

Cambridge University Press

0521025400 - The Reformation of Community: Social Welfare and Calvinist Charity in Holland, 1572-1620

Charles H. Parker

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## I

## Introduction

## AUTHORITY, COMMUNITY, AND CHARITY

In the early weeks of November 1573, the leaders of the fledgling Calvinist congregation in the city of Delft took a bold step forward.<sup>1</sup> They had decided that the congregation was now ready to hold its first formal election for elders and deacons since the city government had lifted the ban on Reformed worship in August 1572. But this election was no mere formality; it would establish an official Calvinist organization in the new church. The Delft magistrates, however, were not keen on Calvinism; they had accepted the fact of a public Reformed Church only as a temporary consequence of their surrender to a Beggar army.<sup>2</sup> From August 1567 to July 1572, the city government had cooperated, albeit sometimes reluctantly, with a renewed Spanish campaign to combat heresy. Out of a concern for how the non-Reformed magistrates might respond, the “brothers” dispatched Arent Corneliszoon, a pastor, and Huyg Jacobszoon van der Dussen, an elder, to announce the election to the burgomasters.

The choice of these delegates was strategic: Corneliszoon was the son of a former burgomaster; van der Dussen was a notable brewer and a church warden (*kerkmeester*).<sup>3</sup> The social position of these two men would help allay the fears of the burgomasters and grant the church a degree of legitimacy. At the same time, however, the Calvinist leaders wanted to make it clear that this announcement was not a request; it was a declaration. They resolved: “the brothers will announce this decision to the burgomasters . . . not in order to subject the freedom and the rule of the church to the [political] authority, but only to warn and admonish [them] not to take offense at this election though it is a new and unseen thing.”<sup>4</sup> The strategy worked, at least for the moment; the Delft burgomasters treated this declaration as a request to which they consented.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> At that time there were about 180 members of the Reformed Church in Delft: H. J. Jaanus, *Hervormd Delft ten tijde van Arent Cornelisz. (1573–1605)* (Amsterdam, 1950), p. 33.

<sup>2</sup> J. C. Boogman, “De overgang van Gouda, Leiden, Dordrecht, en Delft in de zomer van 1572,” *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 57 (1942), pp. 105–8.

<sup>3</sup> Jaanus, *Hervormd Delft*, pp. 94–100; Reinier Boitet, *Beschryving der stad Delft* (Delft, 1720), p. 308; A. Ph. F. Wouters and P. H. A. M. Abels, *Nieuw en ongezien: kerk en samenleving in de classis Delft en Delftiland, 1572–1621*, 2 vols. (Delft, 1994), vol. 1, p. 563.

<sup>4</sup> *GAD. Kerkeraad* (November 9, 1573). <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

Cambridge University Press

0521025400 - The Reformation of Community: Social Welfare and Calvinist Charity in Holland, 1572-1620

Charles H. Parker

Excerpt

[More information](#)*The reformation of community*

Though this turn of events represented a triumph for local Calvinists, the Delft burgomasters, like all magistrates in Holland, were not particularly given to “new and unseen things.” On the contrary, contemporaries attached the greatest value to ancestral liberties, customary privileges, and historic traditions. Since 1559 Dutch regents had already seen enough new things to last them a lifetime. They had witnessed the revival of the dreaded inquisition hunting for heretics, the emergence of Calvinist evangelists preaching “hedge-sermons” to growing crowds, the wave of iconoclastic mobs plundering church property, the influx of Spanish military officials taking reprisals against local citizens, and the appearance of armies making demands on local governments.<sup>6</sup> And now, new Calvinist congregations in cities like Delft were asserting their independence.

Only to avoid more turmoil, the Delft burgomasters conceded a measure of jurisdiction over the ministries of the Reformed congregation to church officers. Yet they were careful to warn the consistory that it was not to meddle in any political affairs.<sup>7</sup> To be sure, this interchange was a slight episode compared to the tumultuous events that had engulfed Calvinists and civic leaders. But it was also an omen of the coming strife in the transition from a society closely associated with the Catholic Church to a Protestant republic. This new church, with its strident confessional demands, had just displaced an ancient faith in some very old cities. As a result, there would be many unseen things bringing conflict to the cities of Holland in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

One of the issues that sheds light on this critical transition in Dutch history is the tension between municipal poor relief and Reformed charity in Holland. Focusing on the six “great cities” of Holland (Dordrecht, Haarlem, Delft, Leiden, Amsterdam, and Gouda),<sup>8</sup> this study uses poor relief to examine competing visions of Christian community that came into conflict as a result of the Dutch Revolt and Reformation. At issue was the relationship between the Reformed diaconate (the church college responsible for charity) and civic poor relief agencies. Calvinists intended to establish an independent diaconate whose primary priority would be to relieve the needs of poor church members. Opponents of Calvinism, however, expected church deacons to work under municipal authority and objected to favoring the church poor over everyone else. This broad struggle was not simply a “churchstate” conflict, for the respective factions were not consistently synonymous with membership in a particular governing body. Lay elders and deacons

<sup>6</sup> For general accounts of the Dutch Revolt, see Geoffrey Parker, *The Dutch Revolt* (Ithaca, 1977), and Pieter Geyl, *The Revolt of the Netherlands 1555–1609*, 2nd edn. (London, 1958).

<sup>7</sup> See *GAD. Kerkeraad* (November 9, 1573).

<sup>8</sup> This designation arose as the provincial States of Holland acquired greater formal authority in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Due to their economic importance to the province, each of these six cities was allowed to cast one corporate vote on matters coming before the provincial assembly. Other small cities were also represented in the States, but the votes of the “great cities” and the single vote of the nobility were the only ones that really mattered: H. de Schepper, “De burgerlijke overheden en hun permanent kaders 1480–1579,” in *NAGN*, vol. v, p. 324.

Cambridge University Press

0521025400 - The Reformation of Community: Social Welfare and Calvinist Charity in Holland, 1572-1620

Charles H. Parker

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Introduction*

were often magistrates and many church officers came from the ranks of the social elite.<sup>9</sup>

Although “authority” assumed the prominent place in these deliberations, disputes over “authority” connoted a deeper disagreement over what actually constituted the Christian community during this momentous period in Dutch history. That is, quarrels over the borders between civil and ecclesiastical jurisdictions arose out of a more fundamental controversy about the very nature of society.<sup>10</sup> Despite the variety of local arrangements in these cities, this general struggle reveals the distinct blend of confessional identity and religious pluralism that characterized post-Reformation Holland.

Therefore, the interaction that took place between consistories and magistrates in these six cities from 1572 to 1620 is best understood as a protracted effort to reconcile disparate conceptions of community. Those antagonistic to the confessional features of diaconal charity attempted to coopt it within municipal welfare networks. To that end, they worked to exercise civil authority in the election of deacons, to oblige church officers to treat all recipients equally, and often to merge diaconates with municipal poor relief agencies. As the famous Synod of Dort adjourned in 1619, the struggles over poor relief organization came to a close in these six cities. Although the particular institutional settlements varied significantly, these negotiations reveal the

<sup>9</sup> G. Groenhuis, *De predikanten: de sociale positie van de gereformeerde predikanten in de Republiek der Vereenigde Nederlanden voor 1700* (Groningen, 1977), pp. 62–6; A. Th. van Deursen, *Bavianen en slijkgeuzen: kerk en kerkvolk ten tijde van Maurits en Oldenbarnevelt* (Assen, 1974), pp. 83–4.

<sup>10</sup> On a wide range of topics from poor relief, to popular festivals, to religious processions, to civil punishments, social historians have emphasized the religious underpinnings of civic society. Some of the important studies in this immense literature include Natalie Zemon Davis, “The reasons of misrule,” in her *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, 1975), pp. 97–123; Davis, “The sacred and the body social in sixteenth-century Lyon,” *Past and Present* 90 (1981), pp. 40–70; John Bossy, “The mass as a social institution, 1200–1700,” *Past and Present* 92 (1983), pp. 29–60; Bossy, “Review article: holiness and society,” *Past and Present* 75 (1977), pp. 119–37; Bossy, “Blood and baptism: kinship, community and Christianity in western Europe, fourteenth to the seventeenth century,” in *Sanctity and Secularity: The Church and the World*, Derek Baker, ed. (Oxford, 1973), pp. 129–43; Pieter C. Spierenburg, *The Spectacle of Suffering: Executions and the Evolution of Repression from a Pre-industrial Metropolis to the European Experience* (Cambridge, 1984); R. W. Scribner, “Civic unity and the reformation in Erfurt,” *Past and Present* 66 (1975), pp. 29–60; Scribner, “Ritual and popular religion in Catholic Germany at the time of the reformation,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 35 (1984), pp. 47–77; Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (New York, 1978). Furthermore, the links between communal values and religious practice have been a central theme in scholarship on the urban Reformation in the German territories. See Bernd Moeller, *The Imperial Cities and the Reformation: Three Essays*, H. C. Erik Midelfort and Mark U. Edwards, Jr., eds. (Durham, N.C., 1982); Thomas A. Brady, Jr., *Ruling Class, Regime and Reformation in Strasbourg 1520–1555* (Leiden, 1978); Heinz Schilling, “Calvinistische Presbyterien in Städten der Frühneuzeit: eine kirchliche Alternativeform zur bürgerlichen Repräsentation? (Mit eine quantifizierenden Untersuchung zur Holländischen Stadt Leiden),” in *Städtische Führungsgruppen und Gemeinde in der werdenden Neuzeit*, W. Ehbrecht, ed. (Cologne, 1980), pp. 385–444; Steven Ozment, *The Reformation in the Cities: The Appeal of Protestantism to Sixteenth-Century Germany and Switzerland* (New Haven, 1975); Kaspar van Greyerz, “Städt und Reformation: Stand und Aufgaben der Forschung,” *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 76 (1985), pp. 6–63; Pieter Blickle, *Gemeindereformation: die Menschen des 16. Jahrhunderts auf dem Weg zum Heil* (Munich, 1987).

Cambridge University Press

0521025400 - The Reformation of Community: Social Welfare and Calvinist Charity in Holland, 1572-1620

Charles H. Parker

Excerpt

[More information](#)*The reformation of community*

process by which this leading province in the northern Netherlands acquired such an unusual character. It was both a decentralized republic heavily influenced by orthodox Calvinism, and a multi-confessional society that protected religious dissidents.

## CIVIC CULTURE AND CONFESSIONALISM IN EUROPE AND HOLLAND

The struggles over poor relief not only reveal the dynamic interplay between confessional Calvinism and civic culture in Holland, but they also have implications for scholarship on religious culture and social welfare in early modern Europe. The case of Holland is instructive because common European patterns played themselves out in a unique way in this important province. Since negotiations over poor relief in Holland were directly related to confessional conflict, it is necessary first to examine how the prevailing trends of confessional formation in continental Europe manifested themselves in the northern Netherlands.

By the 1560s, as Calvinism was just beginning to make an appearance in the Low Countries, most other European states were undergoing a process of what historians now describe as “confessionalization.”<sup>11</sup> According to this model, the three major religious traditions (Catholicism, Lutheranism, and Reformed Protestantism) had each already formulated their own respective statements of orthodoxy into explicit doctrinal creeds. Any possibilities of reconciliation or even conciliation among Catholics, Lutherans, and Calvinists were long past. After the Peace of Augsburg, the vigorous theological controversies of the early sixteenth century had ossified into a struggle for political dominance in Europe until the end of the Thirty Years War.

As rulers declared their allegiance to one of the three major creeds, they found that religious orthodoxy also squared nicely with political centralization. They promoted these dual aims by imposing social discipline on their subjects and by punishing non-conformity within territories under their authority. Although accompanied by destructive warfare, most notably in France and the Empire, confessionalization facilitated the rise of strong centralized states wedded to religious orthodoxy.

Confessional conflicts also left an indelible imprint on Holland, though they developed in an unusual fashion and the political effects they produced were very different from the rest of Europe.<sup>12</sup> Unlike other areas, Holland’s cities actually

<sup>11</sup> For a survey of this literature and its implications for the Netherlands, see Benjamin J. Kaplan, *Calvinists and Libertines: Confession and Community in Utrecht 1578–1620* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 5–12.

<sup>12</sup> The older literature on what may be regarded as the Dutch equivalent to confessionalization has centered around how and to what the extent the Republic actually became Protestant. Pieter Geyl first posited the view that most Netherlands did not embrace Calvinism willingly; rather, it was forced on them by social and economic pressure. The Catholic historian, L. J. Rogier, expanded upon Geyl’s thesis by arguing that Calvinists used poor relief, public education, and political disenfranchisement to compel people to join the Reformed Church. According to Rogier, Calvinism was most successful in areas where Catholic parish ministries were weak and corrupt. Even then, it took the Reformed Church until 1650 before it could claim a majority membership: Geyl, *The Revolt of the Netherlands*, pp. 215–16; L. J. Rogier, *Geschiedenis van het katholicisme in de Noordelijke Nederlanden*

Cambridge University Press

0521025400 - The Reformation of Community: Social Welfare and Calvinist Charity in Holland, 1572-1620

Charles H. Parker

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Introduction*

increased their political power at the expense of national and provincial authorities over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The major episode in this trend, the Revolt, was the Dutch response to the absolutist agenda of the Spanish crown and the religious discipline of the Counter-Reformation. Tensions mounted in 1559 when Phillip II's regency government (in Brussels) inaugurated a complete reorganization of the diocesan structure in the Low Countries. This "bishops scheme" expanded the number of dioceses from four to fourteen and dramatically increased the number of inquisitors in the provinces. There was little doubt that these inquisitorial offices would be filled by clerics who took Tridentine Catholicism to heart and who would wage an all-out war on heresy.<sup>13</sup> For the Dutch nobility and urban magistrates, both of whom showed little enthusiasm for confessional Catholicism, these measures violated the assortment of local privileges that they had gained over a long period of time.<sup>14</sup>

As a general rule, however, city governments in the province of Holland, despite strong anti-Spanish sentiment, were not in favor of rebellion. Outright defiance would lead to war, and war would threaten the free flow of river traffic upon which their economies depended. Magistrates despised the high-handedness of Spanish authorities, but this loathing did not translate into any passion for political insurrection or religious reformation.<sup>15</sup> It was primarily the Sea Beggars, led by William of Orange and supported by Calvinist activists, who were the major adversaries of Spanish authority. After six years of trouble including widespread iconoclasm, Spanish occupation, and harsh taxes Gouda, Dordrecht, Delft, and Leiden were forced under military pressure to join the side of the rebellious provinces in 1572.<sup>16</sup> Haarlem and Amsterdam came into the rebel orbit permanently in 1577 and 1578, respectively.<sup>17</sup>

After this transition (known to the Dutch as the *overgang*), magistrates in these cities proved that they would also resist any political encroachment from a stadholder, a provincial Estates, or a Calvinist synod. As a result of fierce local determination, the Revolt accelerated a process of oligarchization in the cities and contributed to a dominating municipal presence in the provincial Estates. This vital province exhibited the most decentralized provincial governance in northern Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

*in de 16e en 17e eeuwen*, 3 vols. (Amsterdam, 1945–7), vol. 1, pp. 438–79. J. A. de Kok also endorsed Rogier's contention about poor relief in *Nederland op de breuklijn Rome-Reformatie* (Assen, 1964), pp. 63–88, 183–92. More recently, A. Th. van Deursen has suggested that the highly uneven regional growth of Calvinism and the meager resources of the church in most places would have severely limited any such ambitions: van Deursen, *Bavianen*, pp. 102–27. Current scholarship (cited in n. 24) tends to confirm van Deursen's doubts and focuses on the interplay between city governments and Calvinist consistories.

<sup>13</sup> Rogier, *Katholicisme*, vol. 1, pp. 201–445; Kaplan, *Calvinists and Libertines*, pp. 8–11.

<sup>14</sup> See J. J. Woltjer, "Dutch privileges, real and imaginary," in *Britain and the Netherlands*, J. S. Bromley and E. H. Kossman, eds. (London, 1975), pp. 19–35.

<sup>15</sup> Jonathan I. Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall 1477–1806* (Oxford, 1995), p. 171.

<sup>16</sup> Boogman, "De overgang." <sup>17</sup> Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, pp. 192–3.

Cambridge University Press

0521025400 - The Reformation of Community: Social Welfare and Calvinist Charity in Holland, 1572-1620

Charles H. Parker

Excerpt

[More information](#)*The reformation of community*

Due to these fortuitous circumstances, the patricians who governed the cities of Holland had been able to avoid Catholic confessionalization and its centralizing proclivities. And they had become afraid that Calvinists were trying to do the same thing. The Estates of Holland and Zeeland rewarded Calvinists for their unwavering support by making the Reformed faith the public religion of the rebellious provinces in 1572. Due to resistance from municipal delegates to the States, this Calvinist Church never acquired the status of a formal state church. The States of Holland and Zeeland designated the Reformed Church as the “privileged” ecclesiastical institution. City governments paid the salaries of ministers and Reformed worship services were held in the parish churches. But church membership was strictly voluntary and the former properties of the Catholic Church (parish and monastic) came under the control of civil authorities.<sup>18</sup> Thus, citizenship or residency in civil society was not synonymous with church membership in a Reformed eucharistic community. Furthermore, the closed oligarchies that governed the cities of Holland sought to expand their political power and to keep a close check on the affairs of local Reformed churches.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, confessional conflict in Holland had a unique Dutch flavor that pitted the particularistic and pluralistic policies of urban magistrates against the confessional ambitions of Calvinist leaders. As a result of these historical conditions, the tension between what scholars have called the sectarian tendencies and the public character of the Calvinist Churches of the Dutch Republic came into open conflict from 1572 to the 1618–19 Synod of Dort.<sup>20</sup> During this phase of the Dutch Reformation, there was widespread disagreement and considerable negotiation over the place of the new church in civil society. Many city magistrates found common cause with a small, but vocal cadre of ministers who opposed the confessional character of the Dutch Reformed Church. This “Libertine” faction in Holland considered the church a public church for all people. These opponents of Calvinism made it clear that magistrates, as the “Christian authority,” should govern church affairs. From this standpoint, the confessional demands of Calvinism smacked of an ecclesiastical tyranny that Netherlanders had only recently overthrown.<sup>21</sup> Consequently, Libertines worked to undermine an independent

<sup>18</sup> A. Th. van Deursen, “Kerk of parochie? De kerkmeesters en de dood tijdens de Republiek,” *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 89 (1976), pp. 531–5. Numerically, the Reformed church grew very slowly and claimed only about 20 percent of the population by 1620: J. J. Woltjer, “De plaats van de calvinisten in de Nederlandse samenleving,” *Zeventiende Eeuw* 10 (1994), p. 16; Fred A. van Lieburg, “From pure church to pious culture: the further reformation in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic,” in *Later Calvinism: International Perspectives*, Fred W. Graham, ed. (Kirksville, Mo., 1994), p. 412.

<sup>19</sup> James D. Tracy, “The Calvinist church of the Dutch Republic, 1572–1618/19,” in *Reformation Europe: A Guide to Research* II, William S. Maltby, ed. (St. Louis, 1992), pp. 261–2.

<sup>20</sup> Alastair Duke, “The ambivalent face of Calvinism in the Netherlands, 1561–1618,” in *International Calvinism 1541–1715*, Menna Prestwich, ed. (Oxford, 1985), pp. 112–13; van Deursen, *Bavianen*, pp. 13–33.

<sup>21</sup> Benjamin J. Kaplan, “‘Remnants of the papal yoke’: apathy and opposition in the Dutch Reformation,” *Sixteenth-Century Journal* 25 (1994), pp. 659–62.

Cambridge University Press

0521025400 - The Reformation of Community: Social Welfare and Calvinist Charity in Holland, 1572-1620

Charles H. Parker

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Introduction*

ecclesiastical structure (such as synods and classes), eliminate church discipline, and subdue an independent diaconate (the church college responsible for poor relief).<sup>22</sup>

Calvinists, the dominant force in the Dutch Reformed Church since the early 1570s, understood their church to be a pure eucharistic community and thus attempted to regulate access to communion, discipline wayward members, and superintend an independent diaconate. The neglect of these ministries would compromise the integrity of biblical religion and invite the wrath of God. With a different understanding of “Christian authority,” Calvinists enjoined magistrates to support the church’s ministries and combat heterodoxy without interfering in their internal religious affairs.

From the establishment of the Reformed Church in 1572 until 1619, the provincial Estates and the Reformed leadership attempted to settle many issues relating to the borders between temporal and ecclesiastical authority. Matters such as public worship, administration of church property, marriage, and baptism were negotiated on a national or provincial level. The reorganization of charitable institutions, though, was one issue that higher authorities left for local city magistrates and consistorial authorities to resolve. As such, the topic of poor relief provides a prism to examine the attempts to reconcile a civic vision of Christian community with a eucharistic one in the chief cities of the province.

## POOR RELIEF IN EUROPE AND HOLLAND

Thus far, studies on Dutch charitable institutions have had little impact on poor relief scholarship from the late middle ages to the seventeenth century. Perhaps this lack of influence is a result of the considerable shortage of non-Dutch scholarship on poor relief in Holland. Beyond Simon Schama’s treatment of charity in his cultural exposé of the Dutch Golden Age and A. Th. van Deursen’s recently translated description of popular culture in the seventeenth century, there has been no extensive treatment of poor relief in Holland in the English language.<sup>23</sup> While charitable institutions in Holland have made cameo appearances in a variety of Dutch studies, there has been no comparative monograph on poor relief in Holland in any language.<sup>24</sup> This void is

<sup>22</sup> “Libertine” was a general pejorative used by orthodox Reformers for a variety of people and groups who opposed consistorial discipline: Kaplan, *Calvinists and Libertines*, p. 14.

<sup>23</sup> Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (Berkeley, 1978), pp. 14–24, 174–5, 570–87; A. Th. van Deursen, *Plain Lives in a Golden Age: Popular Culture, Religion and Society in Seventeenth-Century Holland*, Maarten Ultee, trans. (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 44–66. See also Sheila D. Muller, *Charity in the Dutch Republic: Pictures of Rich and Poor for Charitable Institutions* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1985).

<sup>24</sup> Dutch scholarship on poor relief has been limited to individual cities. See Christina Ligtenberg, *Armeezorg te Leiden tot het einde van de 16e eeuw* (’s-Gravenhage, 1908); Ch. A. van Manen, *Armenpflege in Amsterdam in ihrer historischen Entwicklung* (Leiden, 1913); Joke Spaans, *Haarlem na de reformatie: stedelijke cultuur en kerkelijk leven, 1577–1620* (’s-Gravenhage, 1989), pp. 163–89; John P. Elliott, “Protestantization in the Northern Netherlands, a case study: the classis of Dordrecht, 1572–1640,”

Cambridge University Press

0521025400 - The Reformation of Community: Social Welfare and Calvinist Charity in Holland, 1572-1620

Charles H. Parker

Excerpt

[More information](#)*The reformation of community*

curious, since the Dutch have been on the cutting edge of welfare policy for the past three hundred years.

What the immense scholarship on poverty and charity in Europe has done quite effectively is to outline the institutional development and spread of poor relief reform over the course of the sixteenth century.<sup>25</sup> The movement to reorganize charitable institutions was initially an urban phenomenon that built on a number of reforms in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.<sup>26</sup> Sparked by rising levels of poverty and disenchantment with traditional forms of charity, a number of Protestant cities in the Empire, as well as Catholic cities in the southern Low Countries and Italy (Venice), began to establish a comprehensive network of poor relief in the 1520s.<sup>27</sup> The key features of this program included eliminating begging, consolidating all parish foundations under the authority of a municipal agency, laicizing charitable institutions, and creating public works projects. Inherent in this system was a more rigid classification of the poor that corresponded to institutional relief categories. Civil officers offered relief to the “deserving” domiciled poor, and housed the sick, the aged, and orphans in specific institutions, while they banned “undeserving” vagrants and unskilled non-residents from their cities.<sup>28</sup> In 1534 the city government of Lyons established an *aumône générale* (general almshouse) that became the prototype for centralized municipal poor relief in sixteenth-century Europe.<sup>29</sup> By the end of the

Ph.D. thesis, Columbia University (1989), pp. 345–417; R. B. Evenhuis, *Ook dat was Amsterdam: de kerk de hervorming in de gouden eeuw*, 5 vols. (Amsterdam, 1965–71), vol. I, pp. 100–6, vol. II, pp. 73–8; H. ten Boom, “De diaconie der gereformeerde kerk te Tiel van 1578–1795,” *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis* NS 55 (1975), pp. 32–69; ten Boom, *De reformatie in Rotterdam 1530–1585* (’s-Gravenhage, 1987), pp. 25–38, 65–8, 198–202; C. A. Tukker, *De classis van Dordrecht van 1573 tot 1609: bijdrage tot de kennis van in- en extern leven van de gereformeerde kerk in de periode van haar organisering* (Leiden, 1965), pp. 78–86, 181–2; Wouters and Abels, *Nieuw en ongezien*, vol. I, pp. 311–417, vol. II, pp. 203–88. A. Th. van Deursen’s *Bavianen* pointed out the diversity of welfare arrangements between local magistrates and Reformed church officers (see pp. 102–26). Despite the value of this excellent study, van Deursen concentrated primarily on developments with the Calvinist church and not their municipal contexts.

<sup>25</sup> See Jean-Pierre Gutton, *La Société et les pauvres en Europe (XVIe–XVIIIe siècles)* (Paris, 1974), pp. 104–6; J. Nolf, *La Réforme de la bienfaisance publique à Ypres au XVIe siècle* (Ghent, 1915), pp. xl–xliii; P. Bonenfant, “Les Origines et le caractère de la réforme de la bienfaisance publique aux Pays-Bas sous le règne de Charles-Quint,” *Revue Belge de philologie et d’histoire* 6 (1927), pp. 219–20, 225–6; F. R. Salter, ed., *Some Early Tracts on Poor Relief* (London, 1926), pp. 6–22.

<sup>26</sup> Brian Pullan, *Rich and Poor in Renaissance Venice: The Social Institutions of a Catholic State* (Cambridge, 1971), pp. 198–215; Brian Tierney, *Medieval Poor Law: A Sketch of Canonical Theory and Its Application in England* (Berkeley, 1959), pp. 131–2. Robert Jütte (in *Poverty and Deviance in Early Modern Europe* [Cambridge, 1994], p. 102), on the other hand, has concentrated on the “new bureaucratic spirit” of the sixteenth century and thus has viewed these changes as a watershed in the history of social welfare.

<sup>27</sup> See nn. 25 and 26, as well as Carter Lindberg’s *Beyond Charity: Reformation Initiatives for the Poor* (Minneapolis, 1993), pp. 128–60.

<sup>28</sup> Jütte, *Poverty and Deviance*, pp. 143–50.

<sup>29</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, “Humanism, heresy, and poor relief in sixteenth-century Lyon,” in Davis, *Society and Culture*, pp. 17–64. See also Jean-Pierre Gutton, *La Société et les pauvres: l’exemple de la généralité de Lyon, 1534–1789* (Paris, 1971); R. Gascon, “Economie et pauvreté aux XVI et XVII siècles: Lyon exemplaire et prophétique,” *Etudes sur l’histoire de la pauvreté*, M. Mollat, ed. (Paris, 1974), pp. 747–60.



Cambridge University Press

0521025400 - The Reformation of Community: Social Welfare and Calvinist Charity in Holland, 1572-1620

Charles H. Parker

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Introduction*

century, most cities in Europe either had completely reorganized parish charity along these lines or had adopted many of these principles.<sup>30</sup>

If there is a general consensus over the components of this reform movement, there has been much disagreement over its causes. Until the late nineteenth century, the dominant and largely unchallenged view was that the Lutheran Reformation was the most important driving force behind welfare reorganization. Reform certainly coincided with Reformation in Wittenberg, Nuremburg, Augsburg, and other Protestant cities. And Martin Luther himself denounced the salvific motivations of Catholic charity, criticized clerical corruption in religious foundations, and condemned begging. Luther went beyond simply promoting poor relief reform; he also assisted magistrates in Wittenberg and Leisnig in drafting reform ordinances in 1519 and 1523, respectively. From this standpoint, poor relief reform illustrated a Protestant social vision that diverged sharply from the self-serving charitable institutions of medieval Catholicism.<sup>31</sup>

In the 1880s, two Catholic historians, Georg Ratzinger and Franz Ehrle, challenged the Lutheran claims to originality and the negative stereotypes this view imposed on Catholic charity. In particular, they argued that Catholic magistrates in Nuremburg and Ypres had already begun poor relief reform before the advent of Protestantism.<sup>32</sup> This challenge set off a protracted and often polemical exchange among Lutheran and Catholic historians over where reform occurred first and its relationship to Protestantism and Christian humanism.<sup>33</sup> Writing in the 1920s, the Catholic historian Paul Bonenfant conceded that reform took place first in the

<sup>30</sup> This does not mean, though, that decentralized forms of poor relief became extinct at the end of the sixteenth century. In Catholic countries, confraternal charity existed well into the eighteenth century. And during the Counter-Reformation, private religious foundations even made a comeback. In most areas these religious institutions either worked alongside centralized municipal agencies, cooperated with them, or took over the entire range of parish poor relief. For an excellent summary of the literature on Counter-Reformation charity, see Jütte, *Poverty and Deviance*, pp. 125–39.

<sup>31</sup> See Otto Winkelmann, “Über die ältesten Armenordnung der Reformationszeit,” *Historische Vierteljahrschrift* 17 (1914/15), pp. 361–440; Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, 2 vols., 2nd edn., Olive Wyon, trans. (New York, 1960), vol. 1, pp. 133–8. For this approach in later twentieth-century historiography, see Harold Grimm, “Luther’s contributions to sixteenth-century organization of poor relief,” *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 61 (1970), pp. 222–34; 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; Lindberg, “The liturgy after the liturgy: welfare in the early reformation,” in *Through the Eye of a Needle: Judeo-Christian Roots of Social Welfare*, Emily Albu Hanawalt and Carter Lindberg, eds. (Kirksville, Mo., 1994), pp. 177–91.

<sup>32</sup> Franz Ehrle, *Beiträge zur Geschichte und Reform der Armenpflege* (1881); Ehrle, “Die Armenordnungen von Nürnberg (1522) und von Ypern (1525),” *Historische Jahrbuch* 9 (1888), pp. 450–79; Georg Ratzinger, *Geschichte der Armenpflege*, 2nd edn. (Freiburg-im-Breisgau, 1884).

<sup>33</sup> Most scholars continue to acknowledge the humanitarian values of northern humanism as an important factor in the promotion of reformed poor relief, even if their articulated programs were subsequent to the creation of the new institutions: Henri Pirenne, *Histoire de Belgique*, 3 vols., 2nd edn. (Brussels, 1912), vol. III, pp. 288–90; Winkelmann, “Armenordnungen,” pp. 376–84. See also Geoffrey Elton, “An early Tudor poor law,” *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, 6 (1953), pp. 55–7. A very good discussion of this debate (which informed the outline of this paragraph) can be found in Elsie Ann McKee, *John Calvin on the Diaconate and Liturgical Almsgiving* (Geneva, 1984), pp. 94–106.

Cambridge University Press

0521025400 - The Reformation of Community: Social Welfare and Calvinist Charity in Holland, 1572-1620

Charles H. Parker

Excerpt

[More information](#)*The reformation of community*

Lutheran city of Nuremburg, but he argued that Catholic magistrates in Ypres did not recognize anything Lutheran in the Nuremburg reforms.<sup>34</sup>

More recent research in the twentieth century has effectively demolished the nineteenth-century Lutheran model. Originally published in 1968, Natalie Zemon Davis's seminal study of the *aumône générale* in Lyons exposed the common social concerns that motivated both Protestants and Catholics to work together in establishing a new centralized relief system there.<sup>35</sup> Noting that Lyons was not an isolated example, Davis concluded that changes in the structure of charity "did not break along religious lines."<sup>36</sup> Rather, "The context for welfare reform . . . was urban crisis, brought about by a conjuncture of older problems of poverty with population growth and economic expansion."<sup>37</sup> Appearing three years later, Brian Pullan's *Rich and Poor in Renaissance Venice* demonstrated that many components of the relief programs of the 1520s and 1530s had been implemented as early as the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.<sup>38</sup> Legislation against vagrancy and the establishment of centralized charitable hospitals emerged in England and northern Italy long before the Reformation. Even as early as the twelfth century, canonists cautioned benefactors against giving charity indiscriminately. Consequently, many of the cardinal principles within late medieval Catholic charity established precedents for sixteenth-century welfare.<sup>39</sup> While Pullan attributed the impetus for the new 1525 poor law in Venice to influences from other cities, some of which were Lutheran, he concluded, "It is, however, doubtful how far such schemes ought to be identified with Lutheranism."<sup>40</sup> Conversely, he stressed the gradual evolution of sixteenth-century reform and argued that there were few practical differences in charitable institutions in Protestant and Catholic lands.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, the studies of Linda Martz and Maureen Flynn have shown that poor relief reform came to Spain, which was largely untouched by the Reformation.<sup>42</sup> Even though Protestantism was not the sole cause of the new social welfare ordinances, there is general agreement today among most scholars that Protestantism provided a strong impetus for reform, especially in centralizing relief under civil administration. In Holland, however,

<sup>34</sup> Bonenfant, "Origines," 6 (1927), pp. 216, 220–3.

<sup>35</sup> Davis, "Poor relief," p. 58. In *Beyond Charity*, pp. 68–172, Carter Lindberg has recently reasserted the argument for the central importance of Lutheran theology in the origins of poor relief reform. With respect to the debate over Protestantism and poor relief reform, however, Lindberg's argument simply reiterates the older Lutheran perspective.

<sup>36</sup> Davis, "Poor relief," p. 60. <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59. <sup>38</sup> Pullan, *Rich and Poor*, p. 198.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 198–202.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 255. Two other excellent monographs on poor relief in Italy are Sandra Cavallo, *Charity and Power in Early Modern Italy: Benefactors and Their Motives in Turin, 1541–1789* (Cambridge, 1995), and Philip R. Gavitt, *The Ospedale degli Innocenti, 1410–1536* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1990).

<sup>41</sup> Pullan, *Rich and Poor*, pp. 11–12, 104, 197. Pullan does note that Catholic charity continued to concern itself with the salvation of benefactor and recipient: Brian Pullan, "Catholics and the poor in early modern Europe," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, series 5, 26 (1976), pp. 25–30.

<sup>42</sup> Linda Martz, *Poverty and Welfare in Hapsburg Spain: The Example of Toledo* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 61–158; Maureen Flynn, *Sacred Charity: Confraternities and Social Welfare in Spain, 1400–1700* (Ithaca, 1989), pp. 75–141.