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Published in:
International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church

Publication date:
2006

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication in Tilburg University Research Portal](#)

Citation for published version (APA):
de Groot, C. N. (2006). The church in liquid modernity: A sociological and theological exploration of a liquid church. *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church*, 6(1), 91-103.

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The Church in Liquid Modernity: A Sociological and Theological Exploration of a Liquid Church

Kees de Groot

Abstract

The characterization of the current phase in the modernization process as 'fluid' or 'liquid' has recently received a place in the theological plea for a late modern church reformation. An example is Pete Ward's call for a liquid church. His message diverges from that of Zygmunt Bauman, which is supposed to support it. Ward suggests that fluid structures are helpful in marketing the gospel. I argue that this approach takes the sting out of Bauman's social theory. A theological reading of the concept of liquid modernity challenges the churches to adopt a hermeneutic reconstruction of their mission.

A spectre is haunting the Christian world – the spectre of the 'liquid' church. 'Solid' churches try to expel it or to contain it. Nevertheless, a movement is starting to appear: new manifestations of being church are taking shape, while the old institutions are continuously eroding. Websites, festivals, religious publications and gatherings suggest a network of Christian believers, characterized by a positive evaluation of 'postmodernity', and transcending the distinctions between Conservatives and Liberals. This Church movement appears under various names: Emerging Church, Next Wave, New Paradigm¹ and Liquid Church.

There is, however, no clear understanding of what the mission of this Liquid Church is. 'Postmodern' theological thinking on the Church draws heavily on social theory. My paradoxical suggestion is that it should not do less so, but more: a deeper understanding of social theory is necessary in order to further Liquid Church's theology. I will demonstrate my position by discussing a widely acclaimed book on the subject: *Liquid Church* by the Anglican theologian Pete Ward.² After an introduction and some critical comments, I describe how I contrasted this intriguing vision with the project of Zygmunt Bauman to come to grips with liquid modernity.³ My argument is that the *theological* concept of a liquid church might benefit from the *sociological* message that the concept of liquid modernity conveys. Sociology's

commitment to humankind in contemporary society may help to re-invent a church that connects the desire for salvation with the need for solidarity.

The Appreciation of Contemporary Culture

Pete Ward is a lecturer in Youth Ministry and Theological Education at King's College, University of London. His *Liquid Church* has been well received within the Christian community, and has engendered a global debate:⁴ an Internet search for 'liquid church' on Google provided 378 'most relevant' hits, which offers a rough indication of how widely discussed this book has become. Though I have used revolutionary imagery in introducing it, Ward's intention is not to overthrow, but rather to reform. Contemporary church life, he argues, is moulded in a way that rewards institutional participation, uniform behaviour and dedication to the club. Ward imagines what the church might be like if it conceived of itself as part of contemporary culture, where people see themselves as individuals rather than members of a community, as buyers rather than producers. *Liquid Church* provides a sociological and theological exploration of the idea that the Church should reflect important features of late modernity, as it has done in the past with early modernity.

Zygmunt Bauman's concept of 'liquid modernity' was a major source of inspiration for this concept of the 'liquid church'. The drift of his analysis and that of other sociological authors, such as Anthony Giddens ('disembedding') and Manuel Castells ('network society'), is well known.⁵ Usually, however, the contrast between late modernity and the church is accentuated, and in social theory (particularly the anti-clerical work of Pierre Bourdieu), liquid modernity implies the dissolution of institutionalized and organized religiosity.⁶ Theologians, especially European authors, tend to agree with this view, although their evaluations are quite diverse. Martina Blasberg-Kuhnke and Ulrich Kuhnke, for example, argue that churches put their identity at risk when they go along with *Erlebnisgesellschaft* ('emotion society'), and rather than promoting a consumer religion, the churches should build religious communities characterized by an attractive communicative climate.⁷ Ward, however, makes a theological plea in favour of a liquid church. He argues that it is possible to imagine a truly Christian church contextualized within this paradigm. The argument is based on current reappraisal of the (orthodox) notion of *perichoresis* (divine movement) within the Trinity,⁸ and on the contemporary downplaying of the congregational focus in Paul's concept of church.⁹ It is not attending Sunday services that constitutes a church, but individuals who are in Christ and participate in the 'liquid dance of God'. Others, such as the Croatian-American author Miroslav Volf, claim to be 'looking for the so-called postmodern forms of ecclesial relationships' but end up offering a theological justification of congregationalism in which the local gathering for a service is constitutive of being a church.¹⁰ Ward, on the other hand, protests against the dominance of this criterion in practical ecclesiology. He correctly argues that the church as a theological concept has undergone a process of reification in which the focus has been on the institution,

which can be little more than a sacralizing of early modernity. Activities and attitudes such as attending church services ('gathering in one place to do the same thing'), supporting the church organization as volunteers, participating in the parish organization and generally giving loyalty and support, are all typical of the behavioural patterns and institutional mentality that are required by modernity. Instead of mourning for the decline of the church as an institution, Ward proposes a more or less de-institutionalized expression of Christian faith, and invites the reader to discover and promote diverse ways of being church that already exist within contemporary culture. These include small groups of Christians who support each other, read the Bible and praise God; events such as the UK Greenbelt Festival, where church happens in music, meetings and worship; Alpha courses; activities in youth ministry; and the presence of the Gospel in the old and new media. In his ecclesiological programme, Pete Ward takes up an issue that has also been addressed by practitioners engaged in youth ministry and evangelism, who propose that we can no longer be content with the modest assumption that youth ministry is building bridges to the 'real' church, but rather such activities actually *are* church, if by 'church' we mean the *locus* where Christ is communicated and saving grace is at work. On this understanding, youth ministry can be, and often is (liquid) church.

What are the implications of this work of theological imagination for the praxis of church development? Liquid church is not a programme, and so church leaders cannot control it. Nevertheless, Ward wishes to promote liquid church. How can this be achieved? Central to his thinking is discovering the value of the already existing networks: 'they work for us'.¹¹ Ward provides three clues as to how this might operate. The first is to expand the opportunities for particular ways of meeting (in the name of Christ, of course); the second is to develop products to stimulate the connection between people; and the third is to organize and invite people to exciting events. Above all, in evangelism, one has to appreciate the implicit desire for God that is already there. This does not mean that church always 'happens' (to use one of Ward's favourite terms) wherever religious communication takes place. According to Ward, liquid church must prioritize 'special grace' and remain focused on the work of God's Spirit toward salvation.¹² However, he does not develop new ideas about what this means in the late modern context. In this respect, his appraisal of postmodernity, though provocative, lacks theological and sociological imagination. A more selective appreciation is necessary.

Ward's most provocative advice relates to the development of products, something that (following Laurence Moore) he refers to as 'commodification'. While 'modularization' referred to the tendency to break down systemic unities into separate parts that can be re-combined (even using parts that originate from another system),¹³ 'commodification' explicitly refers to the selling of religious products using modern marketing techniques. The possibility that capitalism would turn people, relationships and feelings into commodities was the ultimate nightmare for Marxists, but Ward welcomes this process and considers it to be both desirable and essential for late modern evangelism. Contrary to a major concern of both congregational studies

in the USA¹⁴ and of the movement for the open church in (European) practical theology,¹⁵ the advocate of liquid church would not wish to vitalize or strengthen religious congregations. Ward simply describes existing forms of being church, for example in a small parents and tots group or a large arts and worship event. In his approach, these informal, ephemeral or commercial church-like phenomena have ecclesial relevance, regardless of their connections with particular congregations or denominations.

Solid church, however, is more interlinked with liquid church than Ward makes it appear. For one thing, participants in the Christian religious network, purchasers of religious products, and visitors to events are often socialized in congregations. Revivalism presupposes an existing, institutionalized religion. Moreover, innovative initiatives may become standard procedure. Part of what is at stake here are the issues that O'Dea, from a functionalist perspective, termed 'the dilemmas of institutionalization'.¹⁶ Institutionalization, de-institutionalization and re-institutionalization are inherent in the dynamics of the religious field. Nevertheless, I share Ward's intuition that for faith to abandon the institution is not only a cyclical phenomenon, but also a structural trait of the current phase in the modernization process.

A Sociological and Theological Comment

Liquid church presents a practical ecclesiological vision and connects its message with the insights of contemporary sociological as well as theological authors. This short, accessible, and provocative book raises three major questions.

First of all, there is a sociological question. In the whole history of the Christian tradition, it is fairly new to conceive of the church as something that 'happens' in the context of the market. Is it not sociologically inevitable that this liquid church will mix with other religious traditions and vanish as something unidentifiable, unless there is a solid church that supports it?¹⁷ In a contemporary market-based approach to the church, one cannot ignore the 'rational choice' thesis that, in a context of pluralism, only churches operating as exclusive firms will be vital.¹⁸ According to this theory, the liquid church would inevitably be 'a sell out', not because it 'embraces the believer as a consumer', but because it uses an ineffective marketing strategy. In another context, Ward mentions the perspective of Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, which implies that 'solid churches' are a successful form of marketing,¹⁹ which he then uses to fling the criticism of consumerism at the advocates of solid church! He does not, however, address their critical thesis, that in a volatile environment only strict Churches are strong. I take it to be Ward's hypothesis that in late modernity fluid structures may be successful means to communicate the Christian message.

A more theological question is the following: is this really church – or are we merely talking about some of the activities that the church should promote? Although the author states more than once that a true church is marked by authentic communication of the Word and the sacraments, he does not indicate in what way the liquid church provides 'the right administration of the sacraments'.²⁰ This is

especially intriguing since the author radically criticizes the conventional focus of church on the local gathering on a Sunday morning. Of course, there is a theological reason behind this gathering: the remembrance and representation of the resurrection, but surprisingly, Ward appears to offer no alternative understanding of the sacramental nature of the church. Authors who are inspired by liberation theology are more sensitive to this aspect of church 'happening' in the world, and their concept of *ecclesiogenesis* may be a critical counterpart to liquid church.²¹ The best one can say is that this liquid church is apparently more evangelical than sacramental.

Central to my critique is the appreciation of liquid modernity underlying the argument. While this analysis of liquid church is also a call for a late modern Christian revival, Ward does not discuss critically what it means to live in late modern society. Although 'liquid church' appears to be a variation on Bauman's 'liquid modernity', Bauman's own ambivalent attitude toward liquid modernity has been left aside. This becomes clear in one of the two examples Ward provides of networking in a solid church environment, namely the deregulated cluster of connections that causes new worship songs to be included in a service. This brings to mind the Christian music industry in the USA, which is regulated by the laws of the market economy. Attractive young men and women are pushed to sell a simple message that is wrapped up in a commercial musical package, and in this way young individuals are seduced to buy a Christian identity. Ward does not criticize such developments, as long as the Christian message is put across, because what counts is the flow of images, symbols, songs and stories.²² While Ward pays serious attention to Christian music in his ecclesiological thinking, it is nevertheless naive to ignore the realities of consumer culture. Ward certainly understands the need to 'regulate the flow': that is why he is concerned about orthodoxy and insists that a liquid church should communicate the good news of Christ. But what does this mean? Does it imply that the gospel is just one of the flavours that are available in the spiritual market place? In the expectation that the theological value of 'liquid church' might benefit from a more encompassing understanding of liquid modernity, it is worthwhile to place Ward alongside the sociological author who first coined the term 'liquid modernity'.

The Ambivalence of Liquid Modernity

It is hard to imagine that anyone reading Zygmunt Bauman's almost gloomy picture of liquid modernity would ever become inspired to promote the notion of a liquid church. There is some significance in the cover illustrations of the editions of these two books that I used. While *Liquid Modernity* is embellished with a sinister picture of oil on water, *Liquid Church* has a photograph of bright, blue, sparkling water on its cover. Bauman, following social theorists such as Ulrich Beck, Manuel Castells, Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu, describes a world where fixed class and status boundaries are vanishing, people have more choice than ever, and identity is no

longer prescribed, but to be constructed. 'Free at last', one might be inclined to react. But that is not the message that is put forward by authors such as Bauman, who argues that, contrary to what the ideology of the free market, neo-liberalism, and hedonism urge us to believe, we are not free at all. In solid modernity, people were determined by their role in the production process; now, they are determined by their role in consumer society. The market has become more powerful than the state, the church or the family, and we now need to purchase the products that provide elements of an 'authentic' identity. The task of building an identity has become a burden. Because people participate in many social networks, fulfilling different social roles, they ask themselves, 'Who am I? Who is this individual?' There is no escape from the reflexive project of the self,²³ just as there is no escape from making choices. We have to choose: what to wear, what to do, what to eat, what to believe. Even leading a traditional life, and clinging to a religious faith, must be by choice. We are forced to be 'autonomous individuals', flexible and mobile: free to work at home or at the office, to work full-time or part-time. We are no longer attached to one place, and that is why we long to be home. In a more recent work, Bauman has elaborated the harsh consequences of liquid modernity even for romantic relationships.²⁴

Meanwhile – and this is one of the points where Bauman's analysis shows its own inconsistencies – speaking of 'we' is itself deceptive.²⁵ It is a manner of speaking that reproduces the dominant ideology of those who are successful, who have managed to take advantage of the condition of being an individual, while in fact a large proportion of the population *de facto* have no capacity to practice individuality.²⁶ They have no significant choice at all but are forced to take life as it comes. These are only individuals *de jure*, and while their ascribed identity may be that of autonomous human beings, the reality is that they are completely dependent on structures that are beyond their influence.

The picture Bauman draws evokes the desire for a fixed community where everyone knows his or her place, and where people know each other and are not driven by commercial interests. According to Bauman, however, this utopia of *Gemeinschaft* (community) is not an alternative to the dystopia that liquid modernity may become. A real, self-evident community is no longer possible. Instead, on the one hand, there are the gated communities of the wealthy – beautiful havens in a world that is perceived as insecure. And on the other hand, we are faced with the ghettos of the new poor, of the different men and women who are marginalized, inhabiting the same district, but not forming a neighbourhood. Here, brotherhood is absent as well: stigma and humiliation do not turn sufferers into brothers.²⁷ Bauman's analysis has an undertone of commitment and provocation, and reluctance to provide easy solutions.²⁸ His essays reflect a protest against the misery of the world. They do not offer an alternative ideology, but neither do they leave the reader without hope, or without an impetus to act. In the end, what Bauman stands for is the continuation of classical socialist ideals of social justice, translated into the terminology of the current phase of modernity. He advocates the redistribution of the means to participate in society, including collective means such as insurances against

incapacities and misfortunes, and he defends the right to pursue social esteem under fair conditions of equal opportunity.²⁹ The power politics which 'flexible man'³⁰ experiences, and the limitations of the new poor to make any choices at all, promote a widespread experience of insecurity in late modern society. The paradigm of liquid modernity deals with this experience by providing cameras, gates and security officers. Bauman, instead, asks us to take seriously the underlying desire for ontological security, while at the same time promoting social solidarity. His wish is 'the blend of distributive justice and a policy of recognition'.³¹

Being Church Under the Conditions of Liquid Modernity

What does this condition of liquid modernity mean for churches, and what is the role that churches should play? This is an interesting question, since Bauman himself hardly addresses the role of religious institutions. In fact, the British sociologist of religion James Beckford has criticized Bauman and, more mildly, Giddens, for neglecting the religious factor in their analyses of contemporary society.³² In spite of that, the work of both authors offers opportunities to understand the current role of religion in general, and of the Christian churches in particular.

In the words of Ulrich Beck, the church may be considered another example of a 'zombie institution', like family, class and neighbourhood. Nowadays, these institutions are both dead and alive.³³ On one hand, their authority as structuring patterns of society is clearly declining: families are breaking up, class distinctions are vanishing and neighbourhoods are disintegrating. On the other hand, people may choose to give meaning to these institutions. Families, for example (even those which are newly composed), can be and are made important – by choice. Whereas in an earlier phase of modernity the importance of the institution was prescribed, today it is chosen. People's attitude toward institutions has been individualized. The church, as one of the modern institutions, can be understood in this way. The institution still exists, but no longer provides a given symbolic universe and social structure for the population of a nation state, a region or a particular social network. The task of constructing and maintaining a (sacred) world³⁴ has become a private task, and a church may, or may not, play a role in performing this task. People may *choose* to make use of an institution.

On the basis of Bauman's analysis, it seems that only two options are left for churches in liquid modernity. Firstly, the church may serve as an institution where a community of equals is invented and imagined in religious rituals, beliefs and ethical behaviour. Like an ethnic community, this religious community does not address the actual social networks where, in the real world, people of different backgrounds and of different religions are interdependent. As long as the existing inequality is not addressed, the unification of any one segment of the population amounts to a form of segregation, a flight from reality. This sort of church provides the experience of belonging, but it is a surrogate community since the people in the church are not the people one works with, lives with, exists alongside. Ward, writing about the 'refuge

church', acknowledges this position as a mutation of the solid church. But the critical question is, how can the network of Christian communication and relationships he promotes avoid establishing just another such refuge church?

The second option for a church is the aesthetic, 'instant' community. Gathering to participate in a spectacular event may provide a sense of being part of something that transcends the individual, and the togetherness of individuals may provide a momentary sense of community, though without necessary ethical or long-term commitments.³⁵ But according to Bauman's judgment, a person does not join a community temporarily, which means that 'cloakroom' communities and 'carnival' communities are not 'genuine' (comprehensive and lasting) communities, but symptoms and, sometimes, causal factors of the social disorder of liquid modernity.³⁶ Though Ward distinguishes the mutation of solid church into 'heritage site' and 'nostalgic community' from his up-to-date liquid church,³⁷ the latter inevitably runs the same risk. For how can the organization of spectacular events and the development of fancy products – however 'orthodox' they may seem to be – avoid the risk of constituting 'cloakroom communities'?

There is a third option, which is implicit in Bauman's own vision of how people can live together in less misery, or even no misery at all. The moral commitment that Bauman displays might be as interesting for theology as the sociological analysis that is driven by it. If there is to be a community in the world of individuals, it can only be (and needs to be) a community woven together from sharing and mutual care; a community of concern and responsibility for the equal right to be human and the equal ability to act on that right.³⁸ Clearly, there are parallels between his concerns and those of traditional Christian theology. The community of individuals that is needed, according to Bauman, reminds the church of its mission.

The Mission of the Church in Liquid Modernity

The comparison between the critical aims of Bauman's project and Ward's adoption of liquid modernity reveals a radical opposition between the two. Bauman identifies the conditions of liquid modernity in order to address its structural impediments to a just society. In his view, liquid modernity is not a condition to be taken for granted, but one that has to be engaged with critically. Although Bauman marginalizes the role of religion, his work offers opportunities to understand the current interest in religion. Indeed, the desire for ontological security and the search for social solidarity can be associated with the classic functions of religion. Bauman's analysis can even be regarded as an invitation to Christian theology to reconsider its own view of contemporary culture. Theology may benefit from Bauman's almost religious plea against a culture of fear, and in favour of community development.

Ward's project, however, is not to understand humankind in the context of liquid modernity, but merely to *perceive* liquid modernity. For example, he asks why the so-called 'New Age' is growing while the churches are waning, and answers that the church is not addressing the desire for spirituality, but without either dealing with the

social causes of this spiritual desire or offering a theological evaluation of liquid modernity. His argument is that the spiritual desire is there, and that the church ought to deal with it.

Ward incorporates Bauman's analysis of liquid modernity, but in his own strategy the critical evaluation has been ignored as he explores liquid modernity, pleads for a positive evaluation, and proposes some limitation in the extent to which the church might embrace it, but primarily determined by reference to early Reformation theology. Whereas Bauman says, 'Watch out! Beware liquid modernity!', Ward exhorts, 'Behold, society is liquid! Church should be likewise!'

Ward's concern to make Christianity attractive to people living in today's consumer society is therefore basically a marketing issue. The church has something to offer and needs to work out how to reach a new public. Early in the book he questions the usefulness of the traditional metaphor of the church as a boat,³⁹ but it reappears towards the end when he reflects on how the waters are full of fish, but 'others' are catching them: '... in Christ we have the way, the truth, and the life, the genuine gospel, and yet we still can't get people to take the bait.'⁴⁰ Though Ward castigates the thinking of a 'heavy institution', he continues to make use of its underlying mindset that people need 'us' (that is, the church) for their salvation.

It is reasonable enough to view the church as an institution carrying the Christian tradition, but the church does not 'own' Christ, nor are the two identical. Despite Ward's appraisal of liquid modernity, the basic formula that informs his analysis is the antithesis between church and society (no doubt informed by Karl Barth and Abraham Kuyper, who are his chief theological advisors). On this view, the Christian faith is regarded as external to society, which means that the challenge is to build bridges between the two, and 'liquid' meetings, products and events are the way that the church can be made more attractive. The foundational assumption is that the church should fit in better with contemporary society, so that it is available to all those seeking salvation, and behind that is the further unspoken assumption that people need to get into the Church. It is clear that this is good for the Church, but not so clear why this is good for people.

A theological approach that acknowledges God's presence in creation and that does not posit so great a distance between church and society, would be less inclined to regard the Church as a safe haven. Such an approach would also challenge the Church to explicate its purpose in this world. In organizational terms, Ward focuses on *survival*, not of the church with its current structure, but of the Church *per se*. My reading of Bauman, however, suggests another way of looking at it. In his work, the experience of insecurity, the growing social inequality, the quest for community and the search for safety are linked in one analysis that challenges the churches to reformulate their *mission*. Bauman's critical analysis of contemporary society may be a useful *background theory* that can be used in a hermeneutic reconstruction of the social and political mission of the church.⁴¹

It is easier to criticize than to present an alternative, but my suggestion for such a reconstruction is as follows. A common element within the four canonical Gospels is

that there is no need to be afraid. The life, death and resurrection of Christ signify that God loves people, and this constitutes an invitation to love one another, which is considered to be equal to loving God. The promise of the Kingdom coming (*Mark, Matthew, Luke*), and that of eternal life (*John*), challenge believers to act as if it is already here among us – and, in a way, sometimes, it is. In liquid modernity, Christ's church fulfils its mission to the extent that it seeks to connect the desire for one's own ontological security with the struggle for social justice. Providing salvation to those who desire spirituality could be merely the service of *Kontingenzbewältigung* (mastering contingency).⁴² But a sociologically informed church will see the structural causes of individual desires and will promote solidarity as well, not just between believers, but between all those who are interdependent in this globalizing world. A careful reading of Bauman's sociological analysis challenges theologians to reconsider their task. If theology is supposed to answer the question of 'regulating', it is like an iron chain that keeps the ship in the harbour. If, on the other hand, theology is to serve the Church in doing its mission in the context of liquid modernity, it should provide the tools to deal with the times and the rising of the sea level. It should accompany the processes of disembedding and re-embedding while relating faith and reason, and thereby serving the *lecture* of the Bible, the celebration of the Liturgy, the care for one another, and the solidarity with those who represent Christ.

In Conclusion

One of the challenges of a theology of the Christian Church is to coordinate the encounter of the social sciences and the theological disciplines in such a way that it promotes the understanding of religious praxis. Making a sharp distinction between sociology and theology involves the risk of delegating the descriptive task to sociology and the task of critical evaluation to theology. Ward does not escape the pitfall of disregarding the already existing critical engagement of sociological work. He used contemporary sociology to interpret the society we are living in, but failed to take up the critical evaluation that went with it. It appears that his main question is, how to promote the Christian tradition in contemporary culture? The answer is, by adapting to consumer culture while remaining rooted in what the author calls *orthodoxy*. This strategy, reminiscent of the old Youth for Christ slogan 'Geared to the times, but anchored to the Rock', implies making use of modern communication technology, organizing attractive events and taking account of the mobility of contemporary lifestyles. In view of his call for reformation, this sounds like a plea for that 'old time religion', though organized in a highly modern way. The hermeneutic task of reconstructing the mission of the Church in liquid modernity remains.

A theology of the Church can learn much more from the sociology of liquid modernity. Sociology challenges theologians not only to work empirically, but also to reflect on their theology. The search for new ecclesial concepts should be accompanied with fundamental ecclesiological reflections. After all, it is not church growth, nor the flow of the liquid church, that constitutes the mission of the Church.

Its mission is entailed in the difference a church makes in a world where salvation and solidarity can be absent or present.

Notes

- 1 Price, "After the Revolution."
- 2 Ward, *Liquid Church*.
- 3 Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*.
- 4 For one of the many reviews on *Liquid Church*, see Perriman. For an interview with the author, see Youth Specialties website.
- 5 Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*; Castells, *Rise of the Network Society*.
- 6 Bourdieu, "Le champ religieux."
- 7 Blasberg-Kuhnke and Kuhnke, "Szene oder Netzwerk?"
- 8 Volf, *After our Likeness*.
- 9 See, for example, Ziesler, *Pauline Christianity*, 49–72.
- 10 Volf, *After our Likeness*, 23, 145–154.
- 11 Ward, *Liquid Church*, 98.
- 12 *Ibid.*, 85.
- 13 Blair, *Modular America*.
- 14 A central publication in the field is Ammerman *et al.*, *Congregation and Community*. For an overview, see Stewart, "The Emergence of Congregational Studies."
- 15 For example: Zerfass, "Christliche Gemeinde."
- 16 O'Dea, and O'Dea Aviad, *The Sociology of Religion*.
- 17 See Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*.
- 18 Stark and Finke, *Acts of Faith*.
- 19 Ward, *Liquid Church*, 62.
- 20 *Ibid.*, 67–68.
- 21 van der Kolm, *De verbeelding van de kerk*.
- 22 For an extensive defence of all this, see Ward's more recent book, *Selling Worship*.
- 23 Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 70–109.
- 24 Bauman, *Liquid Love*.
- 25 Nijhoff, "The Right to Inconsistency"; Best, "Zygmunt Bauman. *Community: Seeking safety*."
- 26 Bauman, *Community*, 58.
- 27 *Ibid.*, 121; Bauman, *Wasted Lives*.
- 28 Beilharz, *Bauman Reader* and Zygmunt Bauman. *Dialectics of Modernity*.
- 29 Bauman, *Community*, 149.
- 30 Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character*.
- 31 Bauman, *Community*, 78.
- 32 Beckford, "Postmodernity, High Modernity and New Modernity."
- 33 Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, 6.
- 34 Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*.
- 35 Bauman, *Community*, 69–70.
- 36 Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, 199–201.
- 37 Ward, *Liquid Church*, 22–25.
- 38 Bauman, *Community*, 149–150.
- 39 Ward, *Liquid Church*, 15.
- 40 *Ibid.*, 76.
- 41 Schüssler Fiorenza, *Foundational Theology*, 164–223.
- 42 Steinkamp, "Gemeinde jenseits der Pfarrei."

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