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Irruption: Placing Theology at the Centre of the Discourse on Church Amalgamation

John MacKenzie, *The University of Western Ontario*

Supervisor: Dr. Darren Marks, *The University of Western Ontario*
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Abstract

When church attendance declines, congregational amalgamation is often looked to as a solution. To that end, institutional church bodies responsible for ecclesiastical governance offer guidance literature as a means of shepherding congregations through this complex process. As it currently exists, however, such guidance literature on how to proceed with amalgamation focuses on practical matters, and neglects a theological dimension. The aim of this paper is to highlight this paucity of theological foundation in matters of church amalgamation, and posits that this engenders sub-optimal conditions for successful congregational amalgamation outcomes. It looks primarily to Friedrich Schleiermacher for theological insights that may be useful in times of turbulent transition. As one mechanism of cultural development in contemporary times, faith based institutions should engage with theological ideas and discourse deliberatively and explicitly as a foundation for exploration of such issues as identity and community formation.

Keywords

Church Amalgamation, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Yi-Fu Tuan, Emmanuel Levinas, Identity, Space and Place, *Heimweh*, *Fernweh*, Theology, Geography.

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Preface

"Geography is simply a visible form of theology."

-Jon D. Levenson

/ / /

"Apart from history, our faith is unintelligible."

-Leonard Hjalmarson

Chapter 1

1 Introduction

1.1 Congregational Effects of Declining Church Attendance

Canadian statistics show that religious attendance has declined over time. According to Statistics Canada, "[o]ver the last 50 years in Canada, the percentage of the adult population attending religious services has declined dramatically. In 1946, a Gallup poll reported that 67% of adults attended religious services during a typical week; in 1998, only 22% did."[1]

Fluctuations in religious attendance are not a new phenomenon. It has historical roots, and clearly continues in contemporary times as the statistics show. As a consequence, declines affect many facets of religious life and practice. In particular, attendance, like much other human activity, varies with time, space, and also basic human idiosyncrasy.

In 1913, for instance, a subset of Canadian protestant denominations – Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregational – were well on their way to achieving 'union', a joining of these denominations into a single entity which would become the United Church of Canada. To support that goal, a decision was made to conduct a survey of all churches in Canada eligible for inclusion in union. The aim of the survey was to gather information that would support forming a stronger, more robust and responsive denomination than any of the constituent denominations could be on their own.

Upon review, it became clear that the survey revealed declines in church attendance. Furthermore, the observed declines were linked to other cultural and sociological factors, primarily wealth and nationality. Surveys from Toronto, for example, noted decreases in attendance, and perceived both relative poverty (as indicated by the results of recent

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[1] Warren Clark, "Patterns of Religious Attendance" (Statistics Canada – Catalogue No 11-008, Winter 2000), 23.

immigration outcomes), and relative wealth, as causes.[2] These congregations perceived that wealthier (and therefore more well-travelled) sometimes had "…less respect for the habit of church attendance."[3] Further, it was felt that the influence of immigration might be having a general secularizing effect on the culture.[4]

Other survey results indicated that family wealth and church attendance were inversely related. Churches in Winnipeg, for example, reported "a growing tendency among the well-to-do classes to attend only one service."[5] From the vantage point of contemporary times, these results suggest that, regardless of the specific reason, a subversive ambivalence was on the rise among churchgoers, and attendance at church simply did not possess the same spiritual or social import that it had in the past.

Other factors, too, such as the rise of the automobile and the popularity of unions and trade associations (at the expense of church membership), were also blamed for declining congregational size.[6] Is it any surprise that, in an era of increasing mobility and greater lifestyle choice, less personal emphasis is placed on factors such as distance and sense of place, and the desire to experience 'elsewhere' might be an enticing one? Based on these factors, there is a high likelihood of great instability in church attendance, varying as it does over time, space, and with changing patterns of cultural interest. In Canada, it has been an important enough metric to monitor since at least the early 20th century, and it seems that the problem of church attendance has persisted from then into contemporary times as the Gallup poll referenced earlier shows.

Just as in the past, contemporary congregations are experiencing dramatic shifts in attendance patterns. These shifts are more than minor unpredictability in attendance from

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[2] N. Keith Clifford, *The Resistance to Church Union in Canada 1904-1939* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1985), 62.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

week to week; large-scale persistent decline in congregational size is involved. There is a connection between church attendance, financial health, and congregational viability. These factors seem to vary in a direct way: as church attendance increases, so does the financial health and viability of the congregation. Troublingly for these congregations, the contemporary context often means that a decline in attendance results in a broad-based deterioration in congregational viability, and it is therefore "…critically important for struggling churches to find ways to increase both donation revenue and worship attendance."[7]

Decreased congregational viability can be expressed in multiple ways, many of them no doubt unique to the particular congregation. However, some common effects can be identified. These effects often represent sources of stress on congregation members and the members of the wider community with whom the congregation is supposed to engage.

The first and arguably the most significant effect of declining church attendance is financial. Attendance declines are felt most acutely at the collection plate. Most churches, like other organizations, have financial obligations that exist independently of the overall collection amount. They have payroll to meet, taxes and bills to pay, large and often inefficient buildings to maintain, and other commitments to honour. In the scenario of decreased church attendance, either the remaining congregants continue giving their traditional amounts, leading to diminished overall collection, or the net givings are sustained through a greater financial burden borne by the remaining congregants. Most churches can sustain sporadic fluctuations in the level of givings from week to week. Few, however, can sustain a systemic failure and resultant long-term decline in the overall collection. This reality leaves churches in a vicious 'catch-22' as they are forced either to find ways to live within new means, or attract more congregants. Given the overall decrease in religious attendance shown in the statistics presented above, accumulating new congregants poses a serious and existential challenge. That leaves many churches to find ways of limiting expenses, and limiting expenses inevitably leads

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[7] Alan Chan, Bruce G. Fawcett, and Shu-Kam Lee "Increasing Revenue and Attendance in Canadian Baptist Churches." *International Journal of Social Economics*, 42, no. 12, 1071.

to degradation in the material viability of the congregation, as necessary outlays of money are put off, only to return, often with a vengeance, in the future.

While the black-and-white financial realities of decreased church attendance are important, there are others that warrant mention. It seems empirically logical that financial stress would be accompanied by emotional stress as remaining congregants struggle to maintain their congregation. These repercussions should not be ignored as potential factors in a positive feedback loop that likely hastens the overall decline in congregational viability. Fewer congregation members means fewer people to support financial obligations, but also fewer people to support projects of the church such as maintenance and upkeep, community services, the choir, and spiritual education instruction. In short, the remaining congregants become 'burnt out' trying to accomplish all the tasks that were previously borne by a greater number of people. This means a relentless degradation in the services, mission, and outreach of the congregation. Curtailing activities such as soup kitchens, charity drives, evangelization, and social activism is one likely outcome as the remaining congregants have less time, energy, and finances to devote. In at least these two interconnected ways, declining church attendance presents a serious challenge to the continuing viability of many congregations.

The religious attendance statistics presented above constitute an average and should not be construed to represent the experience of all congregations. Some congregations, in fact, continue to grow and thrive. Notable among these tend to be so-called mega-churches. Many of these churches seem to be on an expansion trajectory, continuing to attract new congregants. Some newcomers may be new to faith altogether, and some may be drawn from other faith communities, attracted perhaps by new exegetical ideas, or by the spectacle of large-screen displays, light shows, praise bands, and bombastic preaching styles that mega-churches typically offer. The mega-church experience, however, is not representative of the many churches that struggle daily with declining attendance. For these congregations, lower attendance means reduced givings, effectively impacting the financial and emotional bottom line.

Bottom-line financial and emotional realities for many congregations are concretely manifested in the beginnings of discussions about ‘amalgamation’ as a possible solution. Often looked to as a silver bullet or panacea, amalgamation is a term widely used to describe the joining of two or more congregations into a new, singular operative entity. Broadly, this process aims to affect the new congregation’s balance sheet in a positive way through pooling of resources and reduction of overall costs. In the same way that households can economize by combining incomes and limiting expenses through sharing space, implements, and goods, so too can congregations economize by recognizing that while, separately, congregational viability may be unlikely, some communal arrangement may represent a way to remain viable into the future.

While undertaken in good faith, the result of any act of negotiation and compromise can be success or failure. So too, church amalgamation may succeed or fail. When it fails, and resources dwindle, often the only alternative is for churches to close completely, rendering mute the congregational history, and stranding the remaining members in ecclesiastical wilderness.

Successful integration is therefore the much more desirable outcome. When it is successful, amalgamation produces several positive effects. First, finances are controlled. Costs are contained through elimination of duplicate services. Liquid financial resources may be increased through the sale of assets. The ability to construct a worship space to contemporary standards or to retrofit an existing building to be more efficient and thus less costly to operate suddenly becomes a possibility.

Secondly, congregant enthusiasm is often high due to a renewed sense of mission or purpose, infusing the new congregation with energy and drive. Where amalgamation has been achieved through democratic, grassroots means, congregants are typically invested in the outcome and are therefore ready to work to make the new congregation succeed. Fresh financial and human capital resources mean enhanced mission and outreach providing new meaning for the church and its surrounding community.

Third, it means that congregational history is preserved, ensconced and intertwined with the history of other congregations, and with the new life and space of the combined

congregation. Congregants enter their new faith community from a position of comfort, rather than trepidation.

So, while congregations may compromise some control over their own agency, they gain in other ways. In Toronto, Ontario, a recent amalgamation of four Anglican churches into a single congregation testifies to these benefits, which became apparent to those involved. On the topic of amalgamation, Bishop Philip Poole, the area bishop of York-Credit Valley, was quoted in the on the Anglican Diocese of Toronto – Anglican Church of Canada website as saying:

> What we've learned is that you don't program your way into critical mass, you critical mass your way into programming. If you've got enough people, enough hands on deck, you can do an awful lot of things. Bigger is not better but it's different and it gives you the capacity to accomplish more…[8]

Here, Poole expresses the benefits of amalgamation in terms of congregation size and mission. Certainly, he perceives that, through concentrating resources, more can be accomplished than any one congregation with its declining numbers could accomplish on its own. When amalgamation fails, congregations never realize these important gains and also often lose their agency anyway through church closure.

With all the benefits church amalgamation offers, why does it fail? There are likely many reasons but, in any case, congregations should have the advantage of working with as many tools as possible to avoid failure and increase the likelihood of positive outcomes.

And yet, the opposite is commonplace. What Poole and many miss is that successful congregational amalgamation is not simply about resources – financial and human. It is also a theological issue and therefore requires a theological approach. Current approaches to congregational amalgamation tend to emphasize important practical aspects of church

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[8] Stuart Mann, "Four churches in Toronto's west end to amalgamate," *Diocese of Toronto – Anglican Church of Canada*, June 19, 2015, http://www.toronto.anglican.ca/2015/06/19/four-churches-in-torontos-west-end-to-amalgamate/; accessed June 23, 2016.

life, such as finances, real estate values, and staffing, while ignoring important theological grounding.

The lack of engagement with theology means that an important and valuable source of support in amalgamation for congregations has been left untapped, leaving congregations theologically adrift as they undertake the work.

Theology is a broad field of study so it can be difficult to know how to begin applying theological thought to practical problems. Given that amalgamation is tied up with issues of space and place, this thesis looks at the relationship between theology and geography as a potential starting point. Space and place matter in religious settings, and strong attachment to space is common among the religiously devoted. Sacred spaces are, after all, places that ground life trajectory and family history. They are places of baptisms, confirmations, weddings, funerals, community meals, and similar events.

Understanding the similarities and differences between spaces and places, as well as how human beings relate to them is crucial to discussions on issues of change. While on one hand, they are obvious categories of geographical inquiry, ideas of space and place can also be accessed through theological inquiry, and there is no contradiction in appealing to geography and theology together. After all, as Levenson tells us: "[g]eography is simply a visible form of theology."[9] These categories – space and place - should therefore be central to discussions of congregational amalgamation, and for theologically oriented institutions like churches, they should be accessed through deliberate and explicit appeal to theologies that engage with space and place. It seems only right and consistent that theology would be afforded a primary voice in conversations on ecclesiastical change. After all, where else would theological thought and modes of inquiry be considered not only relevant, but also instructive in the contemporary world than in affairs of churchly estate?

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[9] Jon D. Levenson, Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible (Minneapolis: Winston, 1985), 116, quoted in Leonard Hjalmarson, *No Home Like Place – a Christian Theology of Place* (Portland: Urban Loft Publishers, 2015), 11.

The path forward for congregations contemplating amalgamation is not to avoid applying theological knowledge to the process of church amalgamation, but is instead to embrace it. By studying and applying the insight of theological and geographical writers, spatial and place-based complications may be addressed beforehand and then avoided and ruled out as obstacles from the beginning of the process.

1.2 Amalgamation Guidance Documents

To aid in the church amalgamation process, institutional church bodies have published in the public domain guidance documents intended to shepherd congregations through this complex process. The Canadian Anglican, Presbyterian, and United Churches, for example, have all published such guidance literature. Whereas it is the purview of ecclesiastical organizations to engage with theological thought, such input is expected, but curiously absent in guidance literature having to do with church amalgamation. Therefore, this paper will briefly look at examples of such guidance literature, and highlight that, in this way, institutional church bodies are engendering sub-optimal conditions for successful congregational amalgamations to emerge. It will also look at ways in which that content can be theologically boosted to increase the odds of successful amalgamation outcomes.

In 2009, the congregations of Knox Presbyterian Church and St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Stratford, Ontario came close to a successful amalgamation. In the majority of respects, the two congregations were aligned. Both were financially struggling; both had similar community outreach agendas; both were experiencing declining attendance, and both had historic and inefficient buildings. However, the project was ultimately unsuccessful. How can two churches from the same denomination be so alike and yet fail to achieve the solution that would have served both their interests over the long term?

When such anecdotal evidence strongly endorses amalgamation, but the process fails, when failure is snatched from the jaws of success, a post-mortem investigation is appropriate to identify possible explanations. One line of inquiry of such an investigation should always be to confront the recommended process for any potential deficiencies,

oversights, or other factors that may have been involved. In this case, one notable deficiency was the paucity of opportunity for theological inquiry, study, and reflection.

1.3 Related Theological Perspectives

Guidance literature meant to aid congregations engaged in church amalgamations must contain more robust treatment of theology. But what kind of theology is appropriate? Considering that amalgamation is tied up with issues of space, place, and unity, modern theologians who have a high view of the personal experience of locating religion as an inward process represent a suitable pool of knowledge are excellent sources of relevant theology. These writers also deal with themes such as identity, difference, unity, and community. The writings of the authors highlighted below offer brilliant excursions into issues of identity, space and place, difference, unity, and community – a kind of geographical theology - that do not simply support congregational amalgamation, but suggest that deeper integration with others should be a goal to which congregations aspire.

Specifically, this project will examine works by Friedrich Schleiermacher, Yi-Fu Tuan, and Emmanuel Levinas. These authors are just three of the many writers whose work might be informative and appropriate; they have much to say on the nature of space and place, self and other, and personal religious experience. As such, congregations may find their work and insights useful for creating a framework appropriate for issues of congregational amalgamation.

1.3.1 Friedrich Schleiermacher

First we come to Friedrich Schleiermacher. His theology is particularly helpful as his period of activity coincided with massive changes in European culture and in church responses to those changes. Schleiermacher was a German idealist theologian who lived in the 19th century (1768-1834). Also a Pietistic preacher, he lived during a time of tremendous social and technological upheaval in Europe. This was a time of changing national boundaries, new technologies, exploration, and empire building. This was a time of wars across Europe, invasion, and resistance. It was the age of the steam engine,

powering locomotive trains and ocean-going ships, decreasing distance as a factor in knowing and experiencing like nothing before.

This was an age of colonial expansion. The British Empire, for example, would come to dominate much of North America, as well as Australia, New Zealand, India, and other significant landmasses. It is not, therefore, surprising that Schleiermacher's theology would incorporate aspects of space and place, and consider Europe's cultural milieu, including its dominant religion, to be one of the factors of the power that made all these developments possible.

To Schleiermacher, European Christianity occupied a privileged position as the ultimate revelation of God to creation. As such, there was no doubt in his mind that Christianity was a superior religion that could, and would, eventually come to include the people and cultures to be found all across the globe. To him, it would spread because of divine intent, and come to include all within its embrace – a truly universal and uniting religion. For this view, Schleiermacher has been criticized as possessing an arrogant, patronizing outlook, or at worst, an attitude of European Christian supremacy. While this may be an accurate assessment, it does not detract from the quality and applicability of his thinking on categories of space and place expressed theologically.

Schleiermacher's ideas were unorthodox for his time. In contrast to other writers, Schleiermacher's idea of religion, for example, was that it is built on a foundation of human feeling and intuition. Feeling and intuition are what create 'places', which, for him, are essentially spaces loaded with meaning. In other words, human beings create places out of spaces by the combination of feelings and experiences that occur there. For him, the physical church went from being a miraculous place to a space where miracles take place.

Much of Schleiermacher's theology can be grouped under the categories of *Heimweh* and *Fernweh*, or the familiar and the exotic, respectively. But more so than just the familiar and the exotic, both these terms express a longing; *Heimweh* is homesickness, the longing for home. *Fernweh* is the longing for something different, to explore the new and the possible. These are perhaps the most relevant categories of exploration for church

amalgamation because Schleiermacher uses them to deliberatively and explicitly engage with space and place as part of his theology. Not only are space and place baked into the Schleiermachian cake as a result of the cultural forces noted above, they find expression in his theology because space and place are necessary components of all earthly action. When we have a good understanding of what 'home' is, and what 'away' is, then we can more clearly evaluate the place in which we currently reside and also what the place is at which we're trying to arrive. For Schleiermacher, humanity is a dynamic creation; we are creatures of motion, forever restless. The exotic is new, exciting, and different while home is known, predictable, and what we've come to expect. It is our impulse, then, to move from the known to the exotic, and then back again.

While Schleiermacher's theology involves space and place, it also is a broadly unifying theology; it is a theology of overcoming difference. He grounds this motif on a framework that allows him to view religious development as a progression toward less imperfect expressions of faith. In his case, that means history will moderate religious difference on the way to Christian expression.

1.3.2 Yi-Fu Tuan and Emmanuel Levinas

Yi-Fu Tuan (1930-) is the second writer with whom this project will engage. Tuan was a geographer who located much of his work at the intersection of geography and theology. As Professor of Geography at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, he engaged with spatial and social issues involving space and place throughout his career, and has the rare ability to locate these topics in an historical context by citing historic ways of contemplating space and place, and also tying those ideas into religion as well as contemporary contexts. Like Schleiermacher, Tuan's work can also be understood under the *Heimweh*/*Fernweh* dialectic. While for Schleiermacher, *Heimweh* is known, predictable, and what we've come to expect, Tuan looks at this as a comfort zone, a place of security. Where Schleiermacher sees *Fernweh* as exotic, Tuan perceives it as a sense of freedom, the ability to travel and explore, to go or leave.

For Tuan, human lives consist of an infinite number of places through which we pass.[10] Each time we undertake an activity, even something as simple as shifting our gaze, we establish a new place because our interpretation and understanding, and therefore the meaning generated, ultimately changes. Echoes of Schleiermacher abound here as Tuan senses the human condition to be one of perpetual motion towards the exotic. What, Tuan asks, is moving through an infinite series of places if not a free journey toward that which has not yet been experienced?

Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995) was a 20th century Jewish French philosopher whose work explores the ideas of personal identity, the identity of others, and how the interaction between them works. Levinas was interested in the fundamental question of how it is we engage with the world, how we experience others, and why that is important. Fundamental engagement, the very foundations of communal existence, for Levinas, is found in relationships. The fact that there is a perceptible difference between oneself and another – 'otherness' – means that one is forced to relate, examine oneself, and begin a dialogue. This dialogue fundamentally alters the course of one's life, changing one's outlook, opinions, opening up new horizons of thought and frontiers of action.

Levinas' work on 'the other' is important in a context of congregational amalgamation because his ideas on otherness speak to dialogue between identities. It is engagement with others that promotes increased interaction, goodwill, community, sharing of resources, skills, desires, and ideas.

Similar to Schleiermacher, this is a helpful perspective to have in relation to church amalgamation. The desire to engage with others on a congregational level should, according to Levinas' model, produce a synergy that improves the conditions of each.

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[10] Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place – The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 161.

More importantly, Levinas considered the interaction between the self and other to be of basic and primal importance. The other implores something visceral to the self – 'let me live.' For Levinas, this is the most fundamental message communicated between individuals and forms the basis of human ethical behavior.

Although Levinas wrote about his ideas with reference to individuals and their relationships with individual others, there is no reason why the essential idea of engagement – enmeshing, or intermingling – cannot be scaled up to a congregational level, especially in view of the idea expressed in both Schleiermacher and Tuan that religion expresses itself at multiple scales from the cosmic through to the individual. For Levinas, too, there is a sense of scale as he shows that engaging with the other means engaging with the Infinite because it provides an opportunity for the self to contain more than it could before – the universal as expressed or represented in the particular.

The writings of Tuan and Levinas both use dialectic as a device to communicate to the reader a theoretical idea. Schleiermacher uses the same approach. For all three writers, the dialectic is the relationship between *Heimweh* and *Fernweh*. Through these categories, these three writers reinforce and support each other.

1.4 Relevance to Amalgamation

The idea of the relationship between the familiar and the exotic has clear resonance with church amalgamation, a process that is intended to integrate two or more congregations. For such congregations, Schleiermacher's theology as expressed through the *Fernweh* / *Heimweh* dialectic can be used as a way to conceive both of the spaces and places we inhabit, and those to which we yearn to go.

Despite the considerable benefits church amalgamation offers to struggling congregations, there are instances when it fails. Might this have something to do with how we perceive sacred space and place? Is 'other' sacred space eschewed in favour of familiar ways of experiencing sacred space? If so, why is it difficult for some congregants to conceive of ongoing participation in worship in a different, exotic, place? What is it about place that is so 'sticky' and makes some congregants reluctant to leave?

Just what is it about ‘other’ congregations that seems like something to avoid? After all, one church is just as much ‘home’ to its congregants as any other. And why are we reluctant to address such questions at the outset of an amalgamation process?

For his part, Tuan might ask why certain touchstones, certain bits of nostalgia, make it difficult to leave a place, and how can we remain in touch with our past as we look to the future? This, for Tuan, is all happening in the background of our day-to-day lives, yet it remains uninspected. It is therefore a realm worthy of exploration and reflection.

Contemporary approaches to congregational amalgamation require more robust theological support to nurture positive amalgamation outcomes. Schleiermacher’s theology is one such source of support. It has the power to foster preferable outcomes by reminding congregations of their connection to church history, reminding them of their scalar existence with regard to the church, and providing an opportunity to cultivate a sense of theological dynamism. These benefits will cultivate meaningful, theologically based discourse between congregations engaged in the amalgamation process.

The aims of this project are therefore threefold: to show that current recommended practices are lacking in deliberative and explicit theological engagement; to show that theological excursion can support efforts toward church amalgamation; and, to provide church authorities, clergy, parishioners, and other stakeholders a reason to summon the strength to proclaim out loud that in cases of persistent congregational decline, a theological foundation to support congregational amalgamation is a useful component of planning activities and discourse to reduce the risk of potential failure.

We turn now to an analysis of examples of contemporary amalgamation guidance documents to show the paucity of theological inclusion.

Chapter 2

2 Guidance Documents

2.1 Theology Lost

Theological issues of identity, space and place, difference, and unity are critical for congregational amalgamation and yet they remain uncultivated in the planning and execution of amalgamation procedures. The apparent lack of theological grounding in church amalgamation and the implications of such theological issues are evident in published guidance literature from church leadership bodies. This chapter examines it, establishing the limitations, theologically (and practically as a result), as a way to illustrate that while they focus on important practical benefits, they fall short in terms of a theological accounting, which may provide sustenance in the turbulence of change.

The theological realm can provide such sustenance to congregations while they undertake amalgamation, as part of the process. How can engaging with theology pull off this magic trick? What are its secrets? First, it locates the present circumstances within the context the larger church story. As we look back in time, we have the opportunity to see through the eyes of our religiously-minded ancestors the issues facing theological and religious life. This is important because it grounds the scenario as an event in the continuing unfolding – or becoming – of the church, rather than as an independent, discrete event within an isolated territory. Too often, it seems that the notion of community in the church is cast aside when control, influence, and agency are at stake.

Second, it reminds of a sense of scale. It recalls the notion that communal religious impulse and direction is found in the particular action of individuals, one with another. The collective direction of the church is a reflection of interaction at the personal level. There is thus a reciprocal relationship between the particular and the communal. For our interlocutors, especially Schleiermacher, this notion extends to the reflection of the infinite in the individual, and existing as an influential part of a larger organism contributes to a sense of commonwealth.

Third, it promotes a sense of dynamism, which is necessary to sustain the life and vitality of the church. When congregations are active in seeking, they at once avoid stagnation and death. For our interlocutors, life is tied up with the relentless activity that happens in the gap between here and there, self and other, sameness and difference, unity and community, particular and infinite.

With these examples of valuable sustenance in mind, it seems clear that guidance literature which does not provide a robust theological underpinning sacrifices ways of knowing and doing that would prove useful during turbulent congregational times.

Despite the benefits briefly outlined above, the guidance literature reviewed makes scant mention of theology, and certainly provides no encouragement or concrete means for congregants to study the ideas of their theological ancestors. These thinkers – both past and contemporary - have much to contribute to conversations about issues that derive from amalgamation, and therefore topics that are of immediate concern. In short, these documents deeply miss the ‘cloud of witnesses’ (Hebrews 12:1)[11] that may provide succor to a congregation needing theological sustenance within its own tradition and mission, as well as understanding its present mission as a parish or congregation. They are largely ‘how to’ guides of management concerns.

Second, where theology is mentioned, it is cursory, vague, and therefore avoids deep consideration driven by theological underbuilding and structure. This is, of course, partly due to the nature of the documents, but nonetheless it represents a missed opportunity. Guidance documents are utilized by lay congregants in real-world scenarios; as such, they must contain specific details about their aims, goals, and courses of action. Fuzzy suggestions to engage in ‘theological reflection’ will remain inadequate.

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[11] The Scripture quotations contained herein are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989, by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., and are used by permission. All rights reserved.

2.2 Some Basic Findings

Consider the guidance document provided by the Presbyterian Church in Canada. Titled *Guidelines for the Amalgamation or Dissolution of Congregations*, it contains many worthy factors to consider in approaching congregational amalgamation. Still, it is heavily focused on the 'nuts and bolts', the practical issues, of amalgamation.

An analysis of the subject matter of this 21-page resource reveals the document contains ten mentions of the word 'Christ', four mentions of the word 'God', and one verse of biblical scripture. There is no wording that could be read as even tangentially relating to the value of theological inquiry, much less to theologies of space and place.

There are statements suggesting that congregations engage in "…prayerful conversations separately, with the other congregation involved, and with the presbytery."[12] Such statements are vague, offering little in the way of direction for congregants. It does not require much imagination to anticipate potential questions in congregants' minds, whether spoken aloud or not: What does 'prayerful conversation' mean? For what purpose? What are we trying to achieve? How is this congregation going to deal with erosion of its unique identity?

A similar Anglican-Lutheran cooperative guidance document is titled *Guidelines for Collaborative Congregational Ministries for Lutherans and Anglicans in Canada*, and dated March 2006. This document also forms much of the basis of the United Church of Canada's (UCC) *Ecumenical Shared Ministries Handbook*, which is used in matters of amalgamation. In this document, the Joint Anglican Lutheran Commission in Vancouver, British Columbia establishes approaches for congregations "…seeking opportunities for organic collaboration…"[13]. What, precisely, constitutes 'organic collaboration' remains unclear. Like the Presbyterian document, we must confront this suggestion and ask basic

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[12] The Presbyterian Church in Canada, "Guidelines for the Amalgamation or Dissolution of Congregations" (Toronto, Ontario, Revised October 28, 2014), 4.

[13] Joint Anglican Lutheran Commission, "Guidelines for Collaborative Congregational Ministries for Lutherans and Anglicans in Canada" (Vancouver, British Columbia, March 2006), 1.

and legitimate questions such as ‘Why?’ ‘For what purpose?’ ‘What is it that we are trying to achieve?’

In a progressive step, the Anglican-Lutheran document recommends an initial ‘discernment’ stage, but it is not made clear what kinds of activities should constitute it, only that it should involve a “…visioning process for its future directions in ministry… [that] examines the areas of collaboration with other congregations which already exist and the potential for mission together with other partners.”[14] Again, what does ‘visioning’ involve? For what purpose are we undertaking this activity? Theological engagement might fit in well in this stage, and while theological engagement is not precluded in the document, nether is it explicitly endorsed.

In the same way, a secondary ‘invitation’ stage misses the opportunity to invite further study into the nature of self and other, or any other geographical theology category for that matter, despite encouraging congregations to enter into “intentional relationship”[15] in which they are expected to “…explore new directions in ministry together, including the possibility of entering into a collaborative ministry relationship.”[16]

To its credit, the document notes that the invitation process may include, among others things, “bible study and theological reflection”[17] and, as such, displays some openness to inclusion of theological inquiry in the midst of structural change, but it doesn’t go far enough. What are we to take ‘theological reflection’ to mean? It seems like this is a term not meant to clarify or provide further direction. It seems, at worst, a weak attempt to acknowledge the theological and, at best, an uninformed mechanism as to how to do this even given a Pentecostal (event, not movement) hope that the Spirit leads.

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[14] Joint Anglican Lutheran Commission, “Guidelines for Collaborative Congregational Ministries for Lutherans and Anglicans in Canada” (Vancouver, British Columbia, March 2006), 1.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

Theology has one further mention in this document and that is in regard to spiritual instruction. Education, it claims, should include “teaching with regard to history and theology of the partner tradition.”[18] Again, the mention of theology is a positive sign, but it is lacking in instructional depth. Besides these references, the balance of the document is weighted to practical matters of amalgamation. Once more, there is a theological paucity and missed opportunity.

The documents highlighted above, although valuable in the practical sense, largely take the view that amalgamation is a mechanical process. They miss that the church, like the body, is more than the sum of its parts. In short, these documents minister more to the bricks and mortar than the people that dwell within.

2.3 Success and Failure

While practical aspects of amalgamation are clearly important, for faith-based organizations these documents are light on religion and scripture in general, let alone theology. It is no wonder then that particular church congregations following these kinds of documents suffer from a lack theological engagement in their amalgamation process. If, as our later theological interlocutors suggest, geographical categories are explicitly theological and therefore mission oriented, then this must surely lead to congregational confusion and lack.

Although there is a clear deficit of theological engagement in the documents highlighted above, two important factors should be acknowledged. First, it must be acknowledged that guidance documents are not always intended to be exhaustive and therefore cannot deeply address in any significant way the litany of relevant theological sources; that being said, there is always room for improvement. Congregants should reasonably be able to expect some degree of direction in terms of appropriate theological education and discussion from the broader institutional level of their church.

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[18] Joint Anglican Lutheran Commission, “Guidelines for Collaborative Congregational Ministries for Lutherans and Anglicans in Canada” (Vancouver, British Columbia, March 2006), 4.

Second, founding amalgamation on theology will not guarantee positive outcomes, nor will it preclude failure. It is simply another tool to be deployed in the broader overall process. There are many examples of positive amalgamation outcomes stemming from theologically poor guidance literature. In 2009, for example, two churches of the United Church of Canada in the Canadian province of British Columbia (B.C.) attempted amalgamation. Royal Heights United Church and St. John's Strawberry Hill United Church, located in Delta B.C., had both been struggling financially and meeting their missional commitments was therefore proving to be a challenge. Instead of attempting to solve these problems in an insular kind of way, these congregations adopted a collaborative approach. Their efforts were ultimately successful, and the following provides a summary of the events and themes that served these congregations so well.

Originally involving three congregations, the beginning of the amalgamation process of these two churches originally began in December of 2005. One congregation withdrew from the process following personnel changes at the church level by the corporate structure of the UCC. It was on April 13, 2008, however, that the two congregations formally agreed to amalgamation, forming Crossroads United Church. What followed was a process of engagement between the two congregations, culminating in formal amalgamation on July 1, 2009. This represented a timeframe of approximately 14 months.[19] Based on the website of Crossroads United Church, the amalgamation experience was a successful one. The congregation now boasts active children and youth programming, diverse music and liturgy, and a strong emphasis on social outreach.[20]

While the experience of Crossroads United Church turned out to be a successful one, other attempts are not. In 2009, the congregations of Knox Presbyterian Church and St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Stratford, Ontario also attempted an amalgamation that ended unsuccessfully. These congregations, like most others, have long and storied

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[19] Steering Committee. "Crossroad United Church Amalgamation Report" (Delta, British Columbia, 2009), 5-6.

[20] *Crossroads United Church*. Accessed August 12, 2016, http://crossroads-united-church.ca. Accessed August 12, 2016.

histories. The failure also deftly illustrates how inattention to theological sources, heritage and specific histories therein can limit success and why an accounting of theologies of space and place such as given by our interlocutors is important.

From the amalgamation report of these two congregations, the story of the two churches can be retold for context. Originally established in 1838, the congregation of St. Andrew's began its gospel outreach to the community. At this time, Stratford was in its infancy so St. Andrew's had the opportunity to minister to its neighbours from the beginning of the community's existence.

In 1843, a major schism occurred in the Church of Scotland that pitted the 'Established Church' against those who were called to participation in the 'Free Church'. While the details of the schism are beyond the scope of the present work, this predominantly Scottish issue affected congregations overseas, forcing them to support one side or the other in the ongoing conversation. The majority of the St. Andrew's congregation felt called to form a 'Free Church' congregation and, being in the majority, considered itself entitled to the church building and property. This claim was, of course, contested by the Established Church. A Civil Court ruling on the matter eventually found in favour of the Established Church.

In response, the Free Church congregants founded their own congregation in 1848, formally establishing Knox Presbyterian Church. The Knox building has occupied its current site since 1873. Like St. Andrew's, Knox has been continuously involved in community outreach since its beginning. In 1868, the first permanent structure was established which still serves as part of the existing structure today. This structure has been home to the continuing community outreach efforts of the congregation.

According to the amalgamation plan of these two congregations, the amalgamation process took place between 2001 and 2008. Beginning with informal 'meet and greets', the elders of the two congregations began to ascertain the degree of interest in the prospect of amalgamation. This activity was carried forward to 2003 when the minister of the St. Andrew's congregation established a working group consisting of "…three or four

members from each congregation who met to discuss possibilities and items of mutual interest."[21]

In 2005, a joint meeting of the two congregations' sessions was held to discuss the prospect of amalgamation. A Planning Team and Prayer Team were established at this meeting to prepare for possible amalgamation.

In 2006, the congregations were consulted on the topic of amalgamation and approval to proceed with amalgamation planning was established through a successful ballot vote. The results of the ballot were 89% in favour of amalgamation for Knox, and 90% for St. Andrew's. This represented a large majority of both congregations and so discussions proceeded accordingly.

A 'Visioning Team' was established with representation from both congregations. The goal of the Visioning Team was to "…investigat[e] the Visioning process which should be used when both congregations were ready to determine what God had called them to be in their community."[22]

With help from a consultant, the amalgamation process moved forward and ultimately culminated in a vote on formal amalgamation on April 29, 2007. The recorded results were in favour of amalgamation by a margin of 71% (Knox) and 75% St. Andrew's. The result provided the mandate to establish a Transition Team, which would produce an amalgamation plan to guide the congregations through the balance of the amalgamation process.

The congregations began worshipping together in 2008, alternating between the two church sites. A mission statement and value statement for the new congregation was created, as was a name for the proposed new congregation: Grace Presbyterian Church. Further, it was decided by both Sessions that, beginning in 2009, worship would take

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[21] Transition Team, "An Amalgamation Plan for the Congregations of St. Andrew's and Knox Presbyterian Churches" (Stratford: 2009), 3.

[22] Ibid., 4.

place in only one building - the St. Andrew's building - as a temporary home. This vote passed 19 to 13 in favour.

Despite this promising beginning, the amalgamation project of these two churches ultimately failed. Although the congregational vote on the proposed amalgamation plan was approved by a margin of 56 to 22[23] at St. Andrew's, it was defeated by a margin of 81 to 28[24] at Knox. A congregational letter issued by the minister of Knox Presbyterian Church at the time formally informed the congregation of the results of the voting:

> [n]o doubt, most of us are fully aware of the results of our congregational meeting Presbytery Special Amalgamation Team. The plan was soundly defeated, and a secondary recommendation passed that emphasized the desire of the membership to return to Knox for worship and ministry. Although a few days later, the congregation of St. Andrew's voted in favour of the plan, the actions at the Knox meeting essentially brought the amalgamation process to a close.[25]

Buried in the text here is a tacit acknowledgement of the important role that sacred place seemed to occupy for the congregants of Knox. Out of anywhere in the community where they could have continued to worship, they chose the building – Knox Presbyterian Church. They chose the building despite the drawbacks. They chose the building plagued with debt, burdened with crumbling infrastructure, and characterized by a ravenous appetite for a steady diet of human physical and emotional energy. Following the decisive vote, worship services for the congregants of Knox resumed in Knox Presbyterian Church on July 5, 2009. Fortunately for these congregations, at the time of writing, both are still operating independently in their buildings; finances, however, continue to be a consuming concern. What would have happened had the congregations embarked on their amalgamation armed with a theology of space and place? Would they still have said no to overcoming difference and facing the future together? Had the congregations known the

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[23] The Presbytery of Huron-Perth, "Special Committee re. Stratford" (report, Stratford, 2009), 1.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Rev. Dr. Terry Hastings, letter to the Members and Adherents of Knox Church, 2009.

importance of their larger historical context, engagement with others, and what these things mean for collective religious impulse, this attempt may have resulted in an entirely different outcome.

So what connection do these examples have to categories of geographical theology? One amalgamation attempt was successful, and one was not. The resources evaluated show that explicit and deliberate theological inquiry, especially of space and place, was absent or critically underemphasized. As a result, amalgamation reports that rely on such documents for guidance also display a lack of theological engagement.

For example, the document titled *Crossroads United Church - Amalgamation Report*, dated April 2009, presents information regarding the practicalities of the amalgamation process experienced by these congregations. While there is a section in the document that provides room for 'visioning', the balance of the document refers to the comparatively practical aspects of church life, sprinkled with verses from biblical scripture in an attempt to biblically legitimate and contextualize the topic. Table of Contents entries, for example include such topics as 'Governance Structure', 'Policy Governance', and '6 Year Operating Budget'. While these topics are important, there is no evidence of deliberate or explicit engagement with theological ideas on the topic of amalgamation. Likewise, in the amalgamation plan and visioning documentation for the Knox-St. Andrew's amalgamation, there is no explicit mention of theological inquiry.

2.4 Locus of Responsibility

Perhaps we need to inquire as to where the responsibility for inclusion of theological thought resides. After all, there are sources available from popular booksellers that address the topic of church amalgamation. Do these sources include theology in addition to the practical concerns of amalgamation, and how certain can congregations be of the quality or completeness of the information presented? And, would not the institutional church level effectively be outsourcing some kind of responsibility by expecting congregations to navigate popular sources and seek out their own information, even if appropriate, theologically robust popular books were, in fact, available? Does not

providing some basic theological knowledge seem like something that is rightly the purview of the church, not the secular bookstore?

Perhaps in an effort to address this critique, the Presbyterian Church of Canada, in addition to their guidance document, issued a support document that outlines resources for congregations to access and use during times of change or transition.[26] Titled *Resources for Congregations in Transition*, this document is meant to be helpful and contains several sections based on the kind of change or transition encountered. Sections include Church Planting; Growth and Resizing; Renewal and Development, including subsections on Visioning and Discernment, Small and Large Church Development, Multicultural Church Development, The Emergent Church, Missional Church and other Models; Clustering and Amalgamating; and Closing a Church.

Under the section on Clustering and Amalgamating, which is of primary interest in the current project, a total of seven resources are listed. Two of those resources are produced by the institutional level of the church itself, one from the Presbyterian Church in Canada, and one from the Presbyterian Church of the U.S.A. (PCUSA). Out of the seven resources provided, therefore, a total of five are from sources outside the church.

But there is a problem, in this case, with referring to information outside of the church. As institutions, churches have particular areas of expertise to which they should play. There is a rich and comprehensive tradition of theological consideration of space and place that has already been undertaken and exists for leisurely perusal for all interested and invested parties, and institutional church bodies should shoulder the responsibility for incorporating them into theological education at every opportunity. In fact, given that the church seems to have no problem providing references to external amalgamation guidance literature, these organizations may find efficiencies by focusing on theological and scriptural excursions and bases for amalgamation, while leaving the practical concerns, which can be objectively evaluated and accomplished, to secular writers and other experts outside the church, perhaps by commissioning an authorized work. This

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[26] The Presbyterian Church in Canada, "Resources for Congregations in Transition" (Toronto, ND).

approach would both incorporate theological approaches from the start, and avoid confusion among congregants and questions as to the quality and appropriateness of external documents.

But if the existing guidance literature are the resources offered by the institutional church levels to guide congregations on amalgamation, then it is no wonder that congregations are struggling to look to the past, to the great link of their tradition, to see and understand that issues of space and place, their meaning then and their meaning now, have been considered before and can shed new light on contemporary realities. A fundamental misunderstanding of the importance of place to faith communities is undermining efforts to amalgamate, even in the face of financial strain and dwindling resources. This misunderstanding must be corrected in order for successful amalgamations to proceed.

Can the responsibility for the explicit and deliberate incorporation of theology truly rest with congregants looking for guidance on Amazon.com? Is this not something that should be included in a standardized approach to amalgamation across the board and apply to all churches of a particular denomination? Considering the advantages of a top down organizational structure, and contemporary forms of mass communication, dissemination of an additional dimension of amalgamation preparation would seem to be a simple matter. So far, however, the tools local congregations have at their disposal are guidelines that underemphasize or ignore the importance of theological engagement altogether.

Chapter 3

3 Friedrich Schleiermacher

We have seen that institutionally sourced church amalgamation guidance documents, in their current form, are theologically ill-equipped to deal with questions of church amalgamation. But does this mean that appropriate theologies have yet to be developed, or that they have been developed and are currently not being consulted?

As it turns out, there is abundant literature featuring explorations of categories of geographical theology and, as such, issues relevant to amalgamation are well represented in the literature. Those writings must be interrogated and explored to determine what lessons we might incorporate into our social, cultural, and religious reality today. While it would be impossible and impractical to cover the full range of relevant theological writing, we can turn to several important writers who offer useful perspectives for discussions of amalgamation.

One such writer is Friedrich Schleiermacher, and he is just one of many accomplished candidates. Prior to hearing about his relevant theology, however, it is important to understand his context as it highlights theological reflection borne, in part, out of social re-imaginings as well as other theological concerns.

3.1 Influential Culture

Just like in contemporary times, perspectives and opinions have always been shaped by cultural upheaval and change, and social re-imaginings. Life for Friedrich Schleiermacher was no different in this sense.

Schleiermacher lived between 1768 and 1834, significant portions of the 18th and 19th centuries, and these were unparalleled times to be alive in Europe. His sixty-six years meant a lifetime spent caught up in the current of unprecedented human events. Consider that, in addition to the French Wars, this was the time of the ongoing breakup of the old Holy Roman Empire, and the subsequent realignment of German territories. This was the

time of the onset of industrial capitalism and the mapping of the earth via exploration by sea, and European colonization of distant lands, and increases in nationalism as a result.

Territory, borders, political allegiances, and governance were all subject to change. Some European history warrants recounting here because it helps to contextualize the European milieu in general at the time, and also Schleiermacher's particular frame of mind. This is important because events and therefore social context provides subtle and not so subtle contour to opinions and perspective. As he was developing his ideas, there is little doubt that Schleiermacher was influenced by the large scale and local events of his day.

Technologically, this was the time of rail travel, steamboat, and some of the first forays into air travel via hot air balloon.[27] These developments enabled new ways of experiencing the earth and, in the case of air travel, literally new ways of seeing and observing the features of earth's surface. An incredible amount of knowledge was created, cross-referenced, indexed, taught, and absorbed during this period.

The impacts of these developments were felt both at home and abroad as people found themselves increasingly disconnected from place. In new lands, this was expressed violently with the eviction and confinement of indigenous peoples by European powers in conflicts over land, territory, and resources. Closer to home, the dawn of rapid transit hastened the diminishment of the importance of place. The train, especially, made distance all but irrelevant as large distances could be traversed at a much faster rate of speed. People could now treat places as disposable, travelling through them without regard on their way to somewhere else. This was the advent of new forms of tourism as people were, for the first time, able to experience space in a detached, superficial way, devoid of all the nuisance and inconvenience of the local, authentic life there. Experiencing newness was suddenly fast-paced, as "[t]ourism…[became] immediate, embodied and geographical; everyone with sufficient means to travel experience[d]

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[27] Steven R. Jungkeit, *Spaces of Modern Theology – Geography and Power in Schleiermacher's World* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), ix.

[it],"[28] and so the rich were personally exposed not only to a new smorgasbord of places, but a new method of consuming them: in the fast lane.

As place diminishes in importance, the tourist's gaze shifts from one of necessary engagement to one of sufficient aestheticism, as an outsider's view became enough to satisfy the craving for the new. But is superficial knowledge really sufficient? What of the quirks that truly define the character of a place? As a geographer, Yi-Fu Tuan, one of the writers with whom we will engage later, laments the decreasing engagement with local elements that this entails.[29] But for Schleiermacher, such things were of secondary importance to the embodied experience of place *within* the tourist. That is what was truly important, and embodiment would become something of a watchword for Schleiermacher as he moved forward with his theological development. Fast forward to 1970, a point closer to our own time, and futurist writer Alvin Toffler considered some of the same issues, famously writing that "[n]ever in history has distance meant less. Never have man's (sic) relationships with place been more numerous, fragile and temporary. Figuratively, we 'use up' places and dispose of them in much the same way we dispose of Kleenex or beer cans."[30]

It is difficult to understate the impact that new modes of mobility had on the cultural development of Europe. The ongoing development of new cartographic methods, enabled by the accessibility of air travel, for instance, perfected that most spatializing of tools: the map. People were evicted from place to space, as explorers were preoccupied with crafting works of art in blue, green and black, establishing borders and territories with ease. For the first time, a truly global perspective emerged, and that changed everything. This new perspective meant that, all of a sudden, it seemed possible to transcend national

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[28] Chris Gibson, "Geographies of Tourism: (un)ethical encounters," *Progress in Human Geography* 34, no. 4 (2010): 521.

[29] Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1974), 64.

[30] Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock* (Toronto: Bantam, 1970), 75, quoted in Leonard Hjalmarson, *No Home Like Place: A Christian Theology of Place* (Portland, Urban Loft, 2015), 125.

boundaries and unite everything under an abstract notion through a common rubric, comprising, among others economy, education, language, and religion.

Kaplan refers to this phenomenon in his book *The Revenge of Geography*. In it, he suggests a connection between social and cultural change and the importance of the map as a tool providing stability and control. The map is a counterbalancing force. “The only thing enduring,” he says, “is people’s position on the map. Thus, in times of upheaval maps rise in importance. With the political ground shifting rapidly under one’s feet, the map, though not determinative, is the beginning of discerning an historical logic about what might come next.”[31] Boundaries are therefore important to progress. As change increases, the desire for control increases in tandem, and we should expect to see political and cultural disintegration.

Schleiermacher represents, then, an amusing paradox. On the one hand, his theology locates religious experience on the inside, thereby democratizing place, and affirming individual experience as the thing that is important, making him a conspirator in the rise of space at the expense of place. On the other hand, his theology is one of unity that attempts to overcome difference in the pursuit of self- and God-consciousness. This contrasts sharply with the views of theologians who came before him. These thinkers asserted the power of place in its own right, that there was something transcendent about the earthly things out of which a place was constructed, that it could be more than the sum of its parts. For Schleiermacher, place is made by people and their experiences. Thus, the physical church, for instance, went from being a miraculous place to a space where miracles take place.

Europe’s identity has thus been influenced by technological and cultural events. In fact, the identity of Europe has always been, and continues to be more of an idea[32], a process of becoming. Berezin and Schain call Europe “… a geographical space where territory,

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[31] Robert D. Kaplan, *The Revenge of Geography* (New York: Random House Inc., 2012), xviii.

[32] Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1974), 41.

membership and identity are sites of contestation and renegotiation."[33] In this way it is defined more by culture than by physical geography, or by easily recognizable features of the landscape. As a continent, it is not neatly packaged as is, for example, the continents of Africa or South America, bounded as they are on multiple sides by the imposing tidal swells. Yet, through the course of history, those who would come to claim European ancestry developed common cultural elements even as they were engaged in armed conflict between them that affected borders, territory, language, and politics, among others.

Once upon a time, after the end of the Cold War, the path of European identity was thought by some to be set. While the London declaration of NATO officially ended the Cold War in July 1990, a corresponding article in the United States written by Francis Fukuyama declared that "[w]hat we may be witnessing is … the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy."[34] Fukuyama clearly saw a trend toward the eventual dominance of liberal democracy as a political mechanism. As we will see, the parallels between this and Schleiermacher's predictions about the spread of Christianity are striking.

Other writers disagreed with Fukuyama, recognizing that culture is fickle. Barry Hindress, for example, reminds us that "[a]nnouncements of 'the end of …' are often premature, and there is no reason to expect this one to be an exception."[35] In light of the upheavals that have pockmarked Europe over time, the only real constant, as they say, is change.

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[33] Mabel Berezin and Martin Schain. "Preface," in *Europe Without Borders – Remapping Territory, Citizenship, and Identity in a Transnational Age*, ed. Mabel Berezin and Martin Schain (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), vii.

[34] Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History* quoted in *The Idea of Europe - Problems of National and Transnational Identity*, ed. Brian Nelson, David Roberts, and Walter Veil (Providence: Berg Publishers Inc., 1992), 96..

[35] Barry Hindress, "Democracy and Big Government" in *The Idea of Europe - Problems of National and Transnational Identity*, ed. Brian Nelson, David Roberts, and Walter Veil (Providence: Berg Publishers Inc., 1992), 1.

Theology shows us that Hindress is correct by providing a way of discovering the many times throughout history when satisfaction was gleaned from the assumption that the ‘end of history’ had arrived; finally, finally, harmony delivered to all by a universal system. Alexander the Great, Hannibal, Julius Caesar, Constantine, Napoleon were all proven wrong. Culture is always in flux. What is clear, however, is that “Western secularized society … is the successor to Western Christendom. It is both the product of and the reaction to the religious wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.”[36] There can be no doubt that religion played a fundamental role in the development of Europe and modern liberal democracies, and that the dominant player in that arena was Christianity.

While it would be impossible to capture the full bore of religious weight on European cultural development, we can look to specific events to begin to characterize the religious influences underpinning the concept of the European continent and how it shaped cultural perspectives, eventually including those of Schleiermacher.

Schleiermacher’s cultural world was rapidly changing. His response was to look to theology. When events are in turmoil in contemporary times, churches should follow his example.

3.2 Influential Conflict

There is no dispute that Europe has been wracked with armed conflict for much of its history, and much of it has to do with religion, due to the entwining of religion and politics that ruled the day.

Perhaps the best place to begin a discussion on the influence of warfare on the European continent is with the Thirty Years’ War, which lasted from 1618 to 1648. Any attempt to succinctly summarize the events of this period will be rife with deficiencies owing to the complexities of international politics, as they existed at the time. Therefore, only a brief account, for context, follows.

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[36] *The Idea of Europe – Problems of National and Transnational Identity*, ed. Brian Nelson, David Roberts, and Walter Veil (Providence: Berg Publishers Inc., 1992), 5.

Although the Reformation had already begun, the Roman Catholic Church remained the dominant expression of Christian faith. There was discord brewing, however, due to growing popularity of Protestant modes of thought in the German territories. There, dynamic shifts in religious outlook were met with the political status quo. Popular opinion was not relevant to the ruling elite, comprised of hereditary monarchs obsessed with self-interest at the expense of the interest of their subjects. It has been surmised that if, however, government based on popular representation had existed at the time, it "…would have adopted Lutheranism, more or less modified, as the religion of the nation[s]."[37]

This basic clash of interests between rulers and ruled, Catholic and Protestant, would be the flashpoint of the Thirty Years' War. The war was characterized by religious traditions vying for power and, after fighting broke out, various battles lasted until 1648 when the Peace of Westphalia finally ended the balance of the conflict.

The Thirty Years' War, tied up as it was with religious overtones, affected the political and religious reality throughout Europe, and its reverberations were still being felt at the time of the next conflict to consider: the French Wars.

Unlike the Thirty Years' War, the French Wars affected Schleiermacher on a personal level, not just a cultural one. In 1769, an event that would come to have far-reaching effects on the European continent took place – the birth of Napoleon Bonaparte. As an adult, his penchant for expansionism coupled with the ongoing political instability of Europe at large would come to have a significant impact on Schleiermacher's theology.

Born of a minor noble family in Corsica, Napoleon Bonaparte would eventually become the "…single most powerful ruler in Europe."[38] While some observers tend to reduce the

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[37] Samuel Rawson Gardiner, *The Thirty Years' War: 1618-1648* (New York: Scribner, Armstrong & Co., 1875), 8.

[38] Mike Rapport, *The Napoleonic Wars – A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1.

causes of the Napoleonic Wars down to "…aggressive French expansionism…"[39] or the indulging of Napoleon's ego, they were actually much more than a single conflict.

In reality, like most large-scale conflicts, the causes of the Napoleonic Wars were manifold, interrelated, and entangled. Indeed, "[t]he wars…were not just about French expansionism or Napoleon's ambition, but represented a perfect storm in which a range of European crises came together."[40]

Napoleon's power came from his success as a general during the French Revolution, which saw a campaign of Christian eradication as the tenets of Enlightenment thinking were taken to radical extremes. Acquiring increasing levels of support, he overthrew the existing government, becoming First Consul, and then Emperor of the French.[41]

Geopolitical strategies and affairs are not a contemporary development and were alive and well in the time of Napoleon. Due to the existing state of European political structures and ambitions at the time, national leaders were consistently preoccupied by personal interest. For these reasons, "…France's opponents could not or would not focus all their military efforts on victory over the French because they were distracted by other crises, or bent on exploiting the international meltdown in the pursuit of their own, habitual strategic goals [of]…dynastic expansion and strategic security."[42] To achieve these ends, leaders needed their subjects to follow them and employed a wide range of strategies to instill loyalty and ambition. These strategies included the use of "…powerful rhetorical, symbolic, and material appeals to their loyalty, their commitment to the social

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[39] Mike Rapport, *The Napoleonic Wars – A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 4.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Christianity – The First Three Thousand Years* (New York: Penguin Group, 2009), 810.

[42] Mike Rapport, *The Napoleonic Wars – A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 4-5.

and political order, and their religious beliefs"[43] and the people were used as pawns in a game being played by the political elite.

At the time, the social and political order revolved in large part around five powerful states: Britain, France, Prussia, Austria, and Russia[44], all of whose endless pursuit of a 'balance of power' meant that conflict between them was always a strong possibility. Ironically, these pursuits were attempts to increase international stability, something seen as more preferable to the existing alternative.[45] As a result, territory and homeland become dominant drivers in the European conflicts, and there was no such thing as a national interest, but rather simply the interests of the ruling elite who still tended to see their territories as inheritance.[46]

Napoleon's armies would come to conquer much of Europe, pressing further and further into German territory, including communities with which Schleiermacher intimately identified. These were the places of his life, the boundaries of which were transgressed, violated by a foreign force. Although operating in a political mode, through conquest, Napoleon consolidated control of space and place throughout Europe, eventually extending his influence into Poland and toward Russia. This campaign personally affected Schleiermacher, who suddenly found himself living in enemy occupied territory.[47] In this way, and despite the political character of the campaign, the French invasion was more than just political. For Schleiermacher, it was personal, and this development, this sense of transgression, as we will see, would come to have a significant impact on his theology, expressed through his writings on home, borders, and security.

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[43] Mike Rapport, *The Napoleonic Wars – A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 5.

[44] Ibid.,7.

[45] Ibid.,10.

[46] Ibid., 10-11.

[47] Ibid., 44.

It is clear that European culture has been steeped in religious ideas and discourse, and therefore so are its children. Schleiermacher is one such child, shaped by persistent religiously-influenced warfare, the trappings of which percolated through the generations.

3.3 Influential Characters

Individuals are shaped not only by large-scale cultural factors, but by smaller-scale personal ones as well. Friedrich Schleiermacher was no different, and we therefore turn now to consider his involvement with the Moravian Brethren.

Partially due to his mother's death when he was 14 years old, he was brought up under the supervision of a school of the Moravian Brethren, a community of what would now be considered conservative religious observers. Their story begins with a fellow by the name of Philip Jacob Spener.

Spener was born on January 13, 1635 and, coincidentally, like Schleiermacher, his religious life began with the death of his mother when he was 13 years old. Spener was educated at the University of Strasburg, eventually becoming a preacher and working in the surrounding area. By the time he was well into his career, he had grown tired of the theological debates, which he saw as dominating the sermons of the day. His project therefore became to promote and highlight the "…saving power of the Gospel."[48]

Three students from the University of Halle, August Francke, John Caspar Schade, and Paul Anton took up the baton of Spener. Not interested in endless exposition of scripture, but the "…awakening of genuine piety,"[49] they began to give what proved to be popular lectures in the area. Lecture topics included the beliefs that "…worldly amusements, the dance, the theatre, the card-table, fashions, etc., were unlawful for true Christians."[50] From their perspective, these were activities that were counter to the Gospel and socially

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[48] J. Taylor Hamilton, *A History of the Church Known as the Moravian Church, during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Bethlehem: Times Publishing Company, 1900), 2.

[49] Ibid., 3.

[50] Ibid.

damaging, and therefore ones that were best avoided; they were therefore dismayed and disappointed that the local religious leaders, while perhaps not endorsing these activities, certainly were not in the habit of dissuading people from partaking in them.[51] Local regular pastors, perhaps responding out of concern or jealousy, began stigmatizing the followers of Spener as 'Pietists.'[52]

Pietists held three fundamental beliefs: man's total depravity; God's revelation to man; and man's communion with God. By extension, people are fundamentally estranged from God and must be born again into a regenerate state. Holiness follows regeneration and consists of living a genuinely devout life.[53] Further, they insisted that theological studies must be biblically based, not based on church creeds, and that Scripture is all that is required to explain Scripture.[54]

For their part, orthodox Lutherans rejected these ideas, alleging that "…at bottom, the Pietists sought justification by works"[55], a perspective they presumably saw as at odds with the traditional Lutheran doctrine of sola fide - justification by faith alone, invalidating the entire enterprise, at least from their standpoint.

Spener died on February 5, 1705 in Berlin, but August Francke, who was a follower of Spener and the ideas of the original Pietists, carried his work forward. Born on March 23, 1663, his schooling culminated in earning a graduate degree, and he lectured at Erfurt and Leipsic before being dismissed due to his Pietism.[56] In 1692, Francke was invited to become Professor of Oriental Language at the University of Halle, and eventually he

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[51] J. Taylor Hamilton, *A History of the Church Known as the Moravian Church, during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Bethlehem: Times Publishing Company, 1900), 3.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid., 3-4.

[54] Ibid., 4.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Ibid.

became Chair of Theology. While there, he also became Pastor of Glaucha, a suburb of Halle.[57] During his work in this period, Francke proved to be an industrious and productive individual, and all of his work seems to have been for the benefit of those around him, his community.

Some of these achievements include the formation of a charity school, which experienced increased enrollment, year over year. His other projects included the establishment of a college, an orphan asylum, a home for the poor, a Bible-house, a seminary for the training of teachers, a Divinity school, a foreign missionary society, a bookstore, a printing office, an apothecary shop, and an infirmary.[58] Although they had obvious social benefits, "[t]hese institutions of Franke mightily worked for the spread of Pietism."[59]

Spread it did. Pietism continued to grow in popularity due in no small part to the efforts of those like Francke. Pietistic learning eventually became concentrated in three main geographic clusters: Halle, Jena, and Tubingen. Our interest in Schleiermacher truly begins at this point because Halle, site of much of his life, became an important exporter of Pietistic thought from the University there to the Church of the Bohemian and Moravian Brethren, the people with whom Schleiermacher was destined to spend formative years.[60]

While Pietistic ideas would also find fertile ground in central Germany, Saxony, Silesia, Denmark, Livonia, and Switzerland, comprising a significant part of Europe at the time, conservative clergy remained opposed to the success of Pietism. Despite the opposition,

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[57] J. Taylor Hamilton, *A History of the Church Known as the Moravian Church, during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Bethlehem: Times Publishing Company, 1900), 4-5.

[58] Ibid., 5.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Ibid.

however, Pietism prospered and traces of the tradition can be distilled from contemporary evangelical Christianity.[61]

As inheritors of Pietistic theological views, the Moravian brethren contributed something extremely crucial to Schleiermacher's theological outlook – the importance of community in the midst of inward religious exploration and experience. While theologically conservative and preoccupied with faith at the personal and emotional level, the Moravians developed and live by a code best thought of as community. Members live, dine, work, worship, learn, and go about their daily lives in a way that binds the community together like no other. Yet, as part of their faith life, they have founded socially oriented organizations including schools, orphanages, and other charitable institutions, and were the "…Protestant pioneers of overseas missions."[62]

Although he felt a fondness for the Moravians, studying with them eventually felt confining for Schleiermacher, due in no small part to the limiting of authoritative texts to approved sources only. Even as the Brethren instructors tried to contain the permeation of writing reflective of outside thought, some sources crept in, making available to students there a wider array of writings from authors with diverse perspectives.

A group of students, including Schleiermacher, would come to coalesce around the reading of prohibited materials. Such 'banned books' as '*Jena Literaturzeitung'*, "…an able periodical that looked at life from the standpoint of Kant"[63], and Goethe's '*Werther*' represented a wider perspective than that available from the Brethren and so they remained restricted by the Brethren for literary consumption. Despite his fondness for them, Schleiermacher would come to feel the need to branch out, and he left the Brethren,

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[61] J. Taylor Hamilton, *A History of the Church Known as the Moravian Church, during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Bethlehem: Times Publishing Company, 1900), 6.

[62] Keith Clements, *Friedrich Schleiermacher – Pioneer of Modern Theology* (London: Collins Liturgical Productions, 1987), 12.

[63] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion – Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, trans. John Oman (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1893), xv.

the first one of the renegade group to do so, seeking the freedom to explore new sources of information and learning.

In 1787, while the industrial revolution was getting underway, Schleiermacher entered the University of Halle as a student; he was 19 years old. Here, other personal encounters and relationships would come to influence his thinking. Consider that, at the time, Enlightenment thought had become firmly established at the university. Despite this, Schleiermacher, fully steeped in religious tradition and upbringing, willingly exposed his values and biases to scrutiny and challenge by fully engaging his peers in dialogue. And yet, Schleiermacher did so because, despite his religious commitment, he was convinced that "…if ever he was to reach a fuller faith, it must be by hearing everything that could be said against it."[64] His academic ability eventually enabled Schleiermacher to pass his theological exams and, afterward, he began employment as a tutor to the family of Count Dohna of Schlobitten. Here, along with earning some compensation and a livelihood founded upon on his studies, Schleiermacher was exposed to new social ways, and refined ways of acting and interacting. The upper crust, apparently, has particular ways of being.

If Schleiermacher's credentials as someone willing to experience that which was not previously encountered were established with his enrollment at the University of Halle, then they were only bolstered by his engagement with what has been described as "…cultured female society."[65] For his part, writes Oman, Schleiermacher found great value in this cultural exposure, "…an experience which he marks as an epoch."[66] So, once again we see Schleiermacher, far from adopting an insular stance, reacting with curiosity, and excitement to something exotic. These experiences clearly contributed to

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[64] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion – Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, trans. John Oman (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1893), xv-xvi.

[65] Ibid., xviii.

[66] Ibid.

his sense of self, as highlighted by Schleiermacher's own admission that "[w]ith a knowledge of the female heart I won a knowledge of true manly worth."[67]

Sadly, Schleiermacher's tenure as a tutor fell victim to the French Revolution as it became clear that he and his employer supported opposite sides of the conflict. The irreconcilable impasse eventually led to the end of Schleiermacher's employment.

3.4 Schleiermacher's Theology and Theological Anthropology

As is the case for each one of us in our time, Schleiermacher's theological perspective was undoubtedly shaped by his context, all the way from his upbringing to his career as an educator and pastor, and as such cannot be disentangled from it.

So far, we have seen that Schleiermacher is a cultural inheritor of the technological and social developments of the industrial revolution, was directly influenced by the armed conflicts of pan-European and French-instigated wars, and one who was influenced by early religious education, and later higher education and exposure to new cultural values. All of these, but especially his Moravian education, the sense of individual, inward piety expressed communally would come to have a lasting effect on his theology.

This sense of community is an important aspect of Schleiermacher's Moravian education. While he would not, ultimately, hold on to much of the conservative theology, he would come to incorporate the communal ideal into his theological system in light of his idealist influenced theological anthropology which took human self consciousness as the location of divine interaction, and to which the communal reinforced the individual.

One of the reasons Schleiermacher could cling so strongly to the communal ideal in his theology is because, like his Moravian caretakers, he located religion and the religious in emotion, consciousness, or experience. It was heart-led. He saw human existence as deeply rooted in social habits. Thus religion must also be communal – "if there is religion

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[67] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion – Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, trans. John Oman (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1893), xviii.

at all, it must be social, for that is the nature of man, and it is quite peculiarly the nature of religion."[68] This, Schleiermacher contended, was distinct from the rational and aesthetic faculties of human beings, but no less integral to a proper understanding of the cosmos.[69]

In any event, there is no doubt that Christianity is privileged in Schleiermacher's view. One of the ways he arrives at this position is through the development of what he calls a two-fold framework. This framework revolves around axes of historical recognition or power, and a kind of speciation of religion. In this framework, for example, a household religion cannot be considered as important as a larger religion because it has not met a certain 'critical mass' of popular devotion that would result in historical power. Just as individual people can transition from one religion to another 'less imperfect' community, it is possible, he says, that household religions can develop into religions of greater historical power, climbing a 'ladder' of development, and this progress can be fast or slow. In a transcendental move then, he says that religions can move beyond their original positions.[70]

Considering the other axis of speciation, he can say that, although there may be two religions that are the same age or have the same historical power, one might be less imperfect that the other because of developmental differences. In a contest between a monotheistic religion and a polytheistic religion of the same age, he would say that the monotheistic religion is the less imperfect one due to the higher degree of God-consciousness required.[71]

Although he is a Christian exceptionalist, he is also a sort of proto-pluralist, recognizing that other religions may have something to offer the religious discourse rather than

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[68] Keith Clements, *Friedrich Schleiermacher – Pioneer of Modern Theology* (London: Collins Liturgical Productions, 1987), 38.

[69] Ibid., 23.

[70] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd., 1989), 30.33.

[71] Ibid.

simply dismissing them out of hand. He sets this view up in terms of error, which, he says, can only have meaning when referenced to truth. Things can only be wrong if they are not aligned with the truth. Therefore, even more imperfect religions may be looked to for the nuggets of truth they may contain, but only to inform their less-imperfect religious superiors.[72]

Through his two-fold framework, he can say that there is a relentless religious progress toward monotheism, and specifically toward the Christian variant. He bases this assertion on a reflection on idol worship and polytheism and how these religions fit into his two-fold framework. Idol-worship morphs into polytheism through the accumulation of gods due to some perceived incapacity in the existing ones, and then the lateral merging of gods across various idol-worshipping religions groups. Concentration of the polytheistic gods into one, unified, figure invested in all of creation is the result, and represents a transition to monotheism. This then results in the realization of absolute dependence on the divine, or what he calls the God-consciousness.[73]

Schleiermacher's counterpoint to the God-consciousness is the development of his idea of self-consciousness which he describes as deficient in followers of idol based religions or polytheistic religions. He says this is because a sense of absolute dependence is not fully developed when human beings turn to visible objects – this represents a lack of trust in the divine. It is also not fully formed in polytheistic religions because adherents spread their trust among many gods, instead of one all-powerful one. In this way he says that the idea of absolute dependence is least imperfectly developed in monotheistic religions and is characterized by a trust in the unseen divine.[74]

Schleiermacher produced several key contributions to the theological discourse of his time. Three of the most important were *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*

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[72] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd., 1989), 33.

[73] Ibid., 34.

[74] Ibid., 34-35.

(hereinafter '*Speeches'*), *The Christian Faith*, and *Christmas Eve: Dialogue on the Incarnation* (hereinafter *'Christmas Eve'*). It was his intent to follow up *The Christian Faith* with a book on Christian ethics, but he was unfortunately unable to complete that project. Scholars have been forced to glean an understanding of Schleiermacher's perspective on Christian ethics by relying on preliminary writings on the subject and surviving lecture notes taken and left by some of his students. While some writers have formalized these notes and writings into interpretative works on his Christian ethics, this paper will focus on selections from the *Speeches*, *The Christian Faith,* and *Christmas Eve* which best illustrate how Schleiermacher's theology is useful today and applicably to church amalgamation.

If all of Schleiermacher's theology could be compressed into a single word, it would be 'unity'. The themes found in the unpacking of this word with reference to Schleiermacher are what will contribute greatly to our discussion on the utility of his theology to issues of church amalgamation. This idea even found its way to the new world in the Latin motto 'E pluribus Unum' - Out of many, One – which is, of course one of the mottos of the founding of the United States of America. But, as we will see, by 'unity' what Schleiermacher really wants to talk about is overcoming difference because that, for him, is how unity is achieved.

Unity is explored thematically through Schleiermacher's writings, and these writings have been assigned categories by other previous researchers. Schleiermacher's writings have come to evoke a sense of either *Heimweh* or *Fernweh*, German words meaning longing for 'home' and 'exotic', respectively. It is important to note that there is no specific Schleiermachian doctrine of *Heimweh* and *Fernweh* per se. Rather, his writings are infused with this conceptual framework that weaves through his theological excursions. Taken together, the evidence points to a Schleiermacher who is oriented to consider life as lived in the tension-filled gap between these two states: *Fernweh*, the longing for the exotic, and *Heimweh*, the corresponding longing for home.

But what does this truly mean for the lives of everyday people? "The human soul," says Schleiermacher, "…is the product of two opposing drives."[75] One drive, expressed via *Fernweh*, can be conceived of as a kind of centrifugal force, which prompts us to extend ourselves through time and space into creation. The second drive, expressed via *Heimweh*, can be thought of as more of an inward, centripetal force, which directs us to establish a base, to become rooted, to know oneself to a greater extent, recognizing that "[t]he self that returns has been altered by the journey."[76] The two, *Fernweh* and *Heimweh* are interrelated, co-dependent, intervariable, and synergistic. In the great activity of the universe, like cosmic respiration, "*Heimweh*…yields to *Fernweh*, which then leads back to a transformed sense of *Heimweh*."[77]

The best source for examples of *Fernweh* in Schleiermacher's writing is in the *Speeches*. For Schleiermacher, *Fernweh* allows us to experience the unknown, to put us into contact with otherness. For him, it is enrolling at the University of Halle, with the full knowledge his faith would be tested; it is encountering for the first time a refined female culture and embracing it to such an extent that it changed his sense of manhood. It is the relentless drive to experience someplace or something new in accordance with a unifying principle.

In contrast to *Fernweh* - some might even call it that place over the rainbow, a place different than home - is *Heimweh*, *Fernweh's* counterpart, a place of familiarity, of comfort, of safety. In Schleiermacher's work titled *Christmas Eve: Dialogue on the Incarnation*, he locates a sense of *Heimweh* in a classic portrayal of a traditional German family living room, filled with relatives. This is a piece of writing thoroughly infused with metaphorical language that shows the importance of borders and boundaries and the spaces and places they create within.

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[75] Steven R. Jungkeit, *Spaces of Modern Theology – Geography and Power in Schleiermacher's World* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 46.

[76] Ibid., 47.

[77] Ibid.

By all accounts the atmosphere in the scene is enjoyable as the occupants share their thoughts on the true meaning of Christmas and the Incarnation. A scene immediately identifiable to many readers, they cannot help but be drawn into the scene, perhaps in a literary act of *Heimweh*, even if one that is once removed. After all, who does not have a sense of some kind of homecoming event? Yet, even here, the description of the scene invites speculation on the reader's part as to the nature of home. The lighting is dim, creating areas of shadow and light, suggesting that even here, in the heart of the home, *Heimweh* is tied up with the mysterious, the unknown, and nowhere is immune from the meeting of the known and the unknown.[78]

Where do *Heimweh* and *Fernweh* happen? For Schleiermacher, this dynamic is ongoing and can take place at multiple points on a continuum of time and space. In the introduction to the *Speeches,* Schleiermacher asserts the importance of scale when he invites his readers to learn "…from what capacity of humanity religion proceeds, and how it belongs to what is for you the highest and dearest." But then invites them "…to the pinnacles of the temple that you might survey the whole sanctuary and discover its innermost secrets."[79] Thus he links something that is most valuable and worthy, to pinnacles as well as to places that are set apart, to public as well as to private, to the visible and the invisible, and he asserts that one can be found in another. Clearly, there is a sense of scale that is at work in Schleiermacher's *Heimweh/Fernweh* dialectic; the sense that the cosmos is reflected in the individual, and therefore that difference can be overcome to achieve unity.

Not only space, but also time, as expressed through history, was important and real to Schleiermacher,[80] as well. Time is full of places to which to extend oneself to gain

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[78] Steven R. Jungkeit, *Spaces of Modern Theology – Geography and Power in Schleiermacher's World* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 132-133.

[79] Friedrich Schleiermacher, "On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers" in *Spaces of Modern Theology – Geography and Power in Schleiermacher's World* by Jungkeit, Steven R., (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 5.

[80] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion – Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, trans. John Oman (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1893), xlvii.

perspective on oneself, and therefore on the divine. This made the cosmos come alive with infinite activity[81] as he sensed the intrinsic human drive toward unity through the reaching out to the exotic, the unknown, and then again through the return trip home through which self-examination and self-identification become possible.

But what about Schleiermacher's view of the church? "The fellowship of believers, animated by the Holy Spirit in its relation to the world," he says, "…is subject to change and variation."[82] It seems Schleiermacher was acutely aware of real-world forces capable of buffeting the church. Schleiermacher's theology then, while acknowledging the reality of change in the church, locates the source of those changes in the world, not in the church infused and informed as it is by the Holy Spirit. In other words, apparent changes in the church are human-caused and not the responsibility of the Spirit, which is the way in which the church remains the same throughout the ages.[83]

But difference is not a bad thing. Indeed, Schleiermacher suggests that, in fact, differences can be induced by the Holy Spirit, creating churches of different character in different places due to "…peculiar characteristics found there."[84] Still, for him the Christian project is about overcoming differences, and forces are at work within churches that lessen differences. Schleiermacher puts it this way: "The closer the fellowship is the more will each seek what is his neighbour's and take it up into his own life, with the natural result that differences are correspondingly lessened."[85]

Difference, to Schleiermacher is not worth worrying about. For him, difference comes out in the wash and, even when based on specific dogmatics and ethics, which are a

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[81] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion – Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, trans. John Oman (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1893), xxix.

[82] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd., 1989), 582.

[83] Ibid., 582-583.

[84] Ibid., 583.

[85] Ibid., 584.

"minor part of the Church's history,"[86] separation in the church as a manifestation of difference is temporary.[87] Even in a state of division, Schleiermacher maintains that each part of the church remains connected to the Christian story through the invisible church,[88] that great pool of 'associate Christianity.'

Schleiermacher contends that the Christian story is tied up with the identity of the church. The church is, as an institution, constantly in a state of 'becoming.' Schleiermacher's church is the reform*ing* church. So it is completely consistent that Schleiermacher asserts the importance of context for understanding the church's identity. In a passage worth providing in full, Schleiermacher says:

> …if we wish to exhibit the self-identity of the Christian Church as the locus of the Holy Spirit, we must present it as inclusive of the truth into which the Holy Spirit alone can lead. Both, however, can only be presented with differences of **time and space**; so that all we can say is that in these disciplines and their adjuncts what we are really trying to express is this self-identical element, yet for this purpose we have only these variable means of expression. The same, however, holds true of **all aspects of Christian life**, in so far as they are based on the truth taught by the Spirit and contain features of Christ's likeness. But the totality of these aspects is just **the historical reality of the Christian Church throughout its whole career, and to this we should have to resort for material** if we wished to exhibit the changing and mutable element; and this we cannot do without at the same time bringing in what is unchanging and self-identical. [emphasis added].[89]

In this passage Schleiermacher clearly encourages the turning to history for context in understanding the current state of the church's identity. But more so than that, it recommends extending oneself outward (and backwards into history) to understand the culture, society and influences at other points in time so that we might incorporate those in an understanding of ourselves in our changing culture, society and influences. Thus it synthesizes three things: *Fernweh, Heimweh*, and the importance of context, in this case,

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[86] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd., 1989), 585.

[87] Ibid., 685.

[88] Ibid., 682.

[89] Ibid., 584-585.

history. The synthesis of these ideas was groundbreaking for its time and, as will be shown, has particular applications for our purposes because processes of amalgamation are also processes of discovering identity through the *Fernweh/Heimweh* dialectic.

We have seen that, during his lifetime, Enlightenment rationalism became immensely popular; so much so that religion was often dismissed entirely as something that had nothing to add to useful discourse. As a founding Romantic, Schleiermacher, in contrast, located religion as something that was felt at the personal level, on the inside; it is a matter of 'heart', and of 'soul.' In this way, religion, for Schleiermacher is inextricably tied up with issues of identity.

Identity, as we have seen, is something that is always in flux, responding to cultural and social development. This was true during his time just as much as it is in our own. Religion, then, is entangled with a person's being, an essential component of human life, and not simply a "superfluous adornment."[90] Schleiermacher takes his religion (and therefore his theology) very seriously.

Due to the ongoing antagonism between the rationalists and the Romantics, it would be easy, if cynical, to suspect Schleiermacher of concocting this formulation of religion as interior feeling, to insulate it from rational inquiry. But this was not the case. His legitimate aim was to try to reclaim religion as the core of one's being, the 'pious consciousness' without which no other activity could flourish.[91] Prior to Schleiermacher, no one had ever thought to link religion with emotion and consciousness before and so this represented a true new anthropology of human existence. Clements would go so far as to call it a "…positive, new vision of what it is to be truly human, in a wholeness, richness and freedom not known by the passing wisdom of the age."[92]

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[90] Keith Clements, *Friedrich Schleiermacher – Pioneer of Modern Theology* (London: Collins Liturgical Productions, 1987), 36.

[91] Ibid., 36-37.

[92] Ibid., 37

But what does Schleiermacher mean by words like 'feeling', 'emotion', and 'consciousness'? In the second of the *Speeches*, he equates feeling with self - consciousness, "…but not just a consciousness of oneself, but a consciousness of the self so determined by what is other than the self."[93] And this self-in-relation, Clements informs us, is the object of consciousness"[94]; consciousness of the self through encountering the other is, for Schleiermacher, the whole point, especially if God is involved. God, represented by the Infinite in this case, makes an appearance as that which each person experiences absolute dependence upon. Schleiermacher contends that there is a brief moment when a person encounters an other that is unique where the person so completely identifies with the other that they are in fact the same and both realize their communal absolute dependence[95]; but on what? Certainly not on each other, for any object of the created realm would be insufficient for the task. No, this would require invoking the infinite.

Schleiermacher therefore fuses ideals of Moravian community with ideals of Romantic inward exploration, and the prevailing cultural ethos of exploration to arrive at his formulation of theology. It is explicitly particular in that it occurs from person to person, but communal because it is relational. Under Schleiermacher's system, as we relate to others, we relate to God and we increase our self-consciousness as a by-product.

But how does the unity/fellowship dialectic work out in the church? For this, we turn to Schleiermacher's more mature work in *The Christian Faith*. The synthesis of the individual and the community achieves its full expressing in the sacraments. It begins, for Schleiermacher, with baptism, which, he says, "…inaugurate[s] a continuous and conscious living fellowship with Christ."[96] This union is supported in an ongoing way

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[93] Keith Clements, *Friedrich Schleiermacher – Pioneer of Modern Theology* (London: Collins Liturgical Productions, 1987), 37.

[94] Ibid.

[95] Ibid., 38.

[96] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd., 1989), 589.

with the Lord's Supper which "…maintains a living fellowship with Christ…"[97] At the level of the congregation, he roots the relationship of the fellowship toward the individual in the forgiveness of sins. This action is about allowing the good works of the individual to shine despite the presence of sin, which can be removed, and "…assign[ing] them their place in the fellowship of believers."[98] Lastly, the influence of the individual on the community is best observed in the act of prayer. As Schleiermacher says, "…there can be no Prayer in the Name of Jesus except in connexion with the things of His Kingdom." This means that an individual act of prayer must relate as part of a theological ecosystem in which in it understood that "…personal activity [is presupposed] in bring[ing] about what is prayed for."[99] In an ecological sense, if all participants work toward the goals prayed for, individual action is transformed into community mission and ethos.

Schleiermacher died in 1834, but the relationship between *Fernweh* and *Heimweh*, the oscillation, resonance, or cosmic 'breath of life' has continued to contemporary times, and will continue far into the future. We are the beneficiaries of his insights, and we have inherited them, if not as religious ideas then as cultural artifacts, in various ways. Perhaps this is best illustrated through discursive expansion of a popular cultural reference in which Schleiermacher's ideas are clearly explored, which we will undertake following brief exploration of other relevant writers.

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[97] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd., 1989), 589.

[98] Ibid.

[99] Ibid.

Chapter 4

4 Supporting Figures

At this point we have seen how Schleiermacher handles categories of geographic theology – issues of identity, culture, society, space and place. His theology is thoroughly steeped in concepts that have come to be grouped under the headings of *Heimweh* and *Fernweh* to evoke the longing for the familiar and the exotic, respectively, and how they come to drive and reinforce each other, how they change one another.

In the introduction to this paper, Schleiermacher was acknowledged as just one of the noteworthy thinkers who have written on these topics. There are two other sources that will be explored briefly below. On one hand, they are not strictly theologians and their writings make their contribution to this paper inter-disciplinary in nature, and therefore not ‘pure’ theology. On the other hand, their inclusion highlights a broad spectrum of support because both sources talk about encounter and engagement with others as forming and resolving issues of identity.

Understanding Schleiermacher means working from a dialectical basis. Schleiermacher spends much of his work on *Heimweh* versus *Fernweh*, and unity versus community. In dialectics such as these, the poles interact and influence each other like the poles of a magnet. The complementary writers showcased below also use a dialectical approach in order to convey their meaning to their readers. This chapter looks to them.

4.1 Yi-Fu Tuan

The second writer we will encounter in this paper is Yi-Fu Tuan. Tuan was born in China, and his formative years were spent travelling with his family, settling in community after community, only to find out that his current residence was not to be his permanent one. These many residential moves supported his father’s career as a diplomat, and home for Tuan included such geographically dispersed places as China, Australia,

Britain, and the United States.[100] It is not surprising that Tuan's academic career would come to have a concentration on space and place given the unpredictability and dynamic nature of his early years.

Later, Tuan studied at Oxford University and the University of California at Berkeley. After receiving his doctorate, he served as a faculty member at the University of Toronto, the University of Minnesota, and the University of Wisconsin, from which he eventually retired.[101] Tuan is primarily a geographer, but his brand of Geography is humanistic and therefore is heavily inspired and influenced by other disciplines, including Theology.

Like Schleiermacher, Tuan explores categories of identity, including space and place, and, as mentioned, this is unsurprising given the spatial instability during his upbringing. His geography includes a parallel dialectic to Schleiermacher's *Heimweh*/*Fernweh* but he couches them in terms that are perhaps more relatable to readers. There is a sense of vulnerability that runs through his version of *Fernweh*, as we will see. Likewise, there is a sense of stability about her version of *Heimweh*. This spin on Schleiermacher's *Heimweh*/*Fernweh* dialectic only serves to reinforce it, and one cannot help but think of Schleiermacher when reading Tuan.

Inasmuch as identity is entangled with context, a sense of historical place is as important for Tuan as it is for Schleiermacher. Awareness of history and context is a fruitful way of truly learning about oneself, and establishing identity and personality – a personal history. In his book *Space and Place*, Tuan suggests that "[t]o strengthen our sense of self the past needs to be rescued and made accessible."[102] His word choice here is interesting. The fact that the past needs 'rescuing' suggests he thinks it has been captured, stolen, a prized possession without which we are all the poorer. And, is the past inaccessible to

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[100] John Bale, "Tuan, Yi-Fu" in *Encyclopedia of Geography*, ed. Barney Warf. (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc.), accessed July 20, 2016.

[101] Ibid.

[102] Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place – The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 187.

contemporary people? How did we become locked out of history, the very thing that can tell us about who we are and where we stand? Regardless of whether we understand the mechanism behind our historical ignorance – the who or the how – Tuan is clear that to reclaim and unlock it is of utmost importance because the past both anchors the present and is tied up with the future.

The past anchors us. Tuan reminds us of the nostalgic experiences that can come from traveling through an old neighbourhood, a previous home, of re-discovering a family photo album and enjoying it anew. These experiences not only give us a sense of enjoyment, but also serve to provide a sense of rootedness, of security; at the same time, they highlight how far we have come, the scope of the journey so far, and bait us with speculation on what the future holds.

Similar to the personal resonance of the family scrapbook, the Moravians steeped Schleiermacher in a tradition of introspection, looking inward to locate the sacred. But Schleiermacher also lived in a culture heavily distracted by exploration and discovery, of expanding frontiers, boundaries, and borders. In Tuan's time, exploration persisted, intensified as human beings broadened the frontiers of natural knowledge, stretching toward distant points in our solar system and beyond. Tuan urges us to consider those explorers who, in embarking on journeys of discovery often invoke images of past exploratory accomplishments. Astronauts who land on the moon follow in Neil Armstrong's footsteps, and even the planetary and lunar bodies in space are named after past heroic and mythical figures. Can there be any more solid evidence that history and myth accompany science and technology into the future? Consider also that forays into the unknown often involved journeys to the 'centre', or origin, into the 'heart of the jungle' so to speak. These words, objectively, imply inwardness, and to probe them further implies introspection. In noting the connection between exploration and the past, Tuan tells us that "[w]hen we look outward we look at the present or future; when we look inward (that is, introspect) we are likely to reminisce the past."[103] For Tuan,

[103] Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place – The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 126.

uncharted territory, the unknown, is as much a journey inward and to the past, as it is a journey outward and to the future. In Tuan, we see a playfulness with the categories of *Heimweh* and *Fernweh*, home and away, echoing much of the work of Schleiermacher.

Reading Tuan brings to mind the Bruce Springsteen song *Glory Days,* the lyrics of which tell the story of a man who relives his youth by remembering the successes, the brokenness and drudgery of life ‘before.’ These experiences, as triumphant or as minor and mundane as they may seem, represent what he considers to be his best days, his glory days, and help situate the man’s present. The listener is left wondering about the man and, perhaps, what his future holds.

Unfortunately, the last lines in the song betray a fundamental misunderstanding of Springsteen’s. In the end the song reveals that, for him, the past is something to be indulged in occasionally, like a pastime, but not something that ultimately should be seriously consulted. Time may slip away, but it certainly leaves you with more than ‘boring stories’; it actually leaves you with something to be consulted and applied in the here and now. In this way, Springsteen treats history as a distraction or vacation from the drudgery and iniquity of the present, not something that should inform the future. Should we believe him? There is, after all, a future to consider; a future that both Schleiermacher and Tuan would say can only be informed by the events of the past.

The power and value of the song for our purposes is the stated democratic claim to history - everyone can take part in unlocking it, revealing it, reclaiming it. Tuan would approve, but he would go even further. For Springsteen, memories and history are fun; for Tuan (and Schleiermacher), they are serious and critical ingredients in establishing identity. All that is missing for the song to serve as a source of inspiration for engaging with theology as a foundation for congregational amalgamation is a sense of necessity and urgency. Adopting this approach would constitute first steps toward addressing the theological paucity of current amalgamation guidance literature.

Inasmuch as context is an important ingredient in terms of self-identity, scale is another component that cannot be ignored. “Place,” Tuan argues, “…exists at different scales.”[104] All at the same time, for example, a person can occupy a chair, a room, a floor, a building, and onward and upward. There is a certain sense of egocentrism tied up in the experience of place, as we tend to consider ourselves to be the centre of our own small worlds, our own small creations. We have a long history of doing so. Indeed, it is a hallmark of religious thought that the world revolves around an axis that extends through a local sacred place.[105] In contrast to a rationalist perspective, multiple sacred places do not contradict each other, as there is no one axis around which creation revolves.[106] Indeed, there is no contradiction between a sacred hearth, the sacred centre of town, or the belief in national exceptionalism, for example. In contemporary thought, ‘centre’ is often considered a static category, but to ancient and religious thinkers, ‘centre’ is no more static than identity itself.

Ideas about ‘centre’ also have to include an awareness of perspective. If one sacred hearth is abandoned or destroyed, another can be created and will again be the centre of creation for the passage through of the celestial axis.[107] Sacred space may therefore be created again and again with no loss in integrity of the concept of centre. Place, in other words, can be recreated at different points and scales.

For Tuan, then, a religious view of creation does not support the uniqueness of place since, based on cosmic perspective, all spaces can be considered sacred, a spot through which the *axis mundi*[108] travels. This is supported by the tenets of universalizing religions. Tuan says “[t]he worship of local gods binds a people to place whereas

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[104] Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place – The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 149.

[105] Ibid.

[106] Ibid., 150.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Mircea Eliade, *Sacred and Profane* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1961), 35.

universal religions give freedom. In a universal religion, since all is created by and all is known to an omnipotent and omniscient god, no locality is necessarily more sacred than another."[109] By contrast, place is established by declaration.

Tuan relates the story of the scientists, for example, who after laborious searching for the headwaters of the Mississippi River, finally identified it. It turned out to be just one of "…thousands of lakes and springs in the same region."[110] Only after scientists identified it, did the area around it become imbued with special significance. "Scientists," he says, "thus appear to have a certain power: they can create a place by pointing their official fingers at one body of water rather than another."[111] Does this not point to an intrinsic ability in human beings, to declare space as special? In a universal religion like Christianity, *Heimweh* demands that a sacred place is declared; *Fernweh* demands that we continually reevaluate that declaration with new questions informed by shifting circumstances.

Tuan's sense of scale, as well as his ideas of perspective and centre, means that religion exists apart from anything concretely fixed, and is more about the relationships we have with one another and the divine as expressed in a network of spaces. Like Schleiermacher, Tuan considers the cosmos to be in a state of relentless activity. According to Tuan, "[p]lace is a pause in movement."[112] The default state of life, for Tuan is movement, and place is a pause, a rest from the hustle-bustle of a life spent moving from here to there. It is somewhere we can take a breath, have a seat, freshen up, while we create someplace new, before jetting off again on another bid to experience the exotic. This notion of almost relentless motion is indicative of a perspective on life that

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[109] Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place – The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 152.

[110] Ibid.,162.

[111] Ibid.

[112] Ibid.,138.

includes an infinite series of moves. The stops in between moves are creative but brief. Tuan even goes to the minute in a passage worth providing in full when he says that

> …place is whatever stable object catches our attention. As we look at a panoramic scene our eyes pause at points of interest. Each pause is time enough to create an image of place that looms large momentarily in our view. The pause may be of such short duration and the interest so fleeting that we may not be fully aware of having focused on any particular object; we believe we have simply been looking at the general scene. Nonetheless these pauses have occurred. It is not possible to look at a scene in general; our eyes keep searching for points of rest.[113]

Such place creation, he says can happen literally in the blink of an eye. We see something from a certain perspective, infuse it with our identity, itself accumulated by our history, and create place. The immensity of the place-making in this scenario is overwhelming, yet he has a point. Just like the religious outlook on sacred places, perspective changes everything. But all this place-making implies a certain vitality, a dynamism in the cosmos. Who can deny that the image of human beings ceaselessly engaged in place-making is full of vim? For Tuan, the universe is full of life and boundless creative energy. This seems to align very closely with Schleiermacher's view of the vitality of the cosmos. Recall that in his theology, the universe was "…conceived as infinitely active" through the ceaseless travel, the ceaseless reciprocation between the exotic and the familiar. The lines of the universe are not straight and firm, but flexible and intertwined for Schleiermacher.[114] Everything is a part of everything else, joined in a web of interconnections.

In this way, Schleiermacher and Tuan are much more similar to contemporary eco-theologians who argue something very similar – the idea of nested systems. These scholars insist that everything that is exists on a circular continuum such that everything is related to everything else, from below the surface of the earth to the outer reaches of

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[113] Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place – The Perspective of Experience*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 161.

[114] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion – Speeches to its Cultured Despisers,* trans. John Oman (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1893), xxix.

our atmosphere that border outer space. This area is one large ecosystem or, more accurately, an almost infinite series of interconnected ecosystems.[115] For these eco-theologians, the realm of theology, religion and spirituality begins where natural scientific inquiry must end, and vice versa, completing the circuit of interconnectedness.[116]

Tuan's ideas of space and place support those of Schleiermacher, especially in the realms of history, scale, and dynamism. His geographical reading lends contemporary and non-theological legitimacy to the argument that theological inquiry has much to offer issues of church governance, especially where amalgamation is concerned. By looking to Tuan and Schleiermacher, potential obstacles to successful church amalgamation might be avoided.

4.2 Emmanuel Levinas

One final scholar's work merits brief discussion here. Emmanuel Levinas was born in 1906 in Lithuania, but lived in France for much of his life, and died there in 1995. The span of his lifetime in Europe therefore covered both world wars, events that, it is easy to imagine, greatly impacted his life and perspective. For Levinas, the twin children of politics and religion, as expressed through those conflicts, had a deep influence on his career as a philosopher, Jewish thinker and educator. Specifically, the events of the holocaust helped to shape his most striking philosophy. This chapter considers select parts of that philosophy and how they align and diverge with portions of Schleiermacher's theology previously explored.

For biographer Michael Morgan, understanding Levinas' context is important to understanding Levinas' philosophy. According to him, there are four things to consider in relation to Levinas' thinking. First, his historical context and the role of the holocaust;

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[115] Edward T. Wimberley, *Nested Ecology – The Place of Humans in the Ecological Hierarchy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 69.

[116] Ibid., 76

second, his relationship to Judaism; third, his place among those critical of Western philosophy, and fourth, his role in the twentieth century debates about the place of ethics in our lives.[117]

The holocaust was personal for Levinas. Many of his family members fell victim to the violence perpetrated during the holocaust and other Nazi violence in the eastern frontiers of their aggression. Eventually, his wife and children went into hiding in a monastery in France. Levinas himself was held in a Prisoner of War camp for five years beginning in 1940.[118]

It was at this time that Levinas' mentor, Martin Heidegger, was rector of Freiburg University. Given all that he had been through, it must have been excruciating for Levinas to learn that Heidegger harboured sympathies for the Nazi movement in Germany. As a result of this discovery, a philosophical gulf emerged between the two and for Levinas it "…provoked a lifelong struggle with Heidegger's philosophy and his drive to rethink the character of the human condition and its ethical foundations."[119] Imagine the sense of profound disappointment and betrayal that must have fueled Levinas' turn away from Heidegger and his later philosophy.

In addition to their philosophical divergence, Levinas' rejection of Heidegger was likely influenced by his Jewish upbringing in Lithuania, his exposure to Russian literature and philosophy, and his experiences teaching, and then directing, at a Jewish normal school. The events of the holocaust and Heidegger's sympathies led Levinas to reconsider how human beings interact with one another, and just how evil that can be. For him, "…the

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[117] Michael L. Morgan, *The Cambridge Introduction to Emmanuel Levinas* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 1.

[118] Ibid.

[119] Ibid., 2.

twentieth century, from the First World War through the Rwandan genocide, was a time of human abandonment, injustice of vast scope, inhumanity and suffering."[120]

Levinas was particularly critical of Western modes of philosophical thought that espoused 'totalities', the idea that differences between people could be overcome by an oppressive averaging, a lack of commitment to social resolution that "…reduce[s] the other to the same; …make[s] sameness out of otherness."[121] For Levinas, there is something in human existence that is unconditionally based on being unique, being radically other somehow. It is the interaction between two or more 'others' that founds life experience, and it is the "…other person with whom I stand face to face"[122] that, in turn, defines my self.

How we come to know, interact, and treat others is, for Levinas, about ethics. This ethical framework diverged from Heidegger's philosophy of Being. For Levinas, "…ontology presupposes metaphysics."[123] . Much of Western philosophy, Levinas informs us, is based on an ontologically oriented view; that is, a philosophy of Being – who am I – where the I is never violated, never surrenders to the other.[124] Ontologically based systems consist in violently nullifying the uniqueness of others, subsuming them under the auspices of the same in order to know.[125] By contrast, in Levinas' hands, encounters with others must affirm their uniqueness because that uniqueness is infinitely different from the same and thus is the only thing that can instruct and inform the same.[126] In other

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[120] Michael L. Morgan, *The Cambridge Introduction to Emmanuel Levinas* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 2.

[121] Ibid., 3.

[122] Ibid.

[123] Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity – An Essay on Exteriority* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 48.

[124] Ibid., 42.

[125] Ibid., 43-44.

[126] Ibid., 51.

words, [i]t is necessary to have the idea of infinity, the idea of the perfect, as Descartes would say, in order to know one's own imperfection."[127] Ontology, which is tied up with spontaneity – how one exercises oneself – has to do with how one comes to know oneself and it is at this juncture that the same faces a stark choice: in Heidegger, the same can opt for subsumption of the other into the same in order to know or, following Levinas, the same can affirm the uniqueness of the other in order to know the same. This is the distinction that, in part, forms the ethical part of Levinas' philosophy. For Levinas, ethics is at the basis of all human conduct; everything else is founded on ethics, which is the bedrock of human social behavior. It is the ethical equivalent of the mathematical lowest common denominator, the idea that there is nothing more basic. According to his reading, Morgan insists that, for Levinas,"[a]t the bottom of all human activity…are these questions of right and wrong, good or evil, etc. We are not fundamentally beings that are rational, or beings that have certain desires or emotions or that are systems of physical processes or bundles of atoms and subatomic particles. Rather, we are fundamentally ethical beings."[128] With this statement, Morgan confirms Levinas as a descendent of Romanticism and Romantic modes of thought, turning away from the claims of the natural sciences.

Romanticism, as the progeny of Enlightenment rationalism, seeks to emphasize passion over reason, to indulge emotion at the expense of logic. Darwin, for example, as a child of Enlightenment rationalism, would claim that ethics is simply a product of processes of genetic selection, favouring the characteristics of individuals that fit best with their environments.[129] In a similar way, Levinas distances himself from the arguments of Freud and Marx, who both grounded ethics in something naturalistic; Freud locates it in the result of parental relationships, Marx locates it in economic phenomena, while

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[127] Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity – An Essay on Exteriority* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 84.

[128] Michael L. Morgan, *The Cambridge Introduction to Emmanuel Levinas* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 4.

[129] Ibid., 5

characterizing ethics as an "expression of class conflict."[130] The trappings of Romanticism in Levinas' thought resonate well with Schleiermacher's theology because both locate meaning in individual experience, feeling, and/or emotion.

While all these naturalistic processes are surely going on as claimed by the likes of Freud, and Marx, Levinas claims that they are all in service of a fundamentally ethical character, which is self-grounding; human existence "is ethical all the way down."[131] Levinas thus links our social nature with his claim of our ethical nature. Our ethical nature is therefore not about how we exist with ourselves, but rather how we exist with others, how we respond when confronted with another.

But here, we seem to come to a paradox with Levinas. While on the one hand he asserts that ethics is what happens when two individuals meet each other, he also claims that this experience is universal. This paradox is reconciled by Levinas through his idea that, while meeting others is a universal experience, it does not become particular for those involved until the encounter because particularity is a result *of* the encounter. "With Levinas," Morgan explains, "…the other is not utterly particular; nor is the self. But together both are, precisely because the other calls the self into question, that is, cries out to it in need and commands the self to accept it."[132] This is the primary function of the other: to call out to the self, to implore, to command, and the self is compelled to comply; and the basic, most fundamental cry from the other is something akin to 'let me live.'[133]. Here we encounter another paradox in Levinas. For at the same time as the other cries out in need, it commands. And at the same time as the self possesses the power to refuse, it complies. This, Levinas contends, is the dialectical power of the self/other paradigm, and there is dynamism in this oscillation.

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[130] Michael L. Morgan, *The Cambridge Introduction to Emmanuel Levinas* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 5.

[131] Ibid., 4

[132] Ibid., 9.

[133] Ibid., 63.

Levinas' thinking here is all about what happens in the gap between the self and the other, much like the dynamism between *Heimweh* and *Fernweh* for Schleiermacher and Tuan. But there is some confusion as to the scale of Levinas' thinking. Was he, for example, meaning to apply concepts of the other to concrete experience, or is this just all theoretical, metaphorical, transcendental, philosophical stuff?

For Levinas, the encounter between the self and other he called the 'face'. 'Face' does not appear to us or come as a phenomenon, but rather as an epiphany; it is revealed through the encounter. It is an expression of the infinite or exteriority, and Levinas contrasts it with 'totality'[134] which is the "domain circumscribed, encompassed, and to a degree constructed by the self..."[135] as well as [t]he domain of reason or mind or culture or theory."[136] The idea of infinity glimmers in the encounter of the self with the face of the other, and thus can only be experienced in the absence of totality.

With Levinas' ideas in mind, in any given encounter, are we not creating places where meaning emerges between people? If the other is "…what I myself am not…"[137], then virtually every person encountered is an experience of place making. This calls to mind Tuan's idea of infinite place-making, as well as Schleiermacher's ideas about constant cosmic dynamism and the reciprocal relationship between *Fernweh* and *Heimweh*.

To be sure, there are fundamental differences between the philosophy of Levinas and the theology of Schleiermacher. While Schleiermacher's is a theology of unity, of overcoming difference to achieve a common religious impulse, Levinas' philosophy is skeptical of such totalizing schemes and seeks to maintain the distinctions between self and other. While Schleiermacher is charging ahead into a brave new world, Levinas

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[134] Michael L. Morgan, *The Cambridge Introduction to Emmanuel Levinas* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 44.

[135] Ibid.

[136] Ibid.

[137] Ibid., 39

wants to apply the brakes. One might say that Levinas is the *Heimweh* to Schleiermacher's *Fernweh*.

Regardless of their intentions, the links between these two writers are clear: there is a relationship between people that informs our context and the course of future events. The event of encounter implies dynamism, and through the encounter a call and response social interaction begins.[138] Like Schleiermacher, Levinas locates religious experience on the inside, a personal encounter that happens also to be ubiquitous. The individual receives a glimpse of the infinite as mediated by an encounter with the other. Through this the self comes to know itself in a more holistic way than was possible before.

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[138] Nigel Zimmerman, *Levinas and Theology* (New York: Bloomsburg Publishing, Plc., 2013), 14.

Chapter 5

5 Cultural Resonance of Schleiermacher's Theology

We have seen how culture affects theology. Schleiermacher's theology, for instance, was affected by his experiences with the Moravians, as well as by the cultural and social developments in Europe during his life. The age of expansionism and colonialism influenced his ideas of otherness; the violently transgressed boundaries during the French Wars prompted his ideas of home.

Similarly it is likely that Tuan's formative experiences had an influence on his notions of security and freedom and his geographic DNA predisposes him to distraction with issues of 'here' versus 'there', 'home', and other spatial categories. But does theology have an impact on culture?

Culture is a complex notion, and we have to be careful about the language used in cultural discourse. As Mitchell explains, 'culture' doesn't actually exist in and of itself; it "…has no ontological basis."[139] Because it is referentially void, it is something that is constantly filled with all kinds of the trapping of human beings. Despite the debates over what, exactly, 'culture' entails, for our purposes, the notion that culture is a "total way of life"[140] seems to work sufficiently; this, after all, is not an exhaustive work in human geography. If consideration of 'culture' proceeds deeper, we risk becoming mired in the infinite regression of 'culture-as-suffix' that currently heralds the ongoing social transformation or re-ordering of our society at large.

So, all things contribute to and help define culture. Under this schema, that includes politics, history, myth, stories, songs, fine art, poems, movies, commercials, sport and,

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[139] Don Michell, *Cultural Geography – A Critical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2000), 12.

[140] Ibid., 13.

yes, religion. Everything human beings do, talk about, create, consume, ignore, or complain about contributes to culture.

From the European laboratory, one lesson can be relied upon with absolute certainty: culture is malleable, always in flux. So too, in contemporary times, trappings of the past can be found in cultural touchstones. We have already seen how theological themes have been explored in music, but now we will turn to other forms of cultural expression to look for evidence of the theological themes previously outlined.

Consider the classic story *The Wizard of Oz*. Sometimes described as the first American Fairy Tale, *The Wizard of Oz* was written by American author L. Frank Baum. Baum was born in 1856, and so grew up in the shadow of the time of territorial expansion, the industrial revolution, and all the rest that characterized Schleiermacher's lifetime. Interestingly, *The Wizard of Oz* was written in 1899, but wasn't available in the theatrical version most familiar until 1939.

As the first American fairy tale, *The Wizard of Oz* shows us that place matters, and that place is messy and dynamic, mutable depending on experience. In his essay titled *There's No Place Like Home: Dorothy Gale's Relations*, Aaron Fortune tells us that for all its popularity now, it wasn't always this way. The movie did not garner much attention until 1956, and at that time, modernity was well under way and had permeated the public consciousness. Migrations were underway, rootlessness was on the rise, and individualism was beginning to run rampant. As such, people began to long for a story that told them the opposite, and that reminded them of what life used to be like. This was when The Wizard of Oz began to take hold, and its popularity hasn't let up much since.[141]

So, even across the Atlantic Ocean, some of the drivers that affected Schleiermacher's thought were also at work in the American consciousness. A line uttered by Dorothy

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[141] Aaron Fortune, "There's No Place Like Home: Dorothy Gale's Relations" in *The Wizard of Oz and Philosophy: Wicked Wisdom of the West*, ed. Randall E. Auxier, and Phillip S. Seng (Chicago: Open Court, 2008), 284.

gives further evidence of a connection between European theology and philosophy and North American fairy tale creation. As Dorothy is yearning for Oz, she ruminates that she wants "...some place where there isn't any trouble [that] you can't get [to] by boat or train…" It seems that boats and trains are still modes of exploration alive and well in the popular consciousness around the time of the final script writing, a clear connection between old world and new.

The 1939 cinematic version of the story is perhaps the one with which most are familiar. In this telling, Dorothy Gale, out of a disillusionment with her home and farm life in Kansas, longs for somewhere other, somewhere, exotic, different; somewhere 'over the rainbow.' And yet, before Dorothy's character is significantly engaged with, the story begins with events surrounding Toto, Dorothy's trusty four-legged companion. In the movie we learn that Dorothy often walks past Miss Gulch's property on her way back to the farm where she lives with Auntie Em and Uncle Henry. Occasionally, we are told, Toto pesters Miss Gulch by digging in her garden and engaging in other kinds of minor annoyances that dogs are wont to do. Miss Gulch responds with fury and wants justice. The resulting trouble that now threatens Toto is made clear by Dorothy who, in one of the opening scenes, tries to explain the threat of Miss Gulch to her aunt and uncle who, it is made clear, are too busy to listen. For the moment, however, Toto is safe. But then along comes Miss Gulch, orders from the local sheriff in hand, to apprehend the dog and have it destroyed.

The stakes are high. Viewers are informed that Miss Gulch owns half the county and so is presumably a character of considerable influence and power. Auntie Em and Uncle Henry, aware of the power dynamic, capitulate and surrender Toto, over the vociferously pleading objections of Dorothy and her pleas for clemency. Miss Gulch refuses, puts Toto into her picnic basket, straps that onto the back of her bicycle, and off she rides toward town to have the deed done. Well, as we all know, Toto escapes from the picnic basket and runs back home, jumping through the window right into the arms of an emotionally shattered Dorothy.

While happy to have her dog back, Dorothy now realizes that, if Toto is to be safe at all, they must be away, and so off they go; they've run away from the farm. At this point, they come into contact with Professor Marvel who convinces Dorothy to return home out of concern for Auntie Em. And so they return to the farm only to be caught up in the midst of a windstorm, which, of course, creates the conditions necessary for the tornado to whisk the farmhouse to Oz. In clever ways, the movie plays with opposing conceptions of home – a place of safety versus a place of danger. Home, for Toto, for instance, went from a place of safety to one of insecurity thanks to the danger represented by Miss Gulch.

These events, of course, foreshadow Dorothy's own trip to Oz. She begins at home but longs to be somewhere else – some place where there is no trouble. This is the juxtaposition between *Heimweh* and *Fernweh*. Like Dorothy, we begin in a place, but look to other places, perhaps better places. But we never travel light or without baggage. Our experiences of where we've been influence our experience of the places to which we look. This insight is plainly expressed through the familiar things that Dorothy takes with her. Toto is one, to be certain. But, less obviously, she also carries the likenesses of the Kansas farm hands, Zeke, Hickory, and Hunk as she goes. These figures would later take on the characters of the Cowardly Lion, the Tin Woodman, and the Scarecrow, respectively, effectively becoming incorporated into Dorothy's experience of the exotic, and so Oz is infused with elements of home.

Miss Gulch, of course, takes on the character of the Wicked Witch of the West, and Professor Marvel becomes the Wizard of Oz himself. Dorothy, for her part, gives no indication that she recognizes the resemblances of the characters with their alter egos back in Kansas. On her return trip home, however, she wakes up in her bedroom and all are gathered around her. She now recognizes that the farmhands were all in Oz, as was Professor Marvel, who strangely pokes his head through Dorothy's bedroom window just as she is recovering.

Thanks to her experiences in Oz, she will no doubt never view her family or life in Kansas in the same way again. Does anyone actually think that Dorothy's experiences in

Oz haven't changed her somehow, haven't broadened her perspective to the point where a combination of Oz and the farm are newly expressed in a Dorothy who is more thoughtful, more worldly, and perhaps just a little bit bigger? In effect, she will always carry a little bit of Oz with her when she engages with those around her. Home has now been irrecoverably altered based on her experiences in Oz, and this is reflective of how, like Schleiermacher says, *Heimweh* prompts *Fernweh*, which affects *Heimweh*, perpetuating the oscillation between the two. And so, the viewer is left to reflect on the realities of how 'home' and 'away' affect their own lives – *Heimweh* and *Fernweh* – how we're affected by experiences of newness and sameness.

But what motivates us to seek out the exotic in the first place? Is it to be perpetually stimulated, entertained, or something more? Fortune notes that fairy tales "…show us what the world could be, what it should be."[142] From this perspective, perhaps we look to the exotic out of a sense of a kind of altruism, striving for, but only asymptotically arriving somewhere we think is closer to good.

In a more contemporary expression of popular culture, we can also see echoes of Schleiermacher's theology and Fortune's insight into the nature of fairy tales. In the popular television program *Glee*, the dour character Sue Sylvester who, by the last episode has inexplicably become Vice-President of the United States, returns to re-dedicate the auditorium of McKinley High to one of the show's anchor characters, Cory Monteith's Finn Hudson. As part of her speech, she recognizes that she has grown as a person and that her perspective on the Glee Club has changed over time. She still sees the Glee Club as deceptive, promising to its members a world that simply doesn't exist; a world filled with fun, where everyone gets along and problems can be solved through song and dance. But while she used to think it was a worthless pursuit, she has come to see it as courageous.

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[142] Aaron Fortune, "There's No Place Like Home: Dorothy Gale's Relations" in *The Wizard of Oz and Philosophy: Wicked Wisdom of the West*, ed. Randall E. Auxier and Phillip S. Seng (Chicago and LaSalle: Open Court, 2008), 284.

"It takes a lot of bravery," she says, " to look around you and see the world not as it is but as it should be. A world where the quarterback becomes best friends with the gay kid, and the girl with the big nose ends up on Broadway. Glee is about imagining a world like that, and finding the courage to open up your heart and sing about it." Oh, how the parallels to *The Wizard of Oz* abound, for isn't this what Dorothy did? In this way, Glee is a fairy tale come to life on the television screens of millions of people around the world, and lends credence to the ability of fairy tales to change our lives.

Not to be left out, literary sources also abound with expressions of theological thought. Erich Maria Remarque's story *All Quiet on the Western Front*, for example, explores themes of home and away through the prism of the sacrifice, courage, fear, life and death that is warfare. At one point in the story, a German soldier is granted leave from the fighting after enduring the horrors of the front line trenches in Europe during the First World War. Although he is happy to be away from the front and at home, he notes that he does not feel 'at home' while at home. The place is alien, the people different somehow. His experience of the front, uniquely his in relation to his family is so utterly other that home has become the exotic, and his reality in the army has instead become home. Familiar and exotic have become inverted. Consider these lines from the book:

> I imagined leave would be different from this. Indeed, it was different a year ago. It is I of course that have changed in the interval. There lies a gulf between that time and to-day. At that time I still knew nothing about the war, we had only been in quiet sectors. But now I see that I have been crushed without knowing it. I find I do not belong here any more, it is a foreign world.[143]

The author has successfully placed one of the main characters in tension, in the gap between home and away, in the midst of both changing and merging. For him, the front line is the new normal, the new real. The result is a character that is very much torn between his pining for home, and his pining for the strange. He realizes he wants to be in both at the same time but knows he belongs in neither. Both places now reside in him; he personifies the two places, bridging them like a node in creation.

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[143] Erich Maria Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front* (New York: Ballantyne Books, 1982), 168.

Through song, through the big screen and the small screen, and in literature, we have come to see that theological principles and ideas have been handed down to us. We may not always recognize them as such, but they remain, baked into our cultural cake. Knowingly or unknowingly, we consume and incorporate our theological inheritance everyday through the mediating phenomenon of culture, which is always in flux and to which we continually contribute. There is reciprocity, then, that we all relentlessly experience best expressed by Mitchell's epiphany that "[cultures] shape the spaces we live in just as the spaces we live in shape them."[144]

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[144] Don Michell, *Cultural Geography – A Critical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2000), 12.

Chapter 6

6 Discussion

This section turns to first a review of the preceding as a way of collecting and summarizing the salient threads followed by a discussion of the benefits of a theological basis for church guidance literature.

We began with statistics that claim religious attendance is on the decline, and has been for some time. Decreases in church attendance have been noticed and tracked in Canada, at least since the time of church union, when reasons for these decreases were ascribed to immigration, greater mobility due to financial and technological means, and a growing pool of competing activities such as trade unions. Decreases in church attendance often mean financial dire straits for particular congregations as sources of regular givings dry up.

As a result, amalgamation is often eventually explored as a way of combining resources and sharing costs to increase the odds of future viability. No uncomplicated affair, an industry-like dimension of church life developed that sought to bridge spatial and emotional gaps between congregations and somehow create common expressions of community and worship. To this end, guidance documents were drafted, finalized, and communicated to congregations by institutional church bodies, but these documents focused on the practical aspects of church amalgamation, ignoring or giving short shrift to a theological foundation. Lack of theological foundation is a problem for churches undertaking the work of amalgamation and, by not providing it, institutional churches are undermining the process in important ways.

So, how can theology help construct guidance literature and guide congregations to the best possible outcome? Theological thought offers several benefits in this regard, but herein three will be highlighted. First, theology is a portal to locating the process of amalgamation within a broader history of the church. This is important and is something that can provide insight and therefore clarity to present-day issues. Historical awareness, a glance backward in time, can provide continuity and context to understand present

challenges. The connection to history is why the local church is manifestly important, but also why it is utterly insignificant. It is manifestly important because all of church history for this building, this congregation has been leading up to now. It is utterly insignificant because the catholic church is much larger than any one church or congregation. This insight can only be realized through an awareness of history and, specifically, church history. Travelling to history makes the church small, returning home makes the church big. This is *Heimweh* and *Fernweh* in action, it is why history is important to Schleiermacher, and why, he says, we live in the gap between the two, always in tension. By looking back into history, by looking to the greater story, the myth, we can see where our small story fits into the larger, universal narrative.[145] One of the reasons acknowledging theology is so important is that it provides continuity – a connection with the past. Since it is so tied up with space and place, and represents such a milestone, such a large change, church amalgamation is one of those times where theology and geography should meet to provide guidance on how to proceed. As Leonard Hjalmarson says in his book *No Home Like Place*, '[a]part from history, our faith is unintelligible…".[146] One reasonable reading of this sentiment might contend that faithful ways of knowing and doing are intimately linked with history, and therefore with place, because history always happens in time and in space. The events of history, the people and the experience are what make spaces places. Without history, what remains are disconnected, discrete events whose meanings are detached from the rest of human activity. This phenomenon, this disconnectedness is, Hjalmarson says, what happened when place was abstracted to 'space'.[147]

Stephen Webb notes this same phenomenon in the soundscape of the natural world. At night, he says, we hear sounds. But we don't hear just sounds, we hear things making

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[145] Robert Ellwood, *Myth – Key Concepts in Religion* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2008), 11.

[146] Leonard Hjalmarson, *No Home Like Place: A Christian Theology of Place* (Portland, Urban Loft, 2015), 109.

[147] Ibid., 113.

sounds.[148] This observation, and this distinction, is important. Instead of hearing a discrete, disembodied phenomenon, Webb connects it to a particular source, thereby grounding it to a particular creature in a particular place and time. Phenomena disconnected from their sources are "unnerving"[149] and induce experiences of "helplessness and vulnerability."[150] Similarly with the church, context matters.

So, the first way that theology can aid church amalgamation guidance literature is related to history. Related to this, the second way that ignoring theology undermines the process of amalgamation has to do with scale. Scale is important to Schleiermacher, Tuan, and Levinas. Schleiermacher sees the infinite reflected in the individual and vice versa; he sees the community as forming the individual and vice versa, with religious impulse as the result. He says that the drive toward less imperfection is ongoing and happens at multiple scales of church life, from the individual to the congregation to the institution, and that splits in communion are only temporary, but maybe necessary, detours on the road toward full Christian communion. Often the imaginations of congregants become captured with the idea of 'their church' and what the loss of that particular church might mean for the larger community. While the impact might be significant, this outlook is misaligned with Schleiermacher's theology. A sense of scale is an important tool for processes of church amalgamation because it is a fundamentally relational dimension of life, and might serve to ease the transition for some congregants from one physical place of worship to another.

A third way that theology can contribute positively to processes of church amalgamation is by providing a sense of dynamism, and this is related to the first two. According to Schleiermacher, the cosmos is alive with the interrelatedness of things. *Fernweh* is always changing, and therefore so is *Heimweh*. This is the stuff of church life, and by

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[148] Stephen H. Webb, *The Divine Voice – Christian Proclamation and the Theology of Sound*. (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2004), 33.

[149] Ibid.

[150] Ibid.

sustaining it, the church defies stagnation and death. A dynamic church, reaching out, exploring, gaining new perspectives and coming to better know itself is important for successful attempts at amalgamation. For their part, Tuan and Levinas also sense dynamism in the drive to encounter the other. Tuan links the human activity of exploration with a collision of home and away, the familiar and the exotic. For Levinas, approaching Infinity is inextricably tied to the human activity of encounter.

Just like other fields of inquiry, the church should look to its past. One can scarcely imagine a physicist who does not, on occasion, look to Newton or Copernicus for guidance or inspiration. Likewise, could an English writer create something as wonderful without considering the works of Shakespeare, Chaucer, Dickens, or Cranmer? So too, for theological-based institution like churches, theology is imperative for affairs of churchly estate, and all affairs should begin here.

In his famous poetry, John Donne, wrote on his deathbed, perhaps his most famous words:

> No man is an island entire of itself; every man
>
> is a piece of the continent, a part of the main;
>
> if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe
>
> is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as
>
> well as any manner of thy friends or of thine
>
> own were; any man's death diminishes me,
>
> because I am involved in mankind.
>
> And therefore never send to know for whom
>
> the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.151

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[151] John Donne, *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions Together with Death's Duell* (Boston: Small, Maynard and Co., Inc., 1926), 108.

Donne was writing about the connectedness of all things, and if we take as metaphorical the references made within, this idea of interconnectedness is one that should be applied to church amalgamation.

In many contemporary institutions of higher learning, tremendous advances in studies of science, technology, and engineering have overshadowed the discipline of theology as a source of knowledge and discursive contribution. It should not, however, be overlooked that, over the centuries, theology has produced a vast body of knowledge that, carefully accessed, has the potential to deliver profound and lasting benefits to society at large. Why is this the case? How is it that a body of knowledge so tied up in religion, of all things, could possibly be considered valuable, especially as contemporary society seems to be moving away from organized religion, as the statistics provided at the beginning of this work show? Part of what this paper shows is that it is precisely due to its entanglement with religion and culture that makes theology such a valuable foundation for explaining, critiquing, and contributing to solutions to many contemporary problems.

The move away from organized religion has its roots in the shadow of the events of the Enlightenment. Large-scale departure from the pew truly began, however, with the rise of modernity, typically taken to have occurred around the turn of the 20th century. As a consequence, organized religion and religious thought underpins all but approximately the last hundred years of human history, and even now, much social discourse revolves around issues of the church. As such, accumulating comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the cultural stage for contemporary issues must look toward, not away from, theology. Churches should look to their past, to those who possessed the gumption to delve into the ways in which the divine and creation interact, and come up with something valuable at the other end.

Now that the ‘why’ of theology for church amalgamation has been addressed, we look to the ‘what’. For much of Western history, people have been engaged in writing about gods, God, and the relationship between creator and creation. These writings span all kinds and modes of theological inquiry, so where to begin?

For an activity like amalgamation where relationships and relating to others should be of chief concern, it makes sense to begin with theologians who deal with meaning as mediated between people who find religious impulse originating within. This is the strength of Schleiermacher and others like him whose theology, from modern through contemporary times, has dominated the discourse.

The Schleiermachian way of viewing theology and the universe is all about interplay between the exotic and the familiar, the creator and the created, between the big and the small, the universal and the particular, unity and community, between there and here. What is more, this interplay, or feedback, is relentless and ongoing and describes a certain activity and dynamism inherent in the universe.

Schleiermacher would come to believe that there are no hard lines in the universe, but instead threads weave themselves together, like strands in a rope, and religion, he would say is "…sense and taste for the infinite, and is neither metaphysics nor morals, but as essentially a part of human nature as either knowledge or action."[152] The dance of inquiry, knowledge, followed by self-inquiry and self-knowledge is, for Schleiermacher, the only way to come to know the other, the Infinite and, through contrast, oneself.

The ideas of *Fernweh* and *Heimweh* are not restricted to individuals. In fact, Schleiermacher goes out of his way to say that they apply "…not only to individuals, but can also be witnessed in collective cultures as well…"[153], opening the door to widespread application as an approach to a kind of group self-awareness. This lends itself well to application in the visible church as part of a process of amalgamation.

Schleiermacher's theology is about overcoming differences in the pursuit of grand unity. To be sure, there is a function of his theology that has to do with borders and home, but *Fernweh* is the dominant intellectual force. This is clear from his two-fold framework,

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[152] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion – Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, trans. John Oman (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1893), xxxii-xxxiii.

[153] Steven R. Jungkeit, *Spaces of Modern Theology – Geography and Power in Schleiermacher's World* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012). 48.

which he uses to catalogue world religions. For him, everything is moving toward Christianity as an ideal, as the least imperfect expression of being. While holding some truth, other religions, he says, are more imperfect and can only offer perhaps some detail to the less imperfect Christian faith. Setting aside for the moment what are less than savory specifics of his thought, we can clearly see that, for Schleiermacher, progress is toward unity, which is the end result. This is what makes Schleiermacher a good theological starting point for church communities to look for if successful amalgamation is the goal.

Still, boundaries play an important role for Schleiermacher and the reasons why are understandable. These boundaries range in scale from the national or territorial to the simpler but no less meaningful walls of the home. "The house," Gaston Bachelard says, "…is our corner of the world…it is our first universe, a very real cosmos in every sense of the word."[154] The walls of the home establish that cosmos, help define its existence and so *Heimweh* is enabled at least in part by boundaries.

Such boundaries exist because of other boundaries at larger scales, neighbourhood boundaries and national boundaries. Schleiermacher would agree, noting that there exists a tension in the concept of home. It is "a space for theological daydreams set against the knowledge that forces exist which can easily overwhelm the walls."[155] In this way, homes are precarious, existing only by the grace of other boundaries, and their walls are, really, the last line of defense for theological thought. At the same time, boundaries have to be permeable, accessible to the outside world. Just as a house has windows and doors, points through which there can be an exchange with others, our willingness to engage with others must be equally as permeable.

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[154] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), x, quoted in Steven R. Jungkeit, *Spaces of Modern Theology – Geography and Power in Schleiermacher's World* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012). 137.

[155] Steven R. Jungkeit, *Spaces of Modern Theology – Geography and Power in Schleiermacher's World* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 139.

The meeting of the known and the unknown suggest a territorial way of conceiving of the two opposing drives of the human soul, and the imagery suggests that Schleiermacher thinks that home is fragile, always at risk of being changed by some outside force.

Modes of *Heimweh* and *Fernweh* are also present in the writing of Yi-Fu Tuan, which supports Schleiermacher in important ways. His background as a globe-hopping youngster may have influenced some of his geographical positions, which address issues of identity, space, place, and scale. His excursions into the importance of sacred space show us that what has historically been considered sacred is subject to both spatial relocation and coexistence with other sacred spaces, with no contradiction. This view privileges space over place. At the same time, however, Tuan realizes the important role that family scrapbooks, houses, neighbourhoods and the like play in our lives, serving to ground us as we go about our business. These two perspectives obviously echo Schleiermacher's *Fernweh* and *Heimweh*, albeit in a less theologically expressed, strongly spatial sense. Tuan perhaps encapsulates the whole issue well with this expressed anecdote, a conversation between Niels Bohr and Werner Heisenberg during a visit to Kronberg Castle in Denmark worth presenting in full. Bohr said to Heisenberg:

> Isn't it strange how this castle changes as soon as one imagines that Hamlet lived here? As scientists we believe that a castle consists only of stones, and admire the way the architect put them together. The stones, the green roof with its patina, the wood carvings in the church, constitute the whole castle. None of this should be changed by the fact that Hamlet lived here, and yet it is changed completely. Suddenly the walls and the ramparts speak a quite different language. The courtyard becomes an entire world, a dark corner reminds us of the darkness in the human soul, we hear Hamlet's "To be or not to be." Yet all we really know about Hamlet is that his name appears in a thirteenth-century chronicle. No one can prove that he really lived, let alone that he lived here. But everyone knows the questions Shakespeare had him ask, the human depth he was made to reveal, and so he, too, had to be found a place on earth, here in Kronberg. And once we know that, Kronberg becomes quite a different castle for us." [156]

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[156] Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place – The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 4.

So, there it is. For Tuan, *Fernweh* is the realization that place is space, and *Heimweh* is the realization that space is place. “Human beings,” he says, “require both space and place. Human lives are a dialectical movement between shelter and venture, attachment and freedom. In open space one can become intensely aware of place; and in the solitude of a sheltered place the vastness of space beyond acquires a haunting presence. A healthy being welcomes constraint and freedom, the boundedness of place and the exposure of space.”[157] And therefore, Tuan again places human beings in the tension filled gap between the two.

Emmanuel Levinas, for his part, is included as a counterpoint to Schleiermacher and Tuan to highlight the relevance of their work to church amalgamation. Although he, too, deals with themes revolving around *Heimweh* and *Fernweh* (for him they are self and other), Levinas is ultimately interested in the preservation of uniqueness, of difference. This is grounded in his suspicion of totalizing regimes due to the experience of the horrors of the Second World War. But as such, he must be included here just because he provides that counterpoint. If Schleiermacher is charging ahead with unity, Levinas is advocating for the preservation of the unique. Levinas is the brake pedal to Schleiermacher’s accelerator. He is the *Heimweh* to Schleiermacher’s *Fernweh*.

These theological themes have been explored throughout all kinds of storytelling and therefore are woven throughout the cultural fabric of the Western world. As such, why should matters of the church be any different? Is there something insulating churches from theology? In fact, the church should be looking to theological sources as voice of support in its business. In this regard, the words of Ecclesiastes (1: 9-11) should not be forgotten.

> 9 What has been is what will be,
>
> and what has been done is what will be done;

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[157] Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place – The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 54.

there is nothing new under the sun.

10 Is there a thing of which it is said,

"See, this is new"?

It has already been,

in the ages before us.

In this light, the subsequent verse of Ecclesiastes should come as a warning, not a prophecy:

11 The people of long ago are not remembered,

nor will there be any remembrance

of people yet to come

by those who come after them.

7 Conclusion

7.1 Theology Found

Churches must incorporate theology into the everyday business of the church, even those with a large component of practical concerns to consider. As a matter of churchly estate, amalgamation must proceed from a theological basis that is engaged with in a deliberate and explicit way. It must be made accessible to congregants to provide context for place in history, to provide a sense of scale, and to promote a sense of dynamism within the church. To do otherwise does not only undermine the credibility of the organization, but it does a disservice to congregations who might benefit from a more theologically robust approach to amalgamation.

The theology of Friedrich Schleiermacher is a good choice for projects of unity, such as amalgamation, because it is about overcoming differences in expressions of *Heimweh* and *Fernweh* in the service of achieving one cohesive whole. This notion has interdisciplinary support in the writing of Yi-Fu Tuan who locates human lives lived at the intersection of these two opposing forces. Emmanuel Levinas' writing provides the counterweight for unifying drives, by seeking to preserve uniqueness despite a rich philosophy of encountering the other. His philosophical *Heimweh* is thus the more dominant driver.

Still, the Christian project, for Schleiermacher, is about overcoming differences, and forces are at work within churches that lessen them. Schleiermacher puts it this way: "The closer the fellowship is the more will each seek what is his neighbour's and take it up into his own life, with the natural result that differences are correspondingly lessened."[158]Difference, to Schleiermacher however, is not worth worrying much about. For him, difference comes out in the wash, and, even when based on specific dogmatics and ethics, which are a "minor part of the Church's history,"[159] separation in the church

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[158] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd., 1989), 584.

[159] Ibid., 585.

as a manifestation of difference is temporary.[160] Even in a state of division, Schleiermacher maintains that each part of the church remains connected to the Christian story.[161]

Incorporating theology can be very easy given the top-down organizational structure and contemporary modes of communication. For guidance literature, churches should focus on their expertise and provide theological as well as scriptural foundation and justification, perhaps while also commissioning a companion document from external sources on how to conduct the practical matters of congregational amalgamation. In the same document, congregants should be encouraged to delve into the rich theological ancestry on the topic. This is an approach that should not only be intended to shepherd congregations through the practical process, but should be considered an opportunity to fire the imagination and to reconnect with the roots of the church, their stories, and their heroes.

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[160] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd., 1989), 685.

[161] Ibid., 682.

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Curriculum Vitae

Name:	John David Samuel MacKenzie
Post-secondary Education and Degrees:	Queen's University at Kingston Kingston, Ontario, Canada 2001-2005 B.A.
Honours and Awards:	The Very Rev. Leslie B. Jenkins Prize in Systematic Theology 2014
Related Work Experience	Teaching Assistant Huron University College at Western University 2014-2015
	Teaching Assistant Huron University College at Western University 2015-2016