had only to throw the incumbent into the street and take possession of the coveted dwelling. It mattered not if the minister was old, or sick, or dying, he and his family were carted across the boundary of the county and left to shift for themselves. Similar acts were being enacted in Transylvania, and in those parts of Hungary connected with the Reformed Church, which under Rakotzy had enjoyed some glorious days.

The petition of the Protestants specified the acts, named the authors of them, supported each averment with proof, and naively pleaded the law which enacted toleration, and

threatened with punishment such outrages as those of which they complained. They approached the throne with this complaint through the Protestant members of the Diet of 1662. Believing the king to be ignorant of these oppressions, they did not doubt that Leopold would at once grant them redress.

After waiting a week, the royal reply was communicated to the complainants through the prime minister, Prince Portia. It admonished them not to annoy his Majesty with such complaints, and reminded them that the law had arranged all religious matters, and assigned to each transgression its proper punishment.

The hearts of the Protestants sank within them when they read this reply, which reflected even more disgrace on the throne than it inflicted injustice on them. Nevertheless they again presented themselves, through their deputies, in the royal presence. They complained that the law was being every day flagrantly violated, that of the men notoriously guilty of these illegal acts not one had been punished; and that even were sentence given against any such, they despaired of seeing it executed. Their hope was in the king alone. This time they waited longer for an answer, and when at last it came, it was even more cold and cruel than the first. Six times did the cry of the Protestants ascend before the throne of their sovereign. Six times were they answered by a voice as inexorably stern as fate. They could no longer hide from themselves that their king was their enemy.

On the 4th of July, 1662, the Palatine Vesselenyi, president of the Diet, handed the paper containing the king's answer to the Protestant deputies, and accompanied it with these words: "I had rather that the funeral-knell had tolled over me than live to see this day; may the day and the hour be covered with eternal darkness."

The troops billeted on Hungary were intended to oppress the Protestants, but that did not hinder their being almost as great an oppression to the Romanists. The magnates who belonged to the Romish faith, seeing the country consuming in the slow fire of a military occupation, petitioned the government for the withdrawal of the troops. But the court of Vienna was in no humor to listen to the request.

The Jesuits, who inspired the royal policy, were not displeased to see those haughty Magyars compelled to hold their heads a little less high, and that province weakened in the soil of which the seeds of Protestantism had been so plentifully scattered. The courtiers openly said, "How gaily do these Hungarian nobles strut about with their heron's plumes waving in their caps, and their silken pelisses clasped with gold and silver! We shall teach them less lofty looks. We shall replace their heron's plume with a feather from the wing of a humbler bird; and instead of a pelisse, we shall make them content with a plain Bohemian coat with leaden buttons." Not only were the German troops not withdrawn, but a disgraceful peace was made with the Turks, and new subsidies were demanded for building new forts and paying more soldiers. When this was seen, the wrath of the Hungarian magnates knew no bounds. They held a secret assembly at Neusohl, and deliberated on their course of action. They resolved on the bold step of raising new levies, throwing off the yoke of the Emperor Leopold, and placing

themselves under the suzerainty of the sultan, Mohammed IV. The leaders in this projected insurrection were the Palatine Vesselenyi, Count Francis Nadasdy, and others, all bitter persecutors of the Protestants. In the circumstances in which these magnates had placed themselves with their countrymen, their scheme of conspiracy was rash to infatuation. Had they unfurled their standard a few years earlier, Protestant Hungary would have rallied round it; city and village would have poured out soldiers in thousands to combat for their religion and liberty. But it was otherwise now. The flower of the Hungarian nation were pining in prisons, or wandering in exile. The very men who would have fought their battles, these nobles had driven away; and now they were doomed to learn, by the disasters that awaited them, what an egregious error they had committed in the persecution of their Protestant countrymen. From the first day their enterprise had to contend with adverse fortune.

They sent a messenger to the grand vizier to solicit assistance. They knew not that a spy in the vizier's suite was listening to all they said, and would hasten to report what he had heard to the court at Vienna. This was enough. "Like a night-bird, hidden in the darkness," Prince Lobkowitz, having penetrated their secret, henceforth kept an eye on the conspirators. If he did not nip the rebellion in the bud, it was because he wished to give it a little time to ripen, in order that it might conduct its authors to the scaffold. Its chiefs now began to be taken off mysteriously. The Palatine Vesselenyi was suddenly attacked with fever, and died in his castle in the heart of the Carpathians.

He was soon followed to the grave by another powerful leader of the projected rebellion, Nicholas Zriny, Ban of the Croats. The Ban was found covered with wounds, in a forest near his own residence, and the report was given forth that he had been torn by a wild boar, but the discovery of a bullet in his head upset the story. The suspicions awakened by these mysterious deaths were deepened by a tragic occurrence now in progress in the palace of Vienna. Leopold fell ill: his disease baffled his physicians; novenas, paternesters, and relics were powerless to arrest his malady, and it began to be suspected that a secret poison was undermining the emperor's strength. While the king was rapidly approaching the grave, the celebrated alchemist, tilt Chevalier Francis Borri, of Milan, who had been proscribed by Rome, was seized by the Papal nuncio in Moravia, and brought to Vienna. The king, who was himself addicted to the study of alchemy, hearing Borri was in his capital, commanded his attendance. The chevalier was introduced after night-fall. Indescribably gloomy was the chamber of the royal patient: the candles looked as if they burned in a tomb; the atmosphere was mephitic; the king's face wore the ghastliness of the grave; his sallow skin and sunken cheeks, with the thirst which nothing could assuage, gave indubitable signs that some unknown poison was at work upon him. The chemist paused and looked round the room.

He marked the red flame of the tapers the white vapor which, they emitted, and the deposit they had formed on the ceiling. "You are breathing a poisoned air," said he to the king. The patient's apartment was changed, other candles were brought, and from that hour the king began to recover. When the lights were analyzed it was found that the wick had been steeped in a strong solution of arsenic. It is hard to imagine what motive the Jesuits could have for seeking to take off a monarch so obsequious to them, and the affair

still remains one of the mysteries of history.

The man who had saved the king's life had earned, one would think, his own liberty. Borri, having completed the monarch's cure, was given back to the Papal nuncio, who claimed him as his prisoner, carried him to Rome, and threw him into the dungeons of St. Angelo, where, after languishing fifteen years, he died. The procurator of the Jesuits was also made to disappear so as never to be heard of more. The king would not have dared, even in thought, to have suspected the Fathers, much less to have openly accused them. But whoever were the authors of this attempt, it was upon the Hungarians that its punishment was made to fall, for Leopold being led to believe that his Protestant subjects had been seeking to compass his death, fear and dread of them were now added to his former hatred. From this hour, the work of crushing the conspirators was pushed forward with vigor. Troops were marched on Hungary from all sides: the insurgents were overwhelmed by numbers, and the chiefs were arrested before they had time to take the field. The papers seized were of a nature to comprise half of Hungary. Lobkowitz reveled in the thought of the many heads that would have to be taken off, and not less delighted was he at the prospect of the rich estates that would have to be confiscated.

About 300 nobles were apprehended and thrown into dungeons. The leaders were brought to trial, and finally executed. The magnates who thus perished on the scaffold were nearly all Romanists, and had been the most furious persecutors of the Protestant church of their native land. As so often in history, God used the evil of the wicked to judge the wicked.

But the deaths of these Hungarian nobles also opened wider the door for the Austrian government to come in and crush Hungarian Protestantism as well. Hardly had the scaffolds of the magnates been taken down when the storm burst afresh (1671) upon the Protestants of Hungary. The Archbishop of Gran — the ecclesiastic with the barbarous name Szeleptsenyi — accompanied by other bishops, and attended by a large following of Jesuits and dragoons, passed, like a desolating tempest, over the land, seizing churches and schools, breaking open their doors, re-consecrating them, painting red crosses upon their pillars, installing the priests in the manses and livings, banishing pastors and teachers, and if the least opposition was offered to these tyrannical proceedings, those from whom it came were east into prison, and sometimes hanged or impaled alive.

Cities and counties which the activity of Archbishop Szeleptsenyi, vast as it was, failed to overtake, were visited by other bishops, attended by a body of wild Croats. Colleges were dismantled, and the students dispersed. In the royal cities all Protestant councilors were deposed, and Papists appointed in their room. The citizens were disarmed, the walls of towns leveled, the pastors prohibited, under pain of death, of performing any official act. And whenever this violence was met by the least resistance, it was made a pretext for hanging, or breaking on the wheel, or otherwise maltreating and murdering the Protestant citizens.

The extirpation of Protestantism in Hungary was proceeding at a rapid rate, but not sufficiently rapid to satisfy the vast desires of Szeleptsenyi and his coadjutors. The king,

at a single stroke, had abolished all the ancient charters of the kingdom, declaring that henceforth but one law, his own good pleasure, should rule in Hungary. Over the now extinct charters, and the slaughtered bodies of the magnates, the Jesuits had marched in, and were appropriating churches by the score, banishing pastors by the dozen, dismantling towns, plundering, hanging, and impaling. But one great comprehensive measure was yet needed to consummate the work. That measure was the banishment of all the pastors and teachers from the kingdom. This was now resolved on; but it was judged wise to begin with a small number, and if the government were successful with these, it would next proceed to its ulterior and final measure.

The Archbishop of Gran summoned (25th September, 1673) before his vice-regal court in Presburg, thirty-three of the Protestant pastors from Lower Hungary. They obeyed the citation, although they viewed themselves as in no way bound, by the laws of the land, to submit to a spiritual court, and especially one composed of judges all of whom were their deadly enemies. Besides a number of paltry and ridiculous charges, the indictment laid at their door the whole guilt of the late rebellion, which notoriously had been contrived and carried out by the Popish magnates.

To be placed at such a bar was but the inevitable prelude to being found guilty and condemned. The awards of torture, beheading, and banishment were distributed among the thirty-three pastors. But their persecutors, instead of carrying out the sentences, judged that their perversion would serve their ends better than their execution, and that it was subtler policy to present Protestantism as a cowardly rather than as an heroic thing.

After manifold annoyances and cajolery, one minister apostatized to Rome, the rest signed a partial confession of guilt and had their lives spared. But their act covered them with disgrace in the eyes of their flocks, and their cowardice tended greatly to weaken and demoralize their brethren throughout Hungary, to whom the attentions of the Jesuits were next directed.

A second summons was issued by the Archbishop of Gran on the 16th of January, 1674. Szeleptsenyi was getting old, and was in haste to finish his work, "as if," say the chroniclers, "the words of our Lord at the Last Supper had been addressed to him — 'What thou doest, do quickly.'" The archbishop had spread his net wide indeed this time. All the Protestant clergy of Hungary, even those in the provinces subject to the Sultan, had he cited to his bar. The old charge was foisted up — file rebellion, namely, for which the Popish nobles had already been condemned and executed. If these pastors and schoolmasters were indeed the authors of the insurrection, the proof would have been easy, for the thing had not been done in a corner; but nothing was adduced in support of the charge that deserved the name of proof. But if the evidence was light, not so was the judgment. The tribunal pronounced for doom beheading, confiscation, infamy, and outlawry.

The number on whom this condemnation fell was about 400. Again the counsel of the Jesuits was to kill their character and spare their lives, and in this way to inflict the deadliest wound on the cause which these men represented. To shed their blood was but

to sow the seed of new confessors, whereas as dishonored men, or even as silent men, they might be left with perfect safety to live in their native land. This advice was again approved, and every art was set to work to seduce them. Three courses were open to the Protestant ministers. They might voluntarily exile themselves: this would so far answer the ends of their persecutors, inasmuch as it would remove them from the country. Or, they might resign their office, and remain in Hungary. This would make them equally dead to the Protestant Church, and would disgrace them in the eyes of their people. Or, retaining their office, they might remain and seize every opportunity of preaching to their former flocks, in spite of the sentence of death suspended above their heads. Of these 400, or thereabouts, 236 ministers signed their resignation, and although they acquired thereby a right to remain in Hungary, the majority went into exile. The rest, thinking it not the part of faithful shepherds to flee, neither resigned their office nor withdrew into banishment, but remained in spite of many threatening and much ill-usage. To the tyranny of the Government the pastors opposed an attitude of passive resistance.

The next attempt of their persecutors was to terrify them. They were divided into small parties, put into carts, and distributed amongst the various fortresses and gaols of the country, the darkest and filthiest cells being selected for their imprisonment. Every method that could be devised was taken to annoy and torment them. They were treated worse than the greatest criminals in the gaols into which they were cast. They were fed on coarse bread and water. They were loaded with chains; nor was any respect had, in this particular, to difference of strength or of age — the irons of the old being just as heavy as those of the young and the able-bodied.

The most disgusting offices of the prison they were obliged to perform. In winter, during the intense frosts, they were required to clear away with their naked hands the ice and snow. To see their friends, or to receive the smallest assistance from any one in alleviation of their sufferings, was a solace strictly denied them. To unite together in singing a psalm, or in offering a prayer, was absolutely forbidden. Some of them were shut up with thieves and murderers, and not only had they to endure their mockeries when they bent the knee to pray, but they were compelled to listen to their foul and often blasphemous talk. Their sufferings grew at last to such a pitch that they most earnestly wished that their persecutors would lead them forth to a scaffold or to a stake. But the Jesuits had doomed them to a more cruel and lingering martyrdom. Seeing their emaciation and despondency, their enemies redoubled their efforts to induce them to abjure. Not a few of them, unable longer to endure their torments, yielded, and renounced their faith, but others continued to bear up under their frightful sufferings.

On the 18th of March, 1675, a little troop of emaciated beings was seen to issue from a secret gateway of the fortress of Komorn. An escort of 400 horsemen and as many foot closed round them and led them away. This sorrowful band was composed of the confessors who had remained faithful, and were now beginning their journey to the galleys of Naples. They were conducted by a circuitous route through Moravia to Leopoldstadt, where their brethren, who had been shut up in that fortress, were brought out to join them in the same doleful pilgrimage. They embraced each other and wept.

This remnant of the once numerous clergy of the Protestant Church of Hungary now began their march from the dungeons of their own land to the galleys of a foreign shore. They walked two and two, the right foot of the one chained to the left ankle of the other. Their daily provision was a quarter of a pound of biscuit, a glass of water, and at times a small piece of cheese. They slept in stables at night. At last they arrived at Trieste. Here the buttons were cut off their coats, their beards shaved off, their heads dipped close, and altogether they were so metamorphosed that they could not recognize one another save by the voice.

So exhausted were they from insufficiency of food, and heavy irons, that four of the number died in prison at Trieste, two others died afterwards on the road, and many fell sick. On the journey to Naples, one of the survivors, Gregory Hely, became unfit to walk, and was mounted on an ass. Unable through weakness to keep his seat, he fell to the ground and died on the spot. The escort did not halt, they dug no grave: leaving him lying unburied on the road, they held on their way. Three succeeded in making their escape, and be one of these, George Lanyi, who afterwards wrote a narrative of his own and his companions' sufferings, we are indebted for our knowledge of the particulars of their journey.

Of the forty-one who had set out from Leopoldstadt, dragging their chains, and superfluously guarded by 800 men-at-arms, only thirty entered the gates of Naples. This was the end of their journey, but not of their misery. Sold to the galley-masters for fifty Spanish piastres a-piece, they were taken on board their several boats, chained to the bench, and, in company with the malefactors and convicts with which the Neapolitan capital abounds, they were compelled to work at the oar, exposed to the burning sun by day, and the bitter winds which, descending from the frozen summits of the Apennines, often sweep over the bay when the sun is below the horizon.

Another little band of eighteen, gleaned from the gaols of Sarvar, Kupuvar, and Eberhard, began their journey to the galleys of Naples on the 1st of July of the same year. To recount their sufferings by the way would be to rehearse the same unspeakably doleful tale we have already told. The sun, the air, the mountains, what were they to men who only longed for death? Their eyes grew dark, their teeth fell out, and though still alive, their bodies were decaying. On the road, ten of these miserable men, succumbing to their load of woe, and not well knowing what they did, yielded to the entreaties of their guard, and professed to embrace the faith of Rome. Three died on the way, and their fellow-sufferers being permitted to scoop out a grave, they were laid in it, and the 88th Psalm was sung over their lonely resting-place.

Meanwhile, the story of their sufferings was spreading over Europe. Princes and statesmen, touched by their melancholy fate, had begun to take an interest in them, and were exerting themselves to obtain their release. Representations were made in their behalf to the Imperial Court at Vienna, and also to the Government of Naples. These appeals were met with explanations, excuses, and delays. The hopes of their deliverance were becoming faint when, on the 12th of December, the Dutch fleet sailed into the Bay of Naples. The vice-admiral, John de Staen, stepped on shore, and waiting on the crown-

regent with the proof of the innocence of the prisoners in his hand, he begged their release. He was told that they would be set at liberty in three days. Overjoyed, the vice-admiral sent to the galleys to announce to the captives their approaching discharge, and then set sail for Sicily, whither he was called by the war with France. The Dutch fleet being gone, the promise of the crown-regent was forgotten. The third day came and went, and the prisoners were still sighing in their fetters; but there was One who heard their groans, and had numbered and finished the days of their captivity.

Again the Dutch ships were seen in the offing. Ploughing the bay, and sweeping past Capri, the fleet held on its course till it cast anchor before the city, and lay with its guns looking at the castle and palace of St. Elmo. It was Admiral de Ruyter himself. He had been commanded by the States-General of Holland to take up the case of the prisoners. De Ruyter sent the Dutch ambassador to tell the king why he was now in Neapolitan waters. The king quickly comprehended the admiral's message, and made haste to renew the promise that the Hungarian prisoners should be given up; and again the good news was published in the galleys. But liberty's cup was to be dashed from the lips of the poor prisoners yet again. The urgency of affairs called the admiral instantly to weigh anchor and set sail, and with the retreating forms of his ships the fetters clasped themselves once more round the limbs of the captives. But De Ruyter had not gone far when he was met by orders to delay his departure from Naples. Putting about helm he sailed up the bay, and finding how matters stood with the prisoners, and not troubling himself to wait a second time on the Neapolitan authorities, he sent his officers aboard the galleys, with instructions to set free the prisoners; and the pastors, like men who walk in their sleep, arose and followed their liberators. On the 11th of February, 1676, they quitted the galleys, singing the 46th, the 114th, and the 125th Psalms.

"Putting their lives in their hands, there were a few pastors who either had not been summoned to Presburg, or who had not gone; and in lonely glens, in woods and mountains wild, in ruined castles and morasses inaccessible except to the initiated, these men resided and preached the gospel to the faithful who were scattered over the land. From the dark cavern, scantily lighted, arose the psalm of praise sung to those wild melodies which to this day thrill the heart of the worshipper. From lips pale and trembling with disease, arising from a life spent in constant fear and danger, the consolations of the gospel were proclaimed to the dying. The Lord's Supper was administered; fathers held up their infants to be devoted in baptism to Him for whom they themselves were willing to lay down their lives; and amid the tears which oppression wrung from them, they joined their hands and looked up to Him who bottles up the tears, and looked forward to a better land beyond the grave."

During the subsequent reigns of Joseph I, Charles VI, Maria Theresa, and Joseph II, down to 1800, the Protestant Church of Hungary continued to drag out a struggling existence. Brief intervals of toleration came to vary her long and dark night of persecution. The ceaseless object of attack on the part of the Jesuits, her privileges continued to be curtailed, her numbers to decrease, and her spiritual life and power to decay. While at one point during the Reformation 80 per cent of Hungary went over to the Reformed side, following the very effective counter-Reformation, only some 20 per

cent retained their attachment to the Reformed position in the following 200 years. And the doctrine even of this bare 20 per cent became corrupted through Enlightenment influences.

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### **CHAPTER 54 : HUNGARY AND TRANSYLVANIA'S RELIGIOUS DECLINE**

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The on-line resources of Historicism Research Foundation at <http://www.historicism.net/> also proved invaluable for my understanding of Biblical prophecy. Biblical prophecy concerning Christian church history, especially as revealed in the book of Revelation, serves as the foundation upon which all church histories should be based.

Other references especially consulted for this chapter include:  
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