

Factors inhibiting inculturation of the holy communion symbols in the Anglican Church in Kenya

A case study of the diocese of Thika

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Abstract

The bread and wine are the central symbols used in the sacrament of the Holy Communion in the Anglican tradition. In some provinces in the Anglican Communion, these symbols are being substituted, but the Anglican Church in Kenya has remained adamant. In light of this, this article argues that cultural factors and the inherited Anglican identity have been key impediments to inculturation of the Holy Communion symbols. The article is informed by qualitative data obtained from Anglican Church in Kenya (ACK) adherents in the diocese of Thika.

Keywords: Anglican Communion, Anglican Tradition, Elements, Holy Communion, Inculturation, Kenya, Missionary

1. Introduction

The sacrament of the Holy Communion in the Anglican ecclesiastical tradition plays a fundamental role in the life of Christians. In this sacrament, the bread and the wine are the officially recognized and recommended elements for use. However, this rich inherited tradition in the ecclesiastical tradition of the Anglican identity has been challenged and questioned by various provinces in the Anglican Communion. This has spread widely in many provinces in the Anglican Communion, to the extent that this has attracted the attention of the Anglican Consultative Council that deals with issues affecting the Communion, among them being the liturgy.² In their survey, statistics indicated that the question of substituting bread and wine in the sacrament of the Holy Communion has risen, albeit unofficially.³ Interestingly, while other provinces in the Anglican Communion are substituting the Holy Communion symbols, that is bread and wine, with indigenous symbols, the ACK is still stuck with bread and wine as the official and authorized symbols for use, as bequeathed by

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² Paul Gibson. 2005. "Eucharistic Food and Drink: A Report of the Inter-Anglican Liturgical Commission to the Anglican Consultative Council." <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/resources/liturgy/docs/appendix%205.pdf> (Accessed on 23/05/2013).

³ Gibson, Eucharistic Food and Drink, (Accessed on 23/05/2013).

the Church Mission Society (CMS) missionaries. Therefore, it is in the light of this plight that this article wants to explore the rationale behind the ACK failure to inculcate the Holy Communion symbols by substituting them with the locally available food products, like other provinces are doing.

Hence, this article will begin by tracing the historical development of the use of bread and wine in the sacrament of the Holy Communion in the ACK.

2. Brief historical development of the use of bread and wine in the Anglican Church in Kenya

The origin of the use of wheat products such as bread and wine from the grapevine is from agriculture in the Mediterranean area, particularly in Palestine. To this end, the use of bread formed part of the Jewish staple food and became their source of daily nourishment whenever they had a meal. Thus bread and wine were not only the source of their nourishment but also formed part of their religious life.⁴ This is manifest in their religious rites in the Passover meal where bread and wine became part of the food offered for thanksgiving and sacrifice. However, in his context Jesus re-interpreted the religious significance of the bread and wine to Jews and gave them a broader understanding for the wider global community.⁵ This meant the bread was now viewed as the body of Christ that was broken and the wine as the blood that was poured out for the atonement of the sin of humankind.⁶ As such, these symbols became the common elements used by Jesus' apostles and the Early Church whenever the community of believers met to break the bread on the Lord's Day.⁷ These symbols became normative in Christian circles and the practice was taken far and wide wherever the gospel was preached. Therefore, the ACK, being a member of the global body of Christ, also received these elements for use in the Holy Communion when they were introduced by CMS missionaries in the nineteenth century.

As these food products were not locally available, the ACK felt compelled to import them from Europe for use in this rite. These two symbols are delivered and administered unto all persons under both kinds. This means that both bread and wine are given to the communicants, as affirmed in the Thirty-Nine Articles of Faith by Thomas Cranmer. Article XXX beseeches the Anglican churches to grant com-

⁴ Eugene Uzukwu. 1980. "Foods and Drink in Africa and the Christian Eucharist," *African Ecclesial Review*, 22/6, (1980), 376.

⁵ John W. Howe and Sam C. Pascoe. *Our Anglican Heritage: Can an Ancient Church be a Church?* (Eugene OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2010), 81.

⁶ See: Anglican Church of Kenya. *Our Modern Services* (Nairobi: Uzima Press, 2002).

⁷ Eugene LaVerdiere. *The Eucharist in the New Testament and the Early Church*, (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1960), 143.

municants the cup of the Lord, as Christ commanded the Church to be doing to all faithful Christians.⁸

While the English missionaries had appropriated the Holy Communion symbols within their own context, it is unfortunate for the ACK that the English missionaries who established daughter Churches in Kenya and other parts of Africa never appropriated these symbols in the light of the context of the local people. This is in spite of Charles Long's observations that the Anglican Church in the globe is rapidly outgrowing its Englishness, yet the mother Church seems not ready to "establish its own identity as a multiracial, multilingual and multicultural family."⁹ Therefore, what is prevalent is that the English Church understanding and practice are replicated outside the British Isles as ecclesiastical orthodoxy which needs to be emulated.

Though this ecclesiastical orthodoxy and practice is evident in other religious spheres of mission-based Anglican Churches in former British colonies, it is more pronounced in the sacramental rite of Holy Communion, where the use of bread and wine permeates the Anglican Communion, in spite of its diverse contexts. Dennis Smith and Hal Taussig, dissatisfied with this ecclesiastical practice in the Anglican Communion, lament that:

In the broad scope of global Church today and even within many congregations where great diversity exists, emphasis on one standard and immutable Eucharist is bound to do injustice to some particular groups. Surely the gospel and the Church are not to alienate people and individuals from the particular strengths of their culture or social situation. It seems difficult to imagine that a God of the good news of love and justice would want a central sacred meal where Africans or Asians all act like Europeans. Even if there are moments for expression of unity through a common Eucharistic practice, to generalize such a service and make it the single kind of Lord's Supper violates the integrity of many cultures and social institutions.¹⁰

From Smith and Taussig's argument, it is evident that there is a missiological quest on the use of bread and wine in the sacramental rite of Holy Communion as orthodoxy in different contexts outside the British Isles. This raises the question of embracing diverse symbols in the sacrament of Holy Communion because the use of bread and wine in other contexts like in Kenya is unjust and culminates in alienation of Christians. This suggests the need for the Churches to use alternative, locally

⁸ G. R Evans and J. Robert Wright (ed.), *The Anglican Tradition: A Handwork of Resources*, (London: SPCK, 1991), 424.

⁹ Charles H. Long (ed.), *Who are the Anglicans?*, (Cincinnati: Forward Movement Publications, 1988), 4.

¹⁰ Dennis S. Smith and Hal E. Taussig. *Many Tables: The Eucharist in the New Testament and Liturgy Today*, (London: SCM Press, 1990), 88.

available foodstuffs in the Holy Communion, that communicate to the local people in the same way the bread and wine communicate to the Euro-American Christians who appropriated these symbols in their contexts. However, what one notes is that uniformity is enforced and what ultimately prevails in the Anglican Communion is “English¹¹ Church” overseas. Michael McCoy attests to this and argues “Anglicanism has often been criticized, from within and without, as being too English, too middle class, too tied to the social and political establishment of the day.”¹² This means English Church understanding and practice of celebrating the sacramental rite of Holy Communion using these two symbols of the bread and wine has spilt abroad without being re-appropriated accordingly. Jesse Mugambi concurs with this and argues that these symbols in the sacrament of the Holy Communion were a new cultural and religious experience to the African people when the CMS missionaries introduced these symbols in Kenya.¹³

Therefore, it is right to conclude that the Holy Communion symbols in the ACK were inherited from the mother Church in England when the CMS missionaries introduced Christianity in Kenya. Though John Pobee notes that Anglicanism accepts the incarnation paradigm and principle in article XXIV, it is ironical because one would wonder whether the use of foreign symbols in a different context is not repugnant to the gospel of Christ.¹⁴ It is on this note that the next section will analyze the issues raised as to why the use of bread and wine in the ACK should be substituted with appropriate indigenous symbols.

3. Why inculturate bread and wine in the Anglican Church in Kenya?

The inculturation of the Holy Communion symbols is one of the discourses in the Christian faith that has sparked a lot of debate around the globe and particularly in post-colonial Africa. African scholars are divided in this discourse for there are those who advocate inculturation of the Holy Communion symbols in line with the people’s ways of life, while others opt to stick to inherited tradition. The proponents of inculturation of the Holy Communion symbols raise various arguments to support their stance.

¹¹ This means that Anglican Churches overseas were carbon copies of the Church of England. This paternalism and imperialism was enhanced and a good example according to John Karanja (1999:1) is the Kikuyu Anglican Church that became replica of her mother Church in England adhering to the thirty nine articles, the Book of Common Prayer and the three fold order of ministry without appropriation.

¹² Michael McCoy. “Peace or Pieces?” *The ANITEPAM Journal*, (November 2006), 37.

¹³ Jesse Mugambi, *African Heritage and Contemporary Christianity*, (Nairobi: Longman Kenya Limited, 1989), 104-105.

¹⁴ John S. Pobee. *The Anglican Story in Ghana: From Mission Beginning to Province of Ghana*, (Keneshie, Accra: Amanza Limited, 2009), 12.

One of the arguments that prevail among most Christians in Kenya is the perception that bread and wine are foreign products. This is attested by the extracts below:

“... for I believe even the wine and wafers were just brought ...”¹⁵

“... wafers is something that is imported to me and it has no major significance ...”¹⁶

In Palestine, these elements were very significant to locals there. When the gospel was disseminated in other parts of the world they did not contextualize the gospel, such that when they came here in Africa they found no grapes, but we had oranges, they borrowed directly from Palestine, thus wheat was a Palestine product with significance there.¹⁷

In light of these extracts, it is true to affirm that the bread and wine are perceived to be foreign symbols that carry with them foreign connotations, because discourses like ‘just brought’, ‘imported’ and ‘borrowed’ all depict foreignness. As a result of this understanding, some Christians point out that these symbols have ‘no major significant role’ in the lives of Kenyans. This implies that when used for celebrating the Holy Communion meal these foreign symbols detach and alienate people from their own context, because they do not communicate to the Kenyan Christians’ hearts. Furthermore, since these symbols significance is more attached to their place of origin than in other contexts, when they are transferred they become insignificant in the life of the people in that new context. Towards this end, it is right to suggest that the use of Holy Communion symbols, that is bread and wine, in Kenya is offensive rather than a blessing, because symbols are cultural and communicate adequately to the people in their own context. Though some may argue that these symbols – bread and wine – are universal in most contexts, Rose Aden refutes this idea saying “even if ‘outsiders’ are told what the symbols represent, they still do not know what they mean. For those who are not immersed in the cultural context of the symbol, the relationship between the symbol and what it stands for may seem quite arbitrary.”¹⁸

Therefore, it is correct to suggest that Holy Communion symbols are foreign products ‘with significance to their place of origin’ and there is a need to inculturate them in the ecclesiastical context of Kenya in order to communicate deeply to the Christians in their cultural milieu. John Gatu, former Moderator in the Presby-

¹⁵ Interview with respondent, Field Notes 01#, (Ruiru Parish, 27 November 2013).

¹⁶ Interview with respondent, Field Notes 02#, (Thika, 25 November 2013).

¹⁷ Interview with respondent, Field Notes 03#, (Clergy and Laity Focused Group Discussion, 5 December 2013).

¹⁸ Rose Aden. *Religion Today: A Critical Thinking Approach to Religious Studies*, (Plymouth: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2013),145.

terian Church in Kenya, argued that these Holy Communion symbols are foreign and do not convey the idea of sacrificial offering which is central in the Kikuyu religious life, for instance, where bulls, cows, sheep or goats were normally killed to provide this offering.¹⁹ Gatu suggests the use of meat as substitute for bread because the symbol of meat communicates and invokes the Kikuyu sacrificial worldview more than bread. In addition, Bénézet Bujo finds the use of bread and wine in the Holy Communion rite in Africa ironical when most African Christians joyfully join in the liturgy saying these symbols are “fruits of their hand” yet many have never even seen a grapevine and cannot identify with this outlandish drink!²⁰ Hence, there is clamour for the use of indigenous symbols in the Holy Communion, because according to Bernard Lonergan cultural symbols allow people’s mind, heart and body to communicate to people’s spirituality.²¹

Another argument advanced against these Holy Communion symbols is their high cost. This is because these symbols are imported food products, particularly the wine used in most Churches in Kenya.²² In a society where most people live on less than one dollar a day, the use of these imported food products for ecclesiastical use becomes economic exploitation of the Kenyan and Africans at large.²³ Therefore, the cost implication of these symbols affects the frequency with which this Eucharistic meal is celebrated in most Churches, despite Christ’s command that it should be celebrated regularly. In return, the significance attached to this meal is declining. While this may be felt as a Kenyan concern, scholars such as Jean Marc Ela (1986), Kabasele Lumbala (1989), Bénézet Bujo (2001), Joseph Osei-Bonsu (2005), Jean-Jacques von Allmen (1969), Hupé Young Kim (2003), Wann Fanwar (2008), Jose’ de Mesa (2012) and Kosuke Koyama (1974) draw our attention to the fact that this is a global problem in most of the mission-based Churches and there is dire need to arrest the predicament. Thus according to Smith and Tausig the perpetual use of bread and wine in Kenya and other parts of the world has become an injustice to those people who are compelled to use these symbols in the Holy Communion.²⁴

While the above voices call for the use of indigenous symbols that communicate to the indigenous people in their own contexts, dissenting voices have been and are heard challenging their positions. These include the late Henry Okullu (1974),

¹⁹ John Gatu. *Joyfully Christian Truly Christian*, (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2006), 30.

²⁰ Benezet Bujo. *African Christian Morality: At the Age of Inculturation*, (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1990), 121.

²¹ Bernard Lonergan. *Method in Theology*, (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1972), 64.

²² See Gibson, “Eucharistic Food and Drink”, (Accessed on 23/05/2013).

²³ Kenya National Assembly. *Parliamentary Debates*, (Wednesday 18th April, 2001), 493.

²⁴ Smith and Haussig. *Many Tables*, 88.

Anglican bishop in the diocese of Maseno in Kenya and James Chukwuma Okoye (1992). These scholars argue that these symbols in the Holy Communion are no longer foreign to Africans for they have been acculturated. Okullu, for instance, substantiates his argument by saying that wine is no longer strange to Africans such that it is only met at communion, because it is taken in African parties and at homes.²⁵ But the critical question to pose to Okullu is how many Africans can afford this wine in countries where most people live on less than one dollar a day?²⁶ This prompts one to suggest that according to Okullu these symbols are available to all and there is no need to inculturate them. Furthermore, Okoye adds that they have become local and they are now given unctious and roles in traditional situations.²⁷ As such these symbols have become normative and irreplaceable in the African context.

In spite of the above convincing factors for the use of Kenyan indigenous symbols in the sacramental rite of Holy Communion being clear and understandable, there are cultural factors inhibiting this noble task from spreading, as discussed below.

4. Cultural challenges to inculturation of holy communion symbols

According to Anscar Chupungco, authentic and genuine liturgical inculturation happens in three levels: creative assimilation, dynamic equivalence and organic progression.²⁸ While relating and evaluating how these methods of liturgical inculturation have been applicable in the ACK diocese of Thika, this article established that it is in the second level of dynamic equivalence. This suggests that though these symbols have been inculturated in the ecclesiastical context of Thika, it is still partial and there is a need for comprehensive inculturation of these symbols if organic progression is to be achieved at all. Though there are theological factors inhibiting authentic and genuine liturgical inculturation of the Holy Communion symbols to be realized, this article will give more attention to the cultural challenges or factors.

These are one of the impediments hindering the inculturation of the Holy Communion symbols in the ACK. Research conducted on this subject showed appalling results.²⁹ The research indicated that a significant number of Anglicans adherents

²⁵ Henry Okullu. *Church and Politics in East Africa*, (Nairobi: Uzima Press, 1974), 57.

²⁶ Kenya National Assembly. *Parliamentary Debates*, (Wednesday 18th April, 2001), 493.

²⁷ James Chukwuma Okoye. "The Eucharist and African Culture," *African Ecclesial Review*, 34, (1992), 284.

²⁸ See Anscar Chupungco. "Methods of Liturgical Inculturation," Pages 262-275 in *Worship and Culture: Foreign Country or Homeland?* edited by Glauca Vasconcelos Wilkey. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014).

²⁹ As a researcher I engaged twenty five respondents in five parishes who were purposively sampled on the question of whether the ACK should use indigenous symbols that communicate to the Christians.

that translates into 80% do not approve the use of other symbols rather than bread and wine, while only 12% advocate the use of indigenous symbols of nourishment. Eight percent were dialectical as they urged this exercise be done cautiously. Therefore, this article discusses some of the cultural impediments to inculturation of the Holy Communion symbols that emerged from the study.

5. Colonialism of the mind

Colonialism of the mind is one the cultural factors adversely affecting authentic and genuine inculturation of the Holy Communion symbols. Bujo contends to this argument and observed that colonialism robbed Africans of their cultural identity and filled them with an inferiority complex, making them hate what is of African origin.³⁰ The consequence of this colonialism, according to John Ikenye, is shame, doubt, feelings of danger and threat, feelings of rage, and paranoid vigilance.³¹ This is no different in Anglican adherents in Kenya where this translates into colonialism of the mind. This form of colonialism is a big challenge as far as authentic and genuine inculturation of the Holy Communion symbols is concerned. For true inculturation to be realized, appreciation of people's culture is essential. Unfortunately, this article discloses that most Kenyans do not appreciate their culture and more often than not like to ape and associate with Euro-American culture that alienates them. This is evident in the way some Anglican adherents in Kenya responded to the question of inculturating the Holy Communion symbols. This was noted by one respondent who argued that:

"I'm not sure if there is any danger, the only danger is in the mind of believers..."³²

Another respondent retaliated that most Anglicans in Kenya would not use other symbols in the Holy Communion because they are:

"Pre-occupied with bread and wine such that if anything else is used, then Holy Communion is incomplete to them."³³

This form of colonialism elicited responses such as

Their responses were qualitatively analysed through discourse analysis and thematically.

³⁰ Bujo, *African Christian Morality*, 121.

³¹ John Brown Ndungu Ikenye. *African Christian Counselling Method, Theory, and Practice*, (Nairobi: Envoy Graphic and Print Systems, 2002), 17.

³² Interview with respondent, Field Notes 03#, (Thika, 26th November 2013) .

³³ Interview with respondent, Field Notes 04#, (Clergy and Laity Focused Group Discussion 5 December 2013).

“I have heard these funny stories that instead of wine why not use *muratina* [laughter] *njohi* that is alcohol but in the real sense this person is talking something. Well I do not know how *muratina* is but I believe with teaching for I believe even the wine and wafers were just brought, for it is okay and there is no danger as long as it is harmless.”³⁴

In light of the above narrative, it is evident that respondent 01# represents the voice and stance of many Anglican adherents in Kenya. Her scepticism is portrayed in her laughter when she mentioned *muratina* or the local brew that was and is used traditionally by Kikuyus in their religious activities. Since it was condemned by missionaries as illicit brew she was not sure if it was right to use it, but when digging up on translation of the Kikuyu religious brew *muratina* by missionaries this article established that traditional religious brew was referred to as *njohi*, that is alcohol, while the missionaries’ brand of alcohol was referred to as *divei* or wine. These two brands of alcohol were attached with different symbolic meanings, such that *muratina* was viewed as a symbol of unholiness, ungodliness and evil. Thus Kikuyu Christians abhorred drinking *muratina* in spite of the religious significance it had in Kikuyu society. *Divei* or wine was viewed as a symbol of holiness and godliness, however it was exclusively for Church use, for any attempt to drink it elsewhere attracted Church discipline, as Gatu retorts.³⁵ This left many Anglican adherents and other adherents in Western established denominations in Kenya confused and what prevails is that some secretly drink both brands of beer in secluded areas lest they be noticed and be excommunicated or disciplined.

Thus the translation of the local brew and missionaries’ alcohol into Kikuyu language brought huge disparity in Kikuyuland. This led to a change of perception on *muratina* in relation to wine that is *muratina* is inferior while wine is superior. This scepticism was evident in most respondents and it translated into the level of colonialism of the mind, as echoed in a focus group discussion by one respondent that:

... those who brought Good News first had a hidden agenda, so even when bread was introduced they knew they had to convince this person that anything else is not good and that is why when we peruse what else to use become difficult as our minds have assimilated bread and wine. But if we may be taught and convinced that arrow root in Holy Communion is the best and the people appreciate that, we can move away from multitude of problems.³⁶

³⁴ Field Notes 01#.

³⁵ Gatu, Joyfully Christian, 29.

³⁶ Interview with respondent, Field Notes 04#, (Clergy Focused Group Discussion 3 December 2013).

In the words of the above respondent 04# his argument is their minds have been socially conditioned that it is only bread and wine that should be used in Holy Communion and nothing else, as respondent 04# observed that some Anglican adherents in Kenya are *'preoccupied with bread and wine.'* However, if Anglican adherents' minds are liberated according to respondent 04 #, this can solve enormous problems.

Therefore, it is true from Anglican adherents' responses that *"inculturation can be done; it is only in our mind that we are thinking the bread and the wine should be in that context."*³⁷ This suggests a form of colonialism that Anglican adherents in Kenya are suffering is what Desmond Tutu termed as 'religious or spiritual schizophrenia.'³⁸ To overcome this form of colonialism, some scholars such as Kwesi Wiredu (1998), Sanya Osha (1999), Ikenye (2002) and Uhuru Hotep (2003) advocate for decolonization of the African soul and mind. These scholars are convinced that there are good things to be derived from African and European culture. Moreover, Hotep argues in decolonization there is a demand of dismantling white supremacy belief and the structures which uphold it in every area of African life, in an effort to recover and reconnect with the best traditional African culture, as a means of ending dominance of the African psyche.³⁹ However, scholars like Byang Kato, dissatisfied with this concept of decolonization, criticize the African theological trend of branding everything as colonialist or neo-colonialist.⁴⁰ On the contrary, it is worth dismissing Kato's criticism and affirming that the main argument by scholars of decolonization and African theology is synthesizing the best practices in the African context and the West to incorporate and integrate them in the people's way of life, after deconstructing Western theology in order to reconstruct African theology relevant to the people. As Pobee noted, the main goal of African theology is interpretation of the essential Christian faith in authentic African languages in the flux and turmoil of our times, so that there may be genuine dialogue between the Christian faith and African cultures.⁴¹

6. Fear of loss of cultural and religious identity

Fear of loss of cultural and religious identity is another factor inhibiting authentic and genuine inculturation of the Holy Communion symbols in the ACK. This form of

³⁷ Field Notes 015#.

³⁸ Desmond Tutu. "Black Theology and African Theology Soulmates or Antagonists?" in A Reader in African Christian Theology, edited by John Parrat, Pages 36-44 (London: SPCK, 1987), 47.

³⁹ Uhuru Hotep. 2003. "Decolonizing the African Mind: Further analysis and strategy," <http://whgbet.com/ifbm/decolonizing.html> (Accessed on 22/10/2014).

⁴⁰ Byang Kato. Theological Pitfalls in Africa, (Kisumu: Evangel Publishing House, 1975), 50.

⁴¹ John Pobee. Toward an African Theology, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979), 22.

fear is conspicuous in the way Anglican adherents in Kenya uncritically safeguard the Anglican identity and tradition of using bread and wine inherited from the English missionaries. This is attested by the extract below that says:

The danger is only been accused. For instance, a Christian may accuse us that we are not doing according to the bible and begin politicking which may mislead some young Christians in the Church ... but according to me there is no danger.⁴²

From the above response it is correct to identify diversion from the Church tradition and biblical standards as the first form of fear hindering the inculturation of the Holy Communion symbols. Like Paul in Corinth (see I Corinthians 8:9-13), some Anglican adherents are hesitant and cautious not to distort the faith of younger Christians. While some Christians are very cautious of the inherited ecclesiastical tradition, John de Gruchy sees no point for concern, for in doing theology we need to stretch our tradition to enable newer and fresh things to emerge. He argues for:

... testing the boundaries and sometimes pushing them beyond the accepted orthodoxies that others defend. In fact, part of the task of critically retrieving tradition is to break out of the boxes of the past, while yet taking the tradition seriously and in some sense as normative. It is akin to participating in a paradigm shift whereby the new always remains in continuity with the old, but in creative tension so that something new, fresh and vibrant emerges (2011:9).⁴³

J. Mose de Mesa agrees and supports de Gruchy in stretching our traditions and pushes the debate further for he is persuaded that the cherished and guarded tradition in most Christian traditions is a series of local and inculturated theologies.⁴⁴ This suggests that the cherished inherited tradition is foreign theology articulated in a different context. This means that since theology is contextual, the inherited ecclesiastical identity and traditions in the ACK have to be re-appropriated in their own context – in the words of de Gruchy, by stretching theology to derive the good in it that speaks and communicates to its own context.

Besides the fear of breaking away from inherited Anglican identity and tradition, some Anglican adherents in Kenya are also sensitive to the abuse of alcohol, an abuse that the Church has been challenging since colonial times. The missionaries

⁴² Interview with respondent, Field Notes 05#, (Ndunyu Chege Parish, 18 November 2013).

⁴³ John de Gruchy. "Transforming Tradition: Doing Theology in South Africa Today," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, (2011), 139, 9.

⁴⁴ J. Mose de Mesa. "Doing Theology in the Asian Context," in *New Direction in Mission and Evangelization 3: Faith and Culture*, edited by James A. Scherer and Stephen Bevans, Pages 117-133, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1999), 124.

(CMS) who brought Christianity into Kenya condemned and branded the local brew as illicit brew, as indicated earlier. Such fear still prevails in Kenya as narrated here:

There is the fear of the misuse and especially with the people who do not understand and with freedom of worship, some of these elements can also be abused. Kenya is contending with the issue of alcohol abuse and without the safeguard people can use the bible to give a tick to wayward behaviour and this is what again the Church is fighting against and therefore it has to be good measures to safeguard misuse of these instruments versus why we are taking them that means proper understanding.⁴⁵

Scholars such as Eugene Hillman (1993), David Gitari (1994) and Elijah Mbonigaba (1994), in reflecting on inculturation, advanced contrary opinions from some Anglican adherents and dismiss any form of fear in the discourse of inculturation. Hillman attributes the fear of inculturating the Christian faith to fear of innovation at the grassroots level.⁴⁶ Indeed, this is clearly manifest in the argument of respondent 05# that for her it is all right but people '*may accuse us that we are not doing according to the Bible.*' This suggests that innovation and creativity at the grassroots has not been encouraged in the Church and any attempt is being thwarted at the inception stage, thus attracting fear of innovation and creativity. Mercy Oduyoye disagrees with Hillman, for the contrary happens in Churches while she remarks: "Christianity employs the language of the powerful seeking to control diversity and achieve conformity with their own standpoint. While mooring approval to inculturation from above, clearly discourages inculturation from below."⁴⁷

This implies that inculturation at the grassroots level is alive among the ordinary Christians who practice theology, as Esther Mombo alludes.⁴⁸ The setback Christians face is the lack of Church goodwill to shape and strengthen their practice. Mary Nwagwu agrees with Mombo's contention and cites the Church leadership's fear of ordinary Christians going too far in the process of inculturation, resulting in strict control of ecclesiastical authorities that tend to dampen the enthusiasm

⁴⁵ Interview with respondent, Field Notes 02#, (Thika 25 November 2013).

⁴⁶ Eugene Hillman. *Inculturation Applied: Toward an African Christianity*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 41.

⁴⁷ Mercy Amba Oduyoye. "African Culture and the Gospel: Inculturation from an African Woman's Perspective," in *One Gospel-Many Cultures: Case Studies and Reflections on Cross Cultural Theology*, edited by Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Hendrik M Vroom, Pages 39-62 (Amsterdam: Rodopi BV, 2003), 47.

⁴⁸ Esther Mombo. "Anglican Liturgies in Eastern Africa," in *Oxford Guide to the Book of Common Prayer: A Worldwide Survey*, Charles Hefling and Cynthia Shattuck, Pages 227-287 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 287.

of those engaged in inculturation initiatives.⁴⁹ Therefore, the Church authority becomes a big stumbling block to authentic and genuine inculturation. This prompts Gabrielle Russell-Mundine and Graeme Mundine to refer to Church authority as ‘middlemen’ [sic] who inhibit and stall true inculturation in the Church of Christ by appointing themselves as the arbiters of all that is seen to be the correct expression of faith.⁵⁰

Gitari and Mbonigaba introduce another concept of fear characterized by African Churches due to their historical injustice during colonialism.⁵¹ They identify it as fear of losing the acquired western ‘civilized’ identity as Anglicans, since the bread and wine are understood as symbols of civilization. This suggests that being an authentic Anglican adherent in Kenya means sticking to the ethos and norms passed down by CMS missionaries. The perception that Kwok Pui-Lan postulates is that in many cases, mimicry of the ‘mother Church’ serves not as the mockery of colonial authority, but as a sign of privilege of association.⁵² Therefore, responses such as ‘this is our culture’ or ‘that is not Anglicanism’ depict colonialism of the mind because you cannot separate Holy Communion symbols from European imperialism and their culture. Since Kenyan products are labelled primitive and European products as civilized, this stimulates most Christians in Kenya to opt to identify with imported products. Oduyoye concurs with this argument and observes this as a widespread practice in the western established Churches vis-a-vis African Instituted Churches because Christians in these western established Churches protest against anything they perceive to be returning to African religion.⁵³ Indeed, this is what prevails among many Anglican adherents in Kenya, for they want to be detached from African religiosity, but be associated with western religiosity that alienates them, however much they try to ape its practices. Due to this great desire to identify mostly with the western products and lifestyle linked with missionaries who introduced Christianity to Kenya, John Mbiti could not hesitate to conclude that Africans

⁴⁹ Mary Gerard Nwagwu. “A Canonical Perspective of Liturgical Inculturation in Africa,” *African Ecclesial Review*. (2001), 43, 61.

⁵⁰ Gabrielle Russell-Mundine and Graeme Mundine. “Aboriginal Inculturation of the Australian Catholic Church,” *Black Theology*, (August 2014) 12/2, 102.

⁵¹ David Gitari (ed.) *Anglican Liturgical Inculturation in Africa: The Kanamai Statement ‘African Culture and Anglican Liturgy’ with Introduction Papers Read at Kanamai and a First Response*, (Bramcote, Nottingham: Groove Books Ltd, 1994), 37. Elisha G. Mbonigaba. “The Indigenization,” in *Anglican Liturgical Inculturation in Africa: The Kanamai Statement ‘African Culture and Anglican Liturgy’ with Introduction Papers Read at Kanamai and a First Response*, edited by David Gitari, Bramcote, Pages 20-32 (Nottingham: Groove Books Ltd, 1994), 23.

⁵² Kwok Pui-Lan. “The Legacy of Cultural Hegemony in Anglican Church,” in *Beyond Colonial Anglicanism: The Anglican Communion in the Twenty-First Century*, Kwok Pui-Lan and Ian T. Douglas, Pages 47-70 (London: Church Publishing, 2000), 57.

⁵³ Oduyoye, *African Culture and the Gospel*, 40.

became more Anglican than English people or more Roman Catholic than Italians and more Lutheran than Germans!⁵⁴ Observably, the Kenyan Anglican adherents are uncritically guarding what they received from the missionaries. But according to Hillman, Gitari and Mbonigaba it is worth exploring the best practice in Holy Communion for authentic and genuine inculturation to be a reality.

7. Holy communion taken lightly

Paul Tillich in dialogue with his student in *Ultimate Concern* observed that symbols lose meaning with time and consequently die.⁵⁵ With this in mind, most Anglican adherents in Kenya hesitantly disapprove inculturation of Holy Communion symbols for fear of losing these vital religious symbols and their significance in the life of the Church. This is because, if these symbols lose their initial meaning and significance, some Christians dread Holy Communion being taken lightly, as “symbols give us our sense of identity, value, self-worth and order both as community and individual.”⁵⁶ This is true, as one Christian observed, that if we use indigenous symbols of nourishment

“people will see as if they are ordinary food they are used to and they might not be pleased with them.”⁵⁷

This indicates that Anglican adherents in Kenya guard the uniqueness attributed to these symbols since familiarity brings contempt. Another thing that emerges is the relationship between the indigenous symbols of nourishment being perceived as powerless and primitive in relation to the imported bread and wine. Though these symbols are perceived as foreign and imported, they are linked with power and modernity.

This perception also prevailed in focus group discussions conducted with both clergy and laity who established that the Holy Communion rite would be taken lightly. In these discussions one clergy who happens to be a Canon in the Anglican Church in Kenya stated that,

“The value of Holy Communion may be misused because having a common thing brings about the whole value of what is Holy Communion as anytime a new thing is introduced there must be a problem. For instance people begin asking why and

⁵⁴ John Samuel Mbiti. *Bible and Theology*, (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1986), 19.

⁵⁵ Brown D. Mackenzie. 1965. *Ultimate Concern: Tillich in Dialogue*, (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1965), 96.

⁵⁶ W. T. Stevenson. “Lex Orandi-Lex Crededi” in *The Study of Anglicanism*, edited by Stephen Sykes and John Booty, (London: SPCK, 1988), 184.

⁵⁷ Interview with respondent, Field Notes 06#, (Gituamba Parish 28 November 2013).

in that one occasion people may disrespect and make Holy Communion lose its meaning.”⁵⁸

Another clergy contributing to this debate concurred with the Canon while he argued that,

“there can be danger of losing the meaning and particularly speciality of the Holy Communion.”⁵⁹

Therefore, the fear of losing the meaning of the Holy Communion symbols and its rite as handed down to the Anglican adherents in Kenya by the CMS missionaries became evident in their discourse. In their fear they forewarned that any measure to adopt the indigenous symbols of nourishment in the Holy Communion rite will eventually emanate into this rite being perceived;

“as if it is a party and not Holy Communion celebrated.”⁶⁰

Moreover, its mystery that is cherished and experienced by Anglican adherents in Kenya will decline, as alluded to by one respondent who stated that:

In its own uniqueness people tend even to admire and really enjoy it; surprisingly even people who do not take Holy Communion do come and celebrate. They do not take but they want to witness, to watch what is happening and now they want to be brought back to the Holy Communion, because they have not been taking Holy Communion, why because inwardly there is mystery and this mystery they want also to participate in it. The mystery in the Holy Communion then bring people back to Christ, but suppose is an ordinary elements [laughter] they will say after all I have them at home but since it is unique actually, surprisingly it also make the whole Church say, do you know.⁶¹

In light of these responses, it is correct to deduce that Anglican adherents in Kenya are deeply attached to bread and wine as the official and authorized symbols in the sacrament of the Holy Communion. As such, any change of these inherited symbols to Anglican adherents in Kenya would also mean change in the value and uniqueness of who they represent, that is Jesus Christ. This implies the Holy Communion and its symbols will lose meaning, become a mere ritual and ultimately the embed-

⁵⁸ Interview with respondent, Field Notes 07#, (Clergy Focused Group Discussion 3 December 2013).

⁵⁹ Field Notes 07#.

⁶⁰ Interview with respondent, Field Notes 08#, (Layty Focused Group Discussion 4 December 2013).

⁶¹ Field Notes 07#.

ded mysteries that move and inspire people will vanish. Robert Cummings Neville, in support of the Anglican adherents' argument, attempts to disclose the drastic influence of the Holy Communion symbols declining in the communicants' lives when he states, "people engage in meaningful behaviours, because of the meanings and motives carried by the meanings in the symbols shaping the behaviours, and these behaviours are meaningful in terms of one another because of the network character of symbolic meaning."⁶²

This means that some Anglican adherents in Kenya are conservative and are highly influenced by diachronic logic of conscious tradition that tends to uphold the status quo in spite of life being dynamic. Consequently, the resistance to a new established order suggests that some Anglican adherents perceive change negatively and therefore it comes to break the cherished structures and behaviour already existing. Ikenye, in his book *Pastoral Theology: Rediscovering African Models and Methods*, helps us conclude and discern a divided self among Anglican adherents in Kenya, due to colonialism.⁶³ He suggests that this is as a result of colonization of the personal and communal soul. Where there is a dualistic experience between the real self and ideal self, that results in shame in the real self for having failed to live up to the standards of the colonizers; while the ideal self in this case is using the inherited symbols (bread and wine), perceived as orthodoxy.

8. Preparation of indigenous symbols

Another cultural challenge hindering authentic and genuine inculturation of the Holy Communion symbols in the ACK is the preparation of indigenous symbols of nourishment. To illustrate this setback one respondent remarked that

"I would say it is not good, for what I may come with or the other person is not well known how is prepared."⁶⁴

Therefore, the Anglican adherents in Kenya had several reasons regarding preparation as a challenge. The first was that the indigenous foodstuff might be overcooked, as illustrated here;

Okay, well sometimes they may be good but their preparation may be a big challenge to many. For instance, preparation of sweet potatoes may be overcooked, but

⁶² Robert Cummings Neville. *The Truth of Broken Symbols* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996).

⁶³ John Brown Ndungu Ikenye. *Pastoral Theology: Rediscovering African Models and Methods*, (Eldoret: Zapf Chancery, 2008),11.

⁶⁴ Field Notes 08#.

something like a loaf of bread is good because before the introduction of wafers we were used to it. So if we use a loaf of bread or wafers they are already prepared. Therefore preparation of our traditional food is a big challenge and is for this reason that we need not to use our traditional food.⁶⁵

The second was that, some foodstuff has to be used instantly after being prepared, such that they cannot be kept for future use, as argued that

“... if you use things like arrowroots, sweet potatoes and whatever ... you need to use it there and there. And again the way you handle it is sticky and that bread is not sticky at all and hygienically it is good.”⁶⁶

Third, hygienically it is wanting on some indigenous food for they are sticky to handle. Another respondent contributing to this challenge shares the same sentiment and argues

“hygiene of these elements is wanting due to low level of technology though spiritually I see no danger because symbols only point to God’s grace.”⁶⁷

Certainly, to some Anglican adherents in Kenya it is a worthwhile exercise to inculturate Holy Communion symbols, but as one respondent argues, “I am for the idea but what I fear is their preparation. So if you want us to use local food prepare them in the right way.”⁶⁸ Hence, preparation of the indigenous symbols of nourishment is a big impediment in the ACK and in other ecclesiastical traditions in Africa at large because a related research done in Zimbabwe by Anthony Amadi cites the same limitation.⁶⁹

9. Conclusion

In this article I have argued that the sacrament of the Holy Communion where bread and wine are the official and authorized symbols used remains central in the Anglican worship. Though bread and wine are understood as foreign symbols in the ACK, they have remained the most widely used symbols because of the diachronic logic of conscious tradition. This is in spite of some provinces in the Anglican Communion substituting bread and wine with other indigenous elements. Therefore, the article

⁶⁵ Interview with respondent, Field Notes 09#, (Ndunyu Chege Parish 18 November 2013).

⁶⁶ Field Notes 03#.

⁶⁷ Interview with respondent, Field Notes 010#, (Ruiru Parish 27 November 2013).

⁶⁸ Interview with respondent, Field Notes 011#, (St Paul University, Mombasa Campus 15 December 2013).

⁶⁹ Anthony Igboke Amadi. *Inculturating the Eucharist in the Catholic Diocese of Mutare, Zimbabwe*. Unpublished PhD Dissertation 2008. University of South Africa.

concludes that the ACK is a conservative province compared with other provinces in the Anglican Communion. This implies that the discourse of inculturation of Holy Communion species in Africa is sharply divided between those who are influenced by diachronic logic of conscious tradition versus synchronic logic of conscious inculturation of these species. The challenge today in Africa is to bridge this gap in order to have genuine and authentic inculturation of these species. The article also concludes that inculturation is the work of the indigenous people in their context to re-appropriate the gospel. While the missionaries succeeded in re-appropriating these species in their contexts, it remains today African Church mystery on how to do so in the midst of her mother Church poking its nose in to dictate its parameters.

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Interviewee	Location	Interviewer	Date
01#	Ruiru	George Kiarie	27 Nov 2013
02#	Thika	George Kiarie	25 Nov 2013
03#	Thika Cathedral	George Kiarie	26 Nov 2013
04#	Thika Cathedral	George Kiarie	3 Dec 2013
05#	Ndunyu Chege	George Kiarie	18 Nov 2013
06#	Gituamba	George Kiarie	28 Nov 2013
07#	Thika Cathedral	George Kiarie	3 Dec 2013
08#	Makongeni	George Kiarie	4 Dec 2013
09#	Ndunyu Chege	George Kiarie	18 Dec 2013
010#	Ruiru	George Kiarie	26 Nov 2013
011#	Mombasa	George Kiarie	15 Dec 2013

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