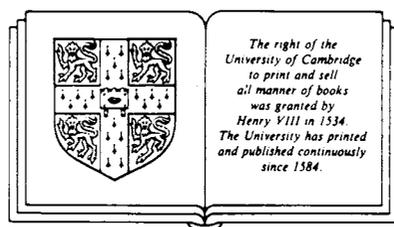


Always among us

Images of the poor in Zwingli's Zurich

LEE PALMER WANDEL

Yale University



CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge

London New York Port Chester Melbourne Sydney

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK
40 West 20th Street, New York NY 10011-4211, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain
Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa
<http://www.cambridge.org>

© Cambridge University Press 1990

This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without
the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1990
First paperback edition 2002

This book was published with the assistance of the Frederick W. Hilles Publi-
cation Fund of the Whitney Humanities Center of Yale University.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Wandel, Lee Palmer.

Always among us: images of the poor in Zwingli's Zurich / Lee
Palmer Wandel.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 0 521 39096 6

1. Poor – Switzerland – Zurich – History – 16th century. 2. Church
and the poor – Switzerland – Zurich – History – 16th century.
3. Zwingli, Ulrich, 1484–1531. 4. Poor laws – Switzerland –
History – 16th century. I. Title.

HV4130.Z87W36 1990

362.5'09494'57–dc20 90-31038 CIP

ISBN 0 521 39096 6 hardback

ISBN 0 521 52254 4 paperback

Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>page</i> vi
Introduction	i
1. The city on the Limmat	17
2. The people's preacher and the living images of God	36
3. Images of the poor	77
4. The poor in the language of legislation	124
Conclusion	170
Appendix A Alms Statute of 1520	179
Appendix B Poor Law of 1525	188
<i>Index</i>	197

Introduction

You always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. (Matthew 26:11)

The poor had indeed been among the peoples of Europe always. Numbers and relative proportions of the poor fluctuated, as did the kinds of people who were poor, but their presence was a constant. The poor were familiar, a point of reference in people's lives.

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich (II Corinthians 8:9).

And since at least the time of Christ, the condition of poverty was not understood solely in economic terms.¹ The life of Christ had brought to the physical condition of poverty a religious value, complex and ambivalent connotations. Christ had connected himself to the poor in two ways: as their shepherd, who offered them the Kingdom of God; and as their brother, whose life was akin to theirs in its lack of property, of fixed abode, of wealth. He had renounced not only wealth, but all that wealth brought: power in political life, influence in social relations, and the worth of the self. His poverty was total. Christ's life posed a central paradox for Christians: his spirituality was anchored in his poverty and his poverty was a metaphor for his spirituality.

If you would be perfect, go sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven (Matthew 19:21).

¹ J. LeClercq "Aux origines bibliques du vocabulaire de la pauvreté," *Etudes sur l'Histoire de la Pauvreté*, vol. 1, ed. Michel Mollat, Publications de la Sorbonne, vol. 8, (Paris, 1974), pp. 42-3.

Always among us

For the greater number of Christians who followed Christ's call to poverty during the next 1,500 years, however, that poverty meant solely material dispossession.² From its earliest forms in the deserts of Egypt through the many reforms at Cluny, Citeaux, Chartreuse, and elsewhere, monasticism found sanctity in the abdication of all private wealth. The twelfth-century Lyonnais merchant, Waldes, found in Matthew 19:21 the precise form he would give to his piety. The defining characteristic of his piety and of his movement was not an abject humility, but the lack of property.³

The person who most completely captured the fullness of Christ's poverty and, in doing so, the imagination of Europeans prior to the Reformation, was Francis of Assisi.⁴ Seeking to imitate Christ, Francis wed "Lady Poverty." Like Christ, Francis renounced not only gold, silver, possessions, and shelter, but all the values his society associated with them: power, influence, and the worth of the self. For Francis, the physical condition of poverty corresponded to man's spiritual and eschatological condition.⁵ Man was as a beggar before God: destitute and powerless. Indeed, all men were beggars before God; for Francis the poor were essentially no different from other men. They shared in the glory of God's creation⁶ and the poverty of man's condition.⁷

He who curses a poor man, does an injury to Christ, because he bears the noble sign of him, 'who made himself poor for us in the world' (Francis, in *I Celano*).⁸

² Ray C. Petry, *Francis of Assisi, Apostle of Poverty* (Durham, N.C., 1941), p. 4. On the debates about the nature of Christ's poverty from the patristic age to the thirteenth century, see J. LeClercq, "Les controverses sur la pauvreté du Christ," *Etudes*, vol. 1, pp. 45-56. On the religious connotations of poverty in the Middle Ages, see especially *Etudes*, vol. 1, entire; Lester Little, *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe* (Ithaca, 1978); and Michel Mollat, *The Poor in the Middle Ages*, trans. Goldhammer (New Haven, Conn., 1987).

³ Little, pp. 121ff.

⁴ The literature on Francis and his notion of poverty is enormous. See, especially, Kajetan Esser, "Die Armutsfassung des Hl. Franziskus," in *Poverty in the Middle Ages*, ed. David Flood (Werk/Westf., 1975), pp. 60-70; M. D. Lambert, *Franciscan Poverty* (London, 1961); Little; Petry; and *La povertà del secolo XII e Francesco d'Assisi* (Assisi, 1975). Although the person and personality of Francis differ markedly from those of Dominic, Little, pp. 158-9, finds that the "purpose and many of the approaches to achieving that purpose," as well as the "geographic spread, social composition, forms of ministry, or style of life" of the orders founded by the two men are fundamentally alike. It is not clear to me if later medieval perceptions of the two orders were as unified.

⁵ Esser, p. 69. Bonaventure made the fullest statement of the Franciscan notion of poverty in the thirteenth century in the *Apologia pauperum*, especially chaps. 7-12.

⁶ Cantic of the Sun; Mollat, pp. 70-1.

⁷ Esser, pp. 69-70.

⁸ Cited in Lambert, p. 59.

Introduction

If the monks, the Humiliati, the Waldensians, and the canons found religious value in a life of poverty, Francis transvaluated the religious meaning of the poor themselves. For him, the distinction between involuntary and voluntary poverty was far less significant than the nature of the poverty one lived.⁹ The poor who lived on the streets of towns, who were destitute and humiliated, who had not chosen to live in such harsh conditions, were not merely Francis's brothers, his fellow creatures. Francis found in the poor, in their wretchedness, their powerlessness, their dependency, the poverty Christ had preached. The fullness of their poverty brought them dignity and the promise of divine love.¹⁰ Francis located religious meaning and value not in the simple condition of material deprivation, but in the complex situation of the poor themselves. And that relocation enabled him and the early Franciscans to look to the poor, to care for them, and to live among them.

Francis left his followers a difficult legacy. The complete poverty he embraced was difficult to emulate. And yet, the story of the Franciscans to the time of the Reformation is one of the struggle to keep Francis's notion of poverty viable and vital. In the early fourteenth century, that struggle centered on the question of Christ's poverty. Pope John XXII had opposed the absolute poverty certain friars had pursued and, in 1318, had four Spiritual Franciscans burned at the stake for their "heretical" adherence to total poverty.¹¹ In 1323, in the papal bull *Cum inter nonnullos*, he declared that it was heretical to hold contrary to Scripture that Christ and his apostles had had or owned no property.¹² With this bull, he sought to sever the Franciscan notion of poverty from its biblical foundation. That he failed in his effort bespeaks not only the centrality of Francis's notion of poverty to many of those who chose to follow him, but also its wider importance to the laity, who supported the more radical Franciscans in their pursuit of Christ's poverty throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

⁹ Rule of 1221, Section 8; Rule of 1223, Section 6, both in *St. Francis of Assisi Writings and Early Biographies; English Omnibus of the Sources*, ed. Marion A. Habig (Chicago, 1973), pp. 31-64.

¹⁰ Petry, p. 53.

¹¹ John Moorman, *A History of the Franciscan Order from its Origins to the Year 1517* (Oxford, 1968), p. 311.

¹² "Quod Redemptori nostro eiusque Apostolis quae ipsos habuisse scriptura sacra testat nequaquam ius ipsis utendi competere nec illa vendendi seu donandi ius habuerint; aut ex ipsis alia acquirendi," quoted in A. G. Ferrers Howell, *S. Bernardino of Siena* (London, 1913), p. 39. See also Moorman, p. 317.

Always among us

And so, firmly established in the Catholic faith, we may live always according to the poverty, and the humility, and the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, as we have solemnly promised (Rule of 1223).

For the Franciscans, the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were dominated by the conflict between the Conventuals, those who pursued a moderate and cloistered life,¹³ and the Friars of the Strict Observance, or Observants.¹⁴ The Observant movement began in 1334, when a group of five friars received permission from the Minister General to found a hermitage, in order to live according to the strictest interpretation of the Rule. The Observants sought to recover the quality of Francis's life of poverty: its instability, its insecurity, its lack of provision. In its early years, the movement met with much opposition from the Conventuals and from some of the Popes. In the last quarter of the century, however, the Conventuals and the Popes came to support it, as its form of piety grew in popularity and validity among the peasants and patricians of northern Italy. In the fifteenth century, the fate of the Observant movement was secured and advanced by a series of extraordinary preachers, among them Bernardino da Feltre, John of Capistrano, James of the March, and Bernardino of Siena.

In the name of blessed Jesus, I began with a mouthful of sow-thistle, and, putting it into my mouth, set about chewing it. Chew! chew! It would not go down. . . . And so, with a bit of sow-thistle I got rid of temptation; for I know well enough now that it *was* temptation. . . . But how about S. Francis who fasted forty days and ate nothing? He might do it, but I can't. And I tell you I would not do it, and would not like God to make me want to do it (Bernardino of Siena, Sermon).¹⁵

The life of the best known among these preachers, Bernardino of Siena, suggests some of the dimensions of the Franciscan ideal of poverty in the fifteenth century.¹⁶ It was a life less dramatic than Francis's, expressed not in gestures of mortification or brutalization of the body.¹⁷

¹³ The Conventuals comprised that part of the Order who chose to live in cloisters, hold property that often was rent producing, and keep stores of food in excess of daily needs.

¹⁴ For the following, see Moorman, pt. 4, and Howell, pp. 53–61.

¹⁵ *Le Prediche Volgari* II, 351, 352, quoted in Howell, pp. 93–4.

¹⁶ On the life of Bernardino of Siena, see Moorman, pp. 457–66; Howell.

¹⁷ "To take up the cross in a way that the body cannot bear, is not an inspiration of God, but a temptation of the devil; and the reason is, that God hates none of the things He has made; wherefore He hates not our body, but loves it, and would have us love it, and preserve it for His honour, and not destroy it, nor give it a burden it cannot bear," quoted in Howell, p. 94.

Introduction

It was, nonetheless, a life that mirrored Francis's in specific moments and gestures. Early in his pursuit of the religious life, Bernardino abandoned the stability and comfort of a Conventual house, moving into an Observant house, where he was permitted to beg his food and to work among the poor. In 1405, he was commissioned as a preacher, a vocation he was to follow until his death in 1444. It was in his life as a preacher that he most closely approached the quality of Francis's life: He lived on the gifts of others, making no provision for future needs; he was itinerant, and after 1418, had no fixed abode.¹⁸ He preached against luxury and extravagance, effecting bonfires of "vanities" throughout northern Italy. But his fiercest polemic was reserved for the economic practice that created money from money, that was in its essence artificial and inorganic, that was concerned exclusively with money, and that created wealth by impoverishing others – usury.¹⁹

In 1418, when the friar's preaching was bringing him a dangerous popularity in Milan, the duke, Filippo Maria Visconti, sought to test the most dramatic and visible attribute of Bernardino's sanctity: his poverty. The duke sent the friar a messenger bearing a gift of gold coin. Following Francis's Rule precisely, Bernardino refused even to touch the money. And when the duke's messenger would not be turned away, Bernardino had him apply the money to free local prisoners. In both gestures, Bernardino evoked and invoked Francis himself; in both, his life imitated Francis's with striking precision.²⁰

According to his contemporary, John of Capistrano, when Bernardino first joined the Order, perhaps twenty communities of Observants were to be found in Italy. By his death, the number had grown to 230 communities.²¹ The image of the gaunt friar moved many to either join or support the Observants. In recognition of this, in 1437, the Minister

¹⁸ Raymond DeRoover asserts that Bernardino "took a rest at the small friary of La Capiola near Siena" during the years 1431–3, in *San Bernardino of Siena and Sant'Antonino of Florence; Two Great Economic Thinkers of the Middle Ages* (Boston, 1967), p. 3.

¹⁹ The Observants were to develop this position into a program of relief for poor citizens, the Monti di Pietà, in the later fifteenth century. Moorman, pp. 529–32; Brian Pullan, *Rich and Poor in Renaissance Venice* (Oxford, 1971), pt. 3, especially pp. 449–75; Reinhold Mueller, "Charitable Institutions, the Jewish Community and Venetian Society. A Discussion of the Recent Volume by Brian Pullan," *Studi Veneziani* 14 (1972): 37–82. On the importance of San Bernardino for Florentine communal ideals of charity, see Phillip Gavitt, "Economy, Charity, and Community in Florence, 1350–1450," in *Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Thomas Riis (Alphen aan den Rijn, 1981), pp. 109–11.

²⁰ Moorman, p. 458; Howell, pp. 109–11.

²¹ Quoted in Moorman, p. 465.

Always among us

General of the Franciscans made him Vicar of the Observants in Italy. In 1440, together with another friar, Bernardino wrote the “Exposition of the Rule,” the Observant interpretation of Francis’s Rule. The Exposition defined the nature of Franciscan poverty for the fifteenth century: It regulated against owning money and called for the renunciation of all goods that were not essential to daily survival. It reasserted the instability and dependency of Francis’s life.

Bernardino’s reform movement, the Observants, triumphed in the early sixteenth century. By the end of the fifteenth century, the reform party, or *reformati*, which comprised the Observants and a number of smaller, equally rigorous groups,²² had come to represent the majority of Franciscans, outnumbering the Conventuals in most countries.²³ In 1517, Pope Leo X gave the *reformati* the right to determine the leadership and the direction of the Order of Friars Minor; the Conventuals were required to submit or establish a separate Order.

In 1517, those who had sought to shape their lives in strict accordance with Francis’s Rule, who had placed a notion of poverty at the center of the Order’s identity, were triumphant in the Franciscan Order. That notion was no longer precisely Francis’s, but it shared many of the qualities Francis had attributed to true poverty. The notion of poverty shaping Franciscan piety in 1517 retained its characteristics of instability, insecurity, its lack of fixed location, of provision – its dependency and humility. And for those who followed that ideal, the line dividing those who chose poverty from those who were involuntarily poor remained pale. The condition of true poverty brought to both a life devoid of many qualities their contemporary society valued.

It may be that for those who saw the most devout *reformati*, that line was equally difficult to trace. Portraits of Bernardino present a man emaciated, his cheeks sunken, without the shaping presence of teeth.²⁴ Others portrayed his head as skull-like, his hair sparse, eyes sunken.²⁵ In his person his audience could see poverty – not mere austerity – in all its deformity. Like Christ and Francis, he had no fixed abode, no

²² Moorman, chap. 43.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 581ff.

²⁴ See, for example, the portraits by Sano di Pietro, in the Palazzo Pubblico, Siena, and Fiorenzo di Lorenzo, in the Pinacoteca Vannucci, Perugia.

²⁵ For example, the head of Bernardino by Lorenzo Vecchietta, in the Palazzo Palmieri-Nuti, Siena; the portrait by Pietro di Giovanni Ambossi in L’Observanza, Siena; and the “Glorification of San Bernardino,” by Pintoricchio, in Santa Maria in Aracoeli, Rome.

Introduction

wealth, no property, no political or social status. His face bore the marks of deprivation, of homelessness, of insecurity. He looked, because he was, a poor man, a beggar.

Social, as well as religious, evaluations were applied to the material condition of poverty.²⁶ The poverty practiced by Christ, Francis, Bernardino, and the Observant Franciscans played upon contemporary social definitions of poverty. Indeed, well into the sixteenth century, the terms by which poverty was defined were social: The poor were understood first in relation to other parts of society. They were defined according to categories that enabled late medieval society to place individuals in relationship to others, hierarchically and vertically, and to give each a place, a status – relative social worth.²⁷ The poor lacked precisely those attributes that gave social value and significance to certain of their contemporaries.

First among those attributes was power: the ability to exercise authority over others. In late medieval towns, power was most visibly and frequently expressed through membership in the town council and the guild. The key criteria in determining that membership were property ownership and citizenship.²⁸ Symbols and rights reinforced distinctions of status and worth.²⁹ Clothes and access to public festivals, in particular, were important marks of social status and influence.³⁰ So, too, was place of residence symbolic of social place: Those who lived just outside the town walls, in the Vorstädte, had less status, a lesser place than those who lived within the walls.³¹

Each of these attributes had been rejected by Francis and his followers.

²⁶ On the social values attached to poverty, see Karl Bosl, "Potens und Pauper: Begriffsgeschichtliche Studien zur gesellschaftlichen Differenzierung im frühen Mittelalter und zum 'Pauperismus' des Hochmittelalters," in *Frühformen der Gesellschaft im mittelalterlichen Europa* (Vienna, 1964), 106–34; *Études*, vol. 2; Little; Mollat; and Erich Maschke, "Die Unterschichten der mittelalterlichen Städte Deutschlands," in *Städte und Menschen*, Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte, Bd. 68 (Wiesbaden, 1980), pp. 306–79.

²⁷ Maschke has traced in great detail the categories by which late medieval society designated the lower, and poorer, ranks.

²⁸ For the towns of Freiburg im Br. and Basel, Thomas Fischer finds that these criteria were not as central. See *Städtische Armut und Armenfürsorge im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert*, Göttinger Beiträge zur Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte, Bd. 4 (Göttingen, 1979), pp. 74–82.

²⁹ See, for example, John Martin Vincent, *Costume and Conduct in the Laws of Basel, Bern, and Zürich, 1370–1800* (Baltimore, 1935; reprint, New York, 1969) on the regulation of dress.

³⁰ Servants, for example, were not allowed to attend a wedding in late thirteenth-century Augsburg. Maschke, p. 316.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 321.

Always among us

They placed “power” in relation to the omnipotence of God and found all men lacking. They avoided all public symbols of status: property, clothes, access to festivals. So, too, their itinerant life denied them both citizenship and permanent place of residence – they had no social place. Finally, Francis and his followers defined themselves in contradistinction to an essential social value: “honor.”³²

Of particular importance in identifying the poor was the application of this value to professions: the distinction made between “honorable” and “dishonorable” professions.³³ Those who practiced “dishonorable” professions lived at the margins of society; most of them also lived at the margins of subsistence. Honor had no clear principle of application among professions. It did not correspond directly with guild membership. Butchers and leatherworkers belonged to guilds; the one retained its honorable status through its association with food, the other did not.³⁴ The work of millers was often considered dishonorable, perhaps because mills were located on the edge, the margin, of towns, perhaps because millers themselves lived at the edges of society, belonging fully neither to the town nor to the countryside.³⁵ Servants, both male and female, because they were dependent upon the households of others, having no home of their own, held dishonorable status.

Although some dishonorable professions were organized into guilds, most were not. Those not belonging to any guild had less identity within the town, less influence, less status. Membership in a guild provided certain protections not available to most dishonorable professions.³⁶ Urban day laborers comprised the largest group of nonguild workers. Because they belonged to no guild, their skill was not regulated. They had no stable place of work. They received the lowest wages among artisans. In an Augsburg tax census of 1475, day laborers ranked immediately above beggars in income.³⁷

Other professions were “dishonorable” for more obvious reasons. Gamblers and prostitutes shared the loss of dignity brought by work

³² Werner Danckert, *Unehrlche Leute* (Bern, 1963), Introduction, on the notion of “honor” in late medieval society.

³³ Danckert; Maschke, pp. 318ff.

³⁴ Maschke, p. 320.

³⁵ Danckert, pp. 125–45.

³⁶ Fischer found that guild membership was the single most important criterion in delimiting poverty for Basel and Freiburg, pp. 59ff.

³⁷ Maschke, p. 331.

Introduction

considered immoral. Work that concerned the dead, that of executioners and gravediggers, was dishonorable. Lacking in honor, too, was the work surrounding prisons and criminals: tower guards, caretakers. Itinerant professions, such as miming, acrobatics, and juggling, were all dishonorable. A last and separate category of dishonorable people, whose dishonor lay not in their profession, but in their person, comprised all those who were considered truly outsiders for late medieval society: Jews and gypsies, bastards and moral deviants.

The social value of honor had direct and material repercussions for certain economic functions. Dishonorable professions were much more vulnerable economically. Guild membership provided a number of protections; its absence meant insecurity on a number of fronts. There were no fixed wages for many dishonorable professions, most prominently, both urban and rural day laborers. Their employment was sporadic; permanent employment was problematic at best. Their lives as well as their livelihoods depended upon the demands of others.

That so many of those who practiced dishonorable professions lived near the line of poverty may well have led people to view some poor as lacking in honor. Yet, as we shall see, poverty and dishonor were not inextricably intertwined. Certain poor were known as “honorable poor.”³⁸ Perhaps more important, many more people were poor or potentially poor than those who belonged to dishonorable professions. As early as 1340 in Florence, *pauper* and *laborator* were becoming interchangeable.³⁹ Among the crafts, and among their guilds, a wide disparity of income and property existed.⁴⁰ A number of professions could not ensure for themselves stability in their standard of living.⁴¹ Many people were vulnerable to wage and price fluctuations and to shortages; many were forced to ask for support from others in order to ensure a basic subsistence.⁴²

³⁸ Richard Trexler, “Charity and the Defense of Urban Elites in the Italian Communes,” in *The Rich, the Well Born and the Powerful*, ed. Frederic Cople Jaher (Urbana, 1973), pp. 64–109; Amleto Spicciati, “The ‘Poveri Vergognosi’ in 15th Century Florence,” in *Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe*, p. 129, 129n. 42.

³⁹ Catherina Lis and Hugo Soly, *Poverty and Capitalism in Early Modern Europe* (Bristol, 1982 [1979]), p. 51.

⁴⁰ See Maschke’s figures for Breslau, p. 329; Fischer, pp. 59–79.

⁴¹ Fischer found poverty occurring most often in three professional sectors: textile workers, construction, and the urban agrarian workers, pp. 67ff. Spicciati found relief programs in Florence specifically designed for the temporarily poor, pp. 136ff.

⁴² “In a broad sense the term ‘the poor’ was often, and correctly, used to designate the majority of the working population,” Carlo Cipolla, “Economic Fluctuations, the Poor, and Public Policy

Always among us

I had hoped to become rich
Over my own on this earth
Many enterprises I've begun
None of which got off the ground
Indeed it's true as men often say
Ah, handwork brings new bad luck . . .
And the fine people think not
That tomorrow may be for them as today is for me
So turns the wheel
Where luck shifts early and late
Quickly over itself, then suddenly down
Luck reigns today, bad luck again tomorrow . . .
Therefore let no one ridicule me
Who knows yet who will be the last
Who will go down just like me
When in the day many hours still remain
(Peter Flettner, *The Fallen Artisan*, c. 1535)⁴³

The line dividing the poor from the rest of society was less and less stable.⁴⁴ It fluctuated according to larger, structural changes, such as climate, economy, and the contours of political jurisdiction. Agricultural production depended more and more upon the labor not of property-owning peasants, but of day laborers, who had come to comprise roughly 50 percent of the rural population in New Castile.⁴⁵ The organization of the textile industries led increasingly to the impoverishment of the textile workers.⁴⁶ In Leyden, the town secretary stated that the few

(Italy, 16th and 17th Centuries),” in *Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe*, p. 65. See also Fischer, pt. A.

⁴³ “Ich han gehoffet reich zu werden/ Uber mein gelich auff disen erden/ Hab vil hendel gefangen an/ Der mir keyner von stat wolt gan/ Ist noch war wie man saget dick/ Acht handwerck pringen neun ungluck/ Das ist mir eben auch geschehen/ . . . Und dencken nicht die dollen lewt/ In sey morgen wie mir ist hewt/ So in gee ubern pauch ein radt/ Wan glück bewegt sich fru und spat/ Schnell uber sich, dann plotzlich nider/ Regiert hewt gluck morgen ungluck wider/ . . . Darumb darff niemant spotten mein/ Wer weiss wer noch der letzt will sein/ Wann in dem tag sand yezt d fl stundt,” from *Der zugrunde gerichtete Handwerker* (ca. 1535), by Peter Flettner, reprinted in Max Geisberg, *Der deutsche Einblatt Holzschnitt* (Munich, 1923–30), vol. 20, p. 828.

⁴⁴ W. P. Blockmans and W. Prevenier, “Poverty in Flanders and Brabant from the Fourteenth to the Mid-Sixteenth Century: Sources and Problems,” *Acta Historiae Neerlandicae* 10 (1978): 1–58; Cipolla.

⁴⁵ Lis and Soly, pp. 73, 62. On the decline in agricultural real wages, see Wilhelm Abel, *Agricultural Fluctuations in Europe; From the thirteenth to the twentieth centuries*, trans. Olive Ordish (New York, 1980 [1978]), pp. 116–46.

⁴⁶ Fischer, pp. 67ff.; Lis and Soly, p. 69; Spicciani, pp. 157ff; Gavitt, pp. 93ff.

Introduction

drapeniers entirely dominated those who lived from spinning, weaving, fulling, and other wool processes.⁴⁷ So, too, individual shifts of fortune could move a family from financial stability to dependency. Increasingly in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, urban artisans and peasants left their towns and villages, their crafts and their land, in search of a means of existence.⁴⁸

By the late fifteenth century, the faces of the poor were many in kind and in number. The poor included not only the traditional groups: widows, orphans, the blind, the lame. They also comprised newer kinds as well: artisans temporarily out of work, urban wage earners, day laborers between harvests, peasants whose holdings had been ravaged by natural disaster or war.⁴⁹ Their number was growing. In Lübeck, the percentage of the population comprised in the lower, and therefore vulnerable, strata, rose from 42 percent in 1380 to 52 percent in 1460.⁵⁰ In ten Württemberger villages, the number of poor, of those people permanently dependent on others for their subsistence, comprised at least 65 percent of the population in 1544.⁵¹ In Memmingen, the number of “Have-nots” on the tax registers leapt from 31 percent to 55 percent in 1521.⁵² Thomas Fischer has estimated that roughly one-fifth of the population received no regular nourishment.⁵³ The faces of the poor were many. They were also diverse, and they may well have been familiar.

Irides. To these rags we owe our happiness.

Misop. But I’m afraid you’re going to lose a good deal of this happiness before long.

Irides. How so?

Misop. Because citizens are already muttering that beggars shouldn’t be allowed to roam about at will, but that each city should support its own beggars and all the able-bodied ones forced to work.

Irides. Why are they planning this?

⁴⁷ Lis and Soly, p. 69.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

⁴⁹ Fischer finds six basic categories of poor – craftsmen with houses and small workshops; journeymen and maids; day laborers; alms recipients; dishonorable professions; the asocial – which he has divided according to their willingness and ability to work, pp. 83ff.

⁵⁰ Lis and Soly, p. 74. In 1475, 66 percent of Augsburg’s taxable population belonged to the category “Habnits,” Maschke, p. 323.

⁵¹ Lis and Soly, p. 74.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 78.

⁵³ Fischer, p. 57.

Always among us

Misop. Because they find prodigious crimes committed under pretext of begging. In the second place, there's not a little danger from your order

(Erasmus, "Beggar Talk," *Colloquies*.)⁵⁴

In the years between Francis's death and the beginning of the Reformation, the precise religious and social values associated with poverty, as well as the prosopography of the poor, changed.⁵⁵ Michel Mollat has argued, and much of the scholarship on sixteenth-century poor relief seems to concur, that the social evaluation of the poor eclipsed religious connotations by the beginning of the sixteenth century.⁵⁶ They were perceived, Mollat and others argue, after the social revolts of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, as a disruptive and periodically violent presence – as a source of social unrest and consequently, a focus for social control.⁵⁷

However, for the people of sixteenth-century Europe, poverty was not so easily severed from its religious connotations. The story of the Franciscans suggests that as late as 1517, poverty retained at least some of the complexity that Christ, Francis, and Bernardino had brought to it. And their effort to return to an original form of Franciscan religious life true to the intent of the founder echoed the much broader movement to return to an original Christianity – a Christianity whose historical dimensions could be mapped with precision in its liturgy, its practices, its doctrine – that emerged in the first decades of the sixteenth century. At the same time that the Franciscans were defining the form of their life, all forms of religious life were called into question, examined, reevaluated against the lives of Christ and His apostles. It may be no

⁵⁴ *The Colloquies of Erasmus*, trans. Craig R. Thompson (Chicago, 1965), pp. 253–4.

⁵⁵ Bosl; Mollat; Little; *Etudes*, vols. 1 and 2.

⁵⁶ Two exceptions to this are Elsie McKee, *John Calvin on the Diaconate and Liturgical Almsgiving* (Geneva, 1984); and Brian Pullan, "Catholics and the Poor in Early Modern Europe," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser., 26 (1976): 26–34, especially.

⁵⁷ Mollat, chap. IV; Lis and Soly, pp. 51ff. and 82–96; Jean-Pierre Gutton, *La société et les pauvres en Europe (XVIe–XVIIIe siècles)* (Paris, 1974); André Vauchez, "Le peuple au Moyen Age: du 'Populus Christianus' aux classes dangereuses," in *Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe II*, ed. Thomas Riis (Odense, 1986), pp. 9–18. Richard Gascon places the shift in evaluation of the poor in the seventeenth century, "Economic et pauvreté aux XVIe et XVIIe siècles: Lyon, ville exemplaire et prophétique," *Etudes*, vol. 2, pp. 747–60. On the theme of social control, see especially Robert Jütte, "Poor Relief and Social Discipline in Sixteenth-Century Europe," *European Studies Review* 11 (1981): 25–52. As John Boswell pointed out to me, the Bull *Cum inter nonnullos* suggests that the association between poverty and social instability and rebellion came much earlier.

Introduction

coincidence that among the most vocal critics were mendicants.⁵⁸ It should not be surprising that they brought to their vision of religious practice some of the values they had sought to establish in their own order: simplicity of piety and a direct engagement with the poor.

Nor were the mendicants alone in their concern for the poor in the early sixteenth century; indeed, humanists and civic leaders are more often credited with a concern that translated into action.⁵⁹ It has long been acknowledged that poor relief and religion were reformed simultaneously in a number of towns, among them, Nuremberg, Wittenberg, Zurich, Strasbourg, Basel, and Geneva.⁶⁰ In each urban community, a range of influences, of ideas, values, and attitudes, came to play in that reform. In each, reform assumed an identity slightly different from those of other towns. But for all, poverty and reform were linked.

As each civic community sought to redefine what constituted true Christian practice and liturgy, it also sought to define its relation with its poor. In Leisnig, Wittenberg, and Nuremberg, town councils called upon their citizens to care for the poor out of Christian love.⁶¹ In Strasbourg, the first administrator of poor relief, appointed in 1523, was a former chaplain.⁶² In Geneva, the *procureurs* placed in charge of poor relief were equal in authority to the elders of consistory, who supervised

⁵⁸ Among the best known were Martin Bucer, a Dominican, and Eberlin von Günzberg and Francis Lambert, Franciscans. In Zurich, two of the earliest and most outspoken proponents of reform were the Franciscans Sebastian Meyer (1465–1545) and Sebastian Hofmeister (1476–1533).

⁵⁹ Natalie Zemon Davis, "Poor Relief, Humanism, and Heresy," in *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, 1975), 17–64; Paul Fideler, "Christian humanism and poor law reform in early Tudor England," *Societas* 4 (1974): 269–85; Pullan, "Catholics and the Poor in Early Modern Europe."

⁶⁰ The modern discussion was initiated by Franz Ehrle, *Beiträge zur Reform der Armenpflege* (Freiburg im Br., 1881) and Georg Ratzinger, *Geschichte der Kirchlichen Armenpflege* (Freiburg im Br., 1884). On Nuremberg and Wittenberg, see Harold Grimm, "Luther's Contributions to Sixteenth-Century Organization of Poor Relief," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte [ARG]* 61 (1970): 222–34; and Carter Lindberg, "There Should Be No Beggars Among Christians," *Church History* 46 (1977): 313–34. On Zurich, see Alice Denzler, "*Geschichte des Armenwesens in Kanton Zürich im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert*," *Zürcher volkswirtschaftliche Studien*, N.F. 7 (1920): 1–215. On Strasbourg, Miriam Usher Chrisman, "Urban Poor in the Sixteenth Century: The Case of Strasbourg," *Social Groups and Religious Ideas in the Sixteenth Century*, Studies in Medieval Culture, XIII (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1978), pp. 59–67. On Basel, see Fischer. On Geneva, see Robert Kingdon, "Social Welfare in Calvin's Geneva," *American Historical Review* 76(1971), reprinted in *Church and Society in Reformation Europe* (London, 1985), section VI, pp. 50–69; and McKee.

⁶¹ Grimm, "Luther's Contributions to Sixteenth-Century Organization of Poor Relief," 227–33. See, for example, the poor ordinances of Nuremberg and Kitzingen, in Otto Winckelmann, "Die Armenordnungen von Nürnberg (1522), Kitzingen (1523), Regensburg (1523), und Ypern (1525)," *ARG* 10 (1913): 259, and 11 (1914): 8, respectively.

⁶² Chrisman, p. 61.