

# Theological Impediments to Inculturation of the Eucharistic Symbols in the Anglican Church of Kenya

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## Abstract

Inculturation of the Eucharistic symbols has been highly advocated in the mission-based churches located in the global South. In spite of this discourse being so fundamental for the expansion of Christian faith in any ecclesiastical context, there are emerging issues silencing this clamour. It is against this background that this article is set in order to explore the theological impediments to inculturation of the Eucharistic symbols in the Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK), with special reference to the diocese of Thika.

**Keywords:** Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK); Eucharist; inculturation; Kenya; Thika; symbols; tradition

## Introduction

Different ecclesiastical traditions in Africa coined and embraced different terms such as adaptation, indigenisation and inculturation for appropriating Christianity in various contexts in the 1960s and 1970s. This article will use the term inculturation because of its openness to dialogue and its wider acceptance in both Roman Catholic and Protestants circles. This term, according to Justin Upkong originated from the Roman Catholic Church and to be specific from the order of Jesuit in Rome in 1975.<sup>1</sup> The term attracted different meanings from different scholars. This got the attention of Ann Nasimiyu-Wasike who notes that defining this term is one of the difficult tasks, for there are as many definitions as there are serious scholars reflecting on this process of

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1 Justin Upkong, "Inculturation Theology in Africa: Historical and Hermeneutical Development," 530–542, in *Handbook of Theological Education in Africa*, edited by Isabel Phiri Apawo and Dietrich Werner (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2013), 531.



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inculturation.<sup>2</sup> For the purpose of this article, John Waliggo's definition will be used. He defines inculturation as:

... [an] Honest and serious attempt to make Christ and his message of salvation evermore understood by people of every culture, locality and time. It means reformulation of Christian life and doctrine into the very thought patterns of each people. It is the conviction that Christ and his Good News are even dynamic and challenging to all times and cultures as they become understood and lived by each people.<sup>3</sup>

This definition by Waliggo is of paramount importance because the Eucharistic symbols in the Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK) were not expressed and interpreted within the thought systems of Anglican Christians in Kenya. However, what is noticeable in the ACK is that the Church Mission Society (CMS) missionaries did the contrary and instead imposed their Anglo-Saxon interpretations of the Eucharistic symbols. With this predicament in the ACK, this phenomenon necessitates reformulation of Christian faith and doctrines—particularly the Eucharistic symbols within the thought systems of the Anglican Christians in Kenya. To this end, the African scholars in the 1960s and 1970s took up the task and began giving attention to the debate on inculturation of the Eucharistic symbols. This elicited two schools of thoughts on the subject among African scholars.

This article draws its raw data from both empirical and non-empirical methods. The raw data were collected from 25 parishes in 2013, where the respondents comprised both clergy and laity in the ACK diocese of Thika. Semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and questionnaires were used in data collection. Sixty-seven respondents with deeper knowledge of the Eucharistic symbols from the ACK diocese of Thika were purposively sampled. The collected data were analysed qualitatively. In the next section, this article explores the divergent views from different scholars on their endeavour to inculturate the Eucharistic symbols.

## **Divergent Views Regarding Inculturation of the Eucharistic Symbols in the ACK**

As stated above, the clamour for inculturation of the Eucharistic symbols attracted two schools of thought. The first school of thought was championed by key scholars such as Jean Marc Ela (1986), Kabasele Lumbala (1989), Benezet Bujo (1990), and John Gatu (2006). These scholars earmarked the Eucharistic symbols as foreign food products and as such with two implications to the Africans. One, as foreign religious symbols they

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2 Ann Nasimiyu-Wasike, "Acceptance of the Total Human Situation as a Precondition for Authentic Inculturation," 47–56, in *Inculturation: Abide by the Otherness of Africa and the Africans*, edited by Peter Turkson and Frans Wijzen (Kampen: Kok, 1994), 48.

3 John M. Waliggo, "Making a Church that is truly African," 11–30, in *Inculturation: Its Meaning and Urgency*, edited by J. M. Waliggo et al. (Kampala: St Paul Publications, 1986), 12.

do not communicate adequately to the Africans because symbols are often contextual and one can hardly impose the same meaning in another context. This insinuates that it is imperative to re-appropriate the Eucharistic symbols within an African ecclesiastical setting and its thought systems if at all they are to realise the desired intention and goal. Two, as imported food products from Europe, one would not hesitate to argue that they serve European commercial interest by ensuring a steady and ready market for European products, while these food products can be substituted by locally manufactured products that communicate adequately to the African Christians. Thus, this school of thought is conscious of the outstanding role of inculturation as a model of the contextualisation process and it strongly urges that Eucharistic symbols should be re-appropriated.

However, the second school of thought, epitomised by scholars such as Henry Okullu (1974) and James Okoye (1992), challenges the position of the first school of thought. They dismissed any plot by the first school to brand these Eucharistic symbols as alien and instead aver that these symbols have already been acculturated within the African thought system. Hence these Eucharistic symbols are no longer foreign food products, but rather locally acceptable products for ecclesiastical use the way Christ commanded in remembrance of him. From these two schools of thought, it is evident that an inculturation model of contextualisation is an open-ended study. With this idea in mind, this article will now explore theological factors hindering inculturation of the Eucharistic symbols since 1960s to date, as discussed below.

## **Theological Impediments to Inculturation of the Eucharistic Symbols in the ACK**

Karl Rahner observes that inculturation is the duty of the local church in any given context.<sup>4</sup> This implies that every local church should endeavour to communicate the good news of Christ in the language coherent to her people's culture. In this article, the views of diocesan Christians on how the diocese has been advocating inculturation of the Eucharistic symbols, especially the use of indigenous symbols of nourishment, and their responses were as follows.

Mwihaki Nguyai, one of the respondents, said: "I have never heard [that before], I heard it from you."<sup>5</sup> Thirteen respondents (62%) out of 21 interviewees (who were laity) gave a similar response. They responded that they had never heard the diocese advocating the use of indigenous symbols of nourishment in the Eucharist. Regarding those who had heard about it (38%), their arguments were represented by Ven. Joshua Ngaruiya, who was convinced that:

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4 Karl Rahner (translated by Joseph Dunceel), *Theological Investigations 22: Perspectives for Pastoral Theology in the Future* (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 109.

5 Mwihaki Nguyai, interview 28 November 2013.

I don't think we have reached there, you know theology is brought about by the needs that are felt. And those needs are taken by the leadership and are discussed.<sup>6</sup>

However, Peterson Karanja claimed to have come close to such inculturation from Archbishop David Gitari. He argued that:

To my knowledge the diocese has not, but I have been proud to see the late Archbishop David Gitari using the local song, sang in Kikuyu about the last supper and him breaking the bread, a normal loaf of bread not the wafers. And I always looked forward to him whenever he was presiding [over] the Holy Communion to use that kind of administering the Holy Communion. This is because it is so beautiful and it made a lot of sense as he broke the bread and sang about the last supper and why it is done and Jesus' command to his disciples that do this in my remembrance since it comes with a lot of spiritual renewal.<sup>7</sup>

As such, it is right to say that Archbishop Gitari drew close to inculturation of the Eucharistic symbols; a thought also shared by Rev. Dr Regina Kinuthia, who maintained that:

Only through Gitari, but no such a discussion on inculturation, probably I guess the church has not been sensitive, the church is traditional and the church is ignorant.<sup>8</sup>

From diocesan Christians interviewed (21) it was only Lydia Wanjiru who was of the opinion that the diocese has been advocating inculturation of the Eucharistic symbols. She argued:

... I think so because I remember it was during Easter and that time I did not attend because I remember, I do not know whether mchungaji (means priest) was serious or joking, he told us he wants one person to bring one dry chapatti. I do not think he can do that if without authority from the diocese.<sup>9</sup>

In light of the above responses from diocesan Christians, it is evident that the diocese has not been advocating inculturation of the Eucharist by using indigenous symbols of nourishment. The critical question to be addressed by this article is: Why is the Kenyan Province adamant while some Provinces within Anglican Communion have embraced their indigenous symbols of nourishment?<sup>10</sup> The following section discusses the

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6 Ven. Joshua Ngaruiya, interview 26 November 2013.

7 Peterson Karanja, interview 25 November 2013.

8 Rev. Dr Regina Kinuthia, interview 27 November 2013.

9 Lydia Wanjiru, interview 21 November 2013.

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

theological challenges associated with inculturation of the Eucharistic symbols in the ACK.

## **Marginal role of Laity in doing Theology**

The marginal role of laity in doing theology is one of the theological impediments to inculturation of the Eucharistic symbols in the ACK. This is evident in the ACK because the role of doing theology is for the whole household of God, both laity and ordained. However, what is conspicuous in the ACK is that theological articulation is the reserve of theologians and the clergy seldom engage their congregations. The result is a considerable number of Christians confessing that they have never heard about inculturation of the Eucharistic symbols. John de Gruchy attributes this failure to the priest and theological educator, as he argues:

We often bemoan the fact that our congregations and denominations do not “think theologically” about issues, or that many Christians today are theologically illiterate ... the fault lies with us as theological educators and with those whom we train to be ministers and pastors. For if ministers are not doing theology and equipping their congregation to do so with them, then it is not surprising that their members are theologically illiterate and ill equipped for the task of being the church in the world.<sup>11</sup>

This phenomenon prevails in the ACK and the result is theologically illiterate congregations, as De Gruchy says. What emerges is discrepancy between theory and praxis because the whole household of God is not engaged in doing theology. Contributing to this discrepancy, Robert Shorter (1980) observes that this culminates into inculturation being clerical rather than a concern for the whole household of God; and the outcome is inculturation being too cerebral and too remote from the real life of the community.<sup>12</sup> This means that the laity is put in periphery by African theologians when they are doing theology, while their involvement would enrich and add flavour to articulation of theological issues—in this case the inculturation of the Eucharistic symbols in the ACK. While this article laments that the laity plays a marginal role in doing theology in Africa, it is unfortunate and shameful to join scholars such as Zablon Nthamburi and Paul Gifford, who observe that inculturation in Africa was and is highly advocated by missionaries or non-Africans and not the natives.<sup>13</sup> This infers that despite our African church leaders’ claim that the “church has come of age,” our theological reflection of our Christian faith is wanting and there is a dire need to critically

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11 John de Gruchy, “Revisiting Doing Theology in Context: Re-assessing a Legacy,” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, (2011): 141, 24.

12 Robert Aylward Shorter, *Towards a Theology of Inculturation* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1988), 226.

13 Zablon Nthamburi, *The Pilgrimage of the African Church: Towards the Twenty-First Century* (Nairobi: Uzima Press, 2000), 117; Paul Gifford, “Africa’s Inculturation Theology: Observations of an Outsider,” *Hekima Review*, (2008): 38, 19.

reconstruct our own theology, lest we continue being spoon-fed theologically by the West in the 21st century.

## Unity of Universal Church

The Apostolic and Nicene Creeds are so emphatic that the true marks of a church are: being one, holy, catholic and apostolic. However, with the debate of using different Eucharistic symbols in different ecclesiastical contexts, it is perceived to jeopardise the true mark of the church, that is, oneness of the universal church of Christ. Regarding this oneness, being the position of the ACK, scholars argue that symbols unite and at the same time divide. From this dialectical observable fact of symbols, the ACK Christians are of the opinion that diverse use of Eucharistic symbols would tear apart the unity of the universal church. This was expressed by Joseph Githae, who maintained that:

Exactly because for a time we have been having forums whereby we meet at deanery level ... at the whole archdeaconry ... and this information will be shared as you are saying to support you and may bring some disharmony. Even some people may be degraded, those who are taking *nduma*<sup>14</sup> might be seen to be very inferior, yet we are talking of the same faith into Christ ... so it may bring that kind of [division] whereby we may have classes within the church. There are classes of *Nduma* they might be deemed, and others—the modern ones [who are] taking the bread.<sup>15</sup>

Reflecting on this response of Githae, it affirms that symbols may divide. Githae feels that in the ACK and in the universal church, symbols will bring social stratification based on class while this meal—through its symbols—is in fact supposed to lift all barriers in the society. Although indigenous symbols of nourishment communicate adequately to people in their context, the critical question remains: Do we need to emphasise universality at the expense of these symbols communicating and leading people to experience God anew? Shorter, in his paper “Inculturation: Win or Lose the Future,”<sup>16</sup> dismisses the emphasis on uniformity in the universal church of Christ and argues that the future of the church depends on inculturation of the gospel in people’s ways of life. Peter C Phan, like Shorter, contends that inculturation is opposed to uniformity.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, the emphasis on the traditional symbols in the global church, and especially in Africa where these symbols are viewed as powerful in relation to indigenous symbols, suggests a form of colonialism. In fact, this article perceives that

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14 Kikuyu word that means arrow root.

15 Joseph Githae, interview 21 November 2013.

16 Robert Aylward Shorter, “Inculturation: Win or Lose the Future?” 54–67, in *New Direction in Mission and Evangelization 3: Faith and Culture*, edited by James A. Scherer and Stephen B. Bevans (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1999), 56.

17 Peter C. Phan, *In our Own Tongue: Asian perspectives on Mission and Inculturation* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2003), xii.

bread and wine not only abolished Kenyan indigenous symbols but also annihilated these symbols, unless reclaimed. This thought is captured by Kinuthia, who stated that:

We need to ask ourselves if universalism means colonialism or is part of neo-colonialism.<sup>18</sup>

By engaging Kinuthia, it is true to say that uniformity is stressed, while the primary goal should be the significance advanced by these symbols in the universal church of Christ. Lumbala concludes that this is an ongoing debate and thus an open-ended discussion in the universal church of Christ because despite the inculturation of Eucharistic symbols being dismissed, they will not vanish.<sup>19</sup> Consequently, Valentin Dedji proposes to break this stalemate on the use of diverse Eucharistic symbols. He suggests that Christians should not ascribe to the materiality of the products authorised by the church as orthodoxy, but on the significance of the symbols that enter into celebration of the Eucharistic sacrament.<sup>20</sup> This idea found vehement support from clergy and laity focus group discussions, when Ven. John Gitau argued:

I should say every culture should look for what is suitable to them and can communicate to them ... for you are looking for relevance in the Holy Communion. We have what we eat and drink. For Kamba *muthukui* will be a common meal because it will bring relevance to that community and wherever we are aware they are doing that, because it is bringing them home. Coming to another community is the same and we will all understand [the idea] of unity in diversity. Because of these diversities we will agree: whatever is bringing them home is that food and at the end of the day what we have in Kikuyuland, Luoland—the significance will be the same but the type of food will be different. So when we are meeting they have a common meal and we have a common meal but the message coming to Kikuyuland is the same message in Kambaland, is the same message in Luoland.<sup>21</sup>

Lumbala thus put the last nail in this casket when he contends that the church of Christ should not attach so much significance to the *symbols* used at the expense of the *significance* these symbols communicate.<sup>22</sup> The key idea conveyed by these symbols should be remembrance of the death and resurrection of Christ for atonement of human sin, which culminated into reconciliation with God—and not remembrance of Mediterranean agriculture.

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18 Kinuthia, interview.

19 F. Kabasele Lumbala, *Celebrating Jesus Christ in Africa: Liturgy and Inculturation* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1998), 57.

20 Dedji, Valentin, *Reconstruction and Renewal in African Christian Theology* (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2003), 229.

21 Ven. Gitau, interview.

22 Lumbala. *Celebrating Jesus Christ in Africa*, 54.

Laurenti Magesa, contributing to this debate in 2004, critiqued the emphasis put on universal unity of the church as far as inculturation is concerned. He points out that the argument on maintaining unity of the universal church is one of the weakest.<sup>23</sup> He cites the fear that prevailed in the Roman Catholic Church before Vatican Council II (1962–1965) when it introduced the local dialects in the mass. He observes that instead of breaking the unity of the church, it enriched it with diverse cultural aspects that spoke and communicated to the people more deeply than Latin. In light of these arguments, it is correct to summarise that unity in diversity is inevitable and it will prevail in the Eucharistic rite using indigenous symbols of nourishment that communicate to people’s hearts and imagination, leading them to experience God anew. In the Anglican tradition, George Mathew foresees today’s plurality<sup>24</sup> of rites within the Anglican Communion, measured by the Lambeth Quadrilateral (1886) and the Lambeth Conference resolutions being evident.<sup>25</sup> If this is realised in fullness of time, it will fulfil Ian Bunting’s projection of rich variety of expressions in the Anglican way in future; and in this case re-appropriates indigenous symbols of nourishment for celebration of the Eucharist in different contexts.<sup>26</sup> Interestingly, Kwame Bediako perceives translatability as universality. To this end, he contends that the incarnation of the Christian faith will be different in different contexts, yet it will preserve elements that unite them all. Bediako sees this as sharing in a common reality, attribution of ultimate significance to Jesus Christ and a sense of belonging to a people of God, extending beyond the local context and in the midst of whom God’s activity in the universal church is recognised.<sup>27</sup>

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23 Laurenti Magesa, *An Anatomy of Inculturation: Transforming the Church in Africa* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2004), 228. Magesa is right in his argument that it is ironical that “middlemen” perceive the unity of universal church at stake if indigenous symbols are used, in spite of prevailing divisions in the Eucharist where Eucharist in some churches is exclusively for their members and excludes other members of the body of Christ when sharing this meal. This is evident in our denominations that we do not welcome other communicants from other churches depicting the level of divisions in different Christian traditions. This happened to me and others as ecumenical students at Bossey Ecumenical Institute Geneva in 2006, when we went for a study visit to the Vatican under invitation of the Pontifical Council for promoting Christian unity. In spite of us been communicants from diverse traditions, the Roman Catholic Church declined to share Communion with us. This featured in our reflection when we came back to Bossey and the well-known Lima text BEM’s [Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry] challenge became evident in its longing according to Kinnamon and Cope (1997:189) for the time the divided church will come closer and be visibly reunited around the Lord’s Table.

24 Chukwu (2008:160) in support of plurality argued that when reformers embraced languages other than Latin in Europe there was plurality and freedom from the Roman Church, since inculturation began to take place in different contexts where the reformers came from.

25 George Mathew, “Whose Culture and Why?” 144–155, in *The Identity of Anglican Worship*, edited by Kenneth Stevenson and Bryan Spinks (London: Mowbray, Acassell Imprint, 1991), 154.

26 Ian Bunting, “The Anglican Future,” 229–243, in *Celebrating the Anglican Way*, edited by Ian Bunting (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1996), 231.

27 Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal for non-Western Religion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), 109.



Hence, it is right to conclude that the solution to the unity of the universal church today is unity in diversity, as all the diversities manifest different faces of God in the global church. For, according to Ola Tjqrhom, unity is a divine gift to the church of Christ because human effort cannot create unity as purported by ecumenical endeavours.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, Hans Küng and Alister McGrath argue that unity should be understood theologically and not sociologically in terms of conformity and uniformity. As argued earlier in this article, inculturation of the Eucharistic symbols should not place too much emphasis on the materiality of the symbols used, but rather on the theological significance advanced by diverse symbols used in different ecclesiastical contexts.<sup>29</sup> This article contends that when diversities are embraced in the universal church of Christ—without subjection of one church—and we pray together, hear the word of God together, confess our faith together and share our meals together, only then can we speak of one church. This is because we do confess one Lord and not many, one spirit and not many, one God and not many.<sup>30</sup>

## Theological Formations of Clergy

Another theological impediment to inculturation of the Eucharistic symbols in the ACK, is the theological formation of the clergy. Their fear to engage their contextual issues that affect the church today is of paramount importance in this article. As one notes from the Karanja and Kinuthia interviews, it is only bishop Gitari in the ACK who was vocal in this endeavour during his tenure (1975–2002). The question remains: Where were the other clergy in the Province of Kenya? To respond to this quagmire in the ACK, Eugene Hillman points out that African clergy (including ACK clergy) are less aggressive towards inculturation and are alienated from their own cultural heritage.<sup>31</sup> This cultural alienation of African clergy is evident and, according to Joseph Wandera (2006); Joseph Galgalo and Esther Mombo (2008); Mugambi (2013); and Bill Houston (2013) (quoted in Global South Anglican 2006) it can be attributed to the theological formation they receive. These authors argue that it is Western conditioned<sup>32</sup> with no relevance to African concerns. This means that it lacks a contextual approach that would encourage African clergy to engage their context critically while doing theology, and thus

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28 Ola Tjqrhom (ed.). *Apostolicity and Unity: Essay on Porvoo Common Statement* (Grand Rapids: William B Eerdman Publishing Company, 2002), 121.

29 Hans Küng, *The Church* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1967), 273; Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction 4th edition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 393.

30 Küng, *The Church*, 282.

31 Eugene Hillman, *Inculturation Applied: Toward an African Christianity* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 43.

32 However, the Global South Anglican Churches have noted this and have resolved to come up with contemporary and contextual theology. This was reflected in their meeting in Kigali, Rwanda in 2006. See Global South Anglican 2006.

inculturation is not encouraged,<sup>33</sup> ensuing alienated priests detached from African realities. This view was justified by Wanjiru, who was not sure if their priest was “*serious or joking*,” and this is despite the Lambeth Conference of 1988 commending and encouraging authentic inculturation in the Anglican Communion.<sup>34</sup>

Houston throws a spanner in the works and cites that this alienation is perpetuated in most theological colleges in Africa by faithfully teaching theological knowledge that was and is generated in the West in Western textbooks.<sup>35</sup> This suggests that African theological colleges are at cross purpose because vast contents of these books are tailored toward Western ecclesiastical context, and not necessarily for export. The implications are that when used in other contexts, like Africa, they do not address theological needs at hand; rather they estrange African clergy from their cultural orientations. While pushing this debate of Houston further, it is clear that articulation of theology in most, if not all African theological colleges and seminaries, is done in foreign languages rather than indigenous languages. This adds insult to injury, because it takes place in spite of the significant role played by language as a tool of doing theology, and it touches the core values of the people. When theology is expressed using a people’s own language, it identifies with these people’s context and responds to their questions in life. However, a foreign language asks irrelevant questions and answers questions not asked in that cultural and linguistic context. This embodies a serious theological setback that has been a great encumbrance to the inculturation of the Eucharistic symbols in the ACK.

The solution to this challenge, according to Mugambi, is the need to encourage and support theological publications of African theologian works—primarily for consumption of African readers—since the African theologians will be addressing the African context and issues therein.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, the formation of: 1) a Global South Anglican Theological Education Task Force (TEFT) that met first in 2006 in Kigali; 2) the Association of Theological Institutions in East Africa (ATIEA) founded in January 1960; and 3) the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) in 1976, among other bodies, is worth mentioning, as they are a step forward toward arresting this problem of Western theological education in theological institutions in

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33 This is no different to other churches in Africa; for instance in the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria James Reynolds (2012: 153) admitted that there is a lack of contextual approach in the theological curriculum of their seminary.

34 See Anglican Communion. *The Truth Shall Make You Free: The Lambeth Conference 1988* (London: Church Publishing), 8.

35 Bill Houston, “The Future is not what is used to be: Changes and Choices Facing Theological Education in Africa,” 108–116, in *Handbook of Theological Education in Africa*, edited by Isapel Apawo Phiri and Dietrich Werner (Dorpspruit: Cluster Publications, 2013), 109.

36 Jesse Mugambi, “The Future of Theological Education in Africa and the Challenges it Faces,” 117–125, in *Handbook of Theological Education in Africa*, edited by Isapel Apawo Phiri and Dietrich Werner (Dorpspruit: Cluster Publications, 2013), 124.

Africa. These bodies have been instrumental in the articulation of theological curricula in most African theological institutions suited for the needs of the African church. Their prime goal has been to inculcate theological approaches and the content being taught. Some of the achievements by these bodies in Africa are the inclusion of core areas of theological studies, such as: African theology; African philosophy; African traditional religions; African women theology; African biblical hermeneutics; history of Christianity in Africa; African initiated churches; and so forth in most African theological seminaries, colleges and universities.

## **Ecclesiastical Imperialism**

Another theological challenge is ecclesiastical rigidity and imperialism in the ACK, such that efforts and endeavours by pro-inculturationists are thwarted when they are summoned and punished by church leadership. This means that lack of political goodwill from African church leaders is a major drawback in this endeavour. A good example in the ACK is the pastoral experience of Ven. Canon John Mbutia, who narrated that:

I know there is a day we used tea in Ngong and I remember a panel called me to ask why [laughter]. All diocesan Evangelists were there, and I was to celebrate that with tea because I could not get wine [interrupted] yes black tea. I could not get any wine anywhere and I had announced that there will be Holy Communion and people were prepared, so I used yellow *ugali* and black tea and we did it, but when we came here [sic] the whole panel called me and asked “Mbutia you celebrated Holy Communion with what?” Because the Evangelists were amazed and they wanted to tell everybody, I remember I and Ven. Mutonga were the celebrants. We had to answer questions and we were not condemned because we justified why?<sup>37</sup>

This ecclesiastical rigidity and imperialism is prevalent in other parts of Africa, as Dillistone gives an example of the Archbishop of Canterbury who demurred the Ugandan church.<sup>38</sup> Philip Tovey cites one Roman Catholic bishop, Dispont from the diocese of Pala in Chad, who celebrated the Eucharist with millet bread and millet beer when there was a shortage of these traditional symbols in that country, only to be relieved of his office.<sup>39</sup>

Darrell Whiteman and Kwok Pui-Lan, contributing to this stumbling block, observed that this imperialism has resulted in ecclesiastical hegemony.<sup>40</sup> This implies that in most

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37 Ven. Canon John Mbutia, interview 3 December 2013.

38 F. W. Dillistone, *The Power of Symbols* (London: SCM Press, 1986), 208.

39 Philip Tovey, *Inculturation of Christian Worship: Exploring the Eucharist* (Hants, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2004), 46.

40 Darrell L. Whiteman, “Contextualization: The Theory, the Gap, the Challenge,” 42–53, in *New Direction in Mission and Evangelization 3: Faith and Culture*, edited by James A. Scherer and

African mainline churches inculturation has to be approved by their mother churches in Canterbury, Scotland, America or the Vatican, as Osei-Bonsu<sup>41</sup> and Okoye<sup>42</sup> observed. This ecclesiastical hegemony provoked Ngugi wa Thiong’o to argue that the African continent was taught to look on Europe as her teacher and the centre of man’s civilisation, and herself as the pupil.<sup>43</sup> To deconstruct this trend, Roderick Hewitt proposes partnership in mission between the global North and global South churches, because mission is the responsibility of the whole people of God and not a few enthusiasts.<sup>44</sup> In addition, Teresia Hinga suggests the African church should be given time and space to do inculturation, even if she makes mistakes.<sup>45</sup> Ben Knighton observes that Christian faith is propagated by natives and not outsiders, and so this necessitates the natives to construct their own local theology.<sup>46</sup> Bediako Kwame believes the ball is now in the court of the African Christians, to determine the development of their own Christian faith coherent with their thought form, the same way the Greco-Roman world inculturated their Hellenistic church.<sup>47</sup>

While ecclesiastical imperialism prevails in the ACK, the African Instituted Churches<sup>48</sup> (AICs) like Kimbanguist Church in DRC (founded by Simon Kimbangu in 1921) are free from this and are far ahead. Gwinyai Muzorewa, Josiah Young and John Parrat argue that they have shown in many respects a more African approach to the Christian

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Stephen B. Bevans (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1999), 49 ; see also Kwok Pui-Lan, “The Legacy of Cultural Hegemony in Anglican Church,” 47–70, in *Beyond Colonial Anglicanism: The Anglican Communion in the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Kwok Pui-Lan and Ian T. Douglas (London: Church Publishing, 2000).

41 Joseph Osei-Bonsu, *The Inculturation of Christianity in Africa* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2005), 103.

42 “The Eucharist in African Perspective,” [www.sedosmission.org/web/index.php?option=com](http://www.sedosmission.org/web/index.php?option=com) (accessed 20/08/2014).

43 Ngugi wa Thiong’o, *The River Between* (Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishers, 1965), 100.

44 Roderick Hewitt, “Building Communities of Hope: A Case Study in Postcolonial Mission,” 79–102, in *Postcolonial Mission: Power and Partnership in World Christianity*, edited by Water, Desmond van der, Upland (California: Sopher Press, 2011), 85.

45 Teresia Hinga, “Inculturation and the Otherness of Africans: Some Reflection,” 10–18, in *Inculturation: Abide by the Otherness of Africa and the Africans*, edited by Turkson, Peter and Wijzen, Frans (Kampen: Kok, 1994), 17.

46 Ben Knighton, “Christian Enculturation in the Two-Thirds World,” 51–68, in *Global Christianity: Contested Claims*, edited by Wijzen, Frans and Schreiter, Robert (Amsterdam: Rodopi BV, 2007), 52.

47 Bediako, *Jesus in Africa*, 56.

48 These churches are also referred to as African Indigenous Churches or African Independent Churches. They emerged in Africa due to white domination in the mainline churches, leading to schism. A good example in Kenya is Legio Maria splitting from the Roman Catholic Church in Nyanza in 1963. Other factors that led to their emergence were cultural practices such as female circumcision in Central Kenya in 1929; polygamy leading to the establishment of the Africa Independent Pentecost Church of Africa (AIPCA) in Kenya; and healing, especially in Aladura Church in Nigeria and Kimbanguist in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), then Zaire.

faith, since they are free from ecclesiastical imperialism.<sup>49</sup> However, the AICs' creativity and innovation have had two immense setbacks, according to Mugambi. One, because in Christian circles the AICs can hardly influence theological orientations in view of the fact that they are marginal or absent in the Christian world communions.<sup>50</sup> Two, what AICs offer to the universal church of Christ has not been broadly received with honour.<sup>51</sup> In this line of thought, Shorter laments that ecclesiastical imperialism prevails as the ecclesial communions are culturally biased in favour of Europe and are not ready to allow authentic inculturation to take place without censorship.<sup>52</sup> However, in spite of all these obstacles in the AICs, this article cites the words of Michael Harper, an Anglican priest in England, who lauded the Kimbanguist Church that it "has much to teach us"; and like in this article, endeavours to give inspiration and motivation for efforts and attempts to inculturate the Eucharistic symbols.<sup>53</sup>

## Conclusion

From this article it was established that the Eucharistic symbols in the ACK are paramount in the life of Christians, and that their understanding is highly influenced by an Anglo-Saxon worldview. To this end, the article contends that it is imperative to inculturate these Eucharistic symbols within the thought systems of ACK Christians to promote inter- and intra-communication and for conveying the grace of God to recipients. However, the article noted that this noble exercise—despite being significant and relevant in the life of any ecclesiastical group—attracted two contrasting schools of thought among ACK Christians. The first school of thought is influenced by synchronic logic conscious of inculturation, where the proponents of this school give more attention to the *significance* attached to these symbols rather than their *origin* in Mediterranean agriculture. The second school of thought subscribes to diachronic logic conscious of tradition, and as such remains convinced that continuous use of bread and wine ensures continuity and congruence from the time of institution of this rite to date.

Therefore, the article concludes that the debate on the use of single and uniform Eucharistic symbols in the Anglican Communion and the global church at large, is

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49 Gwinyai Muzorewa, "A Definition of a Future African Theology," *Theological Journal*, 1990: 19, 171; Josiah Young U III, *African Theology: A Critical Analysis and Annotated Biography* (London: Greenwood Press, 1993), 2; John Parrat, *Reinventing Christianity: African Theology Today* (Grand Rapid, Michigan: William B Eerdmans, 1995), 60.

50 Jesse Mugambi, "Theological Methods in African Christianity," 5–40, in *Theological Methods and Aspects of Worship in African Christianity*, edited by Mary N Getui (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 1998), 12; see also Philip, *Inculturation of Christian Worship*, 79

51 Jesse Mugambi (ed.), *The Church and Reconstruction of Africa: Theological Considerations* (Nairobi: All African Conferences of Churches, 1997), 74.

52 Robert Aylward Shorter, *Towards a Theology of Inculturation*, 247.

53 John S Pobee and Gabriel Ositelu, *African Initiatives in Christianity: The Growth, Gifts and Diversities of Indigenous African Churches: A Challenge to the Ecumenical Movement* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1998), 47.

unhealthy. The article strongly recommends the emphasis on unity in diversity, provided that the diverse use of the Eucharistic symbols in different ecclesiastical contexts, convey the grace of God. With evaluation of the theological impediments to inculturation of the Eucharistic symbols, it indicates significant achievements by the ACK in relation to Henry Venn's theory of three selves. Unfortunately, with the invention of the fourth self on a church that is self-theologising, the ACK and the entire African church is yet to fully realise this self. With the huge gap in the ratio of clergy to laity, it calls upon the church to reconsider the ministry of laity afresh, if the African church is at all to make an outstanding mark in the universal church of Christ. The laity has been taken for granted for too long, and now the ACK should note that it is no longer business as usual. Their involvement today in doing theology and equipping them for ministry is imperative. It is not an option to be debated; rather it is an urgent need to be addressed lest the church remains immature and with illiterate congregants, as De Gruchy observed. To crown it all, the theological formation of the clergy should be equally reconsidered because they are the engine to take the African church to greater heights. When considered, the clergy will be in tune with African realities such as poverty, disease, food crisis, ethnicity, and environmental degradation, among other challenges that are tarnishing the reputation of the continent.

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