Before the last quarter of the eighteenth century there was a generally clear and remarkably uniform pattern of Church-State relationships across Europe, which had emerged from the religious conflicts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the course of the ‘long’ nineteenth century this firm alliance between political and religious establishments broke down all over Europe. A substantial degree of religious pluralism developed everywhere, requiring Church and State to accommodate change. Defining religious reform as ‘the conscious pursuit of renewal with the aim of adapting organised religion to the changing relations between Church, State and society’, this series examines the reforms initiated by the organised religions of Northern Europe between c.1780 and c.1920. There has been an assumption that it was the change in the Church-State relationship that was largely responsible for the ecclesiastical reform movement of the nineteenth century, and that it was the state that was the principal agent of change, with the national churches seen as resisting changes that had to be forced upon them. Recent research across Europe has shown that in some parts of Europe ecclesiastical reform was initiated by the churches; and that there were times and places when it was the state rather than the church that was hostile to alterations in the status quo. This series explores this process of change from different angles, looking particularly at its impact on the question of religious reform, in England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, Sweden and Norway.

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THE DYNAMICS OF RELIGIOUS REFORM IN NORTHERN EUROPE

1780-1920

IV

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Colophon
The Reformation in Denmark and Sweden turned the two Northern European kingdoms into Lutheran, Protestant states in the first half of the sixteenth century. This had far-reaching consequences both for the organization of poor and sick relief, and for the way in which social responsibilities were politicized. The Church became part of the state, and in accordance with Lutheran ideas of the king as father of his people, the monarchs took over responsibility for the poor and sick. Nevertheless, the Church retained a crucial role as long as poor relief was organized within the parish structure, and was in practice carried out by local priests in their function as royal civil servants. This situation only changed during the nineteenth century, with the arrival of democracy and the reorganization of the state. The central principles of poor relief at the beginning of the nineteenth century were however influenced by Lutheran ideas about the importance of daily work, by Luther’s break with works righteousness¹, and by the social responsibility built into the social relations in household and state.

Through an overview of how poor and sick relief was organized in Denmark and Sweden,² and an analysis of the principles behind the relief, this chapter will discuss the influence of Lutheran ideology and the Church on the organization of social care, and the position of the Church in the gradual process of politicization and secularization of social responsibilities in the late nineteenth century. Emphasis will be placed on the development of poor relief, including sick relief, and the nineteenth-century

¹ Meaning the individual only obtains righteousness through faith and not through deeds. Luther talked about two kinds of righteousness: righteousness coram Deo (in the eyes of God), a passive righteousness only dependent on faith and given by God; and righteousness coram mundo (in the eyes of the world), an active righteousness guided by the law, and without importance for salvation. It is important to add that the relation between the individual and God (or salvation) is not dependent on what he or she does in this world, but on the mercy of God and on faith.

² The Danish case serves as the main example, supplemented and compared with the Swedish situation.
debate that led to the establishment of the secularized welfare state, but the starting point will be a short presentation of the aims of poor and sick relief between the Reformation and the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Both Denmark and Sweden were highly agrarian societies until the end of the nineteenth century, marked by urbanization, industrialization and considerable growth in population during the nineteenth century. From the Reformation until 1660, Denmark was ruled by the king and a noble elite. From 1660 to 1848 there was an absolute monarchy, and from 1848 a gradually evolving democracy within a constitutional monarchy. Sweden followed a similar path from power shared by the nobility and king, through absolutism to democracy, even though struggles over power made the picture more complicated with shorter or longer periods of influence from representative forums. Both countries were mono-confessional from the Reformation onwards. Small groups of religious minorities were allowed, either at specific places or with limited rights, but they did not have influence on politics in general, or on poor and sick relief in particular. Freedom of religion was granted in Denmark with the new constitution in 1849.

Poor Relief before the Nineteenth Century

Following the Reformation the Danish king, Christian III, issued two ordinances (in 1536 and 1537) establishing hospitals for the poor, organized in former monasteries, and poor relief on a local level for those who could not work because of age or illness. These ordinances indicated that responsibility to ensure the welfare of the poor now resided in the state (personified by the king), and that this responsibility should be organized locally in individual parishes. The responsibility of the king to provide for the poor in order to serve God was also made clear in the Danish Church Ordinance of 1539:

(...) the word of God, that is the Law and the Gospel, would We have righteously preached, the Sacraments rightly given, the children well educated, that those who are christened may stay Christian. That the servants of the Church, schools and poor people will be provided for and have their aliment.

After the Reformation the immediate understanding of poor relief was to permit begging by children, the sick and the elderly. From the end of the sixteenth century a central question became how to handle the poor and beggars who were able to work, reflecting the dilemma between the Christian obligation to feed the poor and the demand that everybody who could work should do so. The idea of daily work as

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3 Gustafsson, *Nordens historia*.  
5 Johansen et al., “Dansk fattiglovsgivning indtil 1803”, 166.  
6 Christiansen et al., “Periodens idéstrømninger”, 44.  
7 Den Danske Kirkeordinans af 1539, Kongens Kundgørelse.  
8 Kahl, “Religious Doctrines and Poor Relief”, 289.
formulating the poor law in the city of Wittenberg in 1520-1521, where the central principles were tax-financed poor relief, secular law, local administration through the priest and outdoor support). Markkola, “The Lutheran Nordic Welfare States”, 106.


10 Johansen et al., “Dansk fattiglovgivning indtil 1803”, 171.

11 Ibid., 172-175.

12 Ibid., 165; Kahl, “Religious Doctrines and Poor Relief”, 272. (Luther had participated in a fulfilment of a holy call was strong in Lutheran doctrine and became a core issue in the question of poor relief.) Beggars who were able to work were used for public works, and the first workhouse intended for vagrants who could be used for forced labour was built in Copenhagen in the early seventeenth century. Nevertheless, an estimated 5-10% of the population lived by begging at the beginning of the eighteenth century. The first Danish poor-relief law during absolutism addressed this problem in 1708. The goal of this law was to care for those who could not work, and to make sure that anyone who was able to work did so. The strategy used was to forbid all begging and to divide into three categories those poor deemed to be deserving of help: the elderly, sick and disabled who could not work at all; orphans; and, in the final category, those who were able to work to some extent but not enough to support themselves and their families. People belonging to these three groups were to be cared for locally. Other beggars able to work would be forced to do so in workhouses owned by the state. Apart from the workhouse in Copenhagen, three more workhouses were established throughout the country between 1738 and 1752. People forced to work in workhouses differed from those in the third category, because the reason for their need was not legal or accepted. If they were themselves deemed responsible for their poverty, for example by drinking and a lack of morality, they could not get any support and were forced to work instead.

Two principles were central to the 1708 poor law. One was the attempt to fight begging, as this had become a social problem, producing vagrants without a proper connection to a household. The other was ratification of the local community’s responsibility to care for their own poor, by secular regulations made by the state. In practice, the local priest was responsible for distributing aid within the parish. This aid was raised through an obligation on everybody to support the poor according to their individual means, effectively a form of poor tax supplemented with voluntary donations. Countering both begging and vagrancy, and the centralized legislation regarding public relief (framing it as a responsibility of the absolute king) which operated on the local level through church structures, were central Lutheran ideas introduced under the poor law in the city of Wittenberg in 1520-1521. This law not only reflects the importance of everyone belonging to a household, but also extended the social responsibilities of the household. A part of the reciprocal responsibility within the Lutheran household was the obligation of the servant to honour and obey his or her master and, in return, the responsibility of the master to provide for his servants. Within the household, the master of the house was responsible for his servant(s). The poor law of 1708 extended this understanding of the master’s responsibility from the household to the

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local community. It was not possible to be outside a household and without work that could support you within Lutheran, absolutist Denmark.

In reality, public help organized by the local parish was characterized by weak financial funding and was often provided through a system where the poor received food and shelter for a specified period of time from each farm within the parish. It was a system that underlined the idea that social responsibility was tied to the household. Otherwise help was normally material help with food, clothes or firewood to people staying in their own home.

Help from outside the public poor-relief system was often crucial and occurred in different social groups and settings. The lord of the manor had social responsibilities as a Lutheran authority, like the master of the house, to ensure the welfare of people living on his estate. One common way of fulfilling this obligation was to build hospitals to care not only for the sick but also for the old and mentally ill.\textsuperscript{13} The village had public responsibility to care for the local poor, but was in addition to this tied together by more horizontal social solidarity in case of accidents.\textsuperscript{14} Both the manor and the village as social communities were changing in character around 1800 due to agricultural reforms restructuring ownership, settlement-structure and method of cultivation and thereby loosen the social responsibilities tied to them. Guilds represented the same kind of horizontal and reciprocal social responsibilities in towns until the second part of the nineteenth century. They were organized according to not only profession but also social class, since masters and journeymen each had their own guild, and each guild to some degree took care of its own old and sick.

In spite of the Lutheran break with works righteousness, private charity played a role too. As beggars disappeared, private grants were established, aimed at good Christian poor. Even though alms were no longer a means for the rich to buy absolution, feeding the poor remained a Christian duty. Charity through alms given to the deserving poor was an important part of Luther’s ideas, together with the obligation to work.\textsuperscript{15} In the town of Aarhus, fourteen private grants were established during the eighteenth century. The target group was either good Christian people, who had probably known better days, or the very poorest. As an example, the purpose of one of these grants was defined as helping: “three poor sick and bedbound, the most wretched and miserable people of the town”.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{13} Petersen, “Sygeforsikring indtil 1898”, 401.
\textsuperscript{14} Johansen et al., “Dansk Fattiglovgivning indtil 1803”.
\textsuperscript{15} Østergaard, “Lutheranismen, danskheden og velfærdsstaten”, 30; Johansen et al., “Dansk fattiglovgivning indtil 1803”, 162-165.
\textsuperscript{16} Jordebog for Aarhus Kjøbstad, 93. Jens Anton- sens Legat.
The Swedish case

In Sweden the welfare of the poor also became the responsibility of the state following the Reformation. In practice, the Church remained heavily involved in poor relief, as it did in Denmark. Just after the Reformation the state financed and ran hospitals for the disabled poor. The able-bodied poor remained the responsibility of the parish and were often left with begging as their only option.\(^7\) Parallels to the Danish situation after 1536 are obvious. Sweden passed its first actual poor law in 1642. This law said that the local parish and community were responsible for caring for their own poor, which now included the sick and the disabled. Begging outside the pauper’s own parish was also prohibited. Families had to provide for poor family members, if possible, and people without relatives had to be cared for in state hospitals. This was followed by a church law in 1686, with stronger principles for local responsibilities towards the poor and an obligation on the local community to build a poorhouse in every parish.\(^8\) The various

\(^7\) Anderson, “The Church as a Nation?”, 219.  
stages of poor relief – between begging and poorhouse, and supplemented by boarding out and the provision of food and shelter for the poor at each farm in the parish for a specific period – were retained in principle until the prohibition of even local begging in 1847.9 This needs to be seen in contrast with Denmark, where begging was outlawed in 1708.

During the eighteenth century different regulations on poor relief in Sweden strengthened the role of the state and the local authorities. In 1763 an ordinance divided the poor into three categories – the old and sick without relatives; the poor with contagious diseases, to be cared for in hospitals; and orphans, to be cared for in foster homes – and thereby also defined which kind of poor the local obligation included. It is worth noticing that poor relief in Sweden did not cover one of the other categories introduced in Denmark in 1708: the morally upright poor who were unable to work enough to support themselves. However, the first of the three categories (the old and sick without relatives) involved the same understanding of the local community or parish as an extended household, with the same social implications and obligations as in Denmark, although in Sweden a stronger emphasis seems to have been placed on the obligations of the relatives and the more systematic use of poorhouses. The 1763 ordinance was followed by an ordinance in 1788 stating the principle by which the local parish had to care for its own poor (including staying at state hospitals), and enshrined in law parishes’ right to turn away poor people from elsewhere (for instance illegal itinerant beggars).20

According to the Swedish Church Law of 1686, it was a Christian charitable duty to give to the poor. But the importance of daily work and the idea that alms were not the way to salvation had a strong influence on Swedish politics and perceptions of the poor.21 In 1811 this was formulated in a more secular way: those who were not themselves dependent on help were obliged to help by giving to the poor. In between these two principles, a second begging law in 1698 had introduced a range of duties to be paid to the poor, supplementing the voluntary donations. But otherwise it was left to the parish to decide how to fulfil the obligation placed upon them by the state to provide for their own poor. This led to large local differences, probably larger than in Denmark. As taking care of both religious and administrative tasks, organizing poor relief was carried out by the local priest on behalf of the civil administration. The poor relief was thus a mixture of State and Church, with the state being the legislator and the Church having everyday practical responsibility. A clear local responsibility was acknowledged in both Sweden and Denmark.22
Social Welfare entering the Nineteenth Century

In Denmark social welfare was reformed at the turn of the nineteenth century. In 1802 and 1803 new legislation for poor relief in the countryside and in market towns built upon a 1799 plan for the poor in Copenhagen. Poor relief was still to be managed in districts following parish lines, but now by a committee with the local parish priest as a permanent member and often chairman. It was the priest that the needy had to approach for help and he was also responsible for the practical distribution of aid. Each district was obliged to help people who had been born in the parish or who had lived there for three years without needing poor relief. People who could not sustain life and health unassisted were entitled to some kind of aid, given in the form of food, clothes, shelter or care during illness.\(^{23}\) Whereas the poor law in 1708 underlined that poor relief was a Christian duty, the laws passed at the beginning of the nineteenth century emphasized that poor relief was a secular obligation of the local community.\(^{24}\)

Overall those entitled to help were described as “poor, who cannot by their own strength, in a legal way, acquire needful subsistence”.\(^{25}\) As in 1708, the needy were divided into three categories: the old and sick, who could not in any way sustain life themselves; orphans and children whose parents could not be trusted to raise them properly; and those who were not able completely to support themselves or their families due to sickness, age or number of children. It is worth noticing that people could still be categorized as deserving poor, even though they were able to perform a certain amount of work. Everybody who turned to the local priest for poor relief was questioned by him and another member of the poor-committee about his or her need, the reason for it, how much they could earn themselves, and the possibility of family and friends helping, before any decision was reached about being placed in one of the three categories. In all cases the help was given from the ‘poor chest’. The income in the poor chest was made up from a variety of sources, ranging from voluntary donations and collections in church on certain days, to taxes and various kinds of fines.\(^{26}\)

In a recent six-volume publication on the Danish welfare state, the authors present the poor laws of 1799 and 1803 as the product of the Enlightenment and a strong belief in the feasibility of changing the world through work (according to mercantilism, it was a duty of the state to ensure work for everybody), through the permanent availability of charity (provision and prevention), and through the development of the individual through counselling.\(^{27}\) The emphasis on work may also reveal Lutheran influences, and the belief in moral development of the individual is not unfamiliar in a religious context either. The laws were enacted at the end of an optimistic period, marked by the economic progress created by neutral Denmark’s trading strength during the first part of the Napoleonic Wars (Denmark’s neutral position allowed trade

\(^{23}\) Fattigreglementet for Danmarks købstæder 1803, §7.

\(^{24}\) Forordningen om Betlere i Danmark 1708; Fattigreglementet for Danmarks købstæder 1803.

\(^{25}\) Fattigreglementet for Danmarks købstæder 1803, §3.

\(^{26}\) Ibid., §30.

\(^{27}\) Johansen et al., “Dansk fattiglovgivning indtil 1803”, 188.
relations with all partners in the conflict). This optimism was only temporary, however, and was soon replaced by war and economic crisis.

The end of the eighteenth century had witnessed radical changes in the agrarian structures in Denmark, allowing former serfs to buy their land from their landowner. As a newly established class of landowners, their situation was very insecure during the economic downturn during the Napoleonic War. Moreover, this class generally had a strong adherence to liberalism, with its belief in the rights and possibilities of the individual. This put them in opposition to the king’s civil servants, who retained the ideology of the Enlightenment with its focus on education of the individual. It is also possible that the king’s civil servants maintained an idea of the responsibility of the king to care for his subjects for a longer period than the new middle class who were struggling to take over power. As a result, the local authorities responsible for enacting the royal legislation focused on bringing down the cost of poor relief by discouraging people from applying for it, while the national government tried to maintain the principles of the new poor laws in 1799 and 1803, focusing on the possibility of improving the morality and living conditions of the poor. Nonetheless, the influence from local to national level was strong, leading to a tendency to restrict the rights of the poor. The goal was to make poor relief as humiliating as possible while still fulfilling the demand of the law to aid those who were not able to support themselves.28

As early as 1808 a regulation laid down the right of the local poor-committee to lay claim to the belongings of the poor. As long as the poor received poor relief or had received aid and not paid it back, they did not have the free use of their belongings because the committee was entitled to sell them on their death to recover their expenses. In 1820 it was stated that the poor-committee was only obliged to support those who could not work, and that poor people able to work should indeed be put to work. Even though the circular from the central administration did not indicate specifically how the local authority should put people to work, a debate about poorhouses or workhouses started that was to continue for most of the century. Poorhouses were seen as a way to reduce costs because of the humiliating and discouraging effect that would encourage people to provide for themselves. But they were also regarded as expensive to establish and dangerous, because they would gather people with a poor sense of morality. In 1824, poor people were forbidden to marry without the permission of the poor-committee if they had received poor relief and not paid it back. This development culminated in the constitution in 1849, depriving people of suffrage if they had received poor relief without paying it back.29 The development in the first half of the nineteenth century thus connected poor relief with the loss of civic and political rights. Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century the opportunity of deserving heads of households to receive supplementary help (having been included in the third category of the poor law since 1708) was in reality removed as poor relief became increasingly limited.

28 Kolstrup, “Fattiglovsvæsens historiske udvikling fra 1708-1891”, 208-209.

29 Ibid., 208-210; Jørgensen, Studier over det offentlige fattigvæsens historiske udvikling, 49-53.
The poor laws around 1800 were based on the idea that the public relief system was something to which people could turn in order to survive. People did not necessarily have the right to assistance, but they had the right not to die from starvation. As mentioned above, the legislation has been interpreted as being strongly influenced by the Enlightenment, but it might also reflect a changing society in which the household was losing power as the smallest unit in society under the authority of the head of the household. This continued the development of dissipating social obligations from the household into society that had been started by the poor law in 1708. The focus on the obligation to work was not new, but represented a continuation of the dilemma between the Christian obligation to help people in need and the Lutheran obligation for everybody to work. Together with the wish to reduce costs as much as possible, the answer to the dilemma in the nineteenth century was local workhouses. In the previous century, workhouses had been large, central institutions, combining workhouse and prison. What developed in the nineteenth century were smaller, local poorhouses or workhouses, only targeted at poor people who were able to work for their own maintenance. The development of a system of local poorhouses underlined the development of the poor-relief system as an extended household, where the poor had to assign to the authority and discipline within the poor-relief system as to the authority of the head of household within a household. People who were able to work, but who looked for public help for one reason or the other, had to work in public poorhouses in order to get the help they needed. This was not very different from the way in which vagrants had been treated in the preceding century, when they were put into more centralized prisons or workhouses. A circular letter in 1838 granted local poor-committees the opportunity to obtain a loan from public sources to build a poorhouse, and also gave them disposal over the labour of the poor.

To a large extent, poor and sick relief remained two sides of the same coin, since poor relief was targeted at those who could not work, including the sick. The Reformation had established free health care for the poor as a principle in both Denmark and Sweden. In practice this often meant the care of old, sick and disabled individuals in poorhouses or hospitals. Denmark was divided into districts with doctors to care for the poor. At first there were very few of these doctors, but their number increased during the nineteenth century in particular. A division between the different categories of old, sick and poor began in the middle of the eighteenth century, when a hospital for sick people was established in Copenhagen in 1757, just after the founding of a maternity clinic in 1750 where poor and single mothers could give birth anonymously. In 1803 a General Board of Health, under the control of the central government, was established as the superior body of the health-care system. Both physicians and surgeons had places on this board, advising the government and practitioners on

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30 Johansen et al., ”Dansk fattiglovgivning indtil 1803”, 180-190.
31 Kolstrup, “Fattiglovgivningen fra 1803-1891”, 211.
32 Bonderup, “Health Care Provision and Poor Relief in Enlightenment and 19th Century Denmark”, 180.
At the turn of the nineteenth century the healthy citizen became a target for the state, but the principle of health care as the responsibility of the king and state had already been established by the time of the Reformation, and the principle of free health care for the poor was established shortly afterwards.

Social Help as a Right

In 1849 a new constitution in Denmark marked the shift from an absolute king to a constitutional monarchy, sharing power with an elected parliament. This constitution made poor relief an individual right of every citizen in the country. The 89th paragraph proclaimed: “He who cannot provide for himself or his own, and whose care is not the responsibility of anyone else, is entitled to receive aid from the state.”

At the same time the right to vote (only given to men) was removed from people who had received poor relief without repaying it. Even though receiving poor relief had been humiliating before, resulting in a loss of civil rights, it now marked a line between citizens and non-citizens, between those trusted to take part in the governing of the country and people who were dependent. This stimulated a growth in private poor relief, seeking to save the decent poor from humiliating public poor relief, and a discussion about the role of private and public poor relief which lasted throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. When poor people were granted the right to public relief in 1849, the legal basis was still the poor relief law from 1803. As Danish historian Karin Lützen has pointed out, this poor relief legislation categorized people according to their ability to work and not depending upon their need. The loss of political citizenship and suffrage as a result of receiving poor relief focused on the question of morality and the notion of the deserving or undeserving poor. Defining the category of the deserving poor – and its extension from the old, the sick and children, to include innocent victims of economic fluctuations – remained one of the huge social and political discussions for the rest of the century. Private philanthropy played a central role in defining who was deserving by deciding who could get help.

Denmark was at war with Prussia when the new constitution ended absolutism. This special political situation resulted in broad criteria defining suffrage, because it became difficult not to include soldiers who were risking (or had risked) their lives fighting for their country. The humiliating effects of poor relief, including the loss of political and civil rights, also became a difficult political question with regard to soldiers and their families, particularly when families needed poor relief because menfolk were away fighting and could not provide for them. In 1848 local governments were urged to support the families of soldiers without stripping them of political and civil rights. This was repeated with special laws in 1853, 1855, 1856 and 1864, when the government again felt the need to give special help to the deserving poor in difficult

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33 Ibid.; Knudsen, “De nordiske statskirker og velfærdsstaterne”, 44.
34 Ibid., 160.
35 Lützen, Byen tæmmes, 160.
36 Ibid., 161.
times, thereby acknowledging that need could arise owing to external causes and that it was the obligation of society to care for these deserving poor through the public relief system.37

Furthermore, the help given hitherto through the Church was separated from public help by reorganizing the poor chest in 1856. From 1803 the poor chest had financed all kinds of poor relief distributed through the local poor-committee; after the reorganization in 1856, the poor chest in the Church was separated from public poor relief and only used to help deserving poor in temporary difficulties, enabling them to keep their civic and political rights. It was to be financed through money collected in the churches, plus a few other kinds of donations such as fees on public documents and donations collected at private meetings or public ceremonies. In the 1803 system, this money simply went into the public poor-relief system, so its main function was to reduce the amount of money the taxpayers had to pay into the poor-relief system.

37 Kolstrup, “Fattiglovgivningen fra 1803-1891”, 245.
The aim of the new poor chest in 1856 was to help the deserving poor who were in temporary need because of lack of work, disease, or other kinds of personal accident. As such, the poor chest founded the idea of a publicly organized poor relief built on voluntary donations, or a combination of public and private funding, designed to help the deserving poor outside the public poor-relief system and without the punitive effects of poor-relief legislation, an idea that was to be central to the discussions throughout the century.

The initiative for the poor chest came from people who were affiliated with the Church. In parliament there were voices demanding voluntary aid organized around the Church, with a priest and the religious community as central players. In 1855 Member of Parliament and Rural Dean Bloch argued in favour of the proposal with the words: “a real start on re-establishing the original church-based poor relief, a beginning which in its wider development may result in a good and significant result, if our parish communities can gain the strength to carry such a free poor relief system”. For Bloch and his followers a church-based poor-relief system was a natural and necessary response to the compulsory poor-relief system, because compulsory poor relief had weakened the Christian feeling for charity and worsened the position of the poor in society by depriving them of civic and political rights. The idea of a free poor-relief system alongside the compulsory system had broad political support because of the lack of compassion and humanity in the compulsory system. But the strong connection between the free poor relief and the Church did not have the same support. Members of parliament argued that it should also be possible to donate to the poor outside a religious context, and the political reality removed the poor chest altogether from the Church. It was, instead, to be administered by three men elected through a public election.

It is likely that the freedom of religion given in the constitution in 1849 made the disconnection between Church and politics necessary. So the poor chest introduced in 1856 was not the intended reintroduction of an old Christian idea of poor relief, but a voluntary local, public poor-relief system alongside the obligatory system. While taxes were established gradually as the financial foundation of the public relief system from the early eighteenth century, voluntary donations given in the Church remained the financial foundation of the poor chest.

Although the system was not a success in terms of raising enough money to alleviate poverty, the influence of the poor chest and the principles which underpinned it must be judged in broader terms. Together with the special laws allowing public poor relief in designated situations without incurring the punitive effects of poor relief, the poor chest helped to establish and acknowledge the deserving poor as a category.

38 Kolstrup, “Fattiglovgivningen fra 1803-1891”, 248-249.
39 Jørgensen, Studier over det offentlige fattigvæsens historiske udvikling, 104.
40 Kolstrup, “Fattiglovgivningen fra 1803-1891”, 249.
41 Jørgensen, Studier over det offentlige fattigvæsens historiske udvikling, 108.
Moving Towards a New Poor Law

In 1862 the introduction of freedom of trade in Denmark meant the end of social solidarity within the traditional town guilds. Shortly after this, the level of rising social costs became an object of political concern. From 1837 onwards towns had a city council, which was partly elected by the wealthy town citizens, but the mayor was still chosen by the king. After 1837 the chairman of the poor-committee, formerly the parish priest, was appointed by the city council. In 1856 the electoral system for the local city councils started to change, but the local political system was not completely reorganized until 1868-1869, when royal appointees were dismissed and all council members had to be elected by taxpaying male citizens. The city council was financial responsible for poor relief, schools and roads, which gained political importance as their significance for the budget grew. The city council could appoint permanent committees, including poor-committees. The parish priest lost his permanent membership of the poor-committee and was no longer a part of the daily work involved in poor relief. Instead the city council could appoint interested citizens as voluntary poor inspectors. In 1803 the parish priest had been considered the natural head of the local poor relief committee, but he had gradually lost this position (as well as power and influence) to leading members of the local community.

After 1868 the poor-committee was thus a committee under the city council. It consisted of members elected to the city council, who reported back to the council. The members of the poor-committee were elected for three years, but normally sat on the committee for as long as they remained members of the city council, thereby ensuring considerable continuity in the administration of poor relief. They were in charge of the practical work relating to poor relief, doing parts of it themselves and gradually professionalizing the poor-relief system by employing poor inspectors, inspectors for the poorhouse, and others. The committee decided who should receive support and how, and its members were responsible for the financial aspects of relief, reporting back to the city council, and giving advice on the future administration and principles of poor relief. They were also responsible for communication with other local authorities and for inspecting the buildings and staff associated with poor relief.

The establishment of local poor-committees, responsible to a local, elected authority, was supplemented by a national commission in 1869, founded because of political concern with growing social costs. The commission’s task was to go through the poor law and suggest revisions. As a result, a series of legal proposals were discussed in parliament between 1872 and 1875, although no consensus could be reached. It was not until 1891 that a new poor relief law was introduced.

42 Koefoed, “Performing Male Political Citizenship”, 166; Lützen, Byen tæmmes, 165.
43 Vigsholm, “Tilviljelsen af den universalistiske velfærdsstat”, 49.
44 Id., Lokaladministrationen i Danmark, 320-332.
45 Villadsen, Det sociale arbejdes generolog, 120;
The commission’s first suggestion for a new poor law came in 1871. For several reasons they wanted a private poor-relief system to supplement the public system. The private poor relief – called free poor relief – was regarded as necessary in order to slow the rise in poor relief costs, and to make the help more targeted. The argument was that in order for relief to be given in time, personal knowledge of the family needing help was required – something it was argued the public poor-relief system could not do, partly because it was based on employed poor inspectors instead of voluntary work.\textsuperscript{46} The private system was supposed to help those people who could work and prevent distress and the need for public help in their families, thereby helping to secure and re-establish civic self-esteem in the recipients. The public poor-relief system, on the other hand should then only support the undeserving poor, and only by the use of workhouses, in order to put pressure on the poor.\textsuperscript{47}

The voluntary element was regarded as important not only out of concern for the poor, but also with regard to the givers: the idea was that citizens should take the initiative themselves. The members of the commission were of the opinion that a consciousness of their moral responsibility to help the deserving poor needed to be strengthened amongst citizens. In this way, being part of the private and free poor-relief system – giving time and money to it – was increasingly presented as a moral responsibility of the citizen.\textsuperscript{48} Likewise the responsibility was seen as a Christian duty, but the two ideas were not considered to be incompatible: charity was both an obligation of citizenship and a Christian act of mercy independent of the idea that a free relief system should be linked to the Church.

The work of the national poor commission resulted in a bill which was debated in the Upper House (\textit{Landstinget}) during 1872 and 1873. This was the first attempt to make a revision of the poor law from 1803. For several reasons the bill did not follow the suggestion of the poor commission to link a free private and a public poor-relief system closely together. First of all there was a widespread unwillingness to pass laws and policies in the area of free and private help.\textsuperscript{49} Another reason for not making free and private poor relief part of the political solution was uncertainty that there would be sufficient volunteers (and therefore funds) to tackle the problem.\textsuperscript{50} The strength of the public debate over the issue of private poor relief in the years just before in the poor commission and the debate of the bill in parliament indicates that a lack of willingness to participate in free poor relief was a problem.\textsuperscript{51} The poor chest, which had contributed in placing the question of deserving poor as receivers of public help on the political agenda, had persistent problems in raising enough money. In the years following the parliamentary debate, the growing interest in philanthropy indicates that citizens were taking on the task. An example of this was \textit{Filantropisk}

\textsuperscript{46} \textit{Ministerialtidende}, Fattigvæsnets Ordning, 653-654.  
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 655.  
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 656-657, 677.  
\textsuperscript{49} \textit{Rigsdagstidende}, Landstingets forhandlinger, 1872, 159, 188.  
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 179.  
\textsuperscript{51} Shown in the newspaper debate and publication of numerous small books on the subject. See the part on philanthropy later in the chapter.
The Swedish Path

Local differences seem to have been larger in Sweden up to the eighteenth and early nineteenth century than in Denmark, because more decisions on how to support the poor in practice were made locally. The need for a national poor law in the early nineteenth century resulted first in a commission working between 1809 and 1823 (without notable results), and again between 1837 and 1839. This time it resulted in a new poor law which was adopted in 1841 and implemented in 1847, establishing a national framework and responsibility for social help, even though the help was still to be financed locally, now by a poor tax, and administered through local poor-committees.

Poor relief was regarded as emergency aid based on Christian values, not a preventive effort made by the state to fight poverty, which was the philosophy underpinning the Danish legislation of 1799/1803. Neither was it a social right as it became in Denmark with the constitution in 1849. The old, the sick and children were regarded as the deserving poor. Both the Church and the poor-committees expressed a rather negative view of the poor in the first half of the nineteenth century, viewing them as irresponsible and regarding poverty as self-induced.

In Sweden only people unable to work could get public help, and the three categories of people who could get help remained the same as in 1763. In other words, the law did not recognize the idea of the morally deserving poor who were unable to work enough, but who deserved help, as seen in Denmark. While in Denmark the debate and poor policy was marked by a growing perception that a working-class father who had experienced misfortune due to reasons beyond his control should be categorized as the deserving poor, in Sweden poverty was seen as being due more to the will of God – which meant that nothing should be done to alter their circumstances.

We have seen how the local authorities in Denmark, with the establishing of the poor-committees, showed a greater concern for the cost of poor relief than the royal government. Even though Sweden experienced periods of absolutism at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, taxpayers in general had much more say in national legislation. These political differences may explain in part why local authorities remained more in control, and for longer, in the question of poor relief in Sweden. The development of poor relief as a secular responsibility was supported by the Swedish Church in accordance with the Lutheran understanding of social welfare as the task of the state, but it is arguable that the lack of an absolute king

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52 Sjögren, Fattigvård och folkuppfostostran, 22-23.
53 Anderson, “The Church as a Nation?”, 211, 220-221.
through much of the period meant a weaker sense of him as a responsible father of his people, and thereby responsible for poor relief.

According to Swedish historian Karen M. Anderson, the Church supported poor relief as a secular responsibility in Sweden as long as the state organized its relief in accordance with the Lutheran principle of the importance of daily work, and did not challenge the position of the Church as the main organizer of relief. When the new poor law in 1847 moved local responsibility for poor relief from the parish into secular poor-committees, with the priest as a permanent member, as seen in Denmark in 1799/1803, the Church in Sweden opposed the downgrading of the authority of the priest.\textsuperscript{56} This development continued when the Local Government Act in 1862 not only made it a duty for the local authorities to support their poor, but also increased the secular influence on poor relief by separating secular administration from church administration, as seen in Denmark in 1868.\textsuperscript{57}

Moreover, a political reform in 1866 had reduced the Swedish parliament from three to two chambers, the result being that the Church lost its direct political power. An economic crisis in the 1860s thrusted the cost of the poor relief into the national political debate. Just as the economic situation in Denmark at the beginning of the nineteenth century had led to cutbacks in the rights of the poor and the amount of poor relief distributed, the situation in Sweden resulted in an ordinance in 1871 tightening poor relief yet further. The poor also lost their civil rights of appeal regarding decisions about poor relief. Unlike in Denmark, where the priest lost his permanent place in the poor-committee, the Swedish ordinance in 1871 maintained that the priest should have a place in the local poor-committee.\textsuperscript{58}

Sweden experienced a rapid industrialization from the 1870s, and the Poor Relief Act of 1871, with its obligation to provide assistance was limited to the old, the sick and children, soon proved insufficient, especially with a growing economic crisis throughout the 1880s and 1890s.\textsuperscript{59} As a result, the system of insurance and philanthropy increased. Freedom of trade had been introduced in Sweden in 1846 and a system of mutual insurance developed from the 1820s onwards, focusing especially on illness and help for funerals.\textsuperscript{60} As in Denmark, a growing belief in free poor relief marked the debate from around 1870, reflecting the obligation to help others in need as both a Christian obligation and a duty of citizenship.\textsuperscript{61}

\textsuperscript{56} Anderson, “The Church as a Nation?”, 223.  
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.,121; Kaspersen et al., “Why no Religious Politics?”, 128; Wångmar, “Sambandet mellan Kyrkelig och kommunal inddeling”, 61.  
\textsuperscript{58} Anderson, “The Church as a Nation?”, 222.  
\textsuperscript{59} Kaspersen et al., “Why no Religious Politics?”, 129.  
\textsuperscript{60} Andersen, “The Church as Nation?”, 225.  
\textsuperscript{61} Förhammer, Med känsla eller fornuft?, 89.
Philanthropy

A register of all books published in Denmark between 1841 and 1892 confirms the growing interest in poor relief, and not least (particularly in the late 1860s) in finding ways in which to aid the deserving poor in different ways. Between 1841 and 1859 almost nothing was published on poor relief, only a few religious or moral pieces and a few books on poorhouses. From 1859 onwards the picture changed gradually, with more publications on poorhouses, providing for the poor, private poor relief, and so on. This development was reinforced between 1869 and 1880, when a new category appears in the register: ‘Philanthropy’. An increasing number of books were registered in other categories, titles on self-help in the political categories and on the poor-relief system, under the category of ‘Danish law’. Between 1881 and 1892 even more titles were registered on Danish law and on philanthropy, clearly establishing this as a topic which belonged under political categories.\

Karin Lützen has argued that social solidarity in Copenhagen until the freedom of trade in 1862 was a question of reciprocity within the same social class and professional group because of the system of guilds, which was also present in other Danish towns. According to this theory, the idea of one higher social class supporting another class arrived with the renewed ideas of philanthropy in the late 1860s, but this explanation does not take into account the gifts given from the better off to the local poor through the poor chest and the poor-committee. The different systems of private relief that developed through the second part of the nineteenth century were based on the principles from two co-existing systems of responsibility and relief – one organized within more or less the same social classes in village communities and guilds, and the other organized within the household, based on the social responsibility of the master of the house. As mentioned above, the social responsibility of the household was expanded through the poor laws from 1708 onwards. But private philanthropy also to a large extent expanded the idea of the household, turning society into an extended household of the citizen.

From the late eighteenth century onwards the idea of insurance developed, seen first in the form of reciprocal social insurance within the middle class itself. Subsequently, the middle class attempted to transfer this principle to the working class as a way of fighting poverty. After freedom of trade, the working class was encouraged by the middle class to reproduce the security that had been lost with the guilds in self-help societies. According to this point of view, there was a need to fight long-term poverty rather than giving instant help. Raising the poor to be responsible and participatory citizens was one way to achieve this.

Even before the constitution in 1849, another principle was present in poor relief. As seen in the case of Aarhus, private grants had already been established during the eighteenth century. There is a clear difference, however, between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Whereas the grants in the eighteenth century were targeted at

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62 Dansk Bogfortegnelse.
63 Lützen, Byen tæmmes, 171.
64 Ibid., 171.
65 Ibid., 184, 195.
God-fearing widows or very poor people, God disappeared as a criterion in the nineteenth century, and the poor were defined as deserving poor, meaning, at a minimum, that they did not get any help from the public poor relief. When lawyer and citizen in Aarhus, Jørgen Rasmussen, made a donation in 1849, the target group was “elderly, needy and deserving citizens or widows of citizens in Aarhus – who were not under the support of public poor relief”. The division between deserving poor and receiving public help became clear. Donations were only made if those concerned had not received any public help, and only if they lived in Aarhus.

Private charity developed slowly from around the 1830s and philanthropy in Denmark reached its height during the 1860s and 1870s. As with the grants, the idea was to help poor people who were not already getting help from the public relief system, especially with food. From the beginning of private charity, the receipt of public aid disqualified an individual from private help. In 1866 an aid association was founded in Copenhagen on the initiative of a local pastor, and a systematic private charity developed. This was perceived as filling a gap between the poor and the public systems, offering them private help and thereby saving their status as citizens. Unlike the public poor-committee under the city councils after 1867, the work within the private relief system was organized largely by the parish priest and carried out by voluntary members of the community, especially women. But even though the help was structured through the parish and was spread throughout Copenhagen, with each parish having its own association, it was considered to be a duty for citizens and not a particular Christian duty. By 1869 every parish in Copenhagen had its own association and, during the discussion of how this system could be centralized, Rural Dean Munck stated at the annual clerical conference that, “Poor relief is not a church concern, it is a civic concern”. The duty of the pastors or Church was not to establish a humane poor relief system, but rather to fight depravity and immorality.

The cooperation between the different philanthropic societies in Copenhagen created a special situation in the capital, in comparison with other Danish towns. In Aarhus, for example, the different small philanthropic societies remained independent, even though the opportunity of making a large, free poor-relief system like the one in Copenhagen, supplementing the compulsory public system, was discussed several times. The role of religion within the different philanthropic societies and for different kinds of assistance also provoked discussion. Critical voices in local newspapers connected the lack of success in certain societies with their attempt to impose Christian values on the people they sought to help: “The time would maybe come then, when sailors themselves asked for a religious lecture (...) but it can hardly be doubted that one by meeting those sailors, whom one especially wants to influence, with too much of this kind causes disgust.” A voice in a general debate on how to organize

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67 Villadsen, Det sociale arbejdes genalogi, 127.
68 Lützen, Byen tæmmes, 174.
69 Velgørenhedsselskabet i Aarhus, §1.
70 Lützen, Byen tæmmes, 185, 193.
71 Ibid., 194-195.
72 Aarhus Stiftstidende, 2 March 1879.
73 Ibid., 17-18 February 1877.
philanthropy most efficient addressed the question directly: “Why must there be a religious spirit or direction (...)?”

Both in the centralized private philanthropy in Copenhagen and the more diffusely organized private aid system in Aarhus, two viewpoints recur in the discussions, echoing the parliamentary debates over poor relief legislation. One side of the argument saw private philanthropy as a Christian duty and a means of implementing Christian values and morality in the poor. Religious influence and the personal commitment of the giver became more important than material help, and were once more connected to the idea that poverty was ultimately caused by the moral fibre of the individual. Based on these foundations, a new group of help associations developed through the engagement of the Inner Mission and the Salvation Army during the 1880s. Their critique was levelled first at the constitutional right to poor relief. They accepted the possibility that some poor would have to starve when their poverty were caused by immorality, but their critique was also levelled at the general philanthropic movement, because they seemed to value material help before spiritual.

The other side perceived private poor relief and the influence on the poor as a question of citizenship. The aim was both to implement a sense of poor relief as a civic obligation in the new political citizen, and to educate the poor as responsible citizens.

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74 Aarhus Stiftstidende, 2 March 1879.
75 Lützen, Byen tæmmes, 200, 215.
76 Villadsen, Det sociale arbejdes genealogi, 121-123.
by saving them from the humiliating effect of poor relief if they lived up to certain middle-class values connected culturally with citizenship, the home and household.\textsuperscript{77} This humanistic or pragmatic part of the philanthropic movement became dominant in the second half of the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{78} One explanation for this could be the fact that the constitution had made poor relief a social right, thereby placing the moral questions of the Church on the sidelines. But the picture altered towards the end of the nineteenth century, and into the twentieth century. As public poor relief gradually took over responsibility for the old and sick from pragmatic philanthropy, philanthropy as a whole lost importance; however, the religious aspect of charity became more central and church-related social work continued into the twentieth century. From being parallel systems in the nineteenth century, different kinds of cooperation between the private and the public system developed in the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{79} The hierarchy between public and private systems gradually changed. In the nineteenth century private philanthropy had the power to set up the criterion for the deserving and undeserving poor. As social help turned into a social right without reprisals, the public took the power to define the deserving poor and private philanthropy turned its focus to helping those who did not get any help from the public.\textsuperscript{80}

Two principles were present in the different ways of organizing private poor relief. In the promotion of self-help, often organized by liberal middle-class men, responsibility was seen as twofold: from the individual, but also within the broader social class, taking the initiative from guilds and the village community. In the different ways of organizing more direct private help, often initiated by churchmen, but seen as a duty of the citizen rather than a Christian duty, the household principle was extended to society as a whole. After the constitution and in the process of democratization, the duty of the Lutheran housefather to care for people within his household became a duty towards society, underlined by the constitution, which made poor relief a social right, but at the same time made the person receiving poor relief dependent on citizens, just as the servant was dependent on his master.

Gender also plays an important role in at least two elements of this new philanthropy. Organizing private relief in the early period of philanthropy, cooperating with public poor relief and establishing self-help organizations apparently became aspects of philanthropy dominated by men. Men were also more active in the early philanthropic societies, whereas women became more and more active towards the end of the nineteenth century. Women also concentrated on care, nursing and helping poor women and families to establish a good family life.\textsuperscript{80} They played a central role in philanthropy in visiting the poor who had asked for help in their own homes, in order to evaluate whether they were deserving of private help, or whether the cause of their poverty was a moral failing, which meant they would have to turn to public help.

\textsuperscript{78} Villadsen, \textit{Det sociale arbejdes genealogi}, 127.
\textsuperscript{79} Petersen, Petersen and Kolstrup, “Autonomy, Cooperation or Colonization?”, 83-85.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., 86, 96, 102.
\textsuperscript{81} Lützen, \textit{Byen tæmmes}, 208; Løkke, \textit{Døden i Barn-dommen}, kap. 4.
Religious values, together with the middle-class values of the good home, were central to their evaluations.  

Female philanthropy was often targeted at women and children. Philanthropy became an alternative to the women’s movement; it was another way of engaging with society as a woman. The religious part of philanthropy, with its focus on moral improvement of the poor, became strong within institutionalized poor and sick relief as deaconess. It might in this aspect have contributed both to the professionalization of female engagement with society and the development of societal institution as such. Recent research has pointed to the way in which philanthropic work developed into national welfare.

**The Swedish case**

Philanthropic relief work in Sweden had religious roots too but, according to Swedish historian Staffan Förhammer, this work was secularized and developed an increasingly scientific approach during the nineteenth century. Christian mercy continued to play a strong role in philanthropy until the more scientific approach from 1870 onwards, but arguably with a more practical focus than in Denmark. This meant a change from religiously motivated (and often spontaneous) aid to people in immediate need, to an evaluation of real need and not least the possibility for improvement as part of more carefully planned aid aiming at self-help.

Philanthropy in Sweden was also characterized by being earlier and more dominated by women than in Denmark. Women became part of charity societies as they developed from the beginning of the nineteenth century, and female philanthropy was organized from the late 1840s. In the 1860s almost every town in Sweden had its own female charity society. In Stockholm all female charity societies were united in one general society in 1866 (*Stockholms Allmänna Skyddsförening*). This meant a change in focus characteristic for the development in philanthropy as such according to Förhammer. The goal in the female charity organizations had been to help people become independent – again, by personal visits, advises and guidance. They also communicated work, e.g. needlework enabling poor women to earn money and take care of their home at the same time. The aim was to spread the Christian message while doing social work. Religion and moral improvement were of central importance, as in the later Inner Mission associations in Denmark. After the charities were united, they to a larger degree became a first link between public and private help, visiting the poor, gathering information, distributing help and work. The moral aspect was set aside and the help developed from a motherly concern into encouragement to self-help and.

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83 Løkke, “Philantropists, Mothers and Doctors”, 143-147.
85 Ibid., 108.
86 Petersen, Petersen and Kolstrup, “Autonomy, Cooperation or Colonization?”, 83.
90 Ibid., 24.
control over the distribution of material help. The organization was partly financed by private means, partly by local public support.  

From the mid-nineteenth century, the philanthropic societies in Sweden cooperated with the public poor relief organized under the new poor law of 1847. Years of crisis in 1867 and 1868 politicized the question of how to use private aid to minimize the cost of public aid, and developed into a political debate around the new poor law in 1869-1870 (passed as law in 1871). As in Denmark, there were voices that wanted to limit public help in order to increase personal responsibility through private relief work, reflecting the tendency that the common good was regarded as the responsibility of citizens. Personal involvement from the middle class with both time and money and personal knowledge of the poor was considered essential. Besides the growing understanding of poor relief as a duty of the citizen, the Church’s involvement in philanthropy was challenged by the rise of the social democrats, who put social issues on the political agenda as a question of making general and permanent improvements in the lives of the working class.

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91 Ibid., 25.  
92 Förhammer, Med känsla eller fornuft?, 42-43.  
93 Ibid., 150.  
As in Denmark, it was difficult in Sweden for private philanthropy to obviate
the need for assistance and cooperation between private philanthropy and public poor
relief was discussed during the 1880s. As a result, the Charity Organization Society of
Stockholm (Föreningen för Välörenhetens Ordande) was founded in 1889. The task
of the organization was to collect information about the poor and coordinate help
given by private individuals, the different societies and public help. The organization
was independent of political and religious organizations. Its task was to investigate
the poor when they applied for help and to function as a coordinating organization. It
soon developed its own means of helping, as the members, coming from middle and
upper classes, also provided financial support. Central figures in the organization were
engaged in both private and public assistance and the organization was soon profes-
sionalized by employing investigators to visit the poor instead of volunteers.

Another way to organize cooperation between public and private help was
through the figure of the deaconess. A Protestant deaconess spread throughout Scan-
dinavia in the second half of the nineteenth century as part of philanthropy and
continued into the twentieth century. The deaconess was not part of the organized
Church, but voluntary religious organizations. The religious aspect was clear in their
work, combining material and moral help and work within them was unpaid. Women
working as deaconesses took motherhood and the female competences as their point
of departure as the early female charity societies. Part of their work was to put the poor
into contact with the right public or private organizations, thus creating relations and
coordinating between public and private help. Besides they gave moral guidance and
worked to create a philanthropic interest in the public sphere. They thus played a more
important and integrated role in Sweden than in Denmark where the deaconess did
not work as integrated with public help.

The main objects of philanthropy throughout the nineteenth century were chil-
dren and old people, and indeed this continued through the professionalization of
philanthropy at the turn of the twentieth century. Children were the citizens of the
new generation and an obvious target group for philanthropic efforts aimed at social
improvements in general. As mentioned above, care of the elderly was regarded as a
moral responsibility because of their contribution to society throughout their lives. The
same tendency to help children and the elderly was seen in Danish philanthropy, with
the result that private relief seldom in reality fulfilled the purpose of keeping working-
class fathers out of the public relief system in times of crisis.

96 Ibid., 29-39.
97 Markkola, “Diskonissan mellan det privata och det offentliga”, 196-204.
Towards the Welfare State in Scandinavia

The perception of the poor altered somewhat during the 1870s and 1880s, not least because of the growth of socialism, which argued that poverty was a question of social class rather than morals; but the political situation prevented a change in the poor law. In Sweden the changed perception of poverty put pressure on the Church. In Denmark a new poor law was introduced in 1891, together with a law regarding old-age pensions (for the first time granting a group of people, the elderly over 60 who had not received public poor relief, access to public relief without the punitive effects of poor relief, but under the same system) and a law on health insurance societies. The poor law and its understanding of public relief was largely a continuance of the public poor relief seen during the nineteenth century, but the three laws are probably best seen as part of the same reform.

Except for the elderly, receiving public poor relief still meant the loss of civil and political rights – even after 1891. All the restrictions implemented during the nineteenth century were written into the new poor law of 1891. What changed was the way in which the relief was given. Help was to be given primarily within the homes of the poor and not in institutions; institutions were only to be used if the poor did not cooperate. This could be seen as a way of keeping the principles but forcing the local communities to follow them – removing the poorhouse as a threat which prevented the poor from seeking help.

The public and political debate in the 1880s had contained a demand to help the deserving poor without the loss of rights associated with the public poor-relief system. Old-age pensions and health insurance partly met this demand. But the poor law of 1891 also in itself contained different kinds of public help given without the negative effects of poor relief. Public help was given for funerals, doctors and midwives. And certain groups of people could get public poor relief without a loss of rights. This included, as seen earlier in special regulations, families of soldiers and lost sailors, beneficiaries of health insurance when the help had stopped, and finally the blind, the deaf-mute, those designated as ‘idiots’, and the mentally ill, if the help was given at certain institutions. The important step was the recognition of these groups of people as deserving poor for whom the provision of help was so much a responsibility of the state that receiving public help did not negate their status as political citizens.

Philanthropy had functioned as a supplement to public poor relief in Denmark from the 1860s through to the 1880s. There had even been political discussions about a private (free) poor-relief system as an integrated part of the legislation. The idea of


102 Ibid., 285-286.
103 Jørgensen, Studier over det offentlige fattig- væsens historiske udvikling, 184.
104 Kolstrup, “Fattiglovgivningen fra 1803-1891”, 286.
privately financed relief taking care of the deserving poor had disappeared in discussions of the 1891 legislation. Philanthropy still had a role to play, but experience of the poor chest (for instance) had shown that private help could not solve the problems and even men of the Church saw it as nothing more than a modest supplement to public relief. The political debate and subsequent legislation thereby cemented public financing and local management/administration as the leading principles in Danish poor relief at the turn of the twentieth century.

The question of old-age relief had been present in the discussions of deserving and undeserving poor since the 1860s. Before freedom of trade was introduced, old people (in towns) had often been provided for through the guilds in which they had been active members for their entire lives. Leaving the elderly who had been independent and who had provided for themselves their whole lives to the stigma of public relief seemed wrong. However, despite different proposals for organizing this through the public poor-relief system (but without the effect of the poor relief from the 1870s), the question was not resolved until 1891. Old people had been regarded as deserving poor ever since the poor law in 1708 categorized them as being people worthy of help, and they had often been provided for either on a rota basis on different farms, or by the family that took over their farm. A growing difference between this recognition of the old as deserving and the rising level of disgrace connected with receiving poor relief, culminating with the loss of newly gained political rights in 1849, made the situation untenable. The tradition for caring for old people within the community was connected with the challenge of liberal ideas and an idea of the responsibility of the state to play an active role in relation to the security and welfare of its citizens.

One of the questions discussed in relation to the old-age pension in Denmark was whether it should be a social right granted to all old people on the basis of certain criteria, or a kind of insurance system with public support which only helped those who had been far-sighted enough to take out such insurance (making it a kind of self-help system). The idea that the old-age pension should be a social right prevailed, but the health insurance system passed the following year (1892) was based on the idea of self-help. Dating back to the 1840s, a system of mutual health insurance had developed, organized locally and on varying principles (other kinds of self-help organizations had developed since the end of the eighteenth century, but did not target health insurance until the 1840s). In 1892 legislation made it possible for health insurance organizations to get public support. Membership of these organizations was voluntary and individual (not family-based), but it was also a prerequisite for getting public support. The organizations needed to have at least 50 members, as well as having a geographical or professional connection, and they had to be approved by the relevant civil servant. Health insurance had been part of the guilds and the local community

106 Jørgensen, Studier over det offentlige fattigvæs- ens historiske udvikling, 209; Petersen, “Debatten om alderdomsforsørgelse”, 333.
107 Petersen, “Debatten om alderdomsforsørgelse”, 358.
108 Ibid., 348-349.
109 Løkke, “Tryghed og risiko”, 179 and 221.
in the village,110 and the new legislation was continuing this tradition for primarily social horizontal help in case of illness and accidents. The old-age pension, on the other hand, was based on the obligation within the household, extended to the local community through the poor law, and thus represented a more vertical tradition for poor relief and social responsibility. This was supplemented by a further separation of sick and poor relief by the building of a municipal hospital in Copenhagen in 1863 which was not tied to the poor-relief system as previous hospitals had been.111 This development continued on a local level, with local hospitals being built throughout the country.112

**The Swedish case**

A debate about the role of the state in social insurance was initiated in Sweden in 1884 by a bill requesting a commission of inquiry in the area of workers’ insurance. This bill resulted in the first sickness fund law in 1891, building on minimal state subsidies. This was followed by a commission in 1893, which was to investigate old-age pensions and accident insurance, but no legislation could be agreed upon.113 It is worth noting that the Swedish commission was established just two years after the Danish law on old-age pensions and one year after legislation on sickness insurance. But political agreement was not reached in Sweden until 1913, when a pension reform was passed,

111 Ibid., 403.
113 Andersen, “The Church as Nation?”, 225.
introducing universalism and tax-financing of social support, a principle introduced with the old-age pension in Denmark as well, and a cornerstone of the welfare state.\textsuperscript{114} The rather weak health insurance for workers in 1891 was followed by more substantial social insurance reforms between 1900 and 1930.\textsuperscript{115}

In Sweden alternatives to public poor relief developed in civil society during the 1880s and 1890s because of the inadequacy of the public system and a political situation that prevented public reforms. But legislation moved the responsibility onto the state at the beginning of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{116} The Church was more or less absent in the debates about workers’ insurance in the 1880s and 1890s, and it did not have much to say about the development of social reforms and insurance systems at the beginning of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{117} One reason for this church inactivity may be the loss of part of its formal position with regard to poor relief in the 1847 and the 1862 legislation. But the Church’s view that the poor were not willing to work, that poverty was the will of God, and that poor relief should never be a right and obligation but was something that should only be given out of Christian love meant that poor relief was not a key issue for the Church. This position was challenged in the 1880s by the growing influence of the social democrats and their demand for social reforms.\textsuperscript{118} The few initiatives they established as an alternative to the insufficient public relief did not have much success.\textsuperscript{119} The Church in Denmark seems much more engaged on social issues, and more successful involved in philanthropy and organization of poor relief outside the public system. And the Church in Denmark accepted that contributing to poor relief was an obligation of the citizen.

Conclusion

In both Denmark and Sweden the Reformation established new principles for poor and sick relief. The immediate effect was that social responsibility was taken over by the king, turning social relief into a secular responsibility, even though the Church remained heavily involved in its practical execution. This was carried out through a central state legislation regulating local responsibility for the poor, with an earlier and stronger significance of the state legislation in Denmark than in Sweden, which might be partly explained by the different political situations of the two countries (absolutism was much stronger in Denmark).

Local responsibility for the poor can be seen as a slow expansion of the social responsibility of the Lutheran housefather into the local community, underlined by the system providing for the poor by letting them work from farm to farm, receiving food and shelter for a specific period of time at each place. As poor relief with democratization in Denmark was turned into a social right, the vertical social responsibility from

\textsuperscript{114} Andersen, “The Church as Nation?”, 227.
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., 231.
\textsuperscript{116} Kaspersen et al., “Why no Religious Politics?”, 129.
\textsuperscript{117} Andersen, “The Church as Nation?”, 231.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., 224.
\textsuperscript{119} Kaspersen et al., "Why No Religious Politics?", 129.
the Lutheran household was extended into society as a whole, and was included in the responsibility of the citizen. Debates about private or free poor relief, philanthropy, in both Denmark and Sweden reveal that contributing to private relief was seen as an obligation of the citizen. Voices in the debate trying to argue for the connection between private poor relief and the Church did not have much success, although the Church in Sweden seems to have been less willing to accept poor relief as part of citizenship, or poverty as something which could be combatted through moral improvement in the working class. Social responsibilities were implied in the Lutheran ideology of the three estates (State, Church, household) with the king as father of his people in the state, like the head of household in the household. Vertical social responsibilities built into the social relations of both state and households seem to have had a stronger influence on poor relief in Denmark than in Sweden, also in the nineteenth century. The Church as the third estate was engaged in social relief through the practical work of the priest, with the priest being the father of his community with the additional moral duty of educating the people.

Ideologically, Luther’s break with works righteousness and the importance of daily work influenced poor relief as well. Without works righteousness the incentive to give to the poor was reduced to fulfilling the general Christian duty to help people in need, but this help could take different forms depending on what was regarded as best for the poor. In the second half of the nineteenth century the Christian duty to help seems to have worked together with the general belief of the possibility of fighting poverty by raising people to a higher moral level. Christian help then became moral rather than financial or material. The importance of daily work determined who was worthy of help. People who could work in any way were expected to do so; thus, only the old, the sick and children were offered help. This was enforced much more strongly in Sweden than in Denmark, where the poor law in 1708 made it possible to obtain help for those providers who could do some work but not enough to provide for their family. As a consequence, the debate about the deserving and undeserving poor in Denmark put the providing family father of high morality, but who had been temporarily hit by illness, unemployment or other unexpected crisis (due to reasons beyond his control), on the agenda earlier than in Sweden. The Church in Sweden kept the focus on poverty being the will of God, and on social help being limited to those who could not work.

Alongside the vertical social responsibilities from the Lutheran household, there was a horizontal social responsibility within the same social classes. This was a particular product of the guilds, going back to pre-Reformation times. Within guilds (and to some extent within the community in the village) there was a responsibility to care for the old and sick. The sick, providing family father had had a security through class-related communities which was difficult to find in the poor-relief system after the guilds’ freedom of trade. This tradition was connected with liberal ideas about personal responsibility and the wish to improve the moral level of the working class based on insurance and self-help organizations, especially during the last three decades of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century.
In both countries the Church lost its position as an independent agent controlling poor and sick relief when the Reformation turned relief into a responsibility of king and state; in both, however, the Church remained central to the practical organization of poor relief throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The idea of poor relief as a Christian duty also remained strong. This changed during the nineteenth century, when the parish priest gradually lost his influence in the local poor-committee and private poor relief developed alongside public poor relief as a secular duty of the citizen. The emergent philanthropy was influenced by Christian organizations, but in neither country did the Church play a significant political role. Private poor relief does not seem to have been able to fulfil the requirement to help the deserving poor and the obligation of the citizens to help fellow citizens without the effect of the poor relief was gradually moved from private to public help, meaning that the state by the turn of the nineteenth century had taken on responsibility for groups of deserving people. The most obvious difference between the two countries was the categorization of deserving and undeserving poor. While the poor law in Denmark saw the head of household as someone who might belong to the deserving poor, only people who were unable to work were deemed deserving of help in Sweden. Different political situations in the two countries, especially different emphasis on absolutism and thereby the king’s responsibility as father of his people, and different weight put on the obligation to work in a Lutheran understanding and thereby the emphasis put on forcing the poor to work and influencing the definition of the deserving poor, might partly explain this.
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