

# Andreas Kesler on Martyrdom and Migration (1630)

## Abstract

In 1630, the Lutheran theologian Andreas Kesler (1595-1643) published a detailed description of the persecution to which Christians were being subjected. In his account, he draws a parallel between the persecution of Christians in antiquity and the expulsion of Protestants during the Counterreformation. In Kesler's view, the expellees were at once a test of the strength of an individual's belief and a task, for it was the duty of a true Christian to help the "Exulanten," as these Protestant refugees were known. However, according to Kesler this help was only to be granted to "real Exulanten": people who merely passed themselves off as Protestant refugees in order to finagle a friendly reception in Lutheran countries were not to be given any assistance.

## Source

We should carefully receive the real *Exulanten*: 1. Accept them gladly, 2. Speak to them amiably with comforting words, 3. Advise them according to their ability. Especially 1. pastors, 2. persons of authority, and 3. heads of families should be reminded of their positions, because additionally, dear Christian, at the time of persecution many frightened believers in Christ voluntarily give themselves over to suffering, and are often forcibly chased out of the country with much violence being done to their families. Because the church has a large number of exiles, or expelled Christians, we must speak privately about them and ask how we should act towards them. Christian means fair, so thorough research must be undertaken to determine whether a person is a true Christian exile, because a great deal of fraud occurs in this evil world and many a scoundrel passes himself off as an *Exulant*. Real refugees are not people who travel around the country because they are lazy and get handouts from people fraudulently; secondly, they are not people who have to leave the country because of offenses they committed, and thirdly, they are not people who have been sent out into the land to find out what the common practice is. The first category are "vagantes" or vagabonds; the second, "relegati" or expelled persons; and the third, "exploratores" or spies. Instead, the real exiles – pastors, beadles and school caretakers, politicians and worldly people, also heads of families, handworkers, townspeople and peasants, men and women – are those people who must leave the country, away from their families and into hardship on account of the pure religion, and who are therefore driven by deprivation; they are good Christian people, who still sit quietly, appealing for assistance and a helping hand. For that reason, pastors, church fathers, church treasurers, and others, each in his profession, should diligently exercise caution and obtain certain information from certificates, documents, and other fundamental evidence, so that those evil individuals are not strengthened in their wickedness and those real exiles are not deprived of what belongs to them on account of their fearlessness.

Source: Andreas Kesler and Patientia Christiana, *Außföhrlicher Tractat Von der Kirchen Christi Persecution oder Verfolgung bey diesen betrübten Zeiten*. Coburg, 1630, pp. 911-14.

---

Translation: Kathleen Dell'Orto

Recommended Citation: Andreas Kesler on Martyrdom and Migration (1630), published in: German History Intersections, <<https://germanhistory-intersections.org/en/migration/ghis:document-76>> [August 23, 2025].