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This is a personal paper from Bishop Dr Joe Aldred at Churches Together in England.
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Intercultural Ecumenism: Culture as ecumenical agency

Introduction

In this paper I begin to explore how culture, including ethnicity and faith, might be appropriated as ecumenical agency. Engaging culture in the service of ecumenism requires rethinking about both the nature of both. At least two acts of deconstruction is called for; deconstructing the hegemony of western Christian culture that impacts profoundly on relationships between Christians in Britain from different cultural camps is a priority, and understanding the inadequacies of structural ecumenism based on an ideology of a 'search for unity rather than appropriating a gift already given to the church. A new approach to ecumenism is called for with realised unity as its central thesis and cultural agency as its expressive arm. I approach this inquiry against the background of my own multiple cultural identities as a Black African-Caribbean British Christian from a non-mainstream British church tradition. My identity is an example of microcosm of culture's complexities and its close proximity to the epicentre of human self-understanding.

Culture

Culture is a way of thinking and behaving by an identifiable, substantial social grouping, by which it derives its identity in relation to others.¹ Cultural identity also includes tribe, ethnicity (blood and belonging), religion and nationality.² And Richard Niebuhr's use of civilisation as a synonym for culture marked by language, habits, beliefs, customs, social organisation, inherited artefacts, technical processes, and values;³ highlights culture as probably the broadest identifier of human belonging. Parekh also shows the reach of culture when he says, 'Even the most creative minds are shaped by their society from their

¹ Ferguson, Sinclair B., and David F. Wright (eds) (1988) *New Dictionary of Theology*, Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, p.183.

² Chaplin, Jonathan (2011) *Multiculturalism: a Christian Retrieval*, Theos, London, p.50. See also Leslie Newbigin (1986) *Foolishness to the Greeks*, SPCK, London, p.21 where Newbigin refers to culture as the complex of ideas, beliefs and practices of a people

³ H. Richard Niebuhr (1952) *Christ and Culture*, Faber and Faber Ltd., London, p46.

childhood onwards, they take their bearings from their experiences within it, use its language, share some of its unconscious assumptions'.⁴ Whilst there may be notions of high and low culture with reference to manners and morals,⁵ no one exists outside culture's grasp. It is, arguably, the primary means by which individuals and groups understand their place in the world; and within the British context, ethnicity – e.g. Asian, Black/African, White/European - and faith – e.g. Christian, Jewish, Muslim - are key indicators of cultural belonging and identity. Suki Ali points to the pluralistic nature of culture by use of the term 'mixed identities' evident in ideas about a person's 'race'⁶ or 'ethnicity', 'culture' and 'nationality'.⁷ In modern times ethnicity, from the Greek *ethnos*, meaning people, but also stock, multitude, crowd or nation⁸ has come to be recognised as a key purveyor of social-cultural identity.⁹

That culture is a complex entity is also shown by the terms sub-culture - indicating minor cultural expressions within a main culture, cross-culture, multi-culture and inter-culture. Shannahan uses cross-culture to depict routes and roots of twenty-first century urbanized urban contexts; spaces where a series of porous overlapping circles reflect the fluidity of the new urban world.¹⁰ Cruz uses 'multi-culture' to identify when more than two cultures co-exist; and uses 'Inter-culture' to mean the interaction between, among or with other cultures. For Cruz, inter-culture also means 'mutual'; and captures encounter - whether positive or negative, superficial or deep - between and among cultures and religions.¹¹

⁴ Parekh, Bhikhu (2000) *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory*, Palgrave, Hampshire, p143

⁵ Cosgrove, Charles H., Herold Weiss and K. K. Yeo (2005) *Cross Cultural Paul*, William B Eerdmans Publishing Co., Cambridge, p

⁶ Ali, Suki (2003) *Mixed-Race, Post-Race: New Ethnicities and Cultural Practices*, New York, Berg Publishers; who argues that 'Race' is now largely discredited as a term, having its roots in the pseudoscientific categorisation of humans, in order to inferiorize, control and subjugate some; with whites at the top and Black Africans at the bottom of a racial pyramid.

⁷ Ali, Suki, p.9

⁸ Bolaf, Guido, (2003) Raffaele Bracalenti, *Peter Braham and Sandro Gindro (Eds) Dictionary of Race, Ethnicity and Culture*, London, SAGE Publications Ltd. See also Office of National Statistics

⁹ We hear of black culture, Asian culture, etc., where ethnicity is the assumed indicator of a person's or a people's experience and values and way of life.

¹⁰ Shannahan, Chris (2010) *Voices from the borderland: re-imagining cross-cultural urban theology in the twenty-first century*, Equinox, London, p.7. See also Harold Coward, Pinit Ratanakul (Eds) (1999) *Cross-Cultural Dialogue on Health Care Ethics*, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, Waterloo, ON, CAN, p.8 where they deploy the term the 'we-self' to describe the nature of cross-cultural relationships

¹¹ Cruz, Gemma Tulud (2010) *Intercultural Theology of Migration : Pilgrims in the Wilderness*, Brill Academic Publishers, Boston USA, p.167. See also Cosgrove, Weiss and Yeo who say; Cross-cultural refers to movement from one culture to another; Multiculturalism is a descriptive term for a culturally diverse social setting; and Intercultural refers to mutual exchange, p4

Chibueze Udeani in a work that analyses the relationship between Western missionary Christianity and the African Igbo people says a key to understanding the concept of inter-culture is dialogue.¹² Or as Cheng calls it, 'conversation' between culturally different speakers.¹³ Inter-culture concerns itself with the fecund dialogue that is possible between cultures, with its implied mutual learning and enrichment. These understandings of culture show its potential as a means of communication.

Faith expressions themselves can be observed as forms of culture; because they are identifiable as groups that think and behave in contradistinction to other groups. One needs only critique one's own Christian denomination to discover that it expresses itself in culturally different ways to others. We speak of Christian culture, Islamic culture, Sikh culture, Pentecostal culture, evangelical culture, Anglican culture, Baptist, Methodist and Catholic cultures.

A key question that faces us is whether culture is of God, the Devil or a neutral naturally occurring phenomenon. Carter describes a leaning towards divine origin when he describes cultures as expressions of the human life God created.¹⁴ While Christians may have little difficulty believing that God created a world in which there is good and evil, some may be challenged to embrace the notion that God created culture because it embodies good and evil. Yet, Revelation 7.9 suggests an eschatological community comprising 'a great multitude from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb'. Stephen D. Moore in a post-colonial reading of the book of Revelation argues that this text is all the more counterintuitive in that every nation, tribe, people and language had equal status, gathered not before the Emperor, but the Lamb of God.¹⁵ This may be interpreted as signalling divine acceptance of cultural difference.

Niebuhr's rhetorical and enduring five-point proposition concerning Christ and culture: Christ against culture, the Christ of culture, Christ above culture, Christ and culture in

¹² Udeani, Chibueze. *Intercultural Theology and Study of Religions, Volume 2 : Inculturation as Dialogue : Igbo Culture and the Message of Christ*. Amsterdam, NLD: Editions Rodopi, 2007. p 217

¹³ Cheng, Winnie. *Intercultural Conversation: A Study of Hong Kong Chinese*, Philadelphia, USA: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2004. p 1

¹⁴ Carter, Craig A. (2006) *Rethinking Christ and culture: a post-Christian perspective*, Brazos Press, Grand Rapids, MI, p.59.

¹⁵ Stephen D Moore 'The Revelation to John' in Segovia, Fernando F. and Sugirtharajah, R.S. (Eds) (2007) *Bible and Postcolonialism: Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings*, London, Continuum International Publishing, p.447

paradox, and Christ the transformer of culture; suggest culture as something about which something must be done.¹⁶ A further challenge posed by culture is its propensity to be used for ill. In his critique of Niebuhr's 'Christ and Culture', Carter argues that the concept of 'Christendom' is the 'unarticulated presupposition behind Niebuhr's work'.¹⁷ Christendom in Niebuhr's conceptual framework was synonymous with Western civilisation - itself composed of the twin arms of church and civil government – which in turns was synonymous with Christian.¹⁸ In this way western culture gain ascendancy on those cultures that fell under its rule under the guise of a supposedly culture-neutral faith.

Carey and Lynn shows how in recent times poststructuralist and postcolonial theorists have argued that the ideas grouped under the rubric of western Enlightenment are irredeemably Eurocentric, and implicitly bound up with imperialism as it occludes cultural difference and refuses moral and social relativity; as the Enlightenment naturalizes a teleology in which all roads lead inexorably to an episteme associated with the West. In so doing, non-Western populations are stripped of agency and historicity.¹⁹ This cultural elitism posited the racial, cultural, linguistic (and may I add, religious) inferiority of the colonized as compared with Europeans.²⁰ Deligiorgi argues that whilst the Enlightenment brought an emancipatory message, its elitism towards others based on its self-generating cultural hegemony drives non-European cultures into marginalisation.²¹ Ward reminds us that cultures come not just with values but with assumptions too.²² The combination of hegemonic cultural imperialism of a combination of western Enlightenment and western Protestant Christendom have deep consequences for minority cultures in Britain. It is therefore arguably the case western culture already exerts significant sway in the trajectory of the ecumenism that exists based on the hegemony of western protestant ecumenical leadership.

¹⁶ Niebuhr, H. Richard (1951) *Christ and Culture*, Faber and Faber Limited, London

¹⁷ Carter, Craig A. (2006), p53

¹⁸ Carter, Craig A. (2006), p14

¹⁹ Carey, Daniel and Lynn Festa (Eds) (2009) *Postcolonial Enlightenment: Eighteenth-century Colonialisms and Postcolonial Theory*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, p.23

²⁰ Carey, Daniel and Lynn Festa (Eds) (2009) *Postcolonial Enlightenment: Eighteenth-century Colonialisms and Postcolonial Theory*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, p222

²¹ Deligiorgi, Katerina (2005) *Kant and the Culture of Enlightenment*, New York, State University of New York Press, p.55

²² Ward, Graham (2005) *Christ and culture*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, p3

Reddie²³ argues that the cultural expression of Black identity in Britain is mediated through the Black Atlantic experience of slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism. Its central tenet is the construction of a binary of blackness as 'bestial' and 'less than'; and whiteness as 'goodness' personified. Black Christianity, he says has always had to respond to the realities of racism. Reddie posits that unity will come through the deconstruction of toxic relationship between Christianity, empire and notions of white British superiority. Against a complex background concerning culture, the World Council of Churches has stated its aim to have a united church that is a universal community where people of different traditions, cultures and races are brought into 'an organic and living unity in Christ' (WCC General Assembly, Uppsala, Sweden 1968).²⁴

Ecumenism

The term 'ecumenical' derives from (Greek) *oikoumene* meaning the whole inhabited earth.²⁵ More specifically, ecumenism refers to the 'quest for church unity'²⁶ expressed in common service, fellowship and witness.²⁷ And it is the perceived loss of wholeness that brought into being the modern Ecumenical Movement, particularly since 1910, in hope of recapturing a lost unity, or realising the hope of Jesus' prayer for it (John 17). However, the movement has been predominantly western and protestant.

Even within this limited sphere of the world church, the concept of unity is contested. The main contestations concern whether the church already possesses or seeks unity. Harr suggests that the churches' share an interdependence that is rooted in a transcendent existence that 'permeates the reality of this world'.²⁸ Here, 'the churches are not creating a unity but are striving to retrieve one which never ceases to exist through Christ in his Holy

²³ Reddie, Anthony 'Unity in the face of racism' in Clive Barrett (ed) (2012) *Unity in Process: reflections on ecumenism*, Darton Longman and Todd, London pp.169-179

²⁴ Harr, Miriam 'The struggle for an organic, conciliar and diverse church – models of church unity in earlier stages of ecumenical dialogue' in Gesa Elsbeth Thiessen (Ed) (2009), *Ecclesiological Investigations: Ecumenical Ecclesiology*: p.70

²⁵ Clements, Keith (2013) *Ecumenical Dynamic – living in more than one place at once*, WCC, Geneva, p.6

²⁶ Ferguson, Sinclair B., and David F Wright (1988) *New Dictionary of Theology*, Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, UK., p219.

²⁷ Kinnamon, Michael and Brian E. Cope (1997) *The ecumenical movement – an anthology of key texts and voices*, World Council of Churches, Geneva, pp.1&2

²⁸ Harr, Miriam 'The struggle for an organic, conciliar and diverse church – models of church unity in earlier stages of ecumenical dialogue' in Gesa Elsbeth Thiessen (Ed) (2009), *Ecclesiological Investigations: Ecumenical Ecclesiology*: p.72

Spirit'.²⁹ The reality however is of a church seemingly divided, or diverse, that attempts to address inter-ecclesial divisions – i.e. between traditions and intra-ecclesial divisions – i.e. within traditions.³⁰ The movement seems undecided about the very nature of unity as something realised, or something sought.

Various concepts have emerged in pursuit of the holy grail of church unity; of which 'Visible unity' is premier. Harr warns that 'the full reality of visible unity of the churches is a reality of which the churches have no previous experience'; and the final outcome and shape are unknown and in the making.³¹ According to the 1927 Lausanne conference, visible unity will be marked by 'a church so united [that] the ultimate loyalty of every member would be given to the whole body and not to any part of it'.³² Another way of articulating the aim of ecumenism is 'organic unity', sometimes called unity in diversity, based upon Paul's description of the church as the body of Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 12).³³ Other ecumenical typologies include Conciliar Fellowship, Receptive ecumenism, Ordinary ecumenism, Reconciled Diversity, and recently Archbishop Desmond Tutu recommended Ubuntu from African cosmology. These theoretical ideas express themselves in ecumenical models.

The main body for ecumenical interaction within Britain is the 'Churches Together' which succeeded the British Council of Churches in 1990 and operates at four-nation, national, county, city, and local levels. Some are ecumenical experiments³⁴ like 'Local Ecumenical Projects', others are mission-focussed task-and-finish initiatives. There have been bi-lateral and multi-lateral ecumenical conversations and attempts at better cooperation or consolidation such as between Anglican and Roman Catholic,³⁵ Anglican and Orthodox,³⁶ Anglican and Baptists, Anglican and Methodists; wider a field between Catholic and the

²⁹ Harr, Miriam 'The struggle for an organic, conciliar and diverse church – models of church unity in earlier stages of ecumenical dialogue' in Gesa Elsbeth Thiessen (Ed) (2009), *Ecclesiological Investigations: Ecumenical Ecclesiology*: p.65

³⁰ Thiessen, Gesa Elsbeth (Ed) (2009). *Ecclesiological Investigations: Ecumenical Ecclesiology: Unity, Diversity and Otherness in a Fragmented World*, London: Continuum International Publishing, 2009. p.14

³¹ Harr, Miriam p.62

³² Harr, Miriam 'The struggle for an organic, conciliar and diverse church – models of church unity in earlier stages of ecumenical dialogue' in Gesa Elsbeth Thiessen (Ed) (2009), *Ecclesiological Investigations: Ecumenical Ecclesiology*: p.64

³³ Harr, Miriam 'The struggle for an organic, conciliar and diverse church – models of church unity in earlier stages of ecumenical dialogue' in Gesa Elsbeth Thiessen (Ed) (2009), *Ecclesiological Investigations: Ecumenical Ecclesiology*: p.64

³⁴ Jeffery, R. M. C. (1971) *Ecumenical Experiments: A Handbook*, British Council of Churches, London

³⁵ ARCIC – The Final Report (1981) SPCK, London. See also *Growing Together in Unity and Mission: Building on 40 years of Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue* (2007), SPCK, London

³⁶ *Anglican-Orthodox Dialogue* (1976) SPCK, London

World Council of Churches,³⁷ and between the WCC and Pentecostals. Other Christian streams such as the Evangelical Alliance, the Free Churches Group and a short-lived Pentecostal Alliance UK have also contributed to the sum of ecumenical activities.

The new black-led churches that have become prominent in Britain since the 1950s have also been engaged ecumenically in two significant ways. They have been in increasing numbers joining mainstream ecumenical bodies and simultaneously sought to establish their own ecumenical entities. In 1968 the International Ministerial Council of Great Britain (IMCGB) was formed; the Afro-West Indian United Council of Churches in 1976; the Councils of African and Caribbean Churches in 1979; and the West Indian Evangelical Alliance in 1984. Other black-led ecumenical agencies continue to emerge at local, regional and national levels; the latest being the National Church Leaders Forum (NCLF) launched in 2011.³⁸ The IMCGB, states as its *raison d'être* that aims

...to provide authenticity and recognition to its member Churches, and in particular black and minority-ethnic Churches, bringing them into a line of unity, respect and understanding, and into parity.³⁹

The IMCGB further states that it was set up to overcome racism in Church life. At the root of the existence of Black-led ecumenical organisations and churches the need for respect for black Christians' selfhood as human beings and as people of faith. This need is not always heard by White Christians who are part of the hegemonic white culture that dominates mainstream ecumenism. Little wonder Oloyede observes that there is a breakdown in communication across cultural and ethnic divides between black and white Christians in England.⁴⁰

In a study of the theory and practice of *koinonia* i.e. communion in Christian churches, Sagovsky, refers to ecumenism as the manner in which churches draw closer together; and says that only if churches deepen their *koinonia* in the midst of the tensions that threaten to pull them apart can they truly exercise their ministry of reconciliation in a divided world.⁴¹

³⁷ Joint working group between Roman Catholic and the World Council of Churches Eighth Report, WCC, Geneva

³⁸ See <http://bmcdirectory.co.uk>

³⁹ <http://www.imc-gb.org.uk>

⁴⁰ Oloyede, Jonathan 'Ecumenism and the Black Church' pp.22-44 in Aldred, Joe and Ogbo, Keno (2010) *The Black Church in the 21st Century*, London, Darton Longman and Todd

⁴¹ Sagovsky, Nicholas (2000) *Ecumenism, Christian Origins & the Practice of Communion*, Port Chester, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, p 195.

Cultural difference, particularly in the form of ethnicity and denominational affiliations act as challenges to mission, yet as Avis points out, Christianity is and always has been unquestionably multifaceted and multidimensional.⁴² And in such a church, marked by diversity, the ecumenical task is both diachronic i.e. attempting to hear, understand and evaluate the different participating traditions; and synchronic, discovering a unity that has integrity while embracing diversity.⁴³ This kind of ecumenism recognises the oneness that already exists in the bond of Christian belonging and seeks to hear, understand and embrace the God-given diversity of the people. How then does the church speak an ecumenical language sensitive to cultural expressions that is biblical, respectful, realistic and achievable?

A challenge to the ecumenical project is that it has never in modern times been truly universal, from its inception at the turn of the twentieth century the movement has expressed the aspiration of only part of the church. David Cornick characterises the post-war ecumenical movement as largely western and protestant.⁴⁴ Not only has this been so, but it has been the preserve of the main historic churches of western Protestantism to the side-lining of significant parts of the world church; Catholics, Orthodox, Pentecostals and a wide array of new movements. After a century of the Ecumenical Movement, some from within have begun to bemoan its failure to achieve its unifying aims. Even so, while talk of the demise of this limited in scope ecumenism persists, Cornick argues that the ecumenical enterprise has not died, it has merely changed.⁴⁵ A significant nature of that change has been the challenge to more structural forms of unity by more fluid and dispersed ecumenical practices. And in spite of homogenising attempts by those who feel monoculturalism is against the principle of Christian unity, Christians continue to express themselves along cultural lines. As Steinberg notes, liberal attempts to homogenize if successful tend to end in an essentialised and unilateral multiculturalism.⁴⁶

⁴² Avis, Paul (2010) *Reshaping Ecumenical Theology : The Church Made Whole?*. London, Continuum International Publishing, 2010, p.12

⁴³ Avis, Paul (2010) *Reshaping Ecumenical Theology : The Church Made Whole?*. London, Continuum International Publishing, 2010, p.36

⁴⁴ Cornick, David 'The story of British ecumenical endeavour' in Clive Barrett (ed) (2012) *Unity in process: reflections on ecumenism*, Darton Longman and Todd, London, pp.60-78.

⁴⁵ Cornick, pp60-78. See also Clements, Keith (2013) *Ecumenical Dynamic – living in more than one place at once*, WCC, Geneva, p.6 who argues that there is an ecumenical winter in Britain, and Harmon, Steven R., (2010) *Ecumenism means you too: ordinary Christians and the quest for Christian unity*, Cascade Books, Eugene, OR

⁴⁶ Steinberg, Shirley R., (ed) (2001) *Multi/Intercultural Conversations : A Reader*, Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., New York, p.20

Towards intentional inter-cultural agency in ecumenism

Any new ecumenical initiative based upon the principle of *Oikoumene* or wholeness needs to be applicable to the whole of Christianity and not dependent upon historic or contemporary social, economic or political organisational or cultural hegemony. Such a principle could comprise:

i) Realised Unity – acceptance that Christians share a unity that is pre-existent in Christ as both head of the church and parent of all God’s children. This transcendent unity lies beyond the concept of an all-embracing organisational model. ii) Cultural regard and acceptance – acceptance that each Christian is Christian within a primary culture and belongs to sub-cultures that define their earthly experience and realities. Such acknowledgement requires no ‘cultural conversion.’⁴⁷ iii) Ecumenical bodies and church as agency - organisations could focus primarily on being agencies for interchanges between first individuals and second secular and denominational cultures. In this regard Black Theology⁴⁸ and b) Intercultural Theology⁴⁹ become vehicles for brokering understanding between culturally different fellow Christians.

Culture is a significant area of challenge in contemporary ecumenical engagement and has tended to be seen through the lenses of conflict, according to a study of ethnic conflicts in nine world settings by Tschuy.⁵⁰ He concludes that ecumenism gets caught between two kinds of ethnic/cultural relations. At times, negatively, siding with government no matter how authoritarian, and therefore contributing to injustice, fear, intolerance and violence; at other times positively working to promote peace, justice and reconciliation between ethno-cultural interests. The fear that leads to this split personality behaviour is that loyalty to a particular ethno-culture threatens the *oikoumene* ecumenism seeks. This perceived cultural toxicity of ethnicity raises questions concerning culture’s suitability as an instrument of ecumenical praxis.

⁴⁷ Moreau, A. Scott (2000) *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, p.251. *The idea that in order to be a Christian one must undergo conversion from their old cultural allegiance to an allegiance with Christ*

⁴⁸ See Reddie, Anthony (ed) *Black Theology: An International Journal*

⁴⁹ Cartledge, Mark and David Cheetham (eds) *Intercultural Theology – approaches and themes*

⁵⁰ Tschuy, Theo, (1997) *Ethnic Conflict and religion*, Geneva, WCC Publications, p150. See also Jonathan Oloyede in an article ‘Ecumenism and the black church’ in Aldred and Ogbo *The black church in the 21st century*, where he coins the term ‘the great wall of culture’ pp28-44.

The negation of culture, a significant human identifying factor means setting aside a key agent and indicator of visible unity the church says it seeks. By intentionally bringing cultures into interpretive encounters with each other – through ethnicity meeting ethnicity, denomination meeting denomination, nationality meeting nationality - Christians may enable what Nehring calls ‘intercultural hermeneutics’⁵¹ in search of what the WCC General Assembly meeting in Uppsala, Sweden in 1968 calls; ‘A united church (is) a universal community where people of different traditions, cultures and races are brought into an organic and living unity in Christ’.⁵² At the heart of this culturally centred ecumenism is what I am calling ‘Intercultural Ecumenism’; a praxis that embraces culture as an ecumenical agent. Christians and churches develop unity significantly through their understanding of scripture, but biblical exegesis is incomplete without multiple cultural perspectives engaging with the text in intercultural exegesis.⁵³ Intercultural ecumenism is an ecumenical imperative, because because every human participates in culture.⁵⁴

Conclusion

The task here has been to explore ‘culture’ in the service of ‘ecumenism’. By appropriating culture as a human social and spiritual reality for all, and by understanding ecumenism as a way of living out a oneness that already inherently exists, the task of Christians in the world becomes living out of an existing realised unity with brothers and sisters in Christ.

Cosgrove, Weiss and Yeo suggest that Paul shows that he discovered something of the importance of ethnic/cultural difference when he insisted that the Gospel did not require gentiles to keep the Law; and called it “not compelling the gentiles to Judaize,” he spoke something like our language of ethnic/cultural identity.⁵⁵ As the historic and contemporary social sum of a people, culture is inherited, protected, built upon and passed on. Parekh describes how culture is never perfect and is therefore subject to internal and external challenges and developments as those within it seek coherence, look for resources to make

⁵¹ Nehring, Andreas ‘On the Communication of Sacred Texts: Intercultural Comparison or Intercultural Encounter in Cheetham, David, (Ed); Winkler, Ulrich (Editor); Leirvik, Oddbjørn (Editor) (2011) *Interreligious Hermeneutics in Pluralistic Europe: Between Texts and People*, New York, USA, p 381.

⁵² Harr, Miriam ‘The struggle for an organic, conciliar and diverse church – models of church unity in earlier stages of ecumenical dialogue’ in Gesa Elisabeth Thiessen (Ed) (2009), *Ecclesiological Investigations: Ecumenical Ecclesiology*: p.70

⁵³ Smith-Christopher, Daniel (2013) *Sacred Scripture: a catholic study of God’s word*, Ave Maria Press

⁵⁴ Duraisingh, Christopher (1998) *The gospel in diverse cultures*, Geneva, WCC, p.31.

⁵⁵ Cosgrove, Charles H., Herold Weiss, Khiok-Khng Yeo (2005) *Cross-Cultural Paul: journeys to others, journeys to ourselves*, William B. Erdmans Publishing Co., Cambridge, p.2

sense of the world; stabilise personality, establish values and ideals and act as a moral compass and guide through life.⁵⁶ It may be the ideal agency for unveiling the unity Christians already possess, as they work together for the common good.⁵⁷

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⁵⁶ Parekh, Bhikhu (2000) *Rethinking Multiculturalism: cultural diversity and political theory*, Hampshire, Palgrave, p159

⁵⁷ <http://togetherforthecommongood.co.uk/home.html> Also the title of a new initiative made up of Christians and other faiths working for Justice