
Regions: Central-Europe and Britain

Persecutio decennalis (1671–1681)


The Lutheran Contribution to the Emergence
of a Protestant Martyrology in Early Modern Hungarian Culture.
The Case of Georgius Lani

1. Introduction

Due to the particular historical context emerging because of the Ottoman threat and the Habsburg military expansion, Reformation was embraced without significant opposition by early modern Hungarian society. Furthermore, Tripartite Hungary, exposed to permanent military and political pressure, appeared to have chosen a tolerant stance towards the process of confession-building or even radicalization. Accordingly, both Royal Hungary and the Principality of Transylvania opted for a religious policy supporting religious liberty and religious toleration granted by laws. For instance, the diet of Pozsony (Bratislava) held in September 1608 endorsed religious liberty as an unalienable right of the population inhabiting Royal Hungary. In a similar manner, it had been confirmed on two occasions (1568, 1595) that all four religions were accepted and protected denominations allowed to be freely professed in the Principality of Transylvania (Balázs: 2006, 34–35). It is possible to conclude that in Tripartite Hungary, at least during the sixteenth century, political will protected and supported a multi-denominational religious culture refraining from any religious persecution or coercion. Confessional communities, whether they constituted majorities or minorities, needed find equilibrium and exercise mutual toleration (Tóth: 2015a, 91–93).

However, major changes would occur during the next century. The devote Catholic Habsburg Emperor ignored this status quo and tried to impose a different settlement for the multid denominational religious culture, one that grossly discriminated both Lutheran and Calvinist communities of Royal Hungary. The beginning of the systematic persecution culminating in the so-called decade of persecution (*persecutio decennalis*, 1671–1681), inevitably ignited the spirits; the Protestant estates openly expressed their disagreement and decided to revolt against the Habsburg rule. Soon, a major political and military crisis was un-

leashed against the Habsburgs as a response to the religious persecution of the Lutheran and Calvinist population of Royal Hungary.

This article takes as a starting point the woeful period of the *persecutio decennalis* in order to investigate how the Lutheran and Calvinist communities experienced maltreatment, political exile, confessional migration, and various afflictions. A particular emphasis will be laid on the examination of how Lutheran teaching and textual sources influenced the perception of martyrdom during and afterwards the decade of persecution. In doing so, my case study will focus on a Lutheran survivor, Georgius Lani (1646–1701) and his theological contribution to early modern Hungarian Protestant martyrology.¹ I shall propose a close reading of one of Lani's influential texts, and then, having unfolded its major Lutheran sources of ecclesiastic history and patrology, I intend to evaluate their impact on the representations of persecution as an act of martyrdom. I shall argue that the Hungarian scholarship, especially its representatives during the nineteenth century, ignored the non-Hungarian Lutheran tradition and concentrated their efforts on constructing a Calvinist martyrology, satisfying the demands of the nation to have a realm of memory populated by exclusively Hungarian Calvinist heroes. Yet, my conclusion will establish that early modern Hungarian Protestant martyrology was possible and functional,  to a significant Lutheran contribution conceived, written, and published either in Latin or in German texts, whose authors were not Hungarian ethnics. The Slovak Georgius Lani's case is certainly a relevant example.

2. Historical Contexts

In order to have a clear understanding of what the *persecutio decennalis* consisted of, some of the relevant historical contexts need to be revisited. Since the time the peace treaty of Vasvár (1664) was signed, loyalty to the Habsburgs, even within the territory of Upper Hungary, was in continuous decline. The Hungarians' hostile attitude was fuelled by the Habsburg administration's unpopular activities which patently promoted the imperial interests, quite often against the expectations and immediate interests of the Hungarian estates. Thus conflict, indeed rebellion, was unavoidable. Although the Habsburgs had managed to uncover the initial conspiracy (1671) and execute its protagonists, the supporters

¹ He was born Juraj Lani. A Slovak ethnic, but Lutheran priest of the Hungarian Lutheran Church, who often identified himself as a *Hungarus*. This does not reveal his ethnic origins, but the place where he was born and lived. Still, Hungarian historiography insists with the Hungarian version of his name referring to him as György Lányi or Láni. Slovak historians customarily mention him as Juraj Lani. In order to avoid the arousal of further sensibilities, I intend to rely on the Latin version of his name, and refer to him as Georgius Lani.

of the opposition were still far too numerous and a military conflict was unleashed. The rebellion, led first by Mihály Teleki (1672) and then by Imre Thököly (1680), was sustained by the Ottoman Porte and assisted by the principality of Transylvania (Tóth: 2010, 547).

The Habsburgs, under the plausible pretext of conspiracy, organized a merciless campaign against the intellectual elite, mostly Calvinist and Lutheran priests and teachers. They accused them of ideological agitation and of inciting the population against their ruler the emperor. Three hundred Calvinist and Lutheran priests and teachers were sentenced to death on the charge of treason against the Emperor and the Kingdom in April 1674 (Péter: 1983, 31–39.). The Habsburg administration was seriously preoccupied with the threat posed by the ideological and political importance of the Protestant intelligentsia. The highly influential role displayed by the Protestant clergy constituted a difficult impediment for the military, political and confessional expansion of the empire.

Moreover, those Calvinist and Lutheran priests who had refused to recant were sent to labour as galley-slaves in 1675. Those who survived this extreme punishment were released only after the political intervention of the Dutch Republic, when the Habsburgs, probably under the international political pressure and burdened by multiple wars, decided to withdraw the initial sentence in 1676.² In the meantime a number of parishes were violently occupied and Calvinist or Lutheran communities and their priests regularly persecuted. Thus the sufferings of the priests and the heroic fight and death of the rebels must have been regarded as almost martyr-like undertakings by a small number of extraordinary men. Moreover, political freedom became identified with religious and confessional freedom. Thus “national church” and the “homeland” were again brought closer to each other and integrated in the common desires, expectations and actions of both suffering priests and fighting rebels. Most importantly, due to their often similar end, their unavoidable death occurring in combat or during persecution, both priests and soldiers might have easily become *martyrs*, or they could represent the quintessence of the *nation*, which was to define itself in this extreme experience (Tóth: 2010, 549–550).

² For a detailed historical account of the events and its recent evaluation see Makkai: 1976; Csorba/Fazakas/Imre/Tóth: 2012; Fazakas/Imre/Szárász: 2015.

2.1 The Historiographical Particularities of the Persecution as a Realm of Memory

The above mentioned historical data and contexts have a relevant metahistorical aspect as well. Early modern Tripartite Hungary was a multid denominational, multi-ethnic and multicultural state, one that was predisposed to inner tensions nurtured by the clashes between majorities and minorities. Therefore, every attempt to produce historical narratives of these tormented times is inescapably doomed to the articulation of some biased and only partially satisfactory accounts. This section intends to construe the process how the narratives of persecution forged a prominent realm of memory expropriated by official Hungarian nationalism.

Not only the outcome of the persecution scandal (the liberation of the prisoners from the galleys), but the affair altogether received remarkable international attention. A consistent body of texts were written by the refugees in the immediate aftermath of the events. The addressees were, first of all, those influential German, Dutch or English persons or institutions that were predisposed to help them. For their destiny reserved them a new type of affliction. After having been liberated from slavery, they became religious refugees, who were not allowed to return to their fatherland. Indeed, some of them never went home, though this option might have been less realistic in 1676. However, this corpus of texts displays a large variety in terms of language (Latin, German, and Hungarian), genre or functions. There is a distinct body of narrative accounts providing a detailed account of the atrocities and violent treatment the persecuted were subject to (Fabiny: 1975, 258–264). Furthermore, there is another significant corpus of publications (tractates, sermons, orations or dissertations) reflecting upon the concept of martyrdom and persecution and their theological evaluation.

Apparently this literary production had two distinct foci. The Latin and German texts, predominantly produced by Lutheran émigrés, were addressed first of all to a Western European readership in order to obtain support in exile. The Latin and Hungarian texts, sometimes authored by Calvinists as well, aimed to inform the Hungarians, especially the social elite and the high ranking Protestant clergy. It seems that the corpus, resulting from this binary literary production, had been asymmetrically assimilated in the collective memory of the Hungarian Protestant Churches. In addition, the Hungarian theological scholarship of the nineteenth century has not been able to eliminate confessional biased prejudices or refrain from the temptation of official nationalism. Thus, they profusely contributed to transforming the *persecutio decennalis* into a Calvinist memorable historical event. For instance, the theological elite of Debrecen (the so-called Calvinist Rome) had procured the initiative to forging a

national site of memory (*lieux de mémoire*)³ based upon the events of persecution from 1671 to 1681. This, in spite of the fact that none of the victims of the persecution originated from Debrecen, instead relying on political propaganda and significant theological research. The ritual gestures of commemoration had undeniably been enhanced by nationalistic considerations as well, for it culminated in the erection of a memorial column in the centre of Debrecen, which took place in 1895, just one year before the grandiose set of events dedicated to the celebration of the Millennium (Geró: 1995, 203–220; Fazakas: 2015, 179–193).

The palpable consequence of this biased approach resulted in promoting both the Calvinist accounts of the persecution and the martyrological reflections as the paramount sources of the events and the conceptual quintessence of commemorated sufferings. In fact, while the experience of persecution was mostly reduced to the testimony of Calvinist sufferers, martyrology became transfigured into a Calvinist tenet endorsing a nationalistic master narrative about the Hungarian Reformation. According to its vision, early modern Reformation was depicted as set of consecutive sufferings valiantly undertaken by oppressed, but pious Hungarian Calvinists resolute to be martyrs in this fight for religion and freedom. Accordingly, the Latin account of Bálint Kocsi Csergő (*Narratio brevis de oppressa libertate Ecclesiarum Hungariorum*), one of the Calvinist priests who had been sentenced to death and then sent to the galleys to work as a slave, soon gained absolute authority. The work became regarded as the standard source of the events in terms of historical veracity. Indeed, this text had been widely circulated: first, it was partially published in 1728 (Lampe: 1728, 746–919). Then, Péter Bod, a forerunner of Calvinist ecclesiastical historiography, produced a Hungarian translation of it. Though it was printed out only in 1866, the translation was extremely popular during the eighteenth century, as several surviving copies testify for this fact.

In a similar manner, the Calvinist martyrology wrote by István Nagy Szőnyi in 1675 had been established as the major work of the Hungarian Protestant martyrological tradition. Indeed, Nagy Szőnyi's book, strictly judging from a chronological perspective, may well have been the first ever published item of Hungarian martyrology. Yet, it cannot replace or invalidate those manuscripts or prints authored by Non-Hungarian Lutheran refugees, that were produced shortly after or even simultaneously with Nagy Szőnyi's work. Having given absolute exclusivity to a Hungarian Calvinist publication, despite its contemporary unquestionable appeal to a very large public, the scholarship created a crass misjudgement of the emergence of Hungarian Protestant martyrological paradigm, with an untenable emphasis on Hungarian Calvinist discourse at the

3 I use the term and concept promoted by Pierre Nora. For further details see: Nora: 1989, 18–19. For the French original see Nora: 1984.

expense of the Non-Hungarian Lutheran contributions, mostly published in Latin or German.

2.2 The Calvinist Paradigm of Early Modern Hungarian Martyrology

The aim of this subsection is to refer to the most important Calvinist author, whose work established the dominant discourse of martyrdom suffered during the *persecutio decennalis*. Moreover, this short survey is intended to expose an overview of how martyrs and martyrdom had been perceived and how this discourse integrated the western tradition reaching back to the sixteenth century. Having provided a sketch of what Calvinist martyrology consisted of, we will have a better understanding of the Lutheran contribution ignored or unjustly overlooked by the Hungarian scholarship.

István Nagy Szőnyi (1633–1709) promoted a powerful pattern of martyrology that was assimilated not only as theological teaching, but as an ideology for resistance against Habsburg oppression. Nagy Szőnyi studied first in Debrecen, then in Utrecht and Groningen. After his return to Hungary, he became the minister of Torna. He was unable to remain there, since he was banished by the Jesuits with the military support provided by the Habsburgs (1671). This humiliating event deeply influenced his life. Forced to leave, he went to Debrecen, then to Zilah (*Rom. Zalău*) in Transylvania. In 1675 he joined the army of the refugees and was active as a preacher. His first work, signed with the telling *nom-de-plume* Philopatrus, was entitled “The Pious Champion” and ostensibly dedicated to the memory of Gustavus Adolphus, the great protector of European Protestantism. In fact, Nagy Szőnyi’s intention was to adopt the motif of the *miles Christi* or *athleta Christi* modelled on Gustavus’s example, in order to explore the implications of the struggle for religious and political freedom (Tóth: 2015b, 419). The subtitle of the work clearly reveals his preoccupation to create multiple parallels between the deeds of the late king, the spiritual fight of the Protestant priests and the military combat undertaken by the refugees: “The Short History of the Pious Champion or the Late Sovereign Gustavus Adolphus King of Sweden and his most praiseworthy fight for bodily and spiritual freedom” (Nagy Szőnyi 1675a: A1r).

Nagy Szőnyi’s second book, also published in the same year (Nagy Szőnyi: 1675b), crowned his previous efforts to design a Calvinist martyrology following the example of the major early modern martyrologies from John Foxe to Pantaleonus or Crespin. This time he presented the archetype of the martyr equally committed to the True Church as *Ecclesia* and the fatherland as *Patria*. Like Foxe, his main concern was to impregnate the notion of martyr with a certain everyday rationality so as to persuade his readers that every Christian could potentially

become a martyr (Tóth: 2015b, 420–421). In this way, the saint of the Catholic hagiographic tradition, whose superhuman character was illustrated by the miracles he so easily performed, was replaced with the much different character of the *elect*: the godly, but average man, willing to undertake the renewed task of the martyr which involved not necessary death, but the act of witnessing:

He who bears witness to the Justice of Christ and undertakes in any possible manner suffering for the Gospel's truth is declared to be a martyr. In this broad sense, therefore, all those persons who serve the Lord honestly with their minds and souls every day, are considered to be martyrs, for they bear witness to the Truth (Nagy Szőnyi 1675b: 5).

Thus, Nagy Szőnyi's greatest achievement consisted of the articulation of a martyrdom concept. A concept that incorporated ten disparate categories, and only the tenth reiterated the idea that he who sacrificed his/her life for the truth of the gospel was surely a martyr. The remaining nine categories covered basically every type of witnessing, including exile, religious perseverance and steadfastness. Accordingly, every survivor, who suffered persecution and managed to endure it with patience and steadfastness, had fulfilled the act of witnessing. He became a confessor and eventually a martyr. Certainly, Nagy Szőnyi's martyrology imitated the works of the early modern standard publications, with an obvious inclination towards the Huguenot and Calvinist tradition. Amongst Nagy Szőnyi's early modern sources, the letters of Calvin (Béze: 1575) occupied a distinguished position and exercised an unchallenged authority. Besides that, the Hungarian martyrologist relied on the ancient tradition starting with Tertullian, including the well-known and quoted authors such as Eusebius, Cyprian, Gregory of Nazianzus, Augustine, etc.

All in all, Nagy Szőnyi was successful in his endeavour of offering a pattern of conduct that served and legitimized both the fight for the true church and the earthly resistance against the Habsburgs. Accordingly, the Calvinist elite, mostly lay people, embraced this martyrology as a blueprint for a genuine self-fashioning meant to justify political decisions or their individual display of loyalty. Soon, political refugees or imprisoned statesmen chose to equate their condition with martyrdom. They wholeheartedly assimilated the identity of a martyr in their ego-document in order to justify their political loyalty or the lack of it. It is possible to conclude that this Calvinist martyrology was more like a political theology of loyalty that came as a necessary discourse to fortify the resistance against the Habsburg absolutism and nurture the fight for religious and political freedom (Tóth: 2015b, 420–421).

3. The Lutheran Discourse of Non-Hungarian Authors

There is a corpus of Latin and German texts written by Lutheran refugees that could justly be qualified as seminal part of the early modern Hungarian Protestant martyrological culture and literature. These texts, despite the shared traumatic experience of the *persecutio decennalis*, emerged from different historical and theological contexts and antecedents. For Lutherans inhabiting the towns of Upper Hungary soon acquired a very clear understanding of the Habsburg political agenda concerning the treatment of Protestant communities: persecuted Protestant Bohemian communities often found refuge there after 1620 (Urbanek: 2010, 587–610). Furthermore, as Urbanek observed, significant pieces of the exilic literary culture production occasioned by the displacement of Bohemian Protestant reached Upper Hungary (Urbanek: 2010, 591–592). While the Calvinist Comenius's work, *Historia persecutionum ecclesiae Bohemicae*⁴ provided a narrative account of Bohemian persecution in the spirit of the standardized western martyrological literature, Natus Fabianus's treatise (*Modesta solutio quaestionis de fuga in persecutione*) set forth a genuine Lutheran standpoint concerning the issue whether escape or running away was allowed during persecution (Comenius: 1648; Fabianus: 1675). This thesis, reaching back to Tertullian and its followers, was indeed of paramount importance and gained so much significance and actuality later on that it was republished in Klausenburg, Transylvania. It was published together with the first pieces of the newly emerged Hungarian martyrological literature in 1675. All in all, it appears that the events occasioned by the persecution of Bohemian Protestants constituted a frightful example and antecedent of the Habsburg intentions in the early 1670. It is almost certain that the non-Hungarian Lutheran ethnics of Upper Hungary not only followed the events in Bohemia after the Battle of White Mountain (1620), but were also keen to read and assimilate those German and Latin texts that provided an account of the events and a theological explanation of the persecution as well.

Having sketched this historical context, it is time to survey some of the texts authored by Non-Hungarian Lutherans deported or forced into exile from Upper Hungary. There is a distinct group of Lutheran memoirists, who recorded their experiences while being imprisoned or brought to trial. The uniqueness of their biographical works is due to their eye-witness testimony, complemented by a certain theological reflection concerning their martyrdom. Tobiás Masznicus (*Unerhörter Gefängniss-Process*), Johannes Simonides (*Galeria Omnium Sanctorum*, 1676) and Georgius Lani (*Funda Davidis, Narratio Historica Captivitatis*

4 This book had an impressive international reception, as several editions and translation were brought to light after its first appearance (Urbanek: 2010, 599).

Papisticae and *Papistische Gefängniss*, all 1676) were all persecuted Lutheran priests, who had refused to recant or admit the invented charges of high treason (*lesae majestatis*). After they had escaped in 1675, they wrote and published their memories either in Latin or in German, which had some far reaching consequences, as we have already seen. As they shared often the same prison cell, let alone the common traumatic experiences, their narratives contain overlapping episodes, facts, or statements. But beside these unavoidable reiterations, they do share a common belief of their witnessing and acting as martyrs. This inner conviction originated from their Lutheran education, determining their perception and judgement upon being brought to trial and persecuted, and then forced into exile. For what they had understood was that confronted with a secular authority, that is the representatives of the Habsburg Emperor, they were to decide whether to obey that earthly ruler over God. As their Lutheran education warned them that “no one has power over the soul except God” (Luther: 1991, 28) they would not obey and refused conversion to Catholicism. They strictly followed Luther’s advice formulated in his work *On Secular Authority* that reads like this:

So, if a prince or a secular lord commands you to adhere to the papacy, to believe this or that, or to surrender books, then your answer should be: it is not fitting for Lucifer to sit next to God. My good Lord, I owe you obedience with my life and goods. Command me what lies within the limits of your authority, and I will obey. But if you command me to believe, or to surrender my books, I will not obey. For then you [will have] become a tyrant and overreached yourself, commanding where you have neither right nor power. If he then takes away your goods and punishes you for your disobedience, then blessed are you, and you should thank God for counting you worthy to suffer for the sake of his Word. Let the fool rage; he shall surely find his judge. But I say to you: if you don’t resist him and let him take away your faith or your books, then you will truly have denied God (Luther: 1991, 29).

This genre focussing on the trustworthy reproduction of facts was not suitable for displaying a sophisticated argumentation of what martyrdom consisted of. Thus, several of these memoirists had also chosen to rely on other genres as well, so that they would expose a sound, scripturally and dogmatically established martyrological discourse.⁵

5 Several aspects of religious persecution had been examined in the writings of these Lutheran exiles ranging from theology to law: Simmonides: 1679; Lani: 1682; Günther: 1675; Klesch 1675; Klesch: 1713; Krüger 1674

3.1 Georgius Lani and his Martyrology: a Lutheran perspective

Georgius Lani (1646–1701) was one of those talented Lutherans⁶ who had profited of a prolonged stay abroad.⁶ After he had studied theology and philosophy in Wittenberg starting in 1662, he turned back to start a career as rector and parish priest in Korpona, Upper Hungary. He was summoned to appear in front of the court in March 1674. When he refused to sign and accept the charges, he was imprisoned. Furthermore, since he had survived the harshness of the prison conditions and remained resolute, he was chosen to be sent to the galleys. During the difficult travel, when they almost reached Naples at Capra Cotta, he profited of the momentary disregard of the military escort and escaped. Though he was not captured, he was not allowed to return to his home. Thus, he became a religious refugee who joined his liberated prison-fellows and went to German territories in 1676. He found support there and established himself in Leipzig. Here, he carried on with his studies, obtained a doctorate and never turned back home. He wrote several German and Latin texts dealing with his experience of being persecuted and various theological issues, with a special focus on martyrology. These latter texts have never been examined by Hungarian scholarship and they have never been incorporated in the canonized corpus of the sources related to the *persecutio decennalis* or the early modern Hungarian Protestant martyrology.

Yet, according to the testimony of both Lutheran and Calvinist accounts of Lani's prison-fellows, he sometimes acted as the spokesman of the imprisoned priest. There was a most memorable episode that had not only been recalled by Lani, but also confirmed by the memoirs of other witnesses, in the imprisoned priest threatened by a mocking colonel that soon the galleys would teach them what Catholicism consists of: "...*brevi vos docebunt, quid sit fides catholica*" (Lampe: 1728, 884). Lani reacted with a sublime irony, reminding the taunting officer that they were quite aware of what true Catholicism meant in terms of teaching, and then very aptly he started reciting the statements of the Athanasian Creed. Reiterating the assertions focussed on trinity or the significance of Christ, but not that of the pope, Lani's riposte was truly poignant. When he concluded with the claim that they were true and genuine Catholics ("*sumus veri et genuini Catholici*") the provoker remained speechless. For Lani alluded to the fact that the Primitive Church and its doctrine had been polluted by Arian innovations. This also qualified, according to Protestant standpoint, as internal persecution (*persecutio interna*). It could also applied to the present of the conversation, so the cast could easily been reversed. While the imprisoned priest acted as the representatives of the True Church, their Catholic warders

6 For further details concerning Lani's life and oeuvre see: Kowalska: 2007a, 20–21.

became the innovators and enemies of true Catholicism. Hence, Lani's act seemed an overtly imitation of Luther's commitment to creedal tradition (Kolb: 2009, 166). For Lani established his and his prison fellows' true 'catholicism' through the identification with the Book of Concorde whereby he also suggested a doctrinal continuity with the Primitive Church (Backus: 2003, 326–330). In this context, early modern Catholicism appeared as a dangerous deviation. Moreover, it could be seen as the *Falsa Ecclesia* persecuting the martyrs and confessors of the True Church, that is the Reformed Church. It is almost certain that Lani's answer was equally important for the prisoners as well, for it was a reformulation of the aim of their afflictions. Lani not only ridiculed his opponent, but reminded his afflicted fellows that their teaching was an orthodox doctrine and they were acting as the confessors of the True Church, that is the persecuted Reformed Church.

However, Lani's most important work that epitomized his perception and teaching of martyrdom was an oration written after 1676, but first published in 1682. The *Oratio de Martyrio* is a remarkable text that blended Lani's personal memories and experience of persecution with an assimilated knowledge of predominantly Lutheran intent. Thus, one can fathom the depths of his discourse, for he relied on scriptural bases complemented by a consistent body of Lutheran authorities covering various thematic areas from ecclesiology to history and apocalypticism. The so called *Opuscula philologicae* added to the text of this oration shows that it is not only a serious piece of erudite scholarship and philological accuracy, but a spectacular access to his sources and applied readings.

Lani starts his oration with the declared aim of securing his audience's attention. Relying on the *captatio benevolentiae*, he points out from the very beginning, that he himself had suffered for Christ: "*ob Christum me pati*" (Lani: 1682, 223). In addition, he sets forth the definition of martyrdom, insisting on the idea that martyrs emerge only there where sacred men (*sanctorum virorum*) gather. Then he proceeds to the historical survey of persecution, starting with the apostles and ending with the persecuted confessors of 1674 (Lani: 1682, 224–225). While enumerating the martyrs (Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, Cyprian of Carthage or Iraeneus Bishop of Lugdunum), Lani emphasizes the steadfastness of their soul (*constantia animae*) while being afflicted. In a further step, he mentions the ultimate reward of martyrdom: the crown of immortality (*immortalitatis corona*), also known as the crown of the martyrs, that is the equivalent of eternal life (Lani 1682, 230). Here, Lani follows the classic thesis grounded on the famous biblical passage: "...*dabo tibi coronam vitae* (Rev. 2. 11)."

Finally, after the survey of the bloodiest persecutors of the church that covered an impressive timespan from the Roman Valerianus to the tragic events of 1674 taking place in Royal Hungary, he focusses on depicting a concluding apoc-

alyptical scene. In doing so, he quotes the Book of Revelation (17:2, 17:12 and 18:20) and suggests that martyrdom as an act of witnessing would eventually fulfil its utmost aim when the Second Advent took place. The perspective of Parousia implies the idea that the church was involved in an eschatological conflict. Lani, moving along the same line with Luther and the Lutheran tradition, suggests that there is this continuous fight between believers willing to act as instruments for affirming Gods truth versus the Satan (Kolb: 2009, 169). The final consummation is regarded to be the terminal act of human history, again based on the imagery of the Book or Revelation. This also rewards all those who bore witness to the truth or martyred themselves for the same reason. Lani completes his discourse with an impelling request addressed to Jesus to come without delay: “*Veni o Domine Jesu, noli tardare!*” (Lani: 1682, 235).

It would be too simplistic to insist with the probation of the Lutheran inspiration of this master-narrative exposing a historical and eschatological view of the persecution endured by the True Church and its martyrs. Yet, one can hardly ignore that relating the experience of persecution to an apocalyptic outcome, in order to envisage martyrdom as an act of confessing and contribution to an eschatological combat refers to the Lutheran heritage as well. If not solely Luther’s, then Melanchthon’s and Chytraeus’ works had certainly constituted some relevant textual contexts and antecedents. Lani seems to have been assimilated a sophisticated sense of historicity that served him to articulate a narrative, endorsing the claim of continuity between the Primitive Church and the Reformed Church. This approach comes very close to Melanchthon’s intention for using history to reveal a genealogy of orthodoxy (Backus: 2003, 329). Inner differentiation of historiographic discourse, let alone the distinction between sacred and profane history, and finally the articulation of ecclesiastical history, can be qualified as a Lutheran enterprise, started by Melanchthon’s edition of the *Chronicon Carionis* and carried on by Chytraeus’s *De lectione historiarum recte instituenda* (Melanchthon: 1561; Chytraeus: 1564). Lani, no wonder, seems to be familiar with this tradition, as both authors had a significant reception in early modern Hungary.

Furthermore, Lani’s account of persecution as a narrative of ecclesiastical history seems to be akin to Chytraeus’ other work *Explicatio Apocalypsis Ioannis*, or at least to its chapter dedicated to the examination of martyrdom (Chytraeus: 1554, 135–147). In point of the fact, Lani’s account progressed along the same structural pattern. The book starts with the definition of martyrdom and is complemented with the enumeration of apostles and martyrs from the Primitive Church to early modern times, displaying a continuous series of experiences of persecutions. It ends with the Apocalyptic set of the final consummation. Moreover, Chytraeus treatment of martyrdom was based on the same biblical

passages, focussing on the Book of Revelation and the significance of the fifth seal.⁷

Nonetheless, Lani's perception of martyrdom had been entangled in several textual and historical-theological contexts. In his *nota philologicae* added to his oration, he only partially revealed the sources he had relied upon. Thus, further investigations are needed to fathom the complexity of the tradition he actually assimilated and applied in his text. When treating the concept proper, he differentiated between two types of martyrdom: one that involved bloodshed and another one that did not. Furthermore this typology of *martyrium cruentum* and *incruentum* was rendered to the more prevalent differentiation between martyrs and confessors:


[Martyres] Duae vulgo constituuntur species Martyrii. Incruentum, quod eorum est Confessorum Christi, qui sanvinem quidem non fundunt, sed pro Christo & veritate Evengelii multa indigna, calumnias, ignominiam, carceres, exilia & infinita alia pericula forti subeunt & sustinent animo, parati ipsam quoque subire mortem, si ita Deus velit, & necessitas ferat. *Alterum est Cruentum* eorum, qui ita libere Christum corum Tyrannis profitentur, ut ipso actu non bona modo omnia negligant, sed & vitam ac sangvinem profundant (Lani: 1682, 240–241).

Accordingly, Lani explains that the confessors bore witness to Christ and the truth of the Gospel. Therefore, they were willing to endure with patience prison, exile and all kinds of calamities or sometimes even death, providing that God wanted it or necessity imposed it. As for martyrs, they bore witness to Christ in front of the tyrants and willingly shed their blood or sacrifice their lives. The most relevant textual antecedent articulating this typology is the shared tradition of the Fathers: Lani refers to Cyprian and Augustin. At this point, Lani performs the standard procedure, as early modern martyrologies unmistakably relied on a corpus or martyrological literature dominated by the authority of Tertullian, Origen and Gregory or the aforementioned authors.

Still, in Lani's case there is a second context of applied texts: the corpus of early modern and exclusively Lutheran ecclesiastical history. Bebelius's *Antiquitates Ecclesiae* constituted one of the major sources of Lani's account regarding the persecution of the true church (Bebelius: 1669). Still, Lani not only borrowed data, narratives, and historical facts, but he apparently gained inspiration from Bebelius, when defining the concept of martyrdom and the differentiation between martyrs and confessors. Lani's concept of *martyrium cruentum* and *incruentum* evolved into the differentiation between martyrs and confessors seems akin to Bebelius's approach: "...ex his alii errant confessores, alii martyres:


⁷ Irena Backus dedicated a whole chapter elaborating on David Chytraeus and his *Explicatio Apocalypsis Ioannis* (Backus: 2000, 113–133).

confessores dicebantur, qui dira quiddem passi, vita tamen mulctati non esset, qua qui mulctabantur, dicebantur martyres” (Bebbelius: 1669, 612).

Yet, I consider that there is one more Lutheran authority that exercised the most determining influence upon him in this matter. Leonhard Hutterus’s (1563–1616) *Loci Communes theologici* was a well-known book in early modern Royal Hungary. Lani might therefore not have any difficulty in procuring it. It appears that Hutterus was the paramount source for Lani’s definition of martyrdom, for a comparison between Lány’s  and Hutterus’s reveals a striking similarity:

Martyrij duae vulgo constituuntur species: Unum Incruentum, quod eorum est confessorum Christi, qui sanguinem quidem non fundunt: sed pro Christo & veritate Evangelij multa indigna calumnias, ignominiam, carceres, exilia, & alia pericula forti subeunt & sustinent animum: parati, ipsam, quoque subire mortem, ipsa ita Deus velit, & necessitas ferat.

Alterum est Cruentum, eorum, qui ita libere Christum coram Tyrannis profitentur, ut ipso acto non bona modo omnia negligant, sed & vitam ac sanguinem profundant. Et hi docente, Augustino, ac ante ipsum Cypriano, [...] pro Martyribus tantum habit fuerunt. Martyres enim sunt, inquit Augustinus, qui propter testimonium Christi, diversis passionibus debilitati sunt, & usque ad mortem pro veritate decertarunt. Tom. 8. In Psal. 118.⁸ Quanquam Cyprianus priores illos ex censu Martyrum non eximit: Non enim, inquit, illi defuerunt tormentus; sed tormenta defuerunt illis. Epist. Lib. 3. Epist. 6 (Hutterus: 1661, 936).

It appears that Lani simply took over Hutterus’s definition and sources (Cyprian, Augustine) still we must not assume that he was not familiar with the Church father.  matter of fact, he accomplishes a genuine Lutheran approach to this heritage. In doing so, he follows Gerhardus’s guide to Patristics (1673), a book that he referred to in his oration, as well (Lani: 1682, 243). In addition, as testified by his references, he consulted Johan Gottfried Olearius’s alphabetical lexicon (1673) that complemented Gerhardus’s book. Both authors provide a detailed account of Cyprian’s and Augustine’s lives and works.⁹ It is worth mentioning that Lani consequently remained committed to the Lutheran tradition in this respect as well, as he was aware of the results of Lutherans Patristics and was keen to apply it to his martyrology.

8 The passage in Augustine referred to reads like this: “.illos qui propter testimonium Christi diversis passionibus humiliati sunt, et usque ad mortem pro veritate certarunt, non testes, quod latine utique possemus, sed graece martyres appellamus”. (http://www.augustinus.it/latino/esposizioni_salmi/index2.htm) (Augustine, Enarratio in Psalmos, Psalmus 118, Sermo 9).

9 Olearius on Augustine and Cyprian: Olearius 1673, 57–60, 123–128. Gerhardus on Augustine and Cyprian: Gerhardus 1673, 359–402, 162–176.

The conclusion is that Lani was perseverant in imitating and applying the Lutheran tradition, when constructing his own perception of martyrdom. One that was partially built on his own experience of persecution and then it was complemented by a thorough assimilated knowledge resulting from his Lutheran conviction, and most importantly his education. It has become clear during this close reading that martyrdom functioned as a comprehensive topic to exhibit the Lutheran perception of ecclesiastical history and to probate the special Lutheran treatment of tradition, in terms of selecting and applying the writings of the Church Fathers. Furthermore, Lani's endeavour to grasp the quintessence of martyrdom, that is confessing related to the eschatological combat between the true church and the Satan, fostered the application of the apocalypticism promoted by Luther and Chytraeus. It is, therefore, quite possible that Lani's attempt to articulate a martyrological discourse acted as the equivalent of collecting and incorporating the most significant items and the up-to-date results of the Lutheran scholarship and traditions.

4. Conclusion

Georgius Lani was certainly not the only Lutheran, who was to write about his persecution experience after liberation. A cohort of Lutheran émigrés, who left Royal Hungary at the beginning of 1670s, had substantially contributed to the emergence of a Lutheran martyrology organically linked to the early modern Hungarian Protestant martyrological tradition (Kowalska: 2007b, 239). Johannes Simonides, a Lutheran priest who shared prison with Lani and was also lucky to escape, published a work treating the issue of exile and martyrdom entitled *Exul predicamentalis* (1679), after having written a narrative account of his imprisonment. Furthermore Esaias Pilarik, the offspring of an important Lutheran family from Upper Hungary, after having been cited to the same court in 1674, chose to migrate instead of converting to Catholicism. As a religious refugee, he found support in Wittenberg where he carried on his studies, as he had written and then defended a theological dissertation dealing with the issue of persecution: *De Persecutione Verae Ecclesiae* (Pilarik: 1676). Another Lutheran victim of persecution, Georgius Krüeger appears to be the author of a philosophical disputation, again dealing with exile: *Disputatio philosophica-practica de exilio* (Krüeger: 1674). All in all, it has become rather clear that the Lutheran elite had constantly been preoccupied by the persecution, its course of events, and its theological significance. Not only those people that had been sent to the galleys, but a previous generation or wave of religious migrants, who had chosen exile right at the beginning of the 1670s were involved in writing about persecution.

The aim of this case study has been to improve the evaluation of the early modern Hungarian Protestant Martyrology by refuting some biased claims of nineteenth century scholarship and to point out the significance of the Lutheran contribution. Though Luther himself was clearly not a theoretician of martyrology, still his ideas of confessing the true faith complemented by his ecclesiology had immensely contributed to the emergence of a paradigm carved and sophisticated by further generations of Lutherans from Rabus to the representatives of the Magdeburg Centuries.¹¹ Thus, the Lutheran Lani of Royal Hungary had at his disposal an impressive tradition. One that enabled him to transpose his personal experience of being persecuted into a coherent tenet. One that had clearly influenced the early modern perception of being Protestant, rebel or patriot in front of a secular authority determined to deny the right of being so. Early modern Hungarian Calvinists and Lutherans had surely been aware of it all the time, for it is just the contingent political heritage of a romantic scholarship that was tended to sink it into oblivion.

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11 For a detailed evaluation of Luther's martyrological views see Kolb: 1987; Kolb: 2003; Kolb: 2009.

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