

Ole Peter Grell. *Brethren in Christ: A Calvinist Network in Reformation Europe*.

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Two fundamental questions guide this study. To begin, how did a group of wealthy godly merchants, assisted by Reformed ministers — “Brethren in Christ,” as they styled themselves in their correspondence — shape international Calvinist identity from the mid-sixteenth through the mid-seventeenth century? The second and related query asks how this network responded to the momentous upheavals that beset German Calvinists, especially those in the Palatinate, during the Thirty Years War. A relentless persecution and successive waves of forced migration are,

in Grell's view, paradigmatic of the landscape of early modern Reformed Protestantism. A penchant for intermarriage as well as robust commercial and financial attachments among artisans and merchants reinforced the religious and cultural identity attached to the diaspora. An international cadre of pastors, trained at the Academy of Geneva, established in 1559, and in later decades at similar institutions in France, Germany, and the Netherlands, informed and heightened a shared sense of election and providential passage, both spiritual and physical. This corporate experience also fostered an acute awareness of fellow sufferers and the unquestioned obligation to come to their assistance. Thus, the participants in this transnational Calvinist association raised considerable funds to help relieve the suffering of Reformed refugees expelled from the Upper and Lower Palatinate beginning in the second decade of the seventeenth century.

Grell explores these and related issues through a close reading of the remarkable peregrinations of four Reformed Italian merchant families — the Calandrinis, Burlamachis, Diodatis, and Turrettinis — over three generations. Originally from Lucca in Tuscany, they fled Italy during the 1560s to avoid persecution. Travelling initially to Lyon, family members soon moved to Paris and Sedan, and eventually spread across Western Europe from Geneva to imperial cities such as Frankfurt and Nuremberg, and beyond to Amsterdam, Antwerp, and London. These four prominent and wealthy families along with their acquaintances are fascinating in their own right in addition to serving as a model for understanding broader historical developments.

That these families were Luchesse in their origins is not surprising. The city was an early and flourishing center of Protestant activity, especially among the civic and intellectual elite. Peter Martyr Vermigli is perhaps its best-known citizen. When the families under consideration left in the 1560s, the venture appears to have been well-planned and orderly. Most critically, they retained their financial assets. The failure of the Reformation at Lyon meant that this first stage of the journey was no more than a stopover. Paris, beset by the Wars of Religion, proved no more hospitable; the independent enclave principality of Sedan seemed more promising. Yet in the aftermath of the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre, France was singularly uninviting. Some family members moved to Geneva, the great religious refuge; others to the commercial centers of Germany and the Low Countries. Here, the Reformed merchants from Lucca hit their stride. An international Calvinist network, founded on the collective experience of suffering and exile, and now fortified by prosperity and intermarriage, emerged.

The religious purpose to which the men of the association applied themselves (few women figure in this tale, except as wives and mothers) is crucial to Grell's thesis. With their considerable ties across Protestant Europe, and their confessional commitment and financial expertise, they were able to solicit and administer substantial charitable funds for the relief of coreligionists displaced by the horrors of the Thirty Years' War. Collections from the British Isles, the Netherlands, Swiss cantons, and France attest to the range and influence of the "Brethren in Christ."

Grell anchors his analysis in several valuable, detailed histories — narratives of flight and exile, anxiety and distress — written by family members. The material is illuminating, encompassing and evocative: it allows Grell to develop his perception of the conjunction of spiritual and social concerns among Reformed refugees from the commercial and financial elite. Still, he might have given greater attention to the manner in which the authors fashioned their stories both consciously and unconsciously. In addition, the study can occasionally be a tedious recounting of the endless particulars of comings and goings, births and deaths, financial arrangements and business transactions. On the other hand, the richness of detail provides the reader with a profound appreciation for the meaning of religious identity in early modern Europe.

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