

## Lift Thy Head, O Zion Weeping

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During the "Decade of Mourning," the Counter-Reformation bitterly persecuted the Protestant believers of Hungary. As detailed in our lead story this issue, pastors and teachers were rounded up throughout the entire country.

Those who refused to convert were cast into prison and, finally "driven on foot from Pozsony to Trieste where they were sold as galley-slaves, "chained to their oars in the Adriatic. A monument in their memory was erected, and still stands today, in the garden behind the historic Reformed Church in Debrecen. "Lift Your Heads, O Martyrs, Weeping" commemorates the bravery and faithfulness of these 42 Hungarian Protestant pastors who refused to recant the faith of the Reformation.

One of the most moving hymns of the persecuted church was written by Károly Jeszensky, based upon words originally composed by Pauli Joachim. Sadly, this magnificent hymn is little known in English-speaking Protestant circles, but it surely belongs in every hymnal, and should be sung wherever God's people gather.

### The Feature Article

The years 1671 to 1681 have become known by Hungarian Protestants as the ten years of mourning, so terrible was the opposition made to the people's exercise of their Reformed faith. During those years, moreover, Protestant ministers and teachers were summoned to a special law court which sat at Pozsony (Bratislava) to answer for the political views that non-Roman Catholics were supposed to hold. They were accused of disloyalty, treason and the defamation of the Roman Church. No account was taken of their humble defense. They were first threatened with torture and death, but finally given the choice either of becoming Roman Catholics, of resigning their charges, or of fleeing the country. Of the first batch of 33 to be accused, one minister turned Roman Catholic, the others either resigned or went abroad. After that every minister in the land was summoned, even those in the Turkish area. Naturally, the latter did not obey, and anyway the Turks would not have permitted them to go to the Kingdom, but then neither did the ministers in the free areas to the east obey either. All who turned up were the 400 ministers of western and northern Hungary. Of this number all were first condemned to death, then some were put in irons and thrown into prison for seven weeks on end. The death sentence had been only a threat, but it frightened 200 of the ministers to such a degree that they succumbed and signed a statement that they would cease their activities, and many of that number then left the country.

### Condemnation to the Gallies

But 89 of this 400 refused under every threat to give way to this show of force, and all of these 89 were imprisoned and then put to heavy labour under the lash. Every means was tried to break their obstinacy. Three died under their treatment, 18 turned Catholic, one agreed to resign his charge, and one escaped from prison. The others languished for another year in jail, and then in March, 1675, 41 of them were impelled by forced marches through Austria to Trieste whence they were taken by ship to Naples and sold as slaves to be used in the galleys. Some of the 41 died on the road to the sea and never reached Naples, and three managed to escape. But the 30 remaining were sold and chained to their oars in May of 1675.

One of the condemned slaves managed to send a message back to Hungary in which he gave a heart-rending account of the horrors he and his fellows were going through at the hand of the merciless task-drivers, and he described how day and daily their whole physical frame was racked by pains and torture under the lash of their beastly masters.

The terrible fate of these 41 Hungarian ministers reached eventually to the ears of foreign Protestant powers, and it was they alone who were instrumental in having the ministers released; although we must not discount the renewed attacks made by Protestant Transylvania upon the Habsburg power.

The Dutch ambassador at Vienna was first instructed to intervene on their behalf. At this period Holland happened to be in alliance with Leopold I, so that after the repeated interchange of notes an agreement was finally reached. Both those in the galleys and those in prison were to be released, then all were to be given the choice either of converting or of leaving their homeland for good. Then it only remained for the Dutch ambassador, Hamel Bruininx, with the help of the Swiss Welz brothers, to collect the huge sum of money necessary to buy the galley-slaves back from their masters.

February 11, 1676, is a date that will never be forgotten in the Reformed Church of Hungary. On that day the galley-slaves regained their freedom. The Dutch admiral, De Ruyter, who was then at anchor in the bay of Naples, was bidden take them on board his own ship. When his eyes fell on the poor emaciated bodies of those suffering men, he is reported to have said: "I have many battles to my credit against all kinds of enemies, but this is my finest victory, in that I have been permitted to set free Christ's innocent servants from an unbearable burden." One of the ministers sought to express the thanks of all to De Ruyter, but the latter stopped him, and said that it was not he who should be thanked, but God, for it was God who had wrought their freedom. But to that the minister replied: "Yes, but we ought also to give thanks to the instruments that God uses."

De Ruyter took them to Venice, the 26 of the 41 who had survived. By the terms of the agreement they could not go home, of course, so they set off for the hospitable lands of Switzerland, Holland and England that had gladly offered them asylum.

# Lift Thy Head, O Zion Weeping

Hymn of the Hungarian Galley Slaves

Translated by: William Toth, 1938

Metrical version, G.J. Neumann, 1938

MAGYAR (Tune Name)

8, 7, 8, 7, 7, 8, 8 (Meter)

Galyarabok Eneke, 1674

Fm D<sup>b</sup> Gm C7 Fm A<sup>b</sup> D<sup>b</sup> A<sup>b</sup> E7

1. Lift thy head, O Zi - on, weep - ing, Still the Lord thy Fa - ther  
 2. Though the sea his waves as - sem - ble And in fur - y fall on  
 3. Though the hills and vales be riv - en God cre - a - ted with His  
 4. Though in chains thou now art griev - ing, Though a tor - tured slave thou

A<sup>b</sup> Fm D<sup>b</sup> Gm C Fm A<sup>b</sup> D<sup>b</sup>

is; Thou art dai - ly in His keep - ing, And thine ev - 'ry  
 thee, Though thou cry, with heart a trem - ble, "O my Sav - iour,  
 hand. Though the mov - ing signs of heav - en Wars pres - age in  
 die, Zi - on, if thou die be - liev - ing, Heav - en's path shall

A<sup>b</sup> E<sup>b</sup> A<sup>b</sup> E<sup>b</sup> D<sup>b</sup> A<sup>b</sup> D<sup>b</sup> A<sup>b</sup>

care is His. Rise and be of glad - some heart,  
 suc - cor - me!" Though un - trou - bled still He sleep  
 ev - ery land Yet, O Zi - on, have no fear;  
 o - pen lie. Up - ward gaze and hap - py be,

Fm D<sup>b</sup> C Fm C Fm C7 Fm C G<sup>o</sup> Fm

And with cour - age play thy part; Soon a - gain His arms will fold  
 Who thy hope is on the deep, Zi - on, calm the breast that quak -  
 Ev - er is thy Help - er near; He hath sought thee, He hath found  
 God hath not for - sak - en thee; Thou His peo - ple art, and sure

C Fm D<sup>b</sup> G<sup>o</sup> Fm C Fm

thee To His lov - ing heart and hold thee.  
 eth Nev - er God His own for - sak - eth.  
 thee; Lo! His wings are walls a - round thee. A - men  
 ly He will fold His own se - cure - ly.