



Church Consulting

# BETWEEN CLIFFS OF THE RELIGIOUS MARKET THEORY

AN EXPLORATION OF THE RELIGIOUS MARKET THEORY WITHIN  
A SECULAR CONTEXT

Master Thesis Practical Theology  
Bruno Tunderman student ID 2514012  
VU Amsterdam

1<sup>st</sup> reader: Prof. Dr. S. Paas  
2<sup>nd</sup> reader: Dr. S. Stoppels



## Table of Contents

<b>PREFACE</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>1. THESIS SETUP</b> .....	<b>4</b>
1.1 Problem Description .....	4
1.2 Aim and Objectives.....	7
1.3 Main Question and Sub Questions .....	7
1.4 Methodology.....	8
1.5 Relevance.....	8
1.6 Chapter Format.....	9
<b>2. SECULARIZATION THESIS</b> .....	<b>10</b>
2.1 Term definitions.....	10
2.2 Multi-level Secularization.....	10
2.3 Social scientists about micro-secularization.....	11
2.4 Explanations for micro-secularization .....	13
2.5 Micro-secularization in the Netherlands.....	15
2.6 Explanations of micro-secularization in the Netherlands.....	16
2.7 Critics.....	16
2.8 Conclusions.....	17
<b>3. RATIONAL CHOICE THEORY OF RELIGION</b> .....	<b>18</b>
3.1 Term definitions.....	18
3.2 Multi-level RMT .....	18
3.3 Social scientists about Religious Market Theory .....	19
3.4 RMT at micro-level.....	20
3.5 Micro-level RMT in the Netherlands.....	23
3.6 Explanations of micro-level RMT in the Netherlands .....	24
3.7 Critics.....	25
3.8 Conclusion.....	26
<b>4. INFLUENCE ON THEOLOGY</b> .....	<b>27</b>
4.1 Influence of ST on theology.....	27
4.2 Influence of RMT on theology.....	29
<b>5. INTEGRATED THEORY OF RELIGIOUS SUPPLY AND DEMAND</b> .....	<b>31</b>
5.1 Supply and Demand.....	34
5.2 Demand in RMT and ST .....	35
5.3 Development of the theoretical framework.....	35
5.4 Church as a value chain.....	37
5.5 How to apply the revised theory?.....	40
5.4 Case Studies.....	42
<b>6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b> .....	<b>44</b>
6.1 Conclusions.....	44
6.2 Recommendations.....	45
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> .....	<b>46</b>

## PREFACE

In 1,500 years' time Christian faith has developed from a minority religion, one of many others, to the authoritative state religion in Western Europe. However today most of the traditional churches originating from that age face a dreadful decline, witnessing a decrease in church membership and worship service attendees.

If we compare the situation in Europe to the one in the United States, there is an interesting difference, however. Churches in America seem to have much higher active membership participation whereas the European churches do not show this same level of activity. Although decline is also showing in the USA, it is far less dramatic than in Europe.

From an academic perspective I found it interesting to investigate these differences and the current existing explanations for them. In Europe, attempts have been made to explain the religious trends by what is called the "Secularization Thesis (ST)". In the USA, however, the religious developments are explained increasingly by what is called the "Religious Market Theory (RMT)", or "Rational Choice Theory of Religion (RCT)."

Although this may seem a clear "working division", it is a somewhat unsatisfying situation having two theoretical frameworks that only seem to apply in their "sweet spot", their own geographical area, let alone interacting with each other. In this thesis I will therefore try to answer the question if and to what extent RMT could also be applied in Europe and more specifically in the Netherlands, after including insights from ST. I would like to propose a revised model of the religious market theory that in fact might be applicable to Europe, trying to avoid on the one hand simply accepting RMT without considering the serious extent of secularization in Europe, and on the other hand "running aground" on the perception that application of RMT in Europe is not possible since it is "American". The title of this thesis refers to applying the RMT in a secular European context and these two "cliffs" with a winked eye to sailing, one of my favourite hobbies.

In order to conduct academic theological research I decided to take a Research Master (MART) course at the faculty of theology of the *Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam* (Free University Amsterdam). This master thesis is the result of that course in which I wanted to investigate whether concepts such as supply and demand are applied in a religious context and when so, if it would be possible to positively influence religious participation by applying an integrated theory based on both supply and demand.

A personal note of thanks goes out to Prof. Stefan Paas who has been leading me and guiding me through this process. His clear and sharp analysis challenged me and pushed me to focus, to go deeper and further into the overwhelming amount of material. Without his help and motivation, I am convinced, I would not have made it this far.

## ABSTRACT

There are two major social theories that are used to explain religious developments in the modern West: the Secularization Thesis and the Religious Market Theory or Rational Choice Theory of Religion. Generally, academic scholars in sociology of religion tend to accept the Religious Market Theory as applicable to the United States of America, while the Secularization Thesis is felt to be most applicable to Europe (Davie, 2007). These theories function as paradigms, influencing also theological and missiological strategic thinking. For example, in the USA, there are dominant entrepreneurial approaches of mission, whereas in Europe the Secularization Thesis seems to have a much higher impact on the way churches discuss and approach their surrounding environments. In other words, these theories are not just important for social scientists; they have the tendency to influence wider philosophical and theological discourses.

In this master thesis, I develop a revised model of the Religious Market Theory, enriched by insights from the Secularization Thesis, to explain religious decline and religious vitality in Europe, especially in the Netherlands. From a services marketing perspective both models are inadequate, since ST tends to focus on a decrease of religious *demand*, while the standard version of Religious Market Theory mostly pays attention to religious *supply*. I will outline the basis for a new theory taking both sides into full consideration and explain what a revised Religious Market Theory would look like. I believe that such a revised theory is relevant not just for academic scholars, but also for religious organizations and churches that want to increase their membership and influence in society.

This thesis concludes with some recommendations for further research, and for missiological reflection on the Netherlands.

## 1. THESIS SETUP

This chapter describing the thesis setup will contain:

1. General information, motivation and background
2. Problem description
3. Aim and Objectives
4. Main question and sub-questions
5. Methodology
6. Relevance
7. Chapter Format

### 1.1 Problem Description

Churches in the western world are in decline, at least in quantitative terms. Many research projects show a dramatic decrease in church attendance since the 1970s. (*Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek*, (Central Bureau of Statistics – CBS) for instance mentions that only 11% of the Dutch population today still goes to church regularly whereas it had been above 50% in the early 1970s<sup>1</sup>.

What is causing this decline? Is the decline to continue? Or can we do something to reverse it? Early social thinkers such as Auguste Comte, Max Weber, Emile Durkheim and Sigmund Freud believed that religion ultimately would cease to exist. Based on their foundational thinking many sociologists in religion have contributed to create an explanatory theoretical framework, loosely called the “Secularization Thesis” (ST).

More recently, inspired by thinking about religious markets, especially in the United States of America, another theoretical approach emerged creating a new paradigm. Sociologists such as Roger Finke, Rodney Stark, William Bainbridge and Laurence Iannoccone heavily contributed to the “Religious Market Theory” or “Rational Choice Theory of Religion”. RMT is exactly opposite to the ST by claiming religion will not cease to exist because the pluralizing effects of modernity will challenge religious organizations to be more creative, and to “play the market” (Warner, 1993).

So, there are two mainstream theories trying to explain religious developments in the modern West:

- Secularization Thesis mostly perceived to be applicable for Europe, thus also for the Netherlands;
- Rational Choice Theory of Religion mostly perceived to be exclusively applicable for the United States; “RCT is to America what secularization theory is to Europe”, (Davie, 2007, p. 12).

From this description four important issues arise.

Firstly, it is rather unsatisfying that the two theoretical models seem to be applicable only (or mainly) in separate geographical areas. The differences between the USA and Western Europe are herewith rightly underlined, however, the situation tends to neglect the fact that both areas are a part of the modern West, and that they are connected through many historical, political, economic and cultural ties. Would we really need two different theoretical models to explain the different religious situations in both continents?

<sup>1</sup> CBS religious activities developments 1975-2007

This could be an invitation to investigate whether these two theories have more in common and may interact more.

Secondly, by taking a closer look, it seems both theories have different focus areas. ST pays attention to religious decline, and explains this through factors impacting the need for religion such as rationalization, individualization, etc. RMT focuses on religious vitality, and explains this through entrepreneurship and creative religious organizations “playing the market”. To rephrase, looking at it from a services marketing perspective, ST seems to focus on a decline of religious demand, whereas the standard version of RMT seems to focus on religious supply. This could be an invitation to think about a new or revised theory bringing both dimensions, supply and demand, together.

Thirdly, it is clear that ST cannot explain all religious developments in Europe, and similarly RMT is unable to do so in the USA. Looking at the Netherlands, how can we explain the increase of religious awareness according to recent research (Lambert, 2004)? And how can we explain that some Dutch churches do grow (Volgers, 2010)? And what about the growth of migrant churches for example, often they are showing great religious vitality (Martins, 2013). What to think of the (limited) numerical church growth realized by new church plants (Vos, 2012)? It seems bringing in a new religious market perspective may also bring in new insights with regard to the situation in the Netherlands. On the other hand RMT predicts that an increase of religious pluralism will lead to a more market aware offering (supply) from existing religious providers, as well as the emergence of new providers. Today we would consider the Netherlands as a highly pluralistic country. However, this increased pluralism did not result in religious growth (Lechner, 1996). It seems, therefore, that the standard version of RMT is not applicable in the Netherlands. This invites us to find a perspective that does justice to the general situation of religious decline in the Netherlands, despite the high level of pluralism, while finding explanations at the same time for the genuine examples of religious vitality.

Fourthly, these two theoretical approaches impact discourses beyond social sciences. Theological and missiological reflections on (Christian) religiosity in the West take many of those sociological insights and process them into their own theories. American theologians, for example, tend to emphasize the extent to which churches are able to inspire religious vitality by creative supply, e.g. via church planting. European theologians, on the other hand, tend to underline the factors that diminish or transform religious demand, and focus on intellectual responses to this situation. Also, acceptance of ST's suggestion of inevitable decline will lead to church policies that aim for consolidation, cost reductions, and retaining church members for as long as possible. This invites us to ask whether these two theoretical approaches can interact more fruitfully, by exploring their (often implicit) analyses of religious developments in our modern Western society.

These issues make clear that we are in need of a new or revised theoretical approach that seriously and comprehensively takes both supply and demand into full consideration. In this thesis I will try to develop such a theoretical approach. In order to do so, I will take services marketing theory as my general framework, complemented with insights from both RMT and ST. Given my generic market approach, I will use the concepts of “supply” and “demand”. Supply herein will be defined as the service offered by churches and religious organizations to their church members and worship attendees. The demand side of religion in this thesis will be defined (in a limited way) as the religious need of people to actually join the church and consume the service.

Moreover, I will use complementary concepts from business economics and services marketing. In this context, one of the key success differentiators is quality in service delivery (supply). This means that the experience of service (quality) delivered by the supplier organization will determine the retention of the service consumer. Another key success factor is the application of the GAPS model and the SERVQual monitoring methodology to understand religious needs (demand). By combining the insights of both ST and RMT, proper use of the concepts of supply and demand and by applying the service delivery framework, I expect to lay the foundation of a revised religious market theory that can be further developed and successfully applied to the Netherlands.

## 1.2 Aim and Objectives

The aim of this thesis is to provide a revised theory that tries to explain religious developments in the Netherlands and to provide churches with a service delivery framework for renewal and innovation of their supply offering based on changing demand in today's society. This thesis will help improve the application of an integrated approach of supply and demand to positively influence and activate religious participation within churches in The Netherlands.

The objectives, in terms of research, are:

- Descriptive: describing current mainstream religious theories being Secularization Thesis and Rational Choice Theory of Religion;
- Evaluative: evaluating these theories with a view to their explanatory force regarding religious developments in The Netherlands and to reflect how they have influenced missiological and theological thinking and writing;
- Strategic: developing an integrated theory based on religious supply and demand that may serve as a point of departure for missiological strategic thinking in The Netherlands.

## 1.3 Main Question and Sub Questions

As a consequence of the problem at hand and the aim to provide a revised theory, the central question that I will answer in this thesis is:

**“Can strengths of ST and RMT be integrated in a revised theory of religious supply and demand, which better explains current religious developments in the Netherlands and initiates new missiological rethinking, and if so how would the revised theory look like?”**

It follows to firstly start with term definitions and answering sub questions such as:

1. What is the Secularization Thesis?
2. What is the Religious Choice Theory of Religion?
3. How do these theories correspond with theological (missiological) thinking in the Netherlands?
4. To what extent do these theories try to explain religious developments in the Netherlands?
5. How can strong elements of both theories be integrated in a revised theoretical framework of religious supply and demand?
6. Which preliminary results would such an integrated theory have for missiological thinking in the Netherlands?

## 1.4 Methodology

The predominant methodology of this thesis will be a review of the literature. A systematic description of both theoretical models will be achieved by using a framework adopted from Dobbelaere and Tschannen, on three levels (Dobbelaere, 1981), (Tschannen, 1991):

1. Macro: societal level (differentiation, religious market);
2. Meso: organizational level;
3. Micro: individual level.

Since I am mostly interested in developments at organizational and individual level, in my analysis of both the ST and RMT I will focus mainly on the meso- and micro-level.

## 1.5 Relevance

When looking at application of both theories within The Netherlands I will connect to the on-going discussion concerning secularization and religious participation that concentrates on mainly either one of the two following standpoints:

1. Religious participation in terms of people connecting to church organizations and joining in membership and worship services, will ultimately disappear and this is an irreversible process hence religious demand will ultimately disappear;
2. Religious participation can be positively influenced by people hence supply will create demand.

The different standpoints have been expressed by proponents and opponents of both ST and RMT. This master thesis will connect to the discussion of both ST and RMT and their applicability to The Netherlands, identify potential omissions of these theories and describe recommendations for development of a more comprehensive theory integrating both the supply and demand side. Secularization thesis assumes a decrease in demand, hence surplus of unnecessary supply leading to church attendance decline and church closures. On the other side RMT assumes increases in supply, hence increases in demand, religious activity and participation. Assuming both Secularization thesis and RMT do not fully justify the explanation of the current religious developments in the Netherlands, would it be possible to develop a theory that fully integrates both supply and demand sides? And what would be the effects of this integration?

Churches and religious organizations may be able to use the theoretical framework and by applying it they might be able to retain current church members and in addition attract new members, to see people changed and committing themselves to be a part of His Kingdom.

## 1.6 Chapter Format

The chapter format of this master thesis will be as follows:

In chapter 2 I will define terms such as secularization, the Secularization Thesis and secularization theories and describe how these have been applied to the Netherlands. I will follow a macro-meso-micro framework and focus on the micro-level (individual), provide an overview of different theoretical models and describe how they have been applied to the Netherlands. I will close this chapter with some conclusions and capturing the strengths of ST.

Chapter 3 will be setup in the same framework but will focus on the Religious Market Theory, defining terms such as RMT, the Rational Choice Theory and the Rational Choice Theory of Religion. By focusing on the micro-level I will provide a similar overview for RMT, the different theoretical perspectives and describe if and how they are applied to the Netherlands. I will close this chapter with some conclusions and a summary of the strengths of RMT.

In chapter 4 an evaluation will be made providing an overview of influences of both ST and RMT thinking in Dutch theology and missiology.

Chapter 5 will be a strategic chapter regarding development of the revised theory. In order to do so I will firstly explain the concepts of supply and demand from an economic context in order to fully understand them and to lay foundations for application in a religious context. Secondly I will define a revised theory and thirdly I will give a short description of additional tools than can be used to apply the revised theory.

Chapter 6 will conclude my findings and provides an answer to the central question; **“Can strengths of ST and RMT be integrated in a revised theory of religious supply and demand, which better explains current religious developments in the Netherlands and initiates new missiological rethinking, and if so how would the revised theory look like?”**

This last chapter will close this master thesis by outlining recommendations for further research to either falsify or confirm the integrated theory of religious supply and demand, and some additional recommendations for churches in the Netherlands.

## 2. SECULARIZATION THESIS

The purpose of this chapter is to answer the sub-question regarding the Secularization Thesis as described in chapter 1. I will provide insights into:

1. Term definitions; What is secularization, what are Secularization Thesis and - theories;
2. Multi-level secularization;
3. Social scientists about micro-secularization;
4. Explanations for micro-secularization;
5. Micro-secularization in the Netherlands;
6. Explanations of micro-secularization in the Netherlands;
7. Critics
8. Conclusions

In order to systematize the description of both Secularization Thesis and Rational Choice Theory of Religion, to analyse them, to compare them and to find potential omissions, I will use this framework in this chapter and the next:

### 2.1 Term definitions

- Secularization in this thesis means the tendency of religion to decline in influence on society and losing members. Herein I am following the definition of Thomas Luckmann who worked together with Peter Berger, one of the seminal sociologists involved in thinking and writing about secularization, “established Christian churches are losing members and influence”, (Luckmann, 1967)
- Secularization Thesis fundamentally is a sociological discussion originated in the 1960s by sociologists such as Wilson, Bruce and Berger. The idea here is that relevance of religion in our modern society will continue to decrease and religion ultimately will disappear.
- Secularization theories are part of the paradigm created by sociologists trying to explain why religion is losing relevance in today’s modern society.
- Religious demand from my point of view would be the total set of religious needs, behaviour and decision making why and if people join a church or religious organization and what they would be looking for whilst joining.

### 2.2 Multi-level Secularization

Karel Dobbelaere explored three dimensions of secularization; societal, organizational and individual. Historically the church controlled society and people depended on social services like food for the poor, education, hospitals and orphanages (Dobbelaere, 1981). By changing the social constructs and the government taking over these responsibilities, people’s dependencies towards the church also diminished. By changing the organizational constructs of power, meaning the separation of church and state, immediately, also the individual level of religious activity has been affected. This happened especially where this separation of powers has led to conflicts between the church and the state. “It seems that where separation of powers has been most resisted, the indicators of religious activity (both organizational and individual), have dropped furthest” (Davie, 2007, p. 50). Except for the United States where this separation of powers never has been an issue.

Drawing further on Dobbelaere's three dimensional secularization definition, Olivier Tschannen created a Macro-Meso-Micro format (Tschannen, 1991):

- 1) Macro – social differentiation;
- 2) Meso – the decline of institutionalized religion;
- 3) Micro – Individual, a reduction in levels of practice, belief, or affiliation at the individual level.

Since my research is motivated mainly by the question how religious organizations (churches) can retain or extend their membership (or market-share) in modern society I will continue to focus on the effects of secularization on micro-level. I.e. what effects does secularization have on individual believers? In the discussion of the secularization thesis and supporting theory models I will also concentrate on this micro-level. Therefore I would be interested in knowing whether secularization does indeed take place on micro-level, and if so in what way. In addition I would like to know what explanations exist from a ST point of view regarding the change of religiosity at micro-level.

### 2.3 Social scientists about micro-secularization

Berger and Luckmann theorized on “the meaning of life” and how people answer that question and what means they use in order to find the answers. Berger writes in his book *The Sacred Canopy* that it might be that there is no meaning, nor purpose of life. Herein he is undermining the old traditions of religious foundations thereby making them less plausible hence leading to secularization. In addition Berger mentions that the Protestant Reformation and the pluralistic effects in fact caused erosion of religious monopoly, i.e. the Roman Catholic Church making it less plausible, thus leading to secularization (Berger, 1967).

The same Peter Berger, in later writings, changed his thinking remarkably: “My point is that the assumption that we live in a secularized world is false. The world today, even with some exceptions, to which I will come presently, is as furiously religious as ever. This means that a whole body of literature by historians and social scientists loosely labelled ‘secularization theory’ is essentially mistaken. In my early work I contributed to this literature. I was in good company – most sociologists of religion had similar views, and we had good reasons for upholding them. Some of the writings we produced still stand up... Although the term ‘secularization theory’ refers to work from the 1950s and 1960s, the key idea of the theory can indeed be traced to the Enlightenment. The idea is simple: Modernization necessarily leads to a decline of religion, both in society and in the minds of individuals. And it is precisely this key idea that turned out to be wrong” (Berger, 1999, pp. 2-3). His reasoning must be seen in the light of the context and therefore application of the secularization thesis needs to be reviewed and potentially nuanced in different contexts. The religious activity of the Americans is not consistent with the theory that modernization, individualization and rationalization will lead to secularity per se. Nuancing the application of the secularization thesis as mentioned by Berger would therefore make sense.

While industrialization and modernization have had their influence towards secularization, post-modernity also opens up new perspectives. While modernization drives economy and social organizational structures, post-modernity drives culture and open mindedness at an individual level having their effects on religious awareness (Davie,

2007). In her earlier writings, Davie already worked out a schematic diagram for modernity versus post-modernity leading to respectively obligation versus consumption, thus opening doors to authentic and more committed religious patterns and behaviour.

<b>Modernity</b>	<b>Postmodernity</b>
Industrialization	Post-industrialization/information technology
Urbanization	De-urbanization
Production	Consumption
Both modernity and postmodernity are problematic for religion but in different ways	
<b>Modernism</b>	<b>Postmodernism</b>
The grand narrative: religious or anti-religious	Fragmentation/decentring of the religious narrative, but also of the secular; i.e. of the scientific, rational or anti-religious narrative e.g. rationalism/communism
Progress	
Secularization/secularism	A space for the sacred but often in forms different from those which have gone before
God the Son	The Holy Spirit
The institutional churches	Varied forms of the sacred
Medical science	Healing/alternative medicine
Agribusiness	Ecology/organic food
<i>Obligation</i>	<i>Consumption</i>
Figure adapted from Davie (1994: 192)	

Figure 1: Grade Davie (2007), *Sociology of Religion*

Although Davie does not pretend this schematic presentation is firmly linking relationships between the different items, it does provide a general outline of the theme that in reality is much more complex. Also, the processes are not universal and seem to be different in every European country. Davie questions the original claimed causes of secularization being individualism and rationality. The changes of a post-modern society and de-pillarization effected many institutional organizations, religious ones as well as secular ones and as a consequence, people started drifting away from religious organizations, yet many still consider themselves as religious. The detaching from religious institutional organizations coined by Davie as “believing without belonging” has its impact towards church attendees and membership but does not necessarily imply that people no longer have religious needs or no longer are interested in religious experiences.

## 2.4 Explanations for micro-secularization

It seems the secularization thesis as defined by Wilson, Bruce and Berger is changing in terms of its interpretation in the course of time. By applying the macro-meso-micro framework we can see a process of social differentiation at macro-level. But it would not be correct interpreting the process of secularization also as people not being religious anymore on a micro-level. This is an interesting finding because it could mean that religion is not necessarily completely diminishing as the thesis assumes but in fact is changing.

Change of religious awareness and dependency could be partially explained by the changing systems of welfare, health and healthcare. Once the state started to take care of welfare for people in need, dependencies towards the churches on these matters were lost. This is especially the case in Europe, yet developed differently in almost every country due to either conflicts or contrarily cooperation between church and state.

There is one consensus in thinking though within Europe; the state **should** take care of welfare according to a substantial research project conducted between 2003 and 2006, the Welfare and Religion in a European Perspective (WREP) project.<sup>2</sup> The project observed welfare and religious relations in 8 countries Finland, Sweden, Norway, England, Germany, France, Italy and Greece. Responsibilities towards welfare and healthcare for instance in Italy and Greece are much more fluidly shared between church and state than in the other countries. In France, the secular state is dominant and even reluctant to cooperate in a project that paid any attention to religion at all. Next to welfare, changes in health, healthcare and the relation between men and women, highly impacted religion and religious participation. Davie pays special attention to the differences between men and women and their religious awareness. Women are by nature more focused on care and concerned about nurturing their children. Women historically highly depended on healthcare organizations, mostly governed by churches to support deliverance in child births while safe deliverance could not be granted. Modernization, technology and science changed this dependency significantly making women less dependent upon churches and the healthcare they provided. But the effects are even more dramatic. When women started to become less dependent upon religion and churches, they also stopped handing over their beliefs and convictions on to the next generation. While it was already known that women were generally more religious than men, this new decline of religious activity by women further caused secularization according to Callum Brown (Brown, 2000). Also Stark confirms the importance of women in the rise of the early church (Stark R., 1997). Could it indeed be true that women are closer to the sacred because of their emotional and physical nature and therefore closer to critical moments in life such as birth and death, than men? And if their existential security is governed by secular states providing their well-being, would they no longer need gains of the Supernatural? And if they do not any longer pass their faith on to their children, could religion indeed cease to exist?

Norris and Inglehart have conducted an extensive research based on data from the World Values Survey<sup>3</sup>. Their findings are described in their book *Sacred and Secular*. They conclude that secularization is determined by the amount of existential security. Religion obviously has not yet disappeared from the face of the earth and probably never will. Norris and Inglehart build on the fact that in more prosperous social areas, secularization is higher than in areas where people are poorer and live in more personal

<sup>2</sup><http://web.archive.org/web/20071107195737/http://www.student.teol.uu.se/wrep/>

<sup>3</sup><http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/>

survival-threatening situations. They conclude that living in a secure environment will mean less dependency upon religion and contrarily living in an insecure environment will make people more religiously dependent (Norris & Inglehart, 2011). The secularization thesis needs to be updated according to Norris and Inglehart. They agree with Stark and Finke who conclude; "What is needed is not a simple-minded theory of inevitable religious decline, but a theory to explain variation" (Stark & Finke, 2000, p. 33).

If we would follow the assumption of ST that religious needs or demand would decrease and disappear, how then can we explain the World Values Survey data for The Netherlands, where in 2006, 56.9% of the respondents claim to be a religious person? A country at macro-level might be secular, religious organizations and churches at meso-level might be forced out of the public area in a way we do not see them reflected in our society anymore, but individually on a micro-level, people claim to be religious. What is meant by this claim? What does religious mean in this context? And if those people claim to be religious, can we assume they also have religious needs then and what would they be?

To conclude here, it has become clear that secularization at macro-level is something different than secularization at micro-level. Secularization at macro-level can very well exist and could continue, but the ST assumes that religion regardless the level, will decrease and disappear. We have seen at micro-level that people may have religious needs, i.e. demand. It is important to recognize this, as it will be fundamental for the revised RMT model. Different visions from social scientists towards secularization at micro-level exist, such as rationality in modern thinking, pluralisation, existential security, and state governed welfare etc. The consequence of these visions is that people might not need the church any longer, it seems they are able to live very well without it. As a consequence of that, people started changing their behaviour. Moving from obligation to consumption would mean change of demand, not a diminished demand per se. This is the second fundamental conclusion for the revised theory.

Is the ST theory applicable in a Dutch context? It is to this question I now will turn.

## 2.5 Micro-secularization in the Netherlands

Looking at micro-secularization in the Netherlands we should firstly agree on the fact that the Netherlands is a secular country. Norris and Inglehart researched that The Netherlands is one of the four most rapidly secularising countries in the world over the last twenty years, when defining secularization at micro level as religious participation (Norris & Inglehart, 2011).

Table 3.6: Trends in religious participation, 1981-2001

Nation	1981	1990	2001	Change
Ireland	82	81	65	-17
Spain	40	29	26	-15
Belgium	31	27	19	-12
Netherlands	26	20	14	-12
Argentina	31	32	25	-6
Northern Ireland	52	50	46	-6
Canada	31	27	27	-4
France	11	10	8	-4
South Korea	19	21	15	-4
West Germany	19	18	16	-3
Britain	14	14	14	0
Denmark	3	3	3	0
Hungary	11	21	11	0
Norway	5	5	5	0
Finland	4	4	5	+1
Iceland	2	2	3	+1
Japan	3	3	4	+1
Mexico	54	43	55	+1
Sweden	6	4	7	+1
United States	43	44	46	+3
Italy	32	38	40	+8
South Africa	43	56	57	+13

Figure 2: Norris & Inglehart (2011), *Sacred and Secular*, trends in religious participation with organized religious organizations.

Based on their findings, two issues are made clear:

1. The Netherlands is indeed a highly secular country;
2. Micro-secularization does occur in terms of a decline in individual participation.

The question would be if this micro-secularization in terms of individual participation also has something to say about the religious awareness or relevance of religion in people's lives. Could we conclude that if participation is low, we can assume relevance of religion in people's lives is also low? And again we could question, is this religious participation expressed in a decreasing demand, or is it changing?

## 2.6 Explanations of micro-secularization in the Netherlands

According to Houtman and Mascini, people are becoming more and more individualistic and this change in behaviour causes people to more freely choose a form of religion, (or no form at all) they feel comfortable with. The rise of New Age and transformation to non-religiosity favoured by this process against Christianity (Houtman & Mascini, 2002). Their research survey was conducted in 1998 with 1.848 respondents representing the Dutch population aged 16 years or more. Houtman and Mascini concluded younger people are more individualistic than older people and leads them to embrace non-religiosity and New Age rather than Christianity. Houtman and Mascini speculate on the fact that the New Age religious forms and expressions, constitutes a non-traditional and non-institutionalized religious choice. This finding confirms the thesis of Heelas on individualism and New Age. Heelas claims that who thinks in terms of the autonomous self is more likely to be attracted to a detraditionalized New Age than to other forms of religiosity (Heelas, 1996).

Freedom to participate in religious activities, or as Davie coined it moving from obligation to consumption, together with individualization has created an open market for religious activities. These can be either decreasing religious activities or transformations from one religion to another. The plural characteristic of this open market has caused a challenge the traditional churches were not prepared for.

By investigating the ST, pluralism effectively is seen as a threat for religion in today's modern society. As expressed by Berger it has been the Protestant Reformation and its pluralistic effects that in fact caused erosion of religious monopoly churches, thereby creating loss of plausibility, causing religion, religious awareness and participation to diminish and ignite secularization.

## 2.7 Critics

Coming back to the questions mentioned in § 1.2, if ST is true and applicable to the Netherlands as generally assumed to decrease religious demand, how do we explain religious awareness according to recent research (Lambert, 2004)? He clearly points out there is a trend breach in religious awareness that is increasing since 1999.

And how can we explain that some Dutch reformed denominational churches do grow with respectively 9.9%, 5.2% and 8.1% (Volgers, 2010)?

According to research on the effectiveness of church plantings, Alrik Vos conducted research to compare the effectiveness of older churches to new church plants. He found that the thirteen most effective older churches reached 18 new believers and 15 returners while new church plants reached 57 new believers and 48 returners. Clearly new church plantings are more effective in achieving numerical growth (Vos, 2012).

With respect to relevance of religion in people's lives, Gerard Dekker claims that in The Netherlands, Christians mention that the importance of their religion and its relevance in their lives has significantly increased by 30% between 1979 and 2006. Dekker concludes that the number of people who find relevance of religion in their lives may be decreasing, but the relevance of religion in the lives of those who believe, is in fact increasing (Dekker, 2007). The ST model does not seem to provide room for this differentiation between quality and quantity of religiosity.

Baumann argues that “there is not one Secularization Thesis but we deal with a derivative circular prophecy, a derivate while it originates from the theory of modernity predicting religion’s demise from public life”. He continues to argue that “the thesis is only of relevance to distinct sociological phenomena into religious ones and non-religious ones. It is of value therefore to create academic boundaries in social sciences, history and anthropology”. He argues that explanation of religious developments and application of ST into Dutch context or anywhere else would not make sense at all due to the fact the secularization theories are based on rather small sets of data gathered in Europe between the sixteenth and twentieth century. Baumann disqualifies the “validity” of the theory by studying modern history and colonial history, and conclude modernity is secular (Van Rooden, Laeyendecker, Baumann, & Tennekes, 1996).

## 2.8 Conclusions

As we have seen, the Secularization Thesis is not able to explain all current religious developments in the Netherlands. Yes, there is secularization, thus decreasing influence of religion at the macro- and meso-levels. However, when it concerns the individual micro-level, we need to differentiate between religious participation and the relevance of religion in people’s lives, and we would need to differentiate between quantity and quality within the religious demand. It has become clear that although quantitative participation is decreasing, the qualitative relevance is increasing. There is a need to make a distinction between the two, something which is not done in the current ST framework.

People may have religious needs, i.e. demand at micro-level. However due to changing behaviour and individualisation, religious demand will not diminish per se, it is changing. Insights from ST described in this chapter have given me the following strengths.

ST Strengths
Insights of the ST is showing demand is there, not decreasing per se but changing
The ST shows us that we need to differentiate at micro-level between religious participation and relevance in people’s lives.
Quantitative participation might be decreasing, the qualitative relevance of religion in people’s lives is increasing

Figure 3: Overview ST strengths

Let me turn to describing the Religious Market Theory as supposed to be the opposite theory framework to explain the religious developments in the United States in the next chapter.

### 3. RATIONAL CHOICE THEORY OF RELIGION

By using the format defined in chapter 2, I will define terms such as Religious Market Theory, the Rational Choice of Theory and the Rational Choice Theory of Religion, describe how RMT could be seen in the multi-level macro-meso-micro framework, give an overview of social scientists who write about RMT at micro level, and how they explain religious developments based on RMT. Next I will describe what has been said about RMT in the Netherlands and what explanations have been given of RMT at micro level specifically with regard to the religious developments in the Netherlands. I will give an overview of critics and close with some conclusions.

#### 3.1 Term definitions

- Religious Market Theory (RMT) is a theoretical reflection of the religious application of general market principles and according to Matthias Opfinger, builds on three pillars; 1. A monopolistic church is less interested in high quality service due to a lack of competition, 2. A monopolistic church can satisfy only a portion of beliefs compared to many competing churches therefore pluralism will have a positive effect on religious participation and vitality and 3. Development of welfare reduced the church's importance. The decline of the church importance and influence created a free religious market (Opfinger, 2011).
- Rational Choice Theory (RCT) is an economic theory based on rationalization as a process of replacing old thinking with logic, reason and practicality.
- Rational Choice Theory of Religion is the RCT theory applied in a religious context, developed by sociologist such as Rodney Stark, William Bainbridge, Roger Finke and Laurence Iannaccone. RMT builds on the idea that religious needs are universal and constant, therefore directly opposing to ST. A free religious market in which differentiation (pluralism) will stimulate rational behaviour in choosing a specific religious offering (supply) to satisfy religious needs (demand) based on an exchange model that involves costs and compensators or rewards.

#### 3.2 Multi-level RMT

As the academic discussion on secularization continued sociologists in the United States opposed to the secularization thesis. A fundamental publication on ST's inappropriateness for application to the United States was written by R. Stephen Warner in the *American Journal of Sociology* in 1993. In this article Warner describes the new paradigm to the religious developments in the United States. This new paradigm is based on religious organizations that are constitutively pluralistic, structurally adaptable and empowering (Warner, 1993). The free religious US market ignited developments of competitive religious offerings (supply). This differentiation offers many possibilities to choose from, which is clearly appealing to modern society (demand). By applying the macro-meso-micro framework, I identified RMT thinking at:

- 1) Macro level – the existence of a free religious market;
- 2) Meso level – organizational offering appealing to the religious consumer (supply);
- 3) Micro level – Individual, the individual religious needs, their behaviour and decision making process (demand).

As I am interested in the micro-level I will concentrate on this part of the literature.

### 3.3 Social scientists about Religious Market Theory

Several articles by Rodney Stark and William Bainbridge were brought together in their book on *The Future of Religion* (Stark & Bainbridge, 1985) followed by *A Theory of Religion* (Stark & Bainbridge, 1987). Basically their ideas draw back on the fact that secularization does exist in all economies, not specifically or exclusively in modern societies. And also that secularization drives two interesting co-processes namely revival and innovation. To quote from *The Future of Religion* “Social scientists have misread the future of religion, not only because they so fervently desire religion to disappear, but also because they have failed to recognize the dynamic character of religious economies. To focus only on secularization is to fail to see how this process is part of a much larger and reciprocal structure... We argue that the sources of religion are shifting constantly in societies but that the amount of religion remains constant” (Stark & Bainbridge, 1985, p. 3). A central theme in their reasoning is that humans try to optimize between rewards, gains or benefits and try to avoid whatever is perceived as costs. In this perspective, the benefit is gained provided certain actions or commitments are fulfilled in the meantime. Stark and Bainbridge defined religious supply as: “human organizations primarily engaged in providing general compensators based on supernatural assumptions” (Stark & Bainbridge, 1985, p. 8)

In *Acts of Faith* Stark and Finke discuss the link between costs and compensators (Stark & Finke, 2000). In their research, they find that more costly churches do better than less demanding churches. Churches that demand a lot also offer a lot that seems to be appealing to the rational religious consumer. This brings in another issue, namely commitment. Laurence Iannaccone clearly describes the “free rider problem” against the more committed believers (Iannaccone, 1996). Free riders consume the religious service but they do not commit to the church or somehow contribute. More committed believers will contribute more to the church or religious organization. Less demanding or liberal churches will suffer more from this free rider problem than stricter churches in which behaviour and social control enforce making a choice, leading to more commitment once the choice has been made. Free riders who do not comply with the stricter rules and codes simply will not join, according to Iannaccone. Still, Iannaccone does not explain the rewards and benefits to be gained. They remain insecure and explained by the supernatural giving answers to the big questions of life. But he does provide better insights in costs and commitments by explaining more strict churches are doing better in terms of commitment and membership than less strict churches.

The second aspect within RMT thinking is the claim that supply will stimulate or even increase demand because of the variety in supply. From an economical point of view we recognize this as “supply creating its own demand”, a phrase derived from writings of John Maynard Keynes (1883-1946) who drew back on the early ideas of Jean-Baptiste Say (1767-1832), a French economist who laid the basic foundations for economic thinking.

Stark and Bainbridge’s book *A theory of Religion* describes the model of supply and demand which is foundational for the religious market theory model. They actually claim that religious vitality and activity, as a consequence of demand, is caused by the variety of choices to be made and the competition model behind it (Stark & Bainbridge, 1987). Roger Finke, building on Stark’s idea that pluralism actually ignites religious vitality claims: “An increase in religious supply will create an increase in demand, not the other way around” (Finke, 1997, pp. 45-65). An interesting case study that confirms Finke’s and

Stark's ideas that religious competition actually drives religious vitality is the research by Hamberg and Pettersson. In this study they examined data on Swedish religious activity both in free churches and the state church, the Church of Sweden. They concluded that in cities where pluralism was higher, religious participation was higher as well. Even so, in cities where free churches were stronger, the state church also offered more variations in service offerings and service attendance was higher than average (Hamberg & Pettersson, 1994). These findings would challenge the secularization thesis according to which demand is assumed to decrease by default. The question then would be can demand be positively influenced by the amount of the variations on the supply side? The Swedish example implies that religious variety will stimulate religious activity but is it increasing demand? Assuming demand is there, differentiation in supply could mean people will stay on board, so to say, and choose to participate in one of the religious expressions they feel comfortable with. But does this mean demand is increasing because of differentiation in supply? Is an increase in competition in fact also increasing demand? Is it true, as Stark and Iannaccone assume, that pluralism and free religious markets positively impact religious activity and participation (Stark & Iannaccone, 1994)? And is there a scientific methodology of measuring this?

A third aspect of RMT thinking is concerned with the assumption that demand for religious products/services is relatively constant, based on the after-life rewards as we can see in most religions (Stark & Finke, 2000).

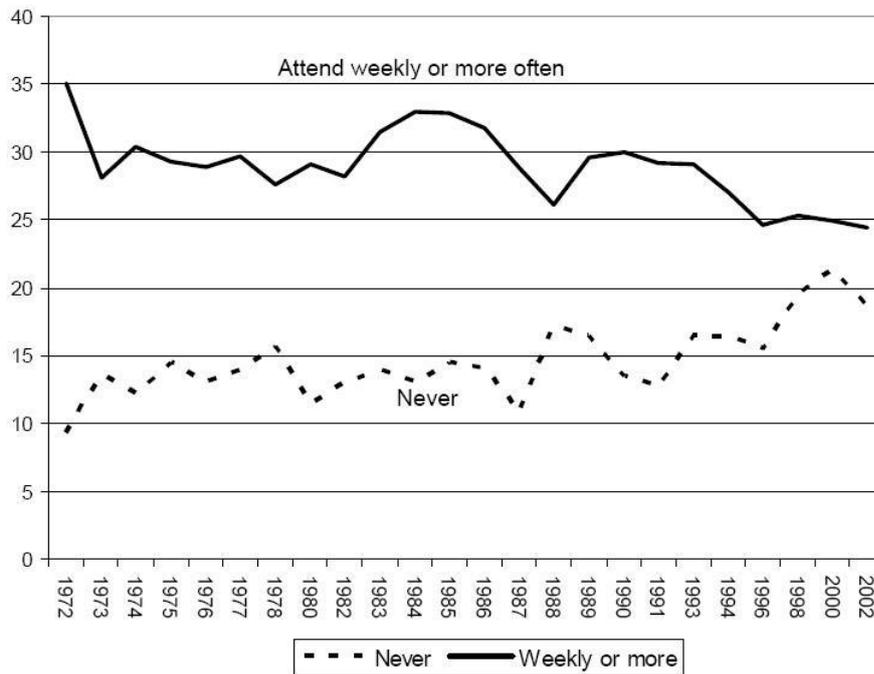
### 3.4 RMT at micro-level

Can the RMT explain why religious participation in the USA is higher compared to Europe? Finke and Stark found positive relations between pluralism and church membership and concluded that "the presence of Catholics and the diversity of the religious market both increase the rate of adherents" (Finke & Stark, 1988, p. 45). Kevin Breault however challenged the findings of Finke and Stark and concluded there is a negative correlation between religious pluralism and adherence rates based on the fact that the Catholic population had a strong influence, thereby influencing the overall results (Breault, 1989). By using the Herfindahl index (the sum of the squared market shares of all organizations in a specific market) more conclusive research has been conducted by Iannaccone, expressing market concentration and weekly church attendance or church membership. The market-share in this context is defined as the number of adherents within domination  $x$  divided by the total number of religious adherents in geographical area  $y$ . Interesting findings were that the unusually high rates of church attendance in the United States actually seem to relate to the amount of pluralism. The US scored 12% by using the Herfindahl index compared to 94% for Denmark; the lower the score, the higher the pluralism (Iannaccone, 1991). Chaves and Cann investigated the topic of regulation compared to participation by using the Herfindahl index as well. They found that the more regulated (centrally organized and monopolistic) churches were the ones with the less participation and attendance (Chaves & Cann, 1992).

A study of 198 nations provides insights and empirical evidence for significant effects of pluralism towards religious conversions or switching (Duke, Johnson, & Duke, 1993). They conclude that where people do not see a range of varieties in supply, there is also low consumption and vice versa, where there is a higher variety, religious consumption is also higher. Frank Lechner describes it as follows: "In a society with a tradition of revivalism and an open religious marketplace, where new enterprises can be started easily and legitimately, and where religious choice and change by individuals are socially

legitimate, revivals and innovation are indeed to be expected, but nothing similar is to be found in most Western European countries” (Lechner, 1991, p. 1111). This underpins the Stark & Bainbridge statements mentioned earlier that secularization will drive revival and innovation; however there seem to be preconditions as well, namely a free religious market and healthy competition, a situation that applied to the United States but not to most Western European countries (Stark & Bainbridge, 1985). This also underpins Davies statements on higher secularized countries that have had a tight connection between church and state and dominant positions of monopolized churches (Davie, 2007).

Looking at data from the US General Social Survey 1972-2002 which is a study across all US citizens, there is no empirical evidence that diversity or pluralism actually increases religious participation, at least not in this specific period.



**Note: Q:** “How often do you attend religious services?” Never/ At least once a week or more often.

**Source:** US General Social Survey 1972-2002 N.43,204

Figure 4: Religious participation in the United States, 1972-2002

According to Roger Finke, an enormous growth in religious activity has been witnessed in the United States due to the Great Awakenings (Finke, 1997). The First Great Awakening is best known for the revivals of George Whitefield during 1739 and 1740. As for the Second Great Awakening, the revivals of Finney and others and their ability to expand the market are well known. Between 1776 and 1850 the national rate of adherence doubled, from 17 to 34%. Finke argues that the growth of organized religion was due to a shift in supply, not demand. According to Finke, more empirical evidence that RMT would be universal can be found in Japan. Finke describes religious freedom in Japan right after the end of World War II and the disestablishment of the dominant and monopolistic Shinto religion. The deregulation of religion created a new religious market, i.e. shifting supply and thereby creating demand, or maybe we can better say unleashing demand in this particular case.

An interesting study by Rodney Stark and Roger Finke with regards to high religious activity also stimulating additional supply has been the research for non-Mormon faiths in Utah. They concluded on the basis of qualified data that “It would seem to take dramatic and highly visible competition, such as an overwhelming Mormon majority, to stir the liberals to effective, defensive action” (Stark & Finke, 2004, p. 297). The data underpin their hypothesis that high religious participation of one dominant religious organization will have its effect on other religious suppliers and that this will reinforce their service offerings, hence activation of supply will generate demand. Their findings on religions other than Mormon are indeed showing a higher rate of participation than anywhere else in the United States. Their findings also led to another interesting conclusion that the energetic majority of religious activities have an effect on minority competitors and hence energetic supply does indeed generate demand.

However, March Chaves and Philip Gorski created an extensive overview on the debate around pluralism and participation. They come to the contrary conclusion that there is no general law about the relation between religious pluralism and religious participation. Some case studies show a positive correlation, but others a negative one, while some authors even criticize the entire model. According to Chaves and Gorski it would be of much more interest to “investigate the social, cultural and institutional arrangements that determine, in part, religious pluralism’s consequences for religious vitality” (Chaves & Gorski, 2001, p. 279).

If findings of RMT fundamentally are not even conclusive in its sweet spot, the geographical area, the United States, where it is generally perceived to be applicable, what does this mean for the application of RMT in the Netherlands? Let us have a look at this in the next paragraph.

### 3.5 Micro-level RMT in the Netherlands

Interesting results can be found by using data from the European Values Survey<sup>4</sup> that provides extensive on-line survey data between 1981 and 2008. Yves Lambert analysed these data in a European context and found interesting trend changes after 1999 (Lambert, 2004). Especially younger people are becoming more interested in or aware of their religious demands and requirements. At least they increasingly claim to be a religious person. According to Lambert, the downward trend is counterbalanced by a renewal in Christianity and by individual religiosity, especially among young people. Zooming in on the Dutch data does indeed show an increase of religious persons, meaning people that claim to be religious, in the two categories, respectively 15-29 years and 30-49 years in the 1999 survey, and also an increase in the same age categories, as well as a small increase in the 50+ years' category in the 2008 survey.

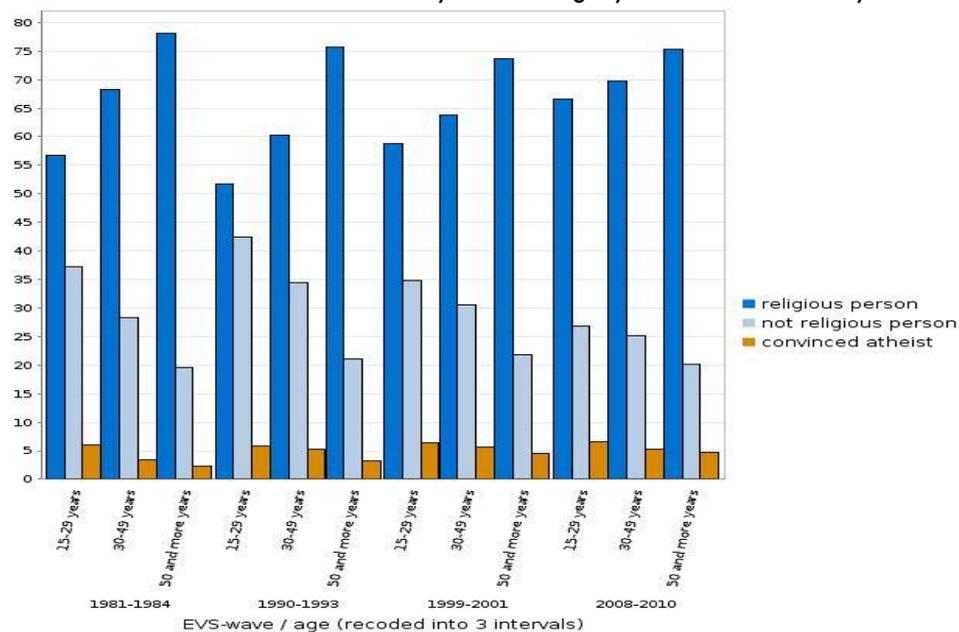


Figure 5: European Values Survey, religious person 1981-2010 in The Netherlands

If the assumption of a free religious marketplace is true and institutionalism of religious organizations is keeping people away from traditional religious services and church membership, we should look for further empirical evidence that religious demand is still there but supply has not or only limitedly evolved to meet the more individual religious demands, spiritual needs and requirements. According to Houtman and Mascini, the decline of Christian belief and rise of alternative religiosity is caused by not meeting individual spiritual needs. The downfall of Christianity is favoured by the rise of New Age and non-religiosity (Houtman & Mascini, 2002). The data from the EVS reports however proves this claim to be false. Religious awareness as a whole is growing instead of declining. The point of individualism might still hold. Luckmann already argued in 1967: “as individual consciousness becomes detached from specific social contexts, people develop a sense of individual autonomy. As a consequence, traditional Christianity makes way for more or less “invisible” and “privatized” forms of religion, which are characterized by an emphasis on self-expression, self-actualization, and individual freedom” (Luckmann, 1967).

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.zacat.gesis.org>

Similar argumentation on the rise of New Age and alternative religiosity is provided by Heelas. New-Agers will reject guidance of any kind of “external” tradition and authority. They will consider their “self” as principal moral authority: “Much of the New Age would appear to be quite radically *de-traditionalized* (rejecting voices of authority associated with established orders) or in other ways anti-authoritarian (rejecting voices of those exercising authority) on their own, even rejecting “beliefs”(…)that what lies within - experiences by way of “intuition”, “alignment” or an “inner voice” - serves to inform the judgements, decisions and choices required for everyday life. The “individual” serves as source of guidance” (Heelas, 1996, p. 22). In addition to Heelas, Houtman and Mascini argue that individualism sets in faster for younger people than for older people. Houtman and Mascini actually confirm the hypothesis that: “young people have more affinity with alternative religiosity, while older people are more often Christian, because young people are more individualistic than older ones” (Houtman & Mascini, 2002, p. 459).

According to the most recent research “God in Nederland”, *God in the Netherlands*, amongst Dutch people older than 18 years, almost 2 million people claim to be interested in some form of spirituality. They could be called religious seekers, highly interested to satisfy their individual spiritual needs, (Zwart de, 2011)

As society is becoming more rational and individualistic, what is then the effect of this to RMT? It seems preconditions for application of RMT into the Netherlands are there. The religious market is deregulated, there is more open mindedness towards different forms of religion, the Netherlands is considered being a pluralistic country and finally people claim significantly to be religious. What is there to say about application of RMT in the Netherlands and can we explain some religious developments with RMT?

### 3.6 Explanations of micro-level RMT in the Netherlands

Erik Sengers published his book *Aantrekkelijke kerk* (attractive church) in 2006. He confirms the growth in the New-Age movement during the 1980's. In addition, in the period between 1990 and 2004 growth percentages are known in the smaller reformed churches *Gereformeerde Kerk Vrijgemaakt* (Free Reformed Church) with 9.9%, *Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken* (Dutch Reformed Church) with 5.2% and the *Gereformeerde Gemeenten* (Reformed Communities) with 8.1%. But despite the growth in these denominations, he also concludes that even though there is openness towards and interest in religion, participation in general is decreasing. Apparently supply and demand are not balanced or matched to one and other. Transformation from a supply-driven, to a demand-led strategy is difficult. Sengers describes differences in supply between churches in the US and in The Netherlands. The competitive characteristics of the US religious market made the churches aware of processes of differentiation and development of competitive advantages. To quote Sengers: “In a truly free and plural religious marketplace everyone can get satisfaction of his or her religious needs for a price he or she is willing to pay”. In other words “pick and choose” the religion you want or like most. The difference between Dutch and US churches according to Sengers is that Dutch churches are not used to competition. In fact, the ecumenical characteristic is creating a religious cartel. And in addition, this monopolistic religious cartel is not market conscious which shows in their daily operations. Mission, vision, clear objectives and communications are frequently lacking. Sengers argues that this non-competitive attitude actually prevents Dutch churches from renewal and innovation and that this might explain why Christian churches in The Netherlands, and maybe even in entire Europe, are not growing. His research shows there is growth in certain areas of the religious market. His

research in the Netherlands for example, covers clearly demand-led religious organizations and institutions such as the Alpha courses and the influence of the Willow Creek Community Church on local Dutch churches, thereby providing empirical evidence that a demand-led supply offering can be successful and lead to growth (Sengers, 2006).

Stefan Paas, professor in church-growth and church-planting at the *Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam* writes about the monopolistic attitude of traditional churches in the Netherlands; “If you have a religious monopoly, and if you are supported by the state, financially and in other ways, it is easy to become lazy – like any monopolist. Whatever you do, no matter how few people you draw, you will get paid. There is no need to mobilize the Christian crowd, since the clergy does not really need their support. And as long as the culture is more or less ‘Christian’, as was the case in “Christendom”, you do not feel very tempted to win new people for the faith. Somehow you feel that they belong to you anyway” (Paas, 2012).

The following question would then rise: is the theory not practised or is it not applicable? What about empirical evidence that the RMT theory can actually be applied to the Netherlands?

A survey by Bernts and De Graaf conducted in the Netherlands showed that differentiation in supply does have effects. It showed that by practicing good marketing, a substantial higher number of participating attendees of divine services during Christmas could be witnessed, against a less positive outcome of the same survey five years before (Bernts & De Graaf, 2003).

Alrik Vos, mentioned before in paragraph 2.7, published his master thesis in 2012. He hypothesized that church plants would have a more positive impact on reaching the un-churched compared to older churches (Vos, 2012). Based on his survey and conclusions this hypothesis was borne out; new church-plants indeed have a higher rate of reaching the un-churched”. It follows that change in supply can have a positive effect on demand thereby proving that application of the Religious Market Theory is possible.

### 3.7 Critics

A free religious market and plural supply do not guarantee RMT to be applicable. Frank Lechner challenged Stark’s and Iannaccone’s statements that application of RMT would be universal and therefore also applicable to The Netherlands. Lechner argued that deregulation and increased pluralism did not show the expected results of increasing religious activation. According to Lechner 40% of the respondents claim membership with a church, 33% of the respondents believe vaguely in some kind of higher power. This 33% then would be the target group to attract by creative supply. However, as Lechner claims thereby confirming Houtman and Mancini, every next generation expresses less interest in religion (Lechner, 1996).

### 3.8 Conclusion

As our society has become more rationalized and individualized, it seems to make sense people have changed needs, behaviour and decision making. A “pick and choose” mentality, open religious market and deregulated monopolistic churches seem to provide the necessary preconditions for RMT. Application of RMT in the Netherlands however, in general fails, and practising the theory on larger scale therefore might fail as well due to lack of competitive awareness. The insights from RMT are captured in the following overview of strengths that I will reuse in the revised theory.

RMT Strengths
RMT takes demand into consideration, whether this is universal, constant, decreasing, increasing or changing can be discussed, but at least differentiation at micro-level would be possible
Assumes people to behave, react and decide rationally and anticipates to the pluralistic and individualistic characteristics of the Netherlands
Provides some empirical evidence that supply will generate demand in Dutch context, therefore application of RMT would make sense if leveraged correctly

*Figure 6: Overview RMT strengths*

Supply by religious organizations and churches have lost their connection to the changing demand. When RMT assumes demand to be relatively constant as claimed by Stark and Finke, it does not really consider the changing of demand as we have seen. If this demand is indeed changing, supply should change accordingly. We are in need of a revised integrated theory of supply and demand, supporting churches and religious organizations with a framework to reconnect their supply to the current demand.

Interestingly, the ST assumes pluralism as a threat, while RMT looks at pluralism as an opportunity. Pluralism for the RMT would mean differentiation, creativity and entrepreneurship, “playing the religious market” and thereby stimulating religious participation and vitality. It is at this intersection I would like to build my revised theory.

## 4. INFLUENCE ON THEOLOGY

As we have seen, the secularization thesis is mostly associated with application in a West-European context. Although questioned whether the theory is in fact a theory, or if it is rather a thesis, paradigm or prophecy, in general there is consensus on the fact that it is a sociological discussion that involves religious activity and has to do with relevance of religion in people's lives. Clearly there is a different situation in the Netherlands compared to the United States. Freedom of religion, separation of church and state and market competitive awareness created a religious market in the United States right from the beginning. A situation we have not seen in the Netherlands. Institutionalized churches never had to think about their competitive position in the religious market according to Sengers. Could it be the traditional, institutionalized churches kept focusing on the old value proposition, e.g. focus on a vision toward the after-life and did not pay much attention to an increasing individualised society, where this value proposition has lost value and significance for people living today? Assuming we agree that there is an after-life, the modern religious consumer would also have religious needs in this life, clearly better addressed by new modern forms of religiosity such as New Age for example. Could it be that the traditional, institutionalized churches forgot to express their incarnational values also in this life? That would be one of the fundamental characteristics of the church; to reflect the Kingdom in today's society, a society that is developing, a society that is changing. It is here where I think RMT thinking is missing focus on the demand side. When Stark and Finke assumed that demand would be relatively constant, they referred to the assumption that almost every religion is focusing on the otherworldly rewards of life after death (Stark & Finke, 2000). As there seems to be a changing demand in terms of religious needs not focusing on the rewards in the after-life, but to experience the Kingdom of God in this life, it is up to the churches, missiological initiatives and fresh expressions to engage in the religious market and to connect their supply in today's modern society. What does that mean for churches, their theology and missiology? Immediately this raises questions such as: Do we need to do whatever people want? How do we maintain our relevance if we constantly adapt? And if we do want to change, how can we make these transformations happen?

Let me get into these questions and the influence of both ST and RMT on theology and missiology in the next two paragraphs.

### 4.1 Influence of ST on theology

Gerben Heitink, a Dutch Professor Emeritus in theology, writes about the Secularization Thesis as "dealing with a loss" (Heitink, 2007). He points out there are three aspects of dealing with this loss:

- 1) Loss of believers getting affirmations from their surroundings;
- 2) Loss of relevance where religious values and norms lose their significance in life;
- 3) Loss of transcendence where the notion of a transcendent God is moving more and more into an inner-world philosophy of life.

Heitink thinks churches need to change now in order not to be too late. According to Heitink churches need to transform for which he created an 8-factor matrix to support the reorientation process for church transformation (Heitink, 2007, p. 41). The transformation would change the churches in such a way they would be able to reverse the processes of secularization and decline. Leadership is of critical importance according to Heitink. The

church leaders should lead the process of transformation. However, they are often not used to planning and setting objectives, especially for the longer term. They are used to working in short weekly cycles mostly resulting in traditions and rituals. They are not used to managing change processes and secondly there is the congregation that will need to follow them (Heitink, 2007). Robert Warren has mentioned this as well by stating that “processes of renewal and reformation of existing churches may be slow and that not all churches will be able to make this transition” (Warren, 1995).

Wim Dekker is a Dutch theologian who recently published his book *Marginaal en missionair* (Marginal and missional). Dekker writes about God’s judgement and the relation of a declining church. He claims the crisis of the church is caused by the church itself. Religious wars and fights changed the “face” of God seen in the world. After the Enlightenment, God has been pushed out to the margin of life and churches and Christians accepted that. According to Dekker, the religious crisis would be overcome by reinforcing preaching and re-establishing preaching as a central place in the workshop service. (Dekker W. , 2011). In his most recent writing he builds further on God’s judgement. Dekker claims that Christians have been hiding themselves so far away in their private spheres, that the incarnation of God in our society is currently not visible anymore. God’s witnesses are silent and therefore God is awakening people to repent and speak up (Dekker W. , 2012). His arguments basically are inward focused, repentance, re-establishing the preaching as central liturgical element and to stand up and be His witnesses, are his key messages to the church (members). Based on these arguments the crisis in the church would be solved according to Dekker.

Wim Dekker and Gerben Heitink are examples of Dutch theologians drawing their conclusions based on ST thinking. Secularization will continue and churches would need to transform in order to reverse this process. Similar thinking can be found within the *Protestantse Kerk Nederland* (Protestant Church Netherlands, PKN). They wrote a strategy development handbook for local churches to create their own strategy *Bronnen voor beleid* (sources for strategy). The document quotes a newspaper article saying that the protestant spirituality is diluted in secularization. The handbook refers to a transformation strategy similar as mentioned by Warren (Valstar, 2012, p. 11). “A calm period without growth sometimes just needs to be accepted, it then comes down to holding out, or to use the Biblical term, to persevere” (Valstar, 2012, pp. 12-13). Although the handbook starts with the fact that in terms of quantity, the church is in crisis and decline, the handbook does not provide any strategies for quantitative growth. ST thinking, e.g. consolidation of churches, costs reductions and an inward focus on how to be church, influences strategic thinking and execution of the largest protestant denomination in the Netherlands.

However, as we have seen, there are also examples of quantitative church growths in the Netherlands, as we have seen by migrant churches and church plants, thus strategies of consolidation and inward focus transformation based on ST thinking would not be the only possible options. Strategies based on RMT thinking clearly would be possible as well. What about the influence of RMT on theology?

## 4.2 Influence of RMT on theology

As Sengers already made clear, (most) churches in the Netherlands are not market conscious. Yes there is a free religious market and there is religious demand, however, most churches are not competitive and conscious about their “market share”. Most strategies that refer back to RMT thinking is focusing on the supply side. As long as the church is providing a “healthy” supply, we would be able to consequently quantitative growth. As if a “healthy” church would be a guarantee for success and quantitative growth. Christian Schwarz and Robert Warren focus on qualitative characteristics of a church. Schwarz says that any church participating in the research, scoring more than 65% on every one of the characteristics, will grow with a certainty percentage of 99,4% (Schwarz, 2010). Robert Warren’s book *The Healthy Churches Handbook* is quite popular among church leaders. Also in the Netherlands it has been received very well and is used for example by the *Unie van Baptisten Gemeenten in Nederland*<sup>5</sup> (Union of Baptist Churches in the Netherlands) and the *Evangelische Werkverband*<sup>6</sup> (Evangelical Working Alliance). Warren claims that spiritual inspiration and quality is the goal, more important than quantitative growth itself (Warren R. , 2004). Warren is herewith referring to the process of renewal and transformation he just mentioned to be so difficult and claiming that many churches would not be able to make this transition. If the process of transformation is so difficult why then would this be a successful strategy?

RMT thinking will challenge processes of renewal and innovation. But as transformation strategies seem to be so utterly difficult, what other strategies are there? New church plantings could be one and have had success according to Martijn Vellekoop’s research published in 2008. He found that between 1990 and 2009 a minimum of 281 new churches have been founded inspired by American church growth leaders (Vellekoop, 2008). Peter Wagner, founder of the Fuller Theological Seminary in California, argued that “the single most effective evangelistic methodology under heaven is planting new churches” (Wagner, 1990, p. 11). Innovation and renewal processes could be driven by church planting, providing the opportunity for ecclesiological renewal and missiological creativity. As Martin Robinson and Stuart Christine made it clear: “The challenge for church planters is therefore to give birth to new forms of the church rather than replicate the same structures that have already failed elsewhere... creative church planting that discovers new ways of being the Body of Christ in a changing world will help keep the sinews of our denominations supple and more able to respond sensitively and vigorously to the as yet unforeseen challenges of tomorrow’s world” (Robinson & Christine, 1992, p. 9). Robinson and Christine have a good point here, just replicating churches that failed elsewhere, would not be the right approach. The other way around would be true as well, replicating churches that have been successful somewhere, does not necessarily mean they will be successful elsewhere. The idea of copying successful church models mostly based on American examples, could be found for example by replicating the Willow Creek Church Community model from Bill Hybels, the Redeemer Presbyterian Church model from Tim Keller, the Purpose Driven Church model from Rick Warren or the Breakout Chorleywood model from Mark Stibbe. *Nederland zoekt*<sup>7</sup> (The Netherlands in search) is such an initiative drawing back on the concept of “missional communities” as outlined in Mark Stibbe’s book *Breakout* (Stibbe & Williams, 2008). *Nederland zoekt* is supporting

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.baptisten.nl/missionaire-gemeente-ontwikkeling/training-advies-en-ondersteuning/gezonde-gemeente/gemeentescan-gezonde-gemeente>

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.ewv.nl/visie/gemeenteopbouw/klacht naar kracht 11jun2011](http://www.ewv.nl/visie/gemeenteopbouw/klacht%20naar%20kracht%2011jun2011)

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.nederlandzoekt.nl/home/>

churches to develop and implement the Chorleywood church model in which the congregation functions in middle sized missional groups to become more outward focused.

An example within existing churches and denominations looking for ways to innovate and renew, can be found within the PKN. They announced in 2012 to look for 100 missional initiatives to pioneer with new forms of community and being church. According to the PKN, already six initiatives have been developed or are in the final stage of development.

RMT thinking initiates churches to think about their supply, renewal and innovation processes. However, the current RMT model does not pay much attention to changing demand. Demand in terms of rewards within RMT is not only relevant for the after-life but also in this life. The question that we would need to raise is not what or how, but why? Why is the church here, in this location? That addresses everything related to the context. RMT thinking needs to be revised by taking fully into account what changing demand means. How do changed religious and contextual needs, behaviour and decision making look like? Stuart Murray argues that contextualization is a vital but complex process. There is an extensive amount of literature available, yet limitedly utilized by those involved in church planting according to Murray. He explains the process of contextualization as listening to the culture and finding appropriate theological images to engage. As an example he writes: "if research indicates that many people do not feel guilty, we may choose initially to present the challenge of Christ in other ways, not because guilt is no longer an issue, but because it is not the only issue confronting people, nor necessarily the starting point on a journey to faith". Of course this brings in major challenges for church planting initiatives or innovations of existing churches. Keeping a Christian identity and conforming to the culture and context of the environment at the same time, might lead to "resident aliens" as Murray coined it. "The task of the church requires it to be distinctive. The shapes it must assume to fulfil this task will vary" (Murray, 2001, p. 155). Church contextualization and sociological developments specifically in the Netherlands have been captured in a handbook on Church Planting, *Als een kerk opnieuw begint* (If a church starts again). Modern ways of living such as; the weekend that needs to be family-time while both parents are working full-time during the week, increasing mobility of people and the growing number of divorces and singles heavily influence church going behaviour (Noort, Paas, De Roest, & Stoppels, 2008).

Depending on the perspective, either ST or RMT, different strategies can be developed and executed by churches leaders. Following an ST approach, consolidation and an inward focused strategy such as struggling transformation might follow. Taking the current RMT approach, they may overlook the changing demand side, they may just copy existing successful church models. A church planting strategy would mean a renewed, innovative and outward focused, yet potentially failing strategy due to missing contextualization. Since the influence of both ST and RMT on theological and missiological thinking have become clear, it has become evident we need the revised theory from a theological point of view as well. As the current RMT model focuses mainly on the supply side, we would need revision of RMT by integrating this contextualization, hence changing (and not a universal, relatively constant) demand side.

The next step will be to develop this new revised theory. I will therefore use the strengths mentioned in paragraphs 2.8 and 3.8 to develop this revised theory in chapter 5.

## 5. INTEGRATED THEORY OF RELIGIOUS SUPPLY AND DEMAND

In the previous chapters I have explained how the two dominant theories try to explain the different religious developments. Applied to the Netherlands, it has become clear that both theories do not cover all developments. ST is only partially applicable since religious demand is decreasing but there is also growth and religious demand is changing, not diminishing per se. RMT assumes the demand to be constant and even to increase provided that suppliers offer enough dynamics and differentiation. Although the latter is partially true, the differentiation in supply and plural characteristics of the Netherlands did not show a convincing picture of overall increased religious activation.

As both ST and RMT theories implicitly work with concepts of supply and demand and I question both theories, in this chapter I will firstly explain where these concepts came from. Secondly I will define a revised theory that takes both ST and RMT into consideration. Thirdly, to support the applicability of the revised theory for churches in the Netherlands, I will give a short description of additional tools than can be used in order to support the application of the revised theory.

Since some of the terms used in this chapter may be unknown, let me start with defining some terms:

- What is a services industry?
- Is the church an organization in the services industry?
- What is supply?
- What is demand?
- What is a value chain?
- What is a GAPS analysis?
- What is service quality?

**What is a services industry?** Typically organizations that are in the business of delivering services to their customers will have four differentiating characteristics compared to a regular physical products industry (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Berry, 1985);

- a. Intangibility, untouchable characteristic;
- b. Heterogeneity, non-standardization characteristic;
- c. Inseparability, production and consumption at the same time characteristic;
- d. Perishability, the impossibility of storing and to inventory the service characteristic.

Intangibility of a service and the fact that the service cannot be touched will also mean that evaluation of needs that has been satisfied can only be based on experience. Regular products provide a specific function, for example a car that drives and operates, is an objective function of the product and can be similarly evaluated by different people. The experience of the delivered quality of the service is a subjective evaluation of every single individual.

The heterogeneity is the second differentiator meaning that the delivered service will differentiate from to time to time and from place to place. Especially services that contain a high amount of labour, will suffer from inconsistent quality in service delivery based on

the performance of people who deliver the service. Of course this affects service organizations most that do not work with experienced and professional personnel.

Inseparability of the services means that there is no time difference between the production and consumption of the service, production and consumption happens at the same time. This will have a major effect on the perceived quality in service delivery. Once the service has been delivered, immediately it will be perceived as being a good or a bad service. The service cannot be taken back or reversed, a guarantee cannot be given and replacement of the service is difficult if not impossible in most situations. Inseparability does not imply that supply and demand are inseparable. Supply represents the services that are offered, demand represents the need for these services, as I will explain hereafter.

The fourth characteristic is about the perishability of the service. As the service is time dependent and consumption takes place immediately, the service cannot be stored and consumed in future time. This highly affects the production of the service and the producer(s) as the consumer will only recognize a problem in service delivery if they have to wait for the service to be delivered.

Although these characteristics are of importance for the producers of the service, they are of less interest to the consumers. It is therefore a challenge for producers to optimally position their services balancing between perceived qualities in service delivery, waiting time, evaluation of the service delivery and differentiation, hence options to choose from.

***Is the church an organization in the services industry?*** Based on these characteristics we can conclude that churches indeed provide an intangible offering, not standardized (the service is not always and everywhere the same), production and consumption are indeed simultaneous, and the service cannot be stored or inventoried. In addition Santos and Mathews concluded that: "A more common experience is simply to join certain ceremonies to be involved in communication with 'God'. It follows that the church must be a service industry" (Santos & Mathews, 2001, p. 279).

***What is supply?*** One of the first definitions of supply came from James Steuart in 1767. He defined supply as the product or service offering that tries to satisfy needs of the consumer (Steuart, 1767). The supply side therefore is the organization that delivers this supply.

***What is demand?*** Based on Steuart, demand is the set of needs from the consumer. The demand side are people who consume the supply offering (the service which is provided). If there would be no demand, nobody would consume, but also when there would be no supply, nobody could consume.

Basically not so much has changed in defining supply and demand in the course of time. Michael Porter, one of the most influential authors in the world on business and economics defined his famous Five Forces model in 1980 around suppliers who are the providers of the service (supply), and buyers who are the consumers of the service to fulfil their needs (demand), (Porter, 1980). It goes beyond the scope of this master thesis to elaborate on his Five Forces model but it is sufficient to recognize that definitions of supply and demand has not dramatically changed in a couple of hundred years.

**What is a value chain?** The organization built to deliver the product or services assumes some form of organized structure creating value to be consumed by the customer. Michael Porter, one of the leading business economic pioneers created the value chain concept in 1985 (Porter, 1985):

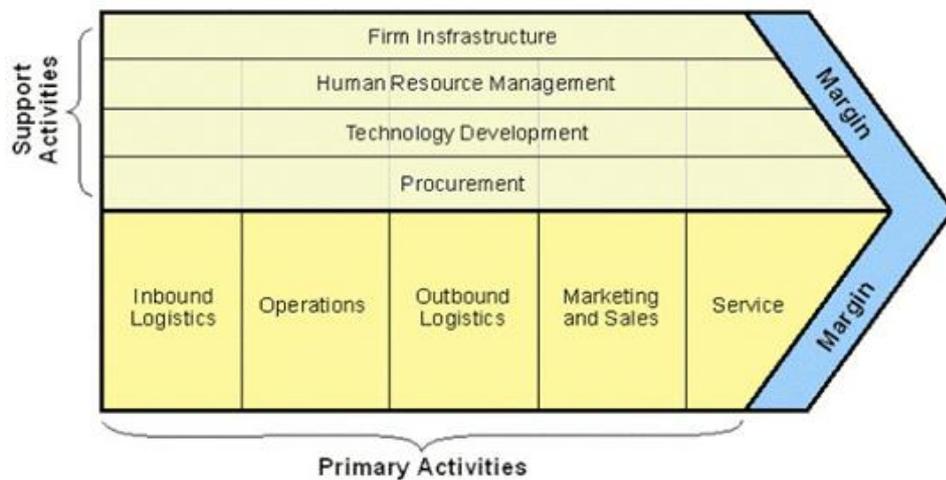


Figure 7: Michael Porter Value Chain, 1985

The total set of activities creating the end user (consumer) value, defines the supply side. In the value chain model, Porter defined primary activities and support activities. Primary activities are related to incoming logistics such as importing raw materials or half-products, the operational processes and people creating the final end-product, logistics to get the end-products to consumers, marketing and sales operations and after sales service. The support activities are related to “overhead” such as buildings, computer systems, machines and warehouses, staff not related to the primary business processes, training and skill development, purchasing and financial departments. Ultimately this supply side will satisfy demand or needs of the end user or consumer. To quote Porter: “Competition is at the core of the success or failure of firms”. In other words in business economics, competition and innovation determine success, hence the way businesses can connect their supply to current demand determines their success. Success typically in this context refers to maximized customer retention, optimized profits and return on investment (Porter, 1985).

**What is a GAPS analysis?** In order to balance both supply and demand it is crucial to understand what exactly the demand is. Together with Valarie Zeithaml and Mary Jo Bitner, Alan Wilson wrote a book *Services Marketing: Integrating Customer Focus across the Firm* (Wilson, Zeithaml, & Bitner, 2008). In this book the authors very well describe how an organization should operate in order to become a successful, customer focused service delivery organization. They provide a description of the “GAPS model of Service Quality”. It is their belief that there are multiple gaps between customer service expectations (demand) and the actual quality of service delivery (supply). These gaps are caused by:

- Not knowing what customers really expect;
- Not applying the right service designs and development standards;
- Not delivering the service against these designs and standards;
- Not matching the delivery performance to promises made.

Once an organization knows what the demand side expects, they can try to optimize their supply in order to optimally match the supply against the demand.

**What is service quality?** The quality of the service delivered is based on the experiences during the service consumption. Success, or “the extent of doing it right”, next to a balanced supply and demand, is depending on quality in service delivery according to many economics, sociologists and marketers (Wilson, Zeithaml, & Bitner, 2008). In order to measure the quality in service delivery, a tool has been developed called the SERVQUAL scale (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988). This is a tool helping to identify the service delivery quality to optimize customer satisfaction. The SERVQUAL model uses five factors to identify perceived quality in service delivery;

1. Consumer expectations, knowing what the needs of the consumers are and what level of performance is expected, which can be done by the GAPS Analysis;
2. Service specification, leadership must be utterly clear in what kind of services need to be provided, especially when the delivery organization has to work with mainly volunteers;
3. Service delivery, as the service is delivered by mostly volunteers, the delivery is not standardized. Motivation of employees highly influences the overall quality in service delivery;
4. Communications, sometimes it is needed to communicate special efforts that are not directly visible but could still influence the perception of the delivered service quality;
5. Service expectation, how do consumers perceive the actual delivered service against their expectations, did it merely meet the expectations or has it exceeded expectations? In the last case the perception of the delivered service quality will be higher.

## 5.1 Supply and Demand

While searching for the first use of the supply and demand concepts, I needed to turn to the field of economics. Sir James Steuart (1713-1780), a British economist, was one of the first authors using the terms supply and demand in his book *An Inquiry into the principles of political economy* (Steuart, 1767). A successful application of the supply and demand concept is based on equilibrium. According to Steuart, a state of equilibrium means that the quantity supplied should be in proportion to the quantity demanded, that is, wanted. To me it seems that for a proper application of both supply and demand concepts we also have to take them both into consideration. As a starting point for the revised theory, I use the RMT framework which is using supply and demand concepts. ST however, does not work with these concepts as it is not a religious market theory. By revising the RMT framework and including ST thinking I will apply the supply and demand concepts also in the ST context. ST assumes people to withdraw from religious activities, something I would call decrease in demand. While this happened, churches may or may not have changed their ways of being church, something I would call supply. If we assume supply and demand have become out of balance, they would need to adapt to each other in order to find the balance again both in quantity as in quality, the equilibrium.

Success, or the extent of doing things right, according to Porter, is a function of the balance between supply and demand. It follows that there is a relationship between supply and demand. “If demand is greater than the offered supply, this leads to high profitability. Supply and demand change constantly, adjusting to each other” (Porter,

1985). It follows that application of the supply and demand concept, in order to be successful, needs to be balanced if possible. Also Steuart (Steuart, 1767) made it clear that the balance between supply and demand can be overturned if:

- Demand diminishes, and the supply remains the same;
- Supply diminishes, and the demand remains;
- Demand increases, and supply remains;
- Supply increases, and demand remains.

## 5.2 Demand in RMT and ST

The current RMT theory assumes demand to be constant or even potentially to increase demand based on variety in supply. ST however, has shown that religious demand in general is decreasing, but is also changing on a micro level. What exactly is this religious demand? If we look at the definition of demand from Steuart we should be able to identify religious needs that the religious consumer wants to consume. Karl Inge Tangen did some research on why individual people would like to identify themselves with a church and what they would look for. Those reasons or values can be summed up as follows:

1. A meaningful and action oriented vision;
2. Practical Bible teachings;
3. Being part of a growing and dynamic organisation;
4. Contemporary aesthetic and professionalism;
5. Charismatic and trustworthy leaders;
6. Authentic encounters with the Holy Spirit and the experience of the presence of God;
7. Most importantly as it showed in his surveys, a sense of community and friendship.

His findings provide some insights in changing demand in our post-modern or late-modern society (Tangen Inge, 2012). As demand has become more rationalized and individualized what does that mean for the theory framework? If people are changing their religious behaviour from obligation to consumption, what does that mean for churches applying the theory framework, if they are not used to operate as market aware organizations? How can churches operate in this non-profit industry without financial support of the government, where demand has dramatically decreased, financially contributing members have left and the remaining demand has changed significantly? It will be crucial for the revised theory not to assume demand to be constant, but to consider the decrease and changing of demand as ST has demonstrated. By considering this changing demand, religious needs, behaviour and decision making processes, contemporary churches should try to supply the fulfilment of those needs. However, this requires more than transformation of the church as mentioned by Heitink (Heitink, 2007). It requires significant change, renewal and innovation processes supported by the revised theory. Applying the revised theory could ultimately lead to an optimized match between supply and demand, potentially balancing in a constant flux. The revised theory therefore would need to include an iterative process that is constantly being monitored and a value chain system that is willing to adapt their service offering and delivery organization. It is time to develop the revised theory as I will do in the next paragraph.

## 5.3 Development of the theoretical framework

In order to develop the revised theory I will use the current RMT framework as a starting point. RMT considers there is relationship between supply and demand and it considers demand can be influenced by offering differentiated and dynamic supply. However, the current RMT framework also assumes demand to be constant or even to increase depending on the supply. By applying ST insights that secularization happens at macro level, being globally or nationally, at meso level within churches and religious organizations but also at micro level, it would be possible to recognize and consider that demand is decreasing but is also changing at micro level (individual level) and does not stay constant as assumed by RMT. Therefore the RMT theory needs to be revised by integrating these insights from ST. As RMT assumes demand to be constant, we would need the revised theory to consider the overall decrease in demand. Just simply creating additional supply will not lead to the desired results despite some positive results. ST insights also taught that the religious consumer has moved from obligation to consumption meaning that the traditional ways of supply offerings need to change accordingly. The revised theory needs to incorporate the change of individualistic religious demand. Most church services offer a traditional come and get model. By considering the ST insights into RMT thinking, it would mean changing the supply side as well. This could imply a more go and bring strategy compared to the more traditional come and get strategies. ST assumes demand to decrease but the service delivery (supply) model did not change accordingly. As the supply side did not change, demand got disconnected and people withdrew. The revised RMT could initiate new thinking about service delivery models. The service delivery model (supply side) will need to consider that the demand side will no longer automatically come and get as the awareness of demand might no longer exist. What would it mean to offer services (supply) if people do not recognize their religious needs (demand)? What kind of services can be developed from the supply side that is appealing to the demand side provided they know what this demand is actually all about? Based on the revised theory it might be possible to initiate creative missiological thinking and support more outreach focused strategies in order to satisfy more individually based needs. The question will be if and how churches will be able to rethink their missionary strategies. Can they change and transform or should they consider church planting strategies for example to completely renew their service offering and existence? Can they continue to operate in a declining market without financial support of the government? Can they creatively develop the right supply to meet the remaining individual religious demand or even create it? And what models are there to support these processes?

What is needed to support the application of the revised theory is the process of identifying demand in a specific context and providing a matching supply. Quality in service delivery should be optimized and an iteration process needs to be in place in order to keep the balance between supply and demand. The current situation of religious developments in the Netherlands is not based on a match between supply and demand, let alone a condition of equilibrium that would be ideal. The constant change between supply and demand implies that a true equilibrated state is only hypothetically achievable. Our entire society is in a constant flux, a continuous change (Batchelor, 1887). According to Batchelor, there is a difference today compared to previous times, "The difference between our age and those which have preceded it is not in kind or degree. The difference relates to the rapidity and the universality of change. Needs are developing faster than the ability to supply or even to understand them". Today this is even more true than 100 years ago! Having a reference point like this, the challenge will be to balance religious supply and demand. Would it be possible for the supply side to

constantly keep up with the change of demand, or even to create demand? The issue of the constant flux is the iterative characteristic of change. Considering the changing demand, also a constant change of supply will be needed and this does not happen automatically. A one-time change will not be sufficient and where change is difficult by itself, a constant strive for change may be almost impossible. Yet, when we start thinking in terms of service lifecycles with beginnings, innovations and endings, and we recognize they will also apply to religious services, we can use frameworks for service delivery and innovation processes. If churches would be able to operate as a value chain, they would need to think about matching supply and demand. The extent to which they can be disciplined in applying the iterative cycle and the ability to be creative towards missiological and ecclesiastical contextualization for example via constantly planting new church communities, will determine the ability to meet up with changing religious supply according to changing demand. A true equilibrium state of religious supply and demand may not be possible but would it be possible to integrate the two in the most optimal way?

#### 5.4 Church as a value chain

What would it mean if churches start thinking in terms of being a value chain as described by Michael Porter (Porter, 1985)? Of course we would need to adapt the value chain system as described by Porter as the services characteristics mentioned before have impact on how the value chain actually looks like. Based on Elisante Gabriel's services value chain model, which in its turn is based on Porters value chain, I recommend an adoption of Gabriel's Value Chain for Services (VACSE) to be used in the application of the revised theory and framework in the context of the church as well (Gabriel, 2006).

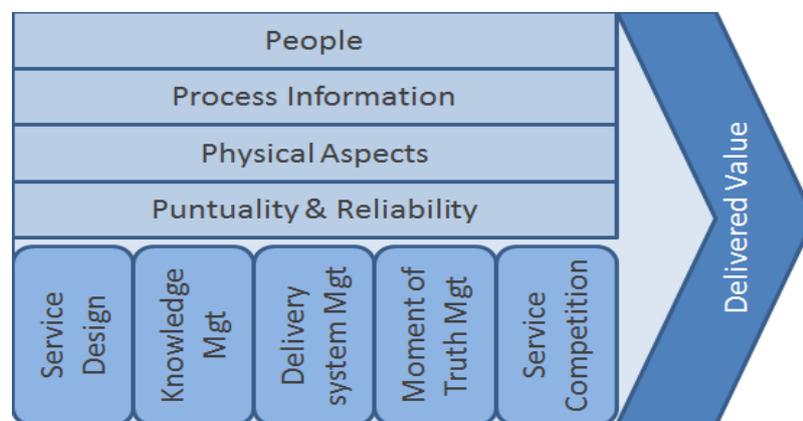


Figure 8: Elisante Gabriel, Value Chain for Services, 2006

One of the most important insights Gabriel provides, is the difference within services compared to regular products regarding the inseparability of production and consumption of the service. In this perspective all consumers are part of the value chain themselves and especially when applied in churches, everyone who is joining in the church service is a crucial part of the entire value chain system. For example praying together in ministry or sharing intimate issues in life in small groups or discipleship groups. The engagements of people, if not done careful and properly, might negatively affect people involved. It is important to recognize that all these parts come together in the value chain and that there are many factors to influence the overall quality in service delivery, hence value that is produced by the value chain system. By applying the supply and demand concept we need to recognize that when applied in a church context,

consumers with demand are actually becoming co-producers of the supply. By recognizing this aspect and emphasizing on it, people will be potentially more engaged and part of the co-production process. Ultimately this could lead to a higher commitment. The come and get model is than slowly changed into a more come and bring model. As big transformation changes need small steps to realize, this might be the first step towards a go and bring model. An example of this would be “Stichting Present”, [www.stichtingpresent.nl](http://www.stichtingpresent.nl). This is a foundation reaching out to people with specific needs via voluntary workers, most of them connected to some local church. Currently there are more than 2.500 projects within the database. It follows to state that value creation is done both by producers and consumers. If this co-creation does not exist, the chances of a mismatch in the delivery system are high.

By applying Gabriel's Value Chain Systems for churches services in a church context it would mean the following recommendations:

**Service Design**, a crucial process as poor design logically has a high chance of dissatisfaction. While thinking in terms of services lifecycles and the rapid changes of today mentioned before people concerned with the service design process need to be very sensitive and adaptive towards the input provided. The integration of a service quality monitoring tool such as SERVQUAL is therefore of high importance.

**Knowledge Management** has two sides, one is to know from a supply side point of view what the religious customers want and need, but also from the demand side point of view, knowing what kind of services he/she actually needs and how he/she wants it to be delivered. The integration of production (supply) and consumption (demand) in knowledge management becomes clear. Both sides need to work together in a kind of think-tank to bring in both perspectives.

**Delivery System Management** is about how the entire delivery system, in other words the supply side, is being offered to the religious consumer. The perceived value is determined by the overall quality in service delivery which has to be managed especially while this is delivered by mostly voluntary workers.

**Moment of Truth Management** is the actual encounter between service producers and service consumers. In most of the situations this will be the Sunday service but also other interactions need to be considered as Moments of Truth. It is important to recognize there is nothing neutral in the moment of truth. The experience is either positive or negative, builds or destroys trust and confidence but will also highly affect word of mouth, hence spreading a positive experience which is one of the most important drivers for evangelical activities.

**Service Competition Management** probably is the most difficult concept to apply in churches as this requires a market and service competitive consciousness. The idea here is to make people who are involved in the production process, aware of competitive alternatives. As Grace Davie mentioned, the religious participation is moving from obligation to consumption (Davie, 2007), it means that the religious consumer has many options to choose from. In order to retain those religious consumers, the producers of the service need to be innovative and adaptive to change.

The supporting attributes in Gabriel's model contain:

**People** are an extremely important value in the entire value chain. As people are represented both by producers and consumers, it is very important to recognize the part consumers are playing in the overall value creation process of the system. If producers neglect the contribution of the consumers, the consumers might feel disengaged and not involved. The effect might be a performance show by the producers of the service and dissatisfaction on both sides as the producers will feel less interaction and response.

**Physical Aspects** contain buildings and infrastructure but also atmosphere. If these are not corresponding to certain expectations they may lead to a gap into customer satisfaction which refers back to Wilson's et al GAPS model (Wilson, Zeithaml, & Bitner, 2008).

**Process Information** is all about communications. Knowing what kind of service to expect, how it will be delivered and why, but also the transparency in how the services design process takes place, is of importance to communicate. Again the participation of consumers into the overall value creation process heavily depends whether they feel involved or not. It is not sufficient they know what is happening and why, they would also need to experience a part of the decision making process. By achieving this chances are much higher they feel engaged, give higher commitment and remain a member of the church community with positive exposure to friends, family and neighbours.

**Punctuality & Reliability** finally are very important as the service that needs to be delivered, needs to be in time. Waiting for a service because someone is not there yet are due to a technical failure, needs to be immediately corrected, communicated and workarounds need to be offered. If people cannot expect the service will be punctual and reliable in terms of what has been promised, they will not likely take someone else with them next time. Making people proud of what both producers and consumers have experienced will positively influence word of mouth and stimulate spontaneous invitations of new visitors.

## 5.5 How to apply the revised theory?

In earlier years I created a service delivery framework derived from Lovelock and Wirtz (Lovelock & Sirtz, 2007) for churches that might help conducting the iterative process of renewal, innovation and improvement of quality in service delivery (Tunderman, 2010).

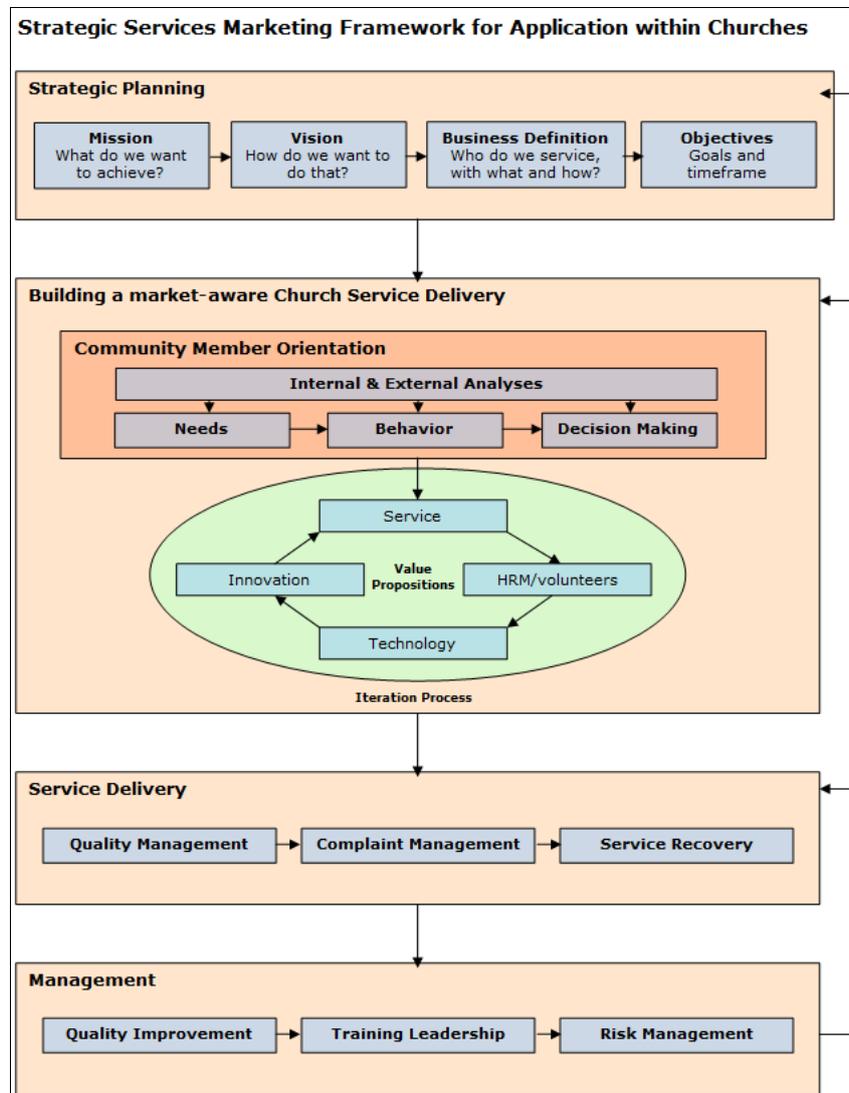


Figure 9: Tunderman (2010), "Strategic Services Marketing Framework for Churches"

The framework starts with a strategic planning process in order to (re)define mission, vision and objectives. Every three to four years it would be advisable to revisit the strategic planning and to evaluate the previous years and if necessary to change the course for the coming one to two years. The next phase in the process is the critical and central phase in the entire model. There has to be a designated process to identify needs, behavior and decision making, hence demand of people the church would like to serve. These can be both current and new members.

A good starting point supported by concrete working models and templates, which is basically the GAPS analysis as mentioned before (Wilson, Zeithaml, & Bitner, 2008), is the process to "develop an understanding" (Wrenn, Kotler, & Shawchuck, 2010). This process relates to:

1. How to understand;
2. What to understand.

The “How to understand” part is mostly conducted by marketing research. A good starting point for this is given by Wrenn, Kotler and Shawchuck in their book *Building Strong Congregations* chapter 4. In chapter 5 of their book the “what to understand” part is described. Knowing what to understand will provide much better insights in needs, behavior and decision-making. Wrenn, Kotler and Shawchuck provide a five-stage model to support this process:

1. Problem recognition;
2. Information search;
3. Evaluation of alternatives;
4. Choice decision;
5. Post-choice behavior.

Once the “development of understanding” process has been completed, the input can be used to develop the matching supply, the service design process in Gabriel’s Value Chain for Services model (Gabriel, 2006). Supply must be based on the combination of the actual services that will be delivered by paid staff and volunteers, using the right technology and tools matching the identified demand. Crucial for the creative part of the supply development process will be to secure a process to innovate, renew or redevelop the supplied service as an output result of the entire value chain. If innovation fails in the supply development process, continuation of the match between supply and demand might also fail. This would require a very adaptive value chain and the question is if churches are capable to operate as such a value chain? Do they recognize the characteristics of the value chain in their church operations? And what are the potential barriers preventing to become such an adaptive value chain?

As within the services industry the extent of being successful highly depends on the quality of service delivery, it would be crucial to implement a form of service quality monitoring. By applying the SERVQUAL concept, meaning monitoring the quality in service delivery on a frequent basis, insights will be gathered regarding failures in service recovery, complaints and mismatch between service expectations and satisfaction. The service quality monitoring should also provide input for quality improvement, training of leadership, employees and volunteers as well as risk mitigation. It is evident that success depends on the entire value chain system, in other words the church leadership, staff and volunteers, willing to adapt the service offering and delivery organization.

To summarize this chapter, the revised theory of integrated supply and demand does not consider demand to be constant as the current RMT does. The revised theory considers the overall decrease in demand as macro- and meso-level secularization caused by differentiation, rationalization and individualization. The revised theory considers the ST insights that demand is decreasing, yet on a micro-level has changed from obligation to consumption. The new revised theory will also urge the churches to become more market conscious and in order to meet the changing demand churches would need creativity in their supply development processes. If churches would be able to apply the revised theory, they might be able to stay in tune with the current existing demand or even to potentially see the demand increasing without “running aground”, avoiding to accept RMT without considering the serious extent of secularization in Europe, and on the other hand perceiving that application of RMT in Europe is not possible since it is “American”.

## 5.4 Case Studies

In 2010 I have tested the application of the service delivery framework with five pastors of Dutch churches. These were:

- Arenda Haasnoot, PKN Gerdermalsen
- Wim Stoorvogel, VBG Groningen
- Norman Viss, NGK Heemstede
- Gert-Jan Brienen, CGK Hoofddorp
- Willem Smouter, NGK Apeldoorn

Based on a social constructionism approach I created a qualitative research to investigate the understanding, recognition and applicability of the service delivery framework within their congregations. Drawing back on the different components in the framework I concentrated on nine different topics:

- Strategic planning and profile;
- Orientation;
- Service development;
- HRM
- Technology;
- Innovation;
- Quality management;
- Complaints and service recovery;
- Management and leadership.

**Strategic planning and profile**, a consistent pattern developed on recognition of the need for strategic planning including topics such as vision, mission, objectives and timeframes. All interviewed church leaders recognized the need for this strategic planning and where already applying these processes.

**Orientation**, although one interviewed church leader was trained in demographic analyses, none of the church leaders implemented an iterative process of need orientation, hence investigate religious demand.

**Service development**, the actual service development process does happen but not in a formalized way. In bigger churches the need for clear documentation and process instruction to voluntary workers is recognized, yet not fully executed.

**HRM**, all interviewed churches experience difficulties in gaining and maintaining voluntary workers. Especially attracting people with very specific skills on technology (sound equipment and internet development) is experienced as very difficult.

**Technology**, all churches have implemented some form of technology, e.g. video, audio, internet.

**Innovation**, this is not recognized as a formalized process. Based on input from church members, sometimes changes are made or new activities are developed but most often these are not integrated or aligned with the overall strategy.

**Quality management**, although there are tools known to measure quality, none of the churches have implemented a specific tool that repeatedly is used.

**Complaints and service recovery,** every interviewed church takes complaints very serious. Sometimes they are very complicated but sometimes people just have a different option on vision or execution. None of the churches keep track of the complaints so analysing the amount of complaints or nature is not practised.

**Management and leadership,** development of leadership is very well recognized. All churches spend a lot of time and money in training and coaching of their leaders and staff. All churches for example know about and participate in the Willow Creek Global Leadership Summit, a yearly program for development of church leaders.

The interesting finding on these interviews has been that the interviewed church leaders did understand most parts of the framework. Some cases already applied some of the components or found them to be applicable. Some parts were considered as usable but probably difficult to implement. A second conclusion was that the implementation of such a framework might be difficult without external help and expertise. Thirdly, although a great number of tools exist and were recognized to be applicable, they are yet limitedly applied. More details about this research can be found at:  
<http://www.ecotel.nl/church%20marketing.pdf>.

Going back to the supply and demand discussion, none of the interviewed churches really made an effort to investigate the need, behaviour and decision making of people in the community they would like to serve. It follows to state that it will be utterly difficult for every church to meet their supply against demand of which they have no knowledge of.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 6.1 Conclusions

Sociology of religion as a sub-discipline of social science is gaining more and more interest from academic scholars as many questions have been raised regarding human behaviour and the influence of religion on this behaviour and decision making processes. If we look at the numbers of church service attendance and membership that is in dramatic decline during the last 40-50 years, we could come to a conclusion that religion is no longer relevant in people's lives. Yet, other data prove that many people still claim to be religious, although they might mean something different than orthodox Christians do.

Religious developments have been explained by many sociologists via theories such as the Secularization Thesis and the Religious Market Theory. Application of both theories to the Netherlands however, does not completely explain all developments. Secularization on macro- and meso level does exist to some extent, but on a micro level people still have religious needs. ST, in its most rigorous version, assumes that these religious needs ultimately will disappear. However, in the Netherlands we also see growth and some developments that contradict to the ST. RMT, however, also fails in the application to the Netherlands. RMT assumes that differentiation in supply will create demand. However, we have not seen growth to the extent of what might be expected by following RMT reasoning. Both theories have influenced sociologists and theologians and directed church strategies. ST assumes consolidation and cost reduction strategies and potentially mergers of churches while RMT strategies might lead to unsuccessful copying church models from somewhere else, without proper consideration of context and localization.

In this thesis I have tried to develop a revised religious market theory by amending standard RMT with insights derived from the ST. This revised theory of religious supply and demand considers an overall decrease but constantly changing demand at micro level. Herewith the revised theory answers the central question of this master thesis if strengths of both ST and RMT can be used to develop the revised theory and how the revised theory would look like. The revised theory might initiate creative missiological thinking based on a go and bring model rather than a come and get model. The revised theory can be applied supported by the tools discussed to identify religious needs, behaviour and decision making in today's life (changing demand) and how to provide the matching service (supply).

The last part of the central question is about the effects regarding new missiological thinking. By providing an iterative process combined with constant monitoring of quality in service delivery in combination with ecclesiastical and missiological renewal and innovation, the effects could be that people in a post-modern society could identify themselves with religious organizations, albeit in a different way, and decide to join them while changing their lifestyles and perspectives. If this happens we could see the effects of a growing Kingdom of God. That would mean a new missiological situation based on a realistic view of religious decline without giving up hope.

## 6.2 Recommendations

Of course this thesis and the revised theory are limited in their setup and scope. It is limited for example in terms of not containing field research that will falsify or confirm the revised theory. It might not be possible at all to apply the theory, it might be too complex or it might take too long before results are actually visible. Or the results of success, growth or any other positive signal that becomes visible, may not conclusively relate directly towards the revised theory. In order to falsify or confirm the revised theory, I would like to conduct a field research project, engaging with churches and working with them in a four year period, applying the model, monitor their developments and identify clear improvements that relate to the application of the revised theory and supporting models.

I would like to recommend validating and evaluating the four models supporting the revised theory in church context within this four year period.

Firstly: The Services Delivery Framework for churches (Tunderman 2010);

Secondly: The Value Chain for churches (based on Gabriel 2006);

Thirdly: The GAPS model (Wilson et al 2008);

Fourthly: The SERVQUAL monitoring tool for churches (Santos & Matthews 2001).

By using a control group it should become clear that either these tools do not support the revised theory and that the combination of the two have no positive impact, which could prove the theory framework to be false or insufficient, or it would become clear that the theory in fact improves religious supply, and activates membership and worship attendance, in which case the theory could be concluded to be confirmed.

It is my hope and prayer that this research project can be conducted and that the results can be used in order to establish new insights to positively contribute to both qualitative and quantitative growth of His Kingdom.

“I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?”<sup>8</sup>

Bruno Tunderman  
Houten/Amsterdam, November 2013

---

<sup>8</sup> Luke 18:8, King James version

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Batchelor, G. (1887). *Social Equilibrium and other Problems Ethical and Religious*. Boston: G.H. Ellis.
- Berger, P. (1967). *The sacred Canopy; elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. New York: Doubleday.
- Berger, P. (1999). *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*. Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Bernts, A., & De Graaf, N. (2003). Church attendance during Christmas in the Netherlands: Does supply of services have an effect? *The Netherlands' Journal of Social Sciences*, 39(3), 227-238.
- Breault, K. (1989). New evidence on religious pluralism, urbanism and religious participation. *American sociological review*, 54, 1018-1053.
- Brown, C. (2000). *The death of Christian Britain*. London: Routledge.
- Chaves, M., & Cann, D. (1992). Regulation, pluralism and religious market structure. *Rationality and society*, 4, 272-290.
- Chaves, M., & Gorski, P. (2001). Religious pluralism and religious participation. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 27, 261-279.
- Davie, G. (2007). *The sociology of religion*. London: Sage Publications.
- Dekker, G. (2007). Het christelijk godsdienstig leven, in: Ton Bernts, Gerard Dekker en Joep de Hart. *God in Nederland 1996-2006*, 12-73.
- Dekker, W. (2011). *Marginaal en missionair; kleine theologie voor een krimpende kerk*. Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum.
- Dekker, W. (2012). *Afwezigheid van God*. Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum.
- Dobbelaere, K. (1981). Secularization: a multi-dimensional concept. *Current Sociology*, 29(2), 1-213.
- Duke, J., Johnson, B., & Duke, J. (1993). Rate of religious conversion; a macrosociological study. *Research in the sociology of religion*, 5, 89-121.
- Finke, R. (1997). *The consequence of religious competition*, in L.A. Young (ed). London: Routledge.
- Finke, R., & Stark, R. (1988). Religious economies and sacred canopies: Religious mobilization in American Cities, 1906. *American sociological review*, 53, 41-49.
- Gabriel, E. (2006). Value Chain for Services, a new dimension of "Porter's Value Chain". *IMS International Journal*, 1-26.
- Hamberg, E., & Pettersson, T. (1994). The religious market: denominational competition and religious participation in contemporary Sweden. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 33, 205-216.

- Heelas, P. (1996). *The New Age movement: The celebration of the self and the sacralization of modernity*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Heitink, G. (2007). *Een kerk met karakter; tijd voor heroriëntatie*. Kampen: Uitgeverij Kok.
- Houtman, D., & Mascini, P. (2002). Why do churches become empty, while new age grows? Secularization and religious change in The Netherlands. *Journal for the scientific study of religion*, 41(3), 455-473.
- Iannaccone, L. (1991). The consequences of religious market structure. *Rationality and Society*, 3, 156-177.
- Iannaccone, L. (1996). Rational Choice: framework for the scientific study of sociology. *Rational Choice Theory and Religion*, 25-44.
- Lambert, Y. (2004). A turning point in religious evolution in Europe. *Journal of contemporary religion*, 19(1), 29-45.
- Lechner, F. (1991). The case against secularization: A rebuttal. *Social Forces*, 56, 1103-1119.
- Lechner, F. (1996). Secularization in the Netherlands? *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 35(3), 252-264.
- Lovelock, J., & Sirtz, J. (2007). *Services Marketing, people, technology, strategy*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Luckmann. (1967). *The Invisible Religion: The Problem of Religion in Modern Society*. New York: Macmillan.
- Luckmann, T. (1967). *The invisible religion: the problem of religion in modern society*. New York: Macmillan.
- Martins, A. D. (2013). *Pinksterkerken in trek bij Haagse migranten*. Den Haag: Kerk in Den Haag.
- Murray, S. (2001). *Church Planting, Laying Foundations*. Scottdale, Pa: Herald Press.
- Noort, G., Paas, S., De Roest, H., & Stoppels, S. (2008). *Als een kerk opnieuw begint*. Zoetermeer: Uitgeverij Boekencentrum.
- Norris, P., & Inglehart, R. (2011). *Sacred and Secular*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Opfinger, M. (2011). *Religious Market Theory vs. Secularization: The role of Religious Diversity Revisited*. Hannover: Leibniz University Hannover.
- Paas, S. (2012). The Crisis of Mission in Europe; Is there a way out? *Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam*, 1-36.
- Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V., & Berry, L. (1988). SERVQUAL: a multiple-item scale for measuring consumer perceptions of service quality. *Journal of Retailing*, 64(1), 12-37.
- Parsons, T. (1951). *The Social System*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.

- Porter, M. (1980). *Competitive Strategy: Techniques for Analyzing Industries and Competitors*. New York: Free Press.
- Porter, M. (1985). *Competitive Advantage; creating and sustaining superior performance*. New York: The Free Press.
- Robinson, M., & Christine, S. (1992). *Planting Tomorrow's Churches Today*. Toronto: Monarch Books.
- Santos, & Matthews. (2001). Quality in religious services. *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, 6(3), 278-288.
- Santos, J., & Mathews, B. (2001). Quality in religious services. *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, 6(3), 278-288.
- Schwarz, C. (2010). *Color your world with Natural Church Development*. Harderwijk: Highway Media .
- Sengers, E. (2006). *Aantrekkelijke kerk*. Delft: Eburon.
- Stark, R. (1997). *The Rise of Christianity*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc.
- Stark, R., & Bainbridge, W. (1985). *The future of Religion*. Berkeley CA: University of California Press.
- Stark, R., & Bainbridge, W. (1987). *A theory of Religion*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Stark, R., & Finke, R. (2000). *Acts of Faith, Explaining the Human Side of Religion*. Berkeley CA: University of California Press.
- Stark, R., & Finke, R. (2004). Religions in context: The response of non-Mormon faiths in Utah. *Review of religious research*, 45(3), 293-298.
- Stark, R., & Iannoccone, L. (1994). A supply-side reinterpretation of the "secularization" of Europe. *Journal for the scientific study of religion*, 33(3), 230-252.
- Steuart, J. (1767). *An inquiry into the principles of political economy*. London: A. Millar, T. Cadell.
- Stibbe, M., & Williams, A. (2008). *Breakout*. Crownhill, United Kingdom: Authentic Media Limited.
- Tangen Inge, K. (2012). *Ecclesial Identification beyond Late Modern Individualism*. Leiden-Boston: Brill.
- Tschannen, O. (1991). The Secularization Paradigm: A Systematization. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 30(4), 395-415.
- Tunderman, B. (2010). *An investigation into the application of services marketing concepts at Christian churches in The Netherlands*. Houten: Ecotel Business Solutions.
- Valstar, P. (2012). *Bronnen voor beleid, werkboek voor beleidsontwikkeling*. Utrecht: Protestants Landelijk Dienstencentrum.

- Van Rooden, P., Laeyendecker, L., Baumann, G., & Tennekes, H. (1996). *Betoverde Wereld? Verslag van een debat over de rol van godsdienst in moderne samenlevingen*. *Words and Things*, 9(1), 82-110.
- Vellekoop, M. (2008). *Nieuwe kerken in een nieuwe context*. Amsterdam: MA thesis Vrije Universiteit.
- Volgers, M. (2010). *Grote gemeenten in een klein land*. 's-Hertogenbosch: afstudeerscriptie GPW, theologie.
- Vos, A. (2012). *Hoop, de effectiviteit van kerkplanting als missionarie strategie*. Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit.
- Wagner, P. (1990). *Church Planting for a greater harvest*. Ventura, Ca.: Regal Books.
- Warner, R. S. (1993). Work in progress toward a new paradigm for the sociological study of religion in the United States. *American Journal of Sociology*, 98(5), 1044-1093.
- Warren, R. (1995). *Being Human, Being Church: Spirituality and Mission in the Local Church*. London: Marshall Pickering.
- Warren, R. (2004). *The Healthy Churches*. London: Church House Publishing.
- Wilson, A., Zeithaml, V., & Bitner, M. J. (2008). *Services Marketing, Integrating Customer Focus Across The Firm*. New-York: McGraw-Hill.
- Wrenn, B., Kotler, P., & Shawchuck, N. (2010). *Building strong congregation*. Hagerstown, MD: Autumn House Publishing.
- Zeithaml, V., Parasuraman, A., & Berry, L. (1985). Problems and Strategies in Services Marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, 49(2), 33-46.
- Zwart de, J. (2011). *Zwevende gelovigen*. Amsterdam: Bert Bakker.