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Poor Relief *and* Protestantism

*The Evolution of Social Welfare
in Sixteenth-Century Emden*

Timothy G. Fehler

Poor Relief and Protestantism

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in Sixteenth-Century Emden

TIMOTHY G. FEHLER

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Timothy G. Fehler
Furman University
1999

Abbreviations

ArchGK	Archiv der Grossen Kirche in Emden
ARG	<i>Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte</i>
BRN	<i>Bibliotheca Reformatoria Neerlandica</i> , ed. S. Cramer and F. Pijper, 10 vols (The Hague, 1903–14)
EJb	<i>Emder Jahrbuch</i> (Jahrbuch der Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst und vaterländische Altertümer zu Emden)
EKP	Emder Kontrakten-Protokolle; STAA, Rep. 234
<i>Fremdlingen I</i>	Account book of the <i>fremdlingen</i> deacons, 1558–68
<i>Fremdlingen II</i>	Account book of the <i>fremdlingen</i> deacons, 1569–75
KRP	Emden Kirchenratsprotokolle; Heinz Schilling and Klaus-Dieter Schreiber (eds), <i>Die Kirchenratsprotokolle der reformierten Gemeinde Emden 1557–1620</i> (2 vols, Cologne, 1989–92); the pages are numbered sequentially in the two volumes (vol. i=pages 1–553; vol. ii=pages 556–1200)
OUB	<i>Ostfriesisches Urkundenbuch</i> , ed. Ernst Friedlaender, 2 vols (Emden, 1878–81); vol. 3, ed. Günther Möhlmann (Aurich, 1975)
Quer.	Querimoniale Civitatis Emedense; STAA, Rep. 241, Msc. A168
QuF	Quellen und Forschungen zur Ostfriesischen Familien- und Wappenkunde
SCJ	<i>Sixteenth Century Journal</i>
StaE	Stadtarchiv Emden
STAA	Niedersächsisches Staatsarchiv Aurich
TRE	<i>Theologische Realenzyklopädie</i> (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter)

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Introduction

If only we too fulfilled the gospel in our time! In the past one gave to churches and cloisters; now one gives to poor institutions, which were not around then.

Emden's Reformed church bookkeeper (c. 1590)¹

Around 1590, in the German port city of Emden, the bookkeeper of the Reformed church sat down to look through the church's old account books. After noting some of his discoveries on the opening pages of the current account book, he bemoaned the fact that people were presently contributing too much for the poor, while the last recorded bequest of land or property directly to the church had been in 1541. This discouraged church official's complaint surprisingly demonstrates the dramatic changes that Emden's social welfare institutions and attitudes toward poor relief underwent during the course of the sixteenth century. That Emden's social welfare system changed will come as no surprise to historians who study early modern poor relief. Yet the tremendous acceleration of Emden's urban, social, religious and economic development in the sixteenth century provides an unusual context in which to study the evolution of early modern social welfare.

Historians have described the systems of poor relief emerging in the sixteenth century as 'the beginning of modern social welfare' and 'a radical departure from the beaten paths of medieval charity'.² Such innovation has thus not surprisingly inspired an explosion of scholarly research on poverty and social welfare over the past three decades. Debates have developed around two key issues. First, scholars have tried to map out precisely the nature of late medieval charity in order to gauge the 'newness' of early modern poor relief methods. Second, analysis of the motivations behind the welfare reforms has been a hotbed in the historiography of early modern poverty: the new theology of Protestantism, the intellectual climate of humanism, socio-economic changes, and a growing state interest in control and discipline have all been considered as driving forces behind poor relief changes. The debate over the significance of the Protestant Reformation in the reform of poor

¹ ArchGK no. 364, *Liber Expensarum* (1572–95), p. 2.

² Elsie McKee, *John Calvin on the Diaconate and Liturgical Almsgiving* (Geneva, 1984), p. 93; Robert Jütte, *Poverty and Deviance in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 2.

relief has re-intensified in recent years. Ole Peter Grell has, in fact, called 'urgently' for a 'revisionist interpretation ... which emphasises the significance of the Reformation for bringing about these changes'. Grell wants to replace the dominant historiographic viewpoint which sees the Reformation's significance as 'negligible' and which sees the poor relief changes 'as inspired by civic leaders and Christian humanists who were responding not to religious reforms, but to the economic and demographic changes of the period'.³ That the refashioning of poor relief was influenced by the climate of religious change is indisputable. What remains to be seen, however, is the extent to which the religious changes can be extracted from their socio-economic context. This complex relationship between religious ideology and practical reality makes up an important facet of the history of the Reformation. Emden's story will thus provide a more balanced understanding of Reformation change by a diachronic analysis of one of the most prominent Protestant cities of the period, the 'Geneva of the North'.⁴

Emden experienced significant religious, social, and communal changes in the first half of the sixteenth century, but in the 1550s the velocity of the changes increased. The most significant of these changes was the arrival of thousands of Dutch refugees fleeing the war against Spain in the Netherlands. The city's population doubled within the course of a few years; and as the city attracted many wealthy refugees, its shipping economy reached an unprecedented level. During the second half of the sixteenth century, Emden had grown from a small provincial German town into Europe's busiest shipping port, if only temporarily. One study has placed the shipping capacity of the fleet of ships registered in Emden in 1570 as greater than that of the entire kingdom of England.⁵ The city's equally rapid fall from European prominence beginning at the end of the sixteenth century has had the effect of obscuring Emden from the sight of most modern viewers, but Emden's economic significance was not hidden to contemporaries. In Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, two angels approached Faustus in his study. The Good Angel entreated him to think of heaven and heavenly things; the Bad Angel, of honour and

³ Grell's review article, 'The religious duty of care and the social need for control in early modern Europe', *The Historical Journal*, 39 (1996) pp. 257, 263; Grell, 'The Protestant imperative of Christian care and neighbourly love', in *Health Care and Poor Relief in Protestant Europe 1500-1700*, eds O. P. Grell and A. Cunningham (London, 1997), p. 43.

⁴ For an overview of these issues in Emden, see Timothy Fehler, 'The Burden of Benevolence: Poor Relief and Parish Finance in Early Modern Emden', in Beat Kümin (ed.), *Reformations Old and New* (Aldershot, 1996), pp. 219-36.

⁵ Bernhard Hagedorn, *Ostfrieslands Handel und Schiffahrt im 16. Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 1910), p. 251.

wealth. Faustus responded, 'Of Wealth! Why, the signiory of Embden shall be mine. When Mephistophilis shall stand by me, what god can hurt thee, Faustus? thou art safe.'⁶ Emden's sudden economic boom, the wealth of which Faustus dreamed, resulted to a large extent from the influx of refugees from the Dutch Revolt, many of whom were rich and brought their business ventures and expertise with them to Emden. Many other refugees, however, arrived in Emden with nothing. As we will see, Emden's poor relief institutions evolved dramatically to deal with the new social and economic climate.

The flood of exiles affected more than just Emden's economy. Virtually all of the Dutch refugees who came to Emden were members of the Reformed church, fleeing their homeland to escape religious persecution. Emden's significance for the development of Reformed Protestantism in the Netherlands – as a city of refuge, a missionary centre, and a hub of printing, propaganda and advice – led to its designation as 'Moederkerk' (Mother Church).⁷ Its influence on the Netherlands has been compared to Geneva's influence on France, and 'of the two [Reformed cities], Emden was the more successful'. While the northern Netherlands, the country toward which Emden directed its primary energy, largely followed Emden's ecclesiastic institutional model and adopted a Calvinist form of Protestantism, France, the focus of Geneva's activities, did not.⁸ Nor should the influence of the Dutch refugees on Emden's own ecclesiastical development be underestimated. The exiles instigated an ever-growing interest in church discipline as well as a firming up of Emden's own Reformed institutions. In the last quarter of the century, Emden underwent an intense phase of confessional development – Heinz Schilling has called this phase in Emden's development a 'Calvinization' – which ultimately, when combined with the growing communal mentality and increasing self-assurance of the citizenry, resulted in the establishment of a Calvinist city church.⁹

⁶ Christopher Marlowe, 'The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus, Scene V' in John Gassner (ed.), *A Treasury of the Theatre* (3rd edn, New York, 1967), p. 226. Marlowe's 'Dr Faustus' was first performed successfully in England in the winter of 1588/89. For an example of the close economic connections between England and Emden/East Frisia, see the following works by G. D. Ramsay: *The Politics of a Tudor Merchant Adventurer: A Letter to the Earls of East Friesland* (Manchester, 1979); *The City of London in International Politics at the Accession of Elizabeth Tudor* (Manchester, 1975), p. 240.

⁷ On this issue, see Andrew Pettegree, *Emden and the Dutch Revolt. Exile and the Development of Reformed Protestantism* (Oxford, 1992).

⁸ Robert M. Kingdon's review of *Die Kirchenratsprotokolle der reformierten Gemeinde Emden 1557–1620* (ed. Heinz Schilling) in *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen*, 246 (1994), pp. 134–5.

⁹ Schilling, *Civic Calvinism in Northwestern Germany and The Netherlands* (Kirkville, MO, 1991), p. 9.

The organisation of poor relief is a point of convergence for the interests of early modern politics, religion and society. Thus social welfare administration provides a window to many issues of central importance to the Reformation. The development of Emden's system of poor relief is an impressive story. For a town hurled from a sleepy obscurity into the centre of European affairs, the creation of so elaborate and effective a structure of poor relief is an amazing achievement. It sheds a fascinating light on the capacities of a civic élite in a part of Europe which more sophisticated contemporaries considered slow-witted and rude. The city's responses to the needs of the poor are highly interesting because they combine so many currents: the need to preserve good order in urban space, the new theoretical and theological view of the indigent inspired by Protestantism, and the application of practical good sense to pressing immediate problems. Emden exhibits all these strands to a high degree and thus makes a fascinating case study.

A key characteristic of the system of social welfare in the Middle Ages was its lack of centralisation. Poor relief was usually administered by means of parish, monastic, confraternal and hospital foundations.¹⁰ Wealthy and generous people often contributed money or land in return for masses and prayers for their souls after their deaths. Also, in most cities institutions called 'spitals' or hospitals were established to help the poor and needy. Generally smaller than modern hospitals, these institutions were not meant to provide medical aid but rather to give assistance and housing to pilgrims, orphans, the elderly, invalids or other disadvantaged.¹¹ By the thirteenth century charitable institutions, spurred on in part by the early work of the new Franciscan and Dominican mendicant orders, had proliferated across much of Europe and had adapted to fit better into the social and economic conditions of an increasingly urban life based ever more upon cash economies.¹² In fact, ecclesiastical poor law seems to have worked 'tolerably well' until about the fourteenth century.¹³ This 'flourishing of charitable institutions' was interrupted by

¹⁰ The most extensive survey of medieval poor relief institutions and methods alongside their impact upon the poor and descriptions of the daily circumstances of the medieval poor themselves is Michel Mollat, *Les Pauvres au Moyen Age* (Hachette, 1978), translated by Arthur Goldhammer, *The Poor in the Middle Ages* (New Haven, 1986).

¹¹ Although hospitals also sheltered sick people, the sick generally 'stayed home and died in their own beds'; Jeannine Olson, *Calvin and Social Welfare; Deacons and the Bourse française* (Selinsgrove, 1989), pp. 19–20.

¹² Mollat, *The Poor in the Middle Ages*, pp. 135–57.

¹³ For instance, see Brian Tierney, *Medieval Poor Law: A Sketch of Canonical Theory and its Application in England* (Berkeley, 1959), esp. pp. 109ff.

the rise of pauperism and other social unrest beginning around the middle of the fourteenth century.

The limited centralisation in the administration of charity created many gaps in social welfare. With the coming of the Black Death, the Hundred Years' War, and greater challenges to ecclesiastic and feudal authorities, social problems multiplied across Europe. Plague, famine and war (and the poverty consequent on these crises) contributed to the growing social unrest of the later Middle Ages. While Michel Mollat probably overemphasises the role of the 'angry poor' in social uprisings, he argues convincingly that 'nostalgia for a better time, rancour, and misery combined to produce something like a festering abscess: all it took was an accident to puncture the abscess and release the built-up poisons'.¹⁴ The number of welfare organisations and stricter regulations increased in many localities to try to curtail the rise of pauperism and plug the welfare gaps. The common perception of medieval charity is that the merit of good works associated with Catholic theology caused many people to give indiscriminately to the poor without necessarily discriminating as to the worthiness of the recipient. Some historians have demonstrated, however, that canon law did, in fact, pronounce the importance of (and provide a method for) discriminating between the poor who should and should not be given alms, and that many almsgivers in the Middle Ages distinguished between the worthy and the undeserving poor.¹⁵ In any case, when scattered organised charity failed to provide relief to those in need, the poor were left on their own to try to alleviate their poverty.

In medieval towns, begging was already a problem: 'It became the unorganised all-pervasive form of welfare in the new urban centres'.¹⁶ The lack of an organised church response led to localised reactions.¹⁷

¹⁴ Mollat admits that 'it would be misleading to try to pinpoint the role of the poor in these disturbances by looking for some typical underlying process', *The Poor in the Middle Ages*, p. 212.

¹⁵ Tierney, *Medieval Poor Law*, pp. 46ff, and 'The Decretists and the "Deserving Poor"', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 1 (1958/59), pp. 360-73; Pullan, *Rich and Poor in Renaissance Venice* (Cambridge, MA, 1971), pp. 11f, 197ff; and 'Catholics and the Poor in Early Modern Europe', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 26 (1976), pp. 15-34; Paul Fidler, 'Christian humanism and poor law reform in early Tudor England', *Societas*, 4 (1974), pp. 272f.

¹⁶ Olson, *Social Welfare*, p. 20. Jean-Pierre Gutton, *La société et les pauvres en Europe* (Paris, 1974), pp. 94f, describes the increasing hostility toward vagabonds in the last century of the Middle Ages due to their rising numbers.

¹⁷ Natalie Zemon Davis, 'Poor Relief, Humanism, and Heresy', in *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, 1975), pp. 37f. Here she considers the failure of medieval parish assistance and the fragmented nature of medieval poor relief. Tierney, *Medieval Poor Law*, pp. 128ff also points to the 'breakdown of parish relief' but feels that the failure has been overstated.

Increasingly, individuals and communities began to establish institutions and confraternities in order to express their concern for the poor as well as for their own souls.¹⁸ Soon, civil authorities began to follow the lead of these lay associations and take control of social welfare, and by the early sixteenth century the magistrates of many municipalities had begun to assume at least partial responsibility and supervision of poor relief.¹⁹

The numbers of poor people and the varieties of poverty increased. The traditional groups had included such poor as orphans, widows, the sick, and the blind. By the end of the Middle Ages, new forms of poverty became prevalent:

As a large number of urban wage-earners, cottagers and day-labourers lived in circumstances which even contemporaries admitted to be extremely precarious, larger, structural and cyclical changes, such as economy, war, [and] climate, could accelerate the impoverishment processes which had attained such enormous proportions in the sixteenth century and which remained at work throughout the early modern period.²⁰

Furthermore, by the sixteenth century, as a result of economic difficulties and enormous population growth, vagrancy and poverty became monumental problems, especially for the cities.²¹

Of course, significant changes in the kinds of poverty and the dramatic increase in numbers of poor necessitated modifications in the medieval approach to charity; there was some tinkering and some radical change. In spite of lingering disagreements between historians over the pace of change and the character of the new methods of social welfare in the sixteenth century, there is general acknowledgement that

¹⁸ For instance, see Mollat, *The Poor in the Middle Ages*, pp. 273ff; Maureen Flynn, *Sacred Charity: Confraternities and Social Welfare in Spain, 1400–1700* (Ithaca, 1989), pp. 16f.

¹⁹ Indeed, urban magistrates began involving themselves in matters of poor relief during the Middle Ages. For instance, Strasbourg's magistrates wielded increasing direct control over the collection of alms as well as the hospitals, orphanages, and officials elected to distribute such alms, from 1263 onward; Miriam Usher Chrisman, *Strasbourg and the Reform: A Study in the Process of Change* (New Haven, 1967), p. 275; Otto Winckelmann, 'Über die ältesten Armenordnungen der Reformationszeit (1522–1525)', *Historische Vierteljahrschrift*, 17 (1914/15), p. 190.

²⁰ Jütte, *Poverty and Deviance in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 2.

²¹ See Robert Jütte, 'Poor Relief and Social Discipline in Sixteenth-Century Europe', *European Studies Review*, 11 (1981), p. 25; Olson, *Social Welfare*, pp. 20f; Abel Althouguia Alves, 'The Christian Social Organism and Social Welfare: The Case of Vives, Calvin and Loyola', *SCJ*, 20 (1989), p. 3; Harold Grimm, 'Luther's Contribution to Sixteenth-Century Organization of Poor Relief', *ARG*, 61 (1970), pp. 222f, points out the decline in medieval giving and the need for new approaches to poor relief.

social welfare took on a new appearance.²² Many recent studies identify several common features or tendencies in poor relief reforms in cities across sixteenth-century Europe: centralisation of administration, a professionalisation and laicisation (e.g. a shift from clerical to lay administration), and a rationalisation of organisation.²³

In the 1520s, some centralised municipal poor relief institutions emerged, especially in south Germany and the southern Netherlands. These gradually spread throughout north-western Europe. The trend toward intervention on the part of the magistrates in matters of poor relief had begun in the late Middle Ages, but the actual creation of centralised social welfare institutions sponsored by the civil authorities came to fruition in the 1520s.²⁴ Nuremberg's Poor Ordinances centralised the city's relief in 1522. Similar civic ordinances bringing about a centralisation of social welfare were adopted in Strasbourg in 1523, and in Mons and Ypres in the southern Low Countries in 1525.²⁵

A typical strategy for centralisation in the German cities was the creation of a 'common chest'. This 'common chest' fund typically received the assets from the previously existing hospitals and charitable institutions, from donations and endowments, and, in Protestant cities, from the monastic and church properties that were secularised. Indeed, most Protestant cities seem to have adopted some sort of centralised 'common chest' to administer the former monastic properties along with the assets of the confraternities.²⁶ The fund would then be

²² Both Pullan (*Rich and Poor*, pp. 198f) and Tierney (*Medieval Poor Law*, p. 132), argue that sixteenth-century social welfare practices grew out of a 'single developing tradition' (Tierney), and thus there is no distinct difference between sixteenth-century and medieval social welfare. Jütte (*Poverty and Deviance in Early Modern Europe*, p. 2), on the other hand, emphasises 'a radical departure from the beaten tracks of medieval charity'.

²³ Jütte provides a thorough overview of the various features of the sixteenth-century reorganisation of poor relief in *Poverty and Deviance*, pp. 100–142.

²⁴ Civic intervention should not necessarily be seen as a 'secularisation' of poor relief. Such actions by the civil authorities often had the support of the religious leadership. For instance, the Strasbourg Cathedral preacher Johannes Geiler von Kayserberg frequently advocated – as early as 1498 – that the magistrate should be responsible for the poor and poor relief; some of his writings (for instance his '11 Articles' of 1501) have been edited by Léon Dacheux, *Die ältesten Schriften Geilers von Kayserberg* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1882; reprinted Amsterdam, 1965).

²⁵ Lille followed with such a centralisation in 1527; Jean-Pierre Gutton, *La société et les pauvres en Europe (XVIe–XVIIIe siècles)* (Paris, 1974), p. 105; Thomas Fischer, *Städtische Armut und Armenfürsorge im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 1979), pp. 266–70; for a partisan discussion, see Otto Winckelmann, 'Über die ältesten Armenordnungen der Reformationszeit', esp. part II.

²⁶ One need not go so far as Jütte, however, who makes the blanket claim: 'All the Protestant systems of poor relief had certain points in common: all were based upon the

administered by a specified number of laymen elected to oversee the poor and distribute the alms.²⁷ The authority of the magistrates over the 'common chest' varied from city to city, and the centralisation of administration did not necessarily mean complete abolition of the older institutions. For instance, in Ypres several other relief institutions survived the establishment of the 'common chest' (*bourse commune*). Indeed, three hospitals continued to function, and the administrators of the *bourse commune* co-operated with the overseers of the 'Tables of the Holy Ghost', organisations which had provided parish relief since the later Middle Ages.²⁸

Another common form of centralisation was the creation of a central hospital or similar type of institution. In 1535, there were eight social welfare institutions in Geneva (seven of them hospitals) which were responsible for taking care of the city's social problems. With the creation of the Hôpital-Général in 1535, all these institutions were combined into one foundation for the care of the sick and the poor. The control of the Hôpital-Général was given to laymen, who were responsible for both administration of the hospital and the actual care of the poor. These civic officials became 'deacons' after the return of Calvin in 1541.²⁹

A prototype for this kind of centralised, municipal poor relief institution originated in the 1530s. The establishment of the Aumône générale in Catholic Lyon in 1534 began a trend which quickly spread to other French cities (perhaps also inspiring Geneva's Hôpital-Général).³⁰ Natalie Zemon Davis examined the establishment of the Aumône générale and pointed out that although it was initially instituted temporarily to meet

idea of a 'common chest', *Poverty and Deviance*, pp. 105f. The claim of universality here is inaccurate, as will be illustrated in the case of Emden.

²⁷ For the development of the 'common chests' in various German and Dutch cities, see Winckelmann, 'Über die ältesten Armenordnungen der Reformationszeit', and 'Die Armenordnungen von Nürnberg (1522), Kitzingen (1523), Regensburg (1523) und Ypern (1525)', *ARG*, 10 (1913), pp. 242–80 and 11 (1914), pp. 1–18; for specific case studies, see, for instance, Stefan Oehmig, 'Der Wittenberger Gemeine Kasten in den ersten zweieinhalb Jahrzehnten seines Bestehens (1522/23 bis 1547)', *Jahrbuch für Geschichte des Feudalismus*, 12 (1988), pp. 229–69; William Wright, 'A Closer Look at House Poor Relief through the Common Chest and Indigence in Sixteenth-Century Hesse', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 70 (1979), pp. 225–37.

²⁸ J. Nolf, *La réforme de la bienfaisance publique à Ypres au XVI^e siècle* (Ghent, 1915), pp. xli–xlii.

²⁹ Robert Kingdon, 'Social Welfare in Calvin's Geneva', *American Historical Review*, 76 (1971), esp. pp. 52–6; Olson, *Social Welfare*, pp. 21f.

³⁰ R. Gascon, 'Economie et pauvreté aux XVI et XVII siècles. Lyon exemplaire et prophétique', in Michel Mollat (ed.), *Etudes sur l'histoire de la pauvreté* (Paris, 1974), pp. 747–60.

extreme needs, this institution soon became the chief method of poor relief in Lyon. The break with the earlier social welfare system is seen in Davis's description of its founding:

Henceforth, all charitable distributions in Lyon, and most charitable services, were to be performed by a new government body, the *Aumône générale*, or by the hospitals run by the Consulate ... All the various alms given out at Saint Jean and other churches and monasteries during the year were now to be paid as a lump sum to the *Aumône*. No one was to give any handout of any kind in front of his house or in any public place (though no penalty was created for doing so), but contributions were to be given to an *Aumône générale* canister or collector. All begging was prohibited under pain of whipping and banishment.³¹

Lyon's hospital, the Hôtel Dieu, survived the creation of the *Aumône générale*, which co-ordinated the pre-existing relief practices.³² A similar centralised system of municipal relief with an *aumône générale* was created in 1555 in Orléans, one of several French cities to follow the model of Lyon.³³

Recent studies have focused on some areas which have long been considered outside the domain of centralised social welfare in the early modern period, including Catholic Italy and Spain. In Venice, the city magistrates gradually appropriated the poor relief duties of the confraternities, taking over the principal charitable institutions by the seventeenth century.³⁴ Bologna's confraternal hospitals (*ospedali*) underwent a process of consolidation and politicisation in the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.³⁵ The Spanish cities of Toledo and Zamora also experienced a gradual centralising of their charitable agencies, even if not to the extent undergone in other parts of Europe.³⁶ The new Europe-wide trend toward centralisation coupled

³¹ Natalie Davis, 'Poor Relief', p. 39.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 38–42.

³³ Leslie Goldsmith, *Poor Relief and Reform in Sixteenth-Century Orléans* (Ph.D. thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1980), esp. pp. 30–46, 180–206. Other French areas created *aumônes générales* on the heels of Lyon's establishment, for instance, Rouen (1534), Troyes (1545), Châlons-sur-Marne (1564), Amiens (1565), Abbeville (1565), Beauvais (1573); Camille Bloch, *L'Assistance et l'état en France à la veille de la Révolution* (Geneva, 1909), p. 44. The Paris *Aumône générale*, most often called the Grand bureau des pauvres, was created in 1544; Barbara Diefendorf, *Beneath the Cross: Catholics and Huguenots in Sixteenth-Century Paris* (Oxford, 1991), p. 20.

³⁴ Pullan, *Rich and Poor*, pp. 239ff.

³⁵ Nicholas Terpstra, *Lay Confraternities and Civic Religion in Renaissance Bologna* (Cambridge, 1995), esp. pp. 179–216.

³⁶ Linda Martz, *Poverty and Welfare in Hapsburg Spain. The Example of Toledo* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 61–158; Flynn, *Sacred Charity*, pp. 82–94, 102–10, 117–27.

with a rationalisation of organisation created a 'premeditated system' of social welfare.³⁷

Such a 'premeditated system' demanded that the methods of the more fragmented and complicated system of medieval almsgiving be rationalised. In general, this meant the creation of new procedures of recordkeeping and of supervision of the poor. New rules carefully regulated bookkeeping procedures, and auditors or supervisors were regularly to oversee the accounts of expenditures and income. Furthermore, officials generally visited the poor, drawing up lists of deserving and undeserving poor. The poor could also make requests for aid on particular occasions.³⁸ Administrators separated those who were invalids or dependent into two groups: those needing institutional care (for instance, orphans or the sick) and those who could receive aid in their homes. For those receiving aid from home, a ticket or token was provided which allowed them to receive their weekly dole (often bread and money).³⁹

Closely connected with this rationalisation of poor relief was an emphasis on social discipline.⁴⁰ Healthy and able poor were to work. In fact, new industries were often developed in order to provide occupation and promote self-support. For instance, Lyon's city government financed the rector of the Aumône générale in order to establish the silk industry in Lyon. The magistrates intended it to train not only orphan girls, but also the daughters of families on the relief rolls.⁴¹ Furthermore, the children were to be educated and apprenticed.⁴² This education included moral training, to which was tied a strong concern for the salvation of impoverished vagrants and beggars.

As a result of the movement toward more rationalised and centralised social welfare, a professionalisation of the position of poor relief administrator occurred. In order to provide better supervision of the poor, and better administration, the overseers made frequent visits to the

³⁷ The humanist cleric Jean de Vauzelles had claimed in his sermons that this kind of rationalised system would cost no more than spontaneous handouts in the street; Davis, 'Poor Relief', p. 40.

³⁸ For instance, Kingdon, 'Social Welfare', pp. 56-9; Davis, 'Poor Relief', pp. 40ff; Jütte, *Poverty and Deviance*, p. 102.

³⁹ Davis, 'Poor Relief, Humanism and Heresy', pp. 39ff, describes the procedure in Lyon.

⁴⁰ See, especially, Alves, 'Christian Social Organism' and Jütte, 'Poor Relief and Social Discipline'. Both articles stress the emphasis placed on the education and work of the poor in attempts to maintain social order.

⁴¹ A similar arrangement was made for the cotton industry; Davis, 'Poor Relief', pp. 43f.

⁴² Jütte, 'Poor Relief and Social Discipline', esp. pp. 40f; Davis, 'Poor Relief', pp. 42f; Pullan, *Rich and Poor*, pp. 402ff.

poor throughout the town. The move away from the traditional relief provided in the hospitals also led to the increased professionalisation of these relief officers. As outdoor relief was expanded, systematised and rationalised, the administrators began to attempt detailed investigations into the circumstances of each poor recipient.

Most reform statutes of the sixteenth century placed social welfare under lay control. This change often involved giving direct control of hospitals, orphanages, collection and distributions of the alms to magistrates, though poor relief administration involved the civil government to varying extents in different regions. Usually they would also have some control over the choice of officials to supervise or carry out these poor relief functions. The choice of the word 'laicisation' to describe this process is intended to distinguish a particular aspect of the over-used term 'secularisation'. 'Laicisation' emphasises the sanctioning of the role of the laity in previously clerical functions. This process needs to be distinguished from other processes that are usually subsumed under the term 'secularisation': for instance, to take from the religious sphere and place in the civil sphere. Indeed, despite changes in religious values associated with charity, social welfare reforms of the sixteenth century, whether Catholic or Protestant, retained fundamentally religious foundations and significance. Especially in Reformed Protestant regions, certain relief administrators were given the church office of 'deacon'; they remained laymen, since the clergy were generally removed from a direct role in Reformed poor relief.⁴³ In some regions, new statutes created a complete break with the traditional methods of church control.⁴⁴ Despite this authority given to laymen, some cities still reserved some functions for the clergy. Such functions could range from assisting the administrators by exhorting donors to almsgiving to serving in administrative positions within the new charitable organisations.⁴⁵

⁴³ Elsie McKee, *John Calvin on the Diaconate and Liturgical Almsgiving* (Geneva, 1984), pp. 120–23, discusses these meanings. Robert Henderson has argued that Calvin actually 'resacralised' (rather than 'secularised') social welfare by making it a function of an ecclesiastical office which was run by laymen; 'Sixteenth-Century Community Benevolence: An Attempt to Resacralize the Secular', *Church History*, 38 (1969), pp. 421–8. See also Kingdon, 'Calvin's Ideas about the Diaconate: Social or Theological in Origin?', in Carter Lindberg (ed.), *Piety, Politics and Ethics: Reformation Studies in Honor of George Wolfgang Forell* (Kirkville, MO, 1984), pp. 169ff.

⁴⁴ Kingdon, 'Social Welfare', p. 51. Natalie Davis, 'Poor Relief', pp. 32ff, discusses the new administration of Lyon's Aumône générale by laymen. She points out the justifications given for lay control in this Catholic city: corruption of the clergy and high evaluation of the laity.

⁴⁵ For instance, Brian Pullan, 'The Famine in Venice and the New Poor Law, 1527–1529', *Bollettino dell' Istituto di Storia della Società e dello Stato Veneziano*, 5/6 (1963/64), pp. 143f.

Perhaps the most pressing social problem facing the social reformers of the sixteenth century was that of beggars and vagrants.⁴⁶ All areas of Europe, whether Protestant or Catholic, had to try to solve the problem, and discussions about the merits and harm of begging dominated much of the intellectual debate on the subject of social welfare reform. While most writers, especially the humanists and Protestant theologians, argued for a prohibition of begging, a few – primarily some Catholic theologians – supported continued begging with some limitations.⁴⁷ Consequently, when poor relief reforms were initiated, the question of how to control begging generally came up in one form or another. A common belief which seems to have guided most of the reforms was that each city or parish should have to provide only for its own residents. Thus hostility toward foreign vagrants grew in the fifteenth century, as vagrants were increasingly seen as a social danger and a cause of criminality and brigandage.⁴⁸ This ‘suspicion’ of vagrants and non-residents found its way into many sixteenth-century ordinances. Most legislation, however, was not very successful.⁴⁹ Contemporary debates over the problem of begging in Catholic towns proved especially troublesome, primarily resulting from the mendicant orders’ opposition to any prohibitions.⁵⁰ So, although Protestant towns usually outlawed begging entirely, Catholics often retained some form of licensed begging.

Humanists were among the most active advocates working for changes in the perception of the poor and in social welfare. Juan Luis Vives, Jean de Vauzelles, Thomas More and Thomas Starkey articulated new methods of dealing with the poor, including the ideas of centralisation and rationalisation of the relief institutions, and education of the poor.⁵¹ Perhaps the most eloquent call for poor relief reform in the sixteenth

⁴⁶ Natalie Davis, ‘Poor Relief’, pp. 24–7, contains a striking portrayal of begging.

⁴⁷ Jütte, *Poverty and Deviance*, p. 101.

⁴⁸ Gutton, *La société et les pauvres en Europe*, p. 94.

⁴⁹ See, for instance, Natalie Davis, ‘Poor Relief’, p. 39; Wright, ‘A Closer Look’, pp. 225, 231; McKee, *Diaconate*, pp. 96f; Olson, *Social Welfare*, pp. 22–3; Jütte, *Poverty and Deviance*, p. 167.

⁵⁰ Natalie Davis, ‘Poor Relief’, p. 17.

⁵¹ Juan Luis Vives, *De subventionem pauperum* (1526), in F. R. Salter (ed.), *Some Early Tracts on Poor Relief* (London, 1926); *ibid.*, also translated (‘On Assistance to the Poor’) by Alice Tobriner in *A Sixteenth-Century Urban Report*, Part II (Chicago, 1971). Davis, ‘Poor Relief, Humanism, and Heresy’, pp. 231–6. Fideler, ‘Christian humanism and poor law reform in early Tudor England’; Geoffrey Elton, ‘An Early Tudor Poor Law’, *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, 6 (1953), pp. 55–7, questions the humanist influence on the English statute of 1536; see also Elton’s ‘Reform by Statute: Thomas Starkey’s Dialogue and Thomas Cromwell’s Policy’, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 54 (1968), pp. 165–88.

century was Vives's *De subventionem pauperum*. Published in 1526, it was written at the request of the mayor and city council of Bruges. As a backdrop to his innovative organisational proposals, including a centralisation and rationalisation of institutions and a prohibition of begging, Vives advocated a new vision of the poor.

Vives wrote that his plan 'will not prevent a man from becoming a pauper but will prevent him from remaining long in that condition, by promptly stretching forth a hand to help him to his feet'. Indeed, the importance of education was central to Vives's vision, especially for poor children; without such training, the children would learn only on the streets. Vives ended his treatise by listing the material and spiritual advantages that would result from his measures. Theft and acts of violence would decrease, greater concord would prevail, and it would be 'safer, healthier, and pleasanter to attend churches and to dwell in the city'. Beyond these civic advantages, however, would be, most importantly, the profit to the poor themselves:

[the former poor] will regain judgement, sensibility, piety. They will live among men like citizens, disciplined, observant of human laws; they will keep their hands pure from acts of violence; they will serve God truly and honestly; they will be men; they will be what they are called, Christians. What else is this, I ask, than to have restored many thousands of men to themselves and to have won them for Christ?

'They will be men.' Such was the goal of the humanist's call for poor relief reforms. Not only would the new methods relieve many of the social ills associated with poverty, they would go even further to restore the individual to proper values and Christian duty through education. Such moral training was necessary because poverty could never be completely eliminated. Thus, as Vives insisted, 'Students should learn to live frugally, but neatly and cleanly, and to be content with little.'⁵²

Intellectual fervour abounded on the topic of social welfare in the sixteenth century, as writers from all persuasions – humanist and secular writers, alongside Protestant and Catholic theologians – clamoured for poor relief reform.⁵³ Calls for reform did not, however, always go uncriticised. Fierce debates raged between writers with differing visions of the poor and of the necessary reform methods.⁵⁴

⁵² Vives, *De subventionem pauperum*, in Salter (ed.), pp. 36, 44–7, 21.

⁵³ Jütte provides a very useful appendix with short biographical sketches of several of the important poor relief reformers of the sixteenth century; *Poverty and Deviance*, pp. 204–16, compare p. 101.

⁵⁴ See Flynn's discussion of welfare reform in Spain, *Sacred Charity*, pp. 75–114 (esp. pp. 91–9 for the intense argument between Domingo de Soto and Juan de Medina).

The exact relationship between Vives's humanistic writings and the emergence of new social welfare methods is a matter of debate. The argument that the poor relief reforms in the Netherlands and northern Europe were initiated by Vives and other Christian humanists has been generally discredited.⁵⁵ Vives's treatise was not published in the Low Countries until 1526; the reforms in Mons and Ypres had been initiated in 1525. Vives's treatise can, therefore, be viewed in part as a confirmation of the reform changes already under way in the Low Countries.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, the values and ideas represented by Vives and other northern humanists promoted poor relief reform after 1526 as Vives's plan circulated widely across Europe.⁵⁷ The significance given to Christian humanists as the driving force behind poor relief change often relates inversely to the emphasis a scholar places on the Protestant Reformation in reshaping medieval charity.

Certain interpretations about sixteenth-century poor relief stem from overstated generalisations about the medieval church's role in social welfare. For instance, Ernst Troeltsch associated the entire welfare operations of the medieval church with the practice of mere 'charity'.⁵⁸ He described Catholic social welfare simply as indiscriminate individual action in giving alms. In addition to emphasising the unsystematic nature of medieval poor relief, he saw medieval social welfare's fundamental nature as ecclesiastical, with church control of the various endowed charitable institutions. Furthermore, many Protestant polemicists criticised Catholic poor relief because of the Catholic doctrine that good works contribute to the salvation of those who give alms.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ See Otto Winckelmann, 'Über die ältesten Armenordnungen', pp. 376–84. Winckelmann's goal in discrediting the humanist initiative was to make the case for a German influence, in order to emphasise the impact of Protestant ideas on poor relief organisation.

⁵⁶ Kingdon, 'Social Welfare', p. 68, points out that from time to time 'rather than initiating change, intellectuals often justified the changes engineered by the practical business leaders of the community'. Calvin's *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* of 1541 for Geneva can be viewed in a similar way.

⁵⁷ Vives's treatise was soon translated into French, Spanish, and Italian; Tobriner, *A Sixteenth-Century Urban Report*, p. 18. The English Poor Law 1536 was almost definitely influenced by Vives's work; Fidler, pp. 280–85. Franz Ehrle, *Beiträge zur Geschichte und Reform der Armenpflege* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1881), p. 29; Winckelmann, 'Über die ältesten Armenordnungen', pp. 387.

⁵⁸ The church's 'reaction [to social suffering] did not take the shape of social reform, or of organic change: it was simply and solely the work of charity'; Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, trans. by Olive Wyon (2 vols, New York, 1931; original German published 1911), I, 134.

⁵⁹ Troeltsch, I, 133–8. Tierney, *Medieval Poor Law*, pp. 46ff.

These traditional characterisations of medieval charity have generally been contrasted with descriptions of Protestant attitudes toward poor relief. Again according to Troeltsch, Protestant leaders and churches achieved a far-reaching 'social policy'. Protestantism developed a much more rational form of state intervention in social welfare, one that was concerned with the welfare of the poor themselves.⁶⁰ According to these arguments, then, the poor relief changes of the sixteenth century resulted from the spread of Protestantism.

Such arguments had their origins in the sixteenth century. Luther and other Protestant polemicists had railed against Catholic charity with its doctrine of good works and thus denounced the benevolent man for being primarily concerned with himself. Moreover, some sixteenth-century critics sometimes associated poor relief reforms with Protestantism. Some contemporaries in Catholic cities like Lyon and Ypres viewed their own social welfare reforms as being tainted with heresy. For instance, Vives wrote in 1527 that the Bishop of Tournai's vicar was attacking his treatise *De subventionem pauperum*: 'he rules that it is heretical and Lutheran'. In 1532, the Inquisitor of Lyon attacked a sermon by the French cleric and humanist Jean de Vauzelles, who urged sweeping new welfare measures (which were eventually adopted). The Inquisitor said it was filled with errors and was 'pernicious to Catholic piety', and he further argued that Lyon had more to fear from a host of heretics than it did from an excess of poor vagrants.⁶¹ Some Catholic regions were even hesitant to pass laws prohibiting begging on the grounds that such laws were 'Lutheran'.⁶²

Throughout most of the nineteenth century, historians and theologians saw the theology of the Lutheran Reformation as the initial force which motivated the reform of the traditional methods of poor relief. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, however, some Catholic scholars began to question that conventional view. Most significant among them were Franz Ehrle and Georg Ratzinger.⁶³ They argued that in many instances Catholic poor relief reforms had been attempted before Protestant reforms, and distinguished between what they saw as a two-fold movement in the reform of poor relief at the beginning of the

⁶⁰ Troeltsch, II, 557, 565ff.

⁶¹ Natalie Davis, 'Poor Relief', pp. 17, 52–5. Although mendicant orders denounced the Ypres 'common chest' as heretical, the fundamental principles of the city's relief changes were upheld by the Sorbonne in 1531; Salter (ed.), *Some Early Tracts*, pp. 32–4.

⁶² Olson, *Social Welfare*, pp. 22f.

⁶³ Ehrle's *Beiträge* and his 'Die Armenordnungen von Nürnberg (1522) und von Ypern (1525)', *Historisches Jahrbuch*, 9 (1888), pp. 450–79; Georg Ratzinger, *Geschichte der Kirchlichen Armenpflege* (2nd edn, Freiburg im Breisgau, 1884).

sixteenth century: one purely socio-economic and originating in the fifteenth century, and one specifically Protestant (that is 'Lutheran') reform based on the Saxon Church Ordinances.⁶⁴

Otto Winckelmann gave the most comprehensive argument in response to these claims in the early twentieth century.⁶⁵ He disputed Ehrle's claims that there was no recognisable influence of Lutheran theology upon the Nuremberg poor relief reforms and that the earliest reforms (1522) were simply continuations of previous reform efforts. Winckelmann was also upset by the utilisation of Ehrle's perspective by other scholars.⁶⁶ Winckelmann countered with an analysis of the earliest poor relief ordinances of the Reformation period in order to argue that the original reforms were Lutheran. He claimed that they had arisen out of Lutheran Nuremberg and spread, through Strasbourg, to Ypres.⁶⁷ After displacing Vives's treatise as the initial spark for reform, Winckelmann then supplanted the theory of a northern humanist inspiration of the poor relief reforms in the Low Countries with a theory of German, specifically Lutheran, influence. In the mid-1920s, the Catholic historian Paul Bonenfant carefully assessed this argument.⁶⁸ Noting both the temporal and qualitative closeness between the German reforms and those in the Netherlands, Bonenfant cautiously accepted some of Winckelmann's schema. He went on to make the case, however, that the Ypres city leaders did not perceive any 'Lutheranness' in the Nuremberg social welfare reforms.⁶⁹

The recent outpouring of historical research on early modern social welfare has gone a step further in demonstrating the flaws in assuming

⁶⁴ Ehrle, 'Die Armenordnungen', p. 479. Ehrle ends his second essay with the phrase, 'muß die 1521 und 1522 in Nürnberg erstandene Armenordnung aus ersterer Bewegung [in other words, the purely socio-economic reforms] hergeleitet werden'. These certainly were the fighting words which inspired Winckelmann's work.

⁶⁵ 'Die Armenordnungen von Nürnberg', pp. 242–72; 'Über die ältesten Armenordnungen', pp. 187–228, 361–440.

⁶⁶ Winckelmann complained that the economic historian Ludwig Feuchtwanger 'accepted the interpretation of Ehrle without deliberation' and that Feuchtwanger's work 'provokes [one] very much toward criticism in its complete interpretation as well as in the details'; 'Die Armenordnungen von Nürnberg', pp. 242f, 'Über die ältesten Armenordnungen', pp. 187f. See Feuchtwanger, 'Geschichte der sozialen Politik und des Armenwesens im Zeitalter der Reformation', *Jahrbuch für Gesetzgebung, Verwaltung und Volkswirtschaft*, 32 (1908), pp. 167–204 and 33 (1909), pp. 191–228.

⁶⁷ 'Über die ältesten Armenordnungen', esp. the discussion on pp. 373–6, 385–7.

⁶⁸ 'Les origines et le caractère de la réforme de la bienfaisance publique aux Pays-Bas sous le règne de Charles-Quint', *Revue Belge de Philosophie et d'Histoire*, 5 (1926), pp. 887–904 and 6 (1927), pp. 207–30; see also 'Un aspect du régime calviniste à Bruxelles au XVI^e siècle: la question de la bienfaisance', *Bulletin de la Commission Royale d'Histoire*, 89 (1925), pp. 265–358.

⁶⁹ 'Les origines et le caractère', esp. pp. 216, 220–23.

a direct relationship between Luther's theological reforms and the reforms of poor relief in the sixteenth century. These studies have analysed local charitable institutions in their religious, cultural and municipal or regional contexts, and have demonstrated that the common poor relief reforms of the sixteenth century cut across confessional boundaries.⁷⁰ Pullan, for instance, has called into question the assumptions about the 'Lutheranness' of the early sixteenth-century reform plans. He demonstrated that Nuremberg's poor relief organisation was modelled upon the *Monti di Pietà* which had emerged in Italy.⁷¹ Although many of the southern German towns which initiated reforms were Lutheran or had a number of Lutheran sympathisers, there was nothing inherently Lutheran or Protestant about the reform programmes; the acceptance of these reforms in Catholic territories substantiates this argument. Natalie Davis's study of the previously mentioned Aumône générale of Lyon has demonstrated that co-operation existed between Catholics and Protestants in organising the newly centralised poor relief institution, and that even during the Religious Wars the Aumône continued to receive contributions from both confessions. Her conclusion has been largely confirmed by recent case studies of early modern social welfare:

Protestant and Catholic cities and cities of mixed religious composition initiated rather similar reforms, usually learning from each other's efforts. Lyon is an example of a religious coalition for welfare reform dominated by Catholics. Is Nuremberg an example of welfare reform by a religious coalition dominated by Protestants? The fact that reform in poor relief cut across religious boundaries and that Protestants and Catholics worked together on it shows the extent to which it rested on values and insights common to both groups.⁷²

⁷⁰ For example, Terpstra, *Lay Confraternities and Civic Religion in Renaissance Bologna* (Cambridge, 1995); Brian Pullan, *Rich and Poor in Renaissance Venice* (1971), and 'Catholics and the Poor in Early Modern Europe', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 26 (1976), pp. 15–34; Natalie Davis, 'Poor Relief, Humanism, and Heresy' (1975); Linda Martz, *Poverty and Welfare in Hapsburg Spain: The Example of Toledo* (Cambridge, 1983); Robert Jütte, *Obrigkeitsliche Armenfürsorge in deutschen Reichsstädten der frühen Neuzeit: Städtisches Armenwesen in Frankfurt am Main und Köln* (Cologne, 1984); Kathryn Norberg, *Rich and Poor in Grenoble, 1600–1814* (Berkeley, 1985); Martin Dinges, *Stadtarmut in Bordeaux 1525–1675. Alltag, Politik, Mentalitäten* (Bonn, 1988); Jeannine Olson, *Calvin and Social Welfare* (London, 1989); Maureen Flynn, *Sacred Charity: Confraternities and Social Welfare in Spain, 1400–1700* (Ithaca, 1989); Lee Palmer Wandel, *Always Among Us: Images of the Poor in Zwingli's Zürich* (Cambridge, 1990).

⁷¹ The *Monte di Pietà* was a new type of loan institution intended to protect poor people from usurers; *Rich and Poor*, pp. 254ff, 281.

⁷² Davis, 'Poor Relief', pp. 56–60.

The process of rationalisation, centralisation and politicisation – trends frequently linked to the Protestant Reformation – can be found in Catholic cities as well. There were certainly differences between Catholic and Protestant poor relief systems, but a simple explanation based solely upon theological factors does not fully grasp the local nature of poor relief reforms.⁷³ Even the typical differences between Protestants and Catholics with respect to approaches to begging, for example, do not fall neatly across confessional lines in practice. For instance, the Protestant Elizabethan Poor Law allowed certain licensed begging, while the Catholic cities of Lyon and Ypres banned begging completely, and Catholic Emperor Charles V authorised prohibitions of begging in territories of the Holy Roman Empire in 1531.⁷⁴

Historians generally agree that the reforms of the sixteenth century, taken as an entire system, mark a distinctly new approach to the previous methods of poor relief, but some scholars have been careful to emphasise that many of the common features of the sixteenth century had precursors in the Middle Ages. Thus they have debated the origins of laicisation (in particular, the role of the laity in medieval confraternal charity), and the occasional attempts in the Middle Ages to prohibit begging and to centralise charitable activities under civil control. For instance, canon law provided a discrimination against able-bodied beggars which was legislated in England in 1349 and 1388; Brian Pullan argues that these English laws and similar prohibitions in medieval Spain contributed to the ease with which sixteenth-century laws were adopted. Both Brian Tierney and Pullan have traced and emphasised the development of social welfare through medieval theory/canon law and practice.⁷⁵ Hence, these historians see the sixteenth-century reforms as continuations or accelerations of past trends.⁷⁶ The rationalised organisation and centralised administration so common in the sixteenth-century

⁷³ Some recent studies have, however, continued to point to the importance of Protestant ideas in the early poor relief reforms. See Ole Peter Grell and Andrew Cunningham, 'The Reformation and changes in welfare provision in early modern Northern Europe', in *Health Care and Poor Relief in Protestant Europe* (London, 1997), pp. 1–42; Grell, 'Religious duty', pp. 257–63; Grell, 'Protestant imperative', pp. 43–65; Grimm, 'Luther's Contribution', pp. 222–34 (esp. pp. 222–3); Carter Lindberg, '"There Should Be No Beggars Among Christians": Karlstadt, Luther, and the Origins of Protestant Poor Relief', *Church History*, 46 (1977), pp. 313–34.

⁷⁴ Gutton, *La société et les pauvres en Europe*, p. 105.

⁷⁵ Tierney, *Medieval Poor Law*, pp. 128–9, 132; Tierney, 'The Decretists and the "Deserving Poor"'; Pullan, *Rich and Poor*, pp. 197–201.

⁷⁶ Michel Mollat, *Les Pauvres au Moyen Age*, traces the development of poor relief and attitudes toward the poor throughout the Middle Ages. He notes a shift in attitudes taking place in the late Middle Ages. Antecedents to many common sixteenth-century reforms occurred at that time.

reform programmes were often simply 'superimposed' on to the 'old' system of medieval social welfare.⁷⁷

Pullan has come up with an interesting notion which attempts to resolve this historiographic question regarding the 'newness' of sixteenth-century welfare reforms. He argues that even if no single feature of sixteenth-century poor relief was without medieval roots, the combination of features which made up the reforms and the widespread adoption of the reforms can be considered 'new':

In general, poor relief in western Europe in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries fails in many respects to conform to the image created by later historians ... Many changes once supposedly located in the sixteenth century were anticipated, at least in theory and in principle, by earlier generations. Very likely, some sixteenth-century changes in philanthropy and social legislation were changes in degree rather than in kind; quantitative changes, rather than changes in principle; changes stimulated by graver economic needs, rather than by radical alterations in intellectual attitudes ... To say this is not to belittle the achievements of sixteenth-century Europeans, for much significant historical change is quantitative rather than qualitative, and much revolution is accomplished by revival.⁷⁸

Thus the sheer quantity of change makes the sixteenth century a vital period for the study and comparison of social welfare institutions and attitudes toward the poor.

The broad scope of Emden's social welfare system as it developed in the sixteenth century and the fact that five of its sixteenth-century institutions survived well into this century have contributed to a sense of local pride in Emden regarding the city's poor relief institutions. Among the institutions that we will see in the coming chapters, the Clementiner Shipper's Brotherhood, the Reformed deacons of the local poor (so-called *haussitzenden*, or house-sitting, poor), and the deacons of the refugee poor (so-called *fremdlingen*, or foreign, poor), continue to the present; the town's hospital (the Gasthaus) burned down in 1938 and was never rebuilt; the Grain Reserve slowly ceased to function in the two decades after World War II. Indeed, in the last 150 years local historians have written a number of brief descriptions

⁷⁷ In Orléans, for instance, the medieval Hôtel-Dieu was retained with a variety of administrative reforms during the course of the sixteenth century, and it complemented the newly centralised system of the Aumône générale; Goldsmith, 'Poor Relief', pp. 57–179, esp. 76–82. The examples of Ypres and Lyon, which illustrate the survival of some of the traditional institutions, have been mentioned above.

⁷⁸ Pullan, *Rich and Poor*, pp. 198f.

of the sixteenth-century development of these institutions.⁷⁹ Yet, none of these goes beyond a 'local history' (*geschichtliche Heimatskunde*) approach of praising ancestors for founding such enduring institutions. Little attempt has been made to describe exactly how or why they were formed and organised and how they functioned.⁸⁰ A recently published prosopographic analysis of the administrators of Emden's five major poor relief institutions provides a useful description of the overlapping networks of welfare, church and civic administrators from the late sixteenth into the eighteenth century, though its reliance on incomplete lists of names and almost total dependence on the incomplete secondary literature to describe poor relief operations and administrations lead to some inaccuracies.⁸¹ The example of Emden's *Becken* diaconate provides an instructional example of the limitations of previous work on Emden's poor relief. The *Becken*, as we will see in Chapter 4, was one of the city's important innovations in the mid-sixteenth century, as Emden's church leaders attempted to create a separate diaconate with a specifically restricted function: to provide solely for poor people who were members of the Reformed congregation. Yet it is never mentioned in any of the 'local history' articles on the city's poor relief institutions, probably because the *Becken* diaconate survived only two decades and these articles have been interested essentially in describing the centuries-old origins of Emden's existing institutions. The only mention of the *Becken* in any secondary literature appears in the prosopographic analysis of relief administrators, but the failure even here to investigate the origins or motivations of the diaconate led to a number of inaccuracies and an incomplete understanding of Emden's sixteenth-century social welfare developments.⁸²

⁷⁹ Pastor J. Conrad, *Gedenkschrift zur Gasthaus- und Gasthauskirchefrage* (typescript, ArchGK no. 120; Emden, 1919); [no name], 'Emdens Einrichtungen zu wohlthätigen Zwecken', *Ostfriesisches Monatsblatt für provinzielle Interessen*, 2 (1874), pp. 165–73, 371–5, 400–404; Leo Fürbringer, *Die Stadt Emden in Gegenwart und Vergangenheit* (Emden, 1892), pp. 134–8; O. G. Houtrouw, *Ostfriesland. Eine geschichtlich-ortskundige Wanderung gegen Ende der Fürstenzeit* (Aurich, 1889), pp. 47ff; Hermann Meier, 'Das Gasthaus und das Privilegium der "Särgemacherei"', *Ostfriesisches Monatsblatt für provinzielle Interessen*, 1 (1873), pp. 480–87; M. Minolts, 'Die Clementiner Bruderschaft in Emden', *Ostfriesland. Ein Kalender für Jedermann*, 20 (1933), pp. 151–2, and his 'Emdens Bysejaager', *Ostfriesland. Ein Kalender für Jedermann*, 23 (1936), pp. 157–8; J. Mülder, *Die Diakonie der Fremdlingen-Armen 1558–1858* (Emden, 1858; reprint Emden, 1958); [no name], 'Ursprung des Fremdlingen-Armen-Institutes zu Emden', *Frisia*, III (1844), pp. 162–3.

⁸⁰ An exception to this generalization must be made for Mülder's narrative of the *fremdlingen* deacons, the most detailed of these studies, which does utilize the surviving account books in order to describe the operations of the diaconate.

⁸¹ Marion Weber, 'Emden – Kirche und Gesellschaft in einer Stadt der Frühneuzeit' (2 parts), *EJb*, 68 (1988), pp. 78–107 and 69 (1989), pp. 39–81.

⁸² Weber, 'Kirche und Gesellschaft', I, 91–2.

The present study corrects many misconceptions about Emden's social welfare system in order to present a comprehensive picture of the way poor relief was administered in the sixteenth century, taking advantage of Emden's remarkable story to shed additional light on social welfare and provision for the poor as an aspect of the social history of the Reformation period. The various institutions which emerged in the middle of the century provided a complex net of sometimes competing, sometimes co-operating services. This book emphasises the administrators of those institutions, how they functioned and the types of relief they provided. Indeed, we will witness how the institutions evolved throughout the period – at times due to religious ideals, at times due to the necessities of economics, famine and plague, and at times due to civic pride, political struggles and warfare.

While Emden's surviving medieval and early modern sources are not complete for any institution, the exceptional quality of several important sources allows the reconstruction of many aspects of the city's evolving system of poor provision. The sources before 1500 are scanty, but the town's very rich notarial collection of contracts and testaments begins in 1509 and continues throughout the period.⁸³ The notebook of criminal complaints in Emden provides additional insights into the period from 1510 to 1557.⁸⁴ From the second half of the century, six exceptionally important and useful sources survive. Three account books of the local *haussitzenden* deacons and two account books of the refugee *fremdlingen* deacons provide a wonderful means by which to view some of the actual institutional workings of poor provision; the minutes of the Emden church consistory meetings begin in 1557 and offer the church's perspective on a number of poor relief matters.⁸⁵ Finally, the scattered correspondence and accounting records in the church and city archives help to reveal some of the motivations and concerns of the administrators of the poor relief institutions.⁸⁶

⁸³ Almost all surviving pre-1500 sources have been collected in the *Ostfriesisches Urkundenbuch*, 3 vols (Emden, 1878, 1881; Aurich, 1975), (cited as OUB). The contracts and testaments are in the *Emden Kontraktenprotokollen*, in STAA, Rep. 234 (cited as EKP).

⁸⁴ *Querimoniale Civitatis Emedense*, in STAA, Rep. 241, Msc. A168 (cited as Quer.).

⁸⁵ ArchGK nos 1117, 1118, 3001, 3194 for the *haussitzenden* deacons; *Fremdlingen I* and *Fremdlingen II* for the *fremdlingen* deacons. The *fremdlingen* books list over 6 000 refugee poor who received alms from the deacons – often with the recipient's name, place of origin, trade, age, and family status. An additional account book for the *Gasthaus* survives after 1595, too late for this study, but it allows for some useful comparisons: in StaE, GII/3/1. The church consistory minutes have recently been edited by Heinz Schilling, *Die Kirchenratsprotokolle der reformierten Gemeinde Emden 1557–1620* (2 vols, Cologne and Vienna, 1989–92), (cited as KRP).

⁸⁶ For a complete list of the archival sources see Section I of the Bibliography.

Thus the quality of Emden's surviving (though incomplete) sources allows the modern reader to understand not only the extent of the organisational system of relief but the painstaking care given to individual cases of poor provision later in the sixteenth century. Though not all poor relief recipients were enthusiastic about such individual attention, the administrators strove to maintain social order and reduce poverty by spending much time emphasising education, training, work and discipline, as well as provision for the poor. Emden's amazing, though previously untold, story of social welfare developments will help delineate more clearly the complex and varied interplay of religious, socio-economic and political forces motivating social welfare changes of the early modern period. Emden's leaders imaginatively confronted newly emerging poor relief problems, yet their effective innovations were often tempered by a continuity with traditional methods and institutions of provision – methods and institutions which first appeared in Emden's surviving sources around the turn of the sixteenth century. The next chapter will investigate poor provision in Emden during the opening decades of the sixteenth century and lay out the pre-Reformation social welfare landscape. This will then enable the subsequent chapters to depict more clearly the evolution of the city's social welfare in the light of the religious changes and practical problems later in the century.