

**The "Wafer" and the Wine: A Case for the Indigenizing the Elements of the Holy Eucharist
in Modern African Churches**

Ejuone Ufuomanefe Triumphant

Department of Religion, Practical Theology and Human Relations,
Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria.

E-mail: ufuomanefe.ejuone@dou.edu.ng

and

Emmanuel Chiweike Nheeme, PhD

Department of Religious and Cultural Studies
Faculty of Humanities

Rivers State University, Port Harcourt

emmanuel.nheeme@ust.edu.ng

Abstract

This study examines the theological, cultural, and historical dimensions of the Holy Eucharist, with particular attention to the symbolism and adaptability of its elements—bread and wine—within Christian worship. Drawing on Paul's account in 1 Corinthians 11:23–34, the Eucharist is presented as a sacred act that unites believers with the body and blood of Christ, commemorating His sacrifice and affirming the new covenant. The research traces the evolution of Eucharistic practice from its origins in the Passover meal to its central role in Christian liturgy across various traditions. As Christianity expanded globally, diverse cultural contexts reshaped its expression, prompting the African Church to explore ways of indigenizing the Eucharist for greater cultural relevance. Using a hermeneutical research method, the study interprets historical and theological perspectives that support contextual adaptation of the rite. It argues for the legitimacy of substituting the traditional bread and wine with culturally meaningful elements such as palm wine, Izobo, Kunu, Okpa, and Imidazole, provided that such elements uphold the theological symbolism of Christ's body and blood. The study concludes that indigenization enriches African Christian worship by fostering a deeper connection between faith and cultural identity. Furthermore, it suggests that embracing cultural diversity within Eucharistic practice strengthens the global Church's unity and inclusivity, offering a more authentic and resonant expression of Christian faith.

Keywords: Eucharist, Indigenization, Cultural adaptation, African theology, Communion.

1. Introduction.

African theology seeks to reinterpret and express the Christian faith through African cultural lenses, thereby aligning it more closely with African traditions and worldviews (Fasholé-Luke, 1976). Early African theologians such as Harry Sawyerr, Bolaji Idowu, John Mbiti, Samuel Eriwwo, and others lamented the manner in which Western missionaries dismissed African religious and cultural practices, often branding them with pejorative terms such as *fetishism*, *paganism*, and *idolatry*. This posture, they argued, privileged Western cultural forms while undermining the dignity, complexity, and spiritual value of African heritage.

Echoing Immanuel Kant's assertion that humanity must eventually "come of age," African theologians contend that African Christianity has reached a stage where it must be articulated in ways that resonate with African believers. James Johnson of Sierra Leone was among the earliest advocates for liturgical reform that incorporates African indigenous traditions, thereby affirming African identity within Christian worship. Fuller (2017) similarly argues that religion should function as an integral component of ethnic identity, cautioning that its absence may lead to identity fragmentation, cultural dislocation, and alienation from one's history and customs.

Using the Holy Communion—a central sacrament rooted in both Old and New Testament traditions—as its point of focus, this study seeks to promote African Christian identity through contextual liturgical expression. By adopting a revolutionary yet theologically grounded approach, the research aims to deepen African Christians' sense of belonging and cultural connection whenever they gather around the Lord's Table. Through participation in the Eucharist, believers affirm their union with Christ and partake in the nourishment that leads to everlasting life.

2. Conceptual Issues

The Concept of the Holy Communion

Among both the Israelites and Gentiles, sacrificial meals often followed religious ceremonies, including the Lord's Supper. Within the Church, the Holy Communion is also referred to as the Eucharist, Mass, Lord's Supper, or Holy Meal (Kearney, 2024). The Synoptic Gospels mention this incident as taking place in an upstairs apartment that may have belonged to Mary, John Mark's mother, on the same day as the Jewish Feast of Unleavened Bread. The term "unleavened" originates from the Hebrew word *matstsah* and the Greek *azymos*, meaning "sweet." The Last Supper, which coincided with Jesus' crucifixion, symbolically depicted Him as the Paschal Lamb, delivering humanity from sin and death (Cline, 2019). The Jewish Passover meal foreshadowed the New Testament Holy Communion, with the lamb representing Christ, who became the perfect, sinless substitute for humanity. The unleavened bread here represents the preparedness of believers to commit themselves to Christ and their independence from sin and

corruption. Therefore, partaking in Holy Communion denotes connection with and involvement in the death of Christ.

The Institution and Theology of the Holy Eucharist

On Maundy Thursday, the day Jesus bathed His disciples' feet, the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist was established. This incident emphasises how Christ is the perfect Paschal Lamb, atoning for all of humanity's sins (GotQuestions.org, 2022). The Anglican Communion Catechism explains that the Eucharistic elements strengthen and renew the soul, akin to how bread sustains the physical body (Compass, 2024). Jesus used bread that was produced nearby for the Last Supper and held it up for everyone to see. The prayer of consecration during today's Eucharistic liturgy is a reflection of this act (Juris, 2024). The consecration of Eucharistic components prior to their distribution to communicants is a reflection of Jesus' practice of blessing the bread to set it apart. The act of breaking bread, especially the host, represents Christ's body being broken for humanity, much like a father would break bread for his family. Importantly, He referred to it as His body (*touto*), not merely bread (*artos*) (Mark 14:12-25 (CEV), n.d.). The Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, where the consecrated bread becomes the actual body of Christ (Davenport, 2023). Christ's blood is symbolised by the wine in the Eucharist (Waite, 2024). As Jesus handed the cup to His followers during the Passover dinner, He expressed gratitude and declared, "This is my blood of the New Testament." MackArthur (1997) emphasizes that Jesus transformed the Last Passover into the first Holy Eucharist, making Himself not only central to the ceremony but also the symbolic Paschal Lamb. While the disciples likely understood the elements metaphorically rather than literally, MackArthur notes that this reflects the Hebraic tradition of symbolic language. From the liturgy, no evidence suggests the concept of transubstantiation, nor does it imply the disciples misunderstood the elements to be Christ's actual body. In essence, the Holy Communion encapsulates profound theological truths, inviting believers to participate in the mystery of Christ's sacrifice.

Apostle Paul's Theology of the Eucharist

One of the most important early Church leaders, Paul of Tarsus, wrote a great deal about the Holy Eucharist. According to Thompson (2019), Paul's influence on Christianity is ranked second only to Jesus'. Paul, who was greatly impacted by his experience in Damascus and his belief in the resurrected Lord, created the fundamental ideas of Christian theology. Paul described this transformative encounter as the revelation of the Son of God, the crucified Lord, and the Lord of glory, which shaped his post-Pentecost theology (Taber, 2024). One of Paul's significant theological contributions is his teaching on the Holy Eucharist, found in 1 Corinthians 11:17–34. Though a beautiful narrative, Paul presents it amidst a stern rebuke of the Corinthian Christians for their selfish and carnal behaviour. Before addressing the Eucharist, Paul critiques the early Church's misuse of the Agape feast, a communal meal borrowed from the ancient world, where

participants shared food in fellowship. Ascough (2008) explains how this feast became corrupted by social divisions within the Corinthian Church, reintroducing the very distinctions the Church sought to abolish. Paul condemned this practice, stating that what they were eating was not the Lord's Supper but merely a selfish banquet. Barclay provides insight into the meals of the ancient Graeco-Roman world, which the Church adopted. This included breakfast, a midday meal, and the deipnon the main evening meal. The Agape feast often concluded with the observance of the Eucharist. However, as MackArthur notes, this sacred meal had degenerated into gluttonous revelry, where the wealthy brought lavish food for themselves, leaving poorer Christians hungry. Paul lamented that this abuse dishonoured the Lord and stripped the meal of its legitimacy and spiritual essence.

Paul's Theology of the Eucharistic Elements.

Paul presents his theology of the Holy Eucharist in 1 Corinthians 11:23–34. Based on what Christ said at the Last Supper, the night Jesus was betrayed, Jesus offers a deep understanding of this holy act of devotion.

The Bread.

When Jesus said, "This is my body," He was still physically present, and there was no indication of a separation between the bread and His body. He did not say, "This bread stands for my body." Instead, the bread, though physically bread, was also called the body of Christ. Paul emphasizes that the broken bread of the sacrament goes beyond symbolism; it connects believers with the living Christ, the source of eternal life and communion with His presence.

The Wine

The liquid in the cup, though unspecified, represents Christ's blood, shed on the cross for humanity's salvation and as the foundation of the new covenant. Jesus inaugurated this new covenant with His blood, becoming its mediator. Rom-Shiloni (2012), links this covenant with the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, foretelling the reunification of Israel and Judah under obedience to Yahweh. Blood represented life in the Old Testament, and Jesus had to give His life in order to institute the new covenant. The sacrament's crimson wine represents Christ's life, without which the new covenant that unites people with God would not be possible.

Significance of the Elements

When Jesus stated, "Eat this bread and drink this cup," He was urging His followers to acknowledge and accept the advantages of His atoning sacrifice. This deed maintains a strong bond with Christ and gives spiritual vitality. This raises the question of whether the grape juice in the cup was fermented or not. Biblical authors employed *genne* (fruit) and *ampelou* (vine), which denote purity, in place of the Greek term *oinos* (wine). Old Testament Passover laws prohibited yeast (a symbol of sin and corruption) during the feast, reinforcing the use of unfermented

elements. The Eucharist serves as a reminder to Christians of Christ's sacrifice and the expectation of His second coming, symbolising His death on the cross for the sins of humanity. It nurtures the soul, builds connection with Christ, and fortifies faith. The Old Testament holiday of Passover, which commemorates Israel's escape from Egypt, is compared to the Eucharist, which commemorates freedom from sin, in the Life Application Study Bible commentary.

Meals Connected to the Holy Eucharist

1. The Passover Meal

This weeklong feast, known as Pesach, commemorates the birth of the Jewish community and their exodus from Egypt. Participants consume symbolic foods, including unleavened bread (matzot), bitter herbs (maror), and a mixture of apples, nuts, wine, and cinnamon (charoset). These elements recall the hardships and deliverance of the Hebrews. Unleavened bread symbolized the urgency of their departure from Egypt. Berkhof L. (2003) notes that the New Testament interprets the Passover meal as a sign of deliverance from sin through the Messiah.

2. The Sabbath Meal

The Sabbath dinner, which was practiced for at least a century prior to Christ, included the breaking of bread, the reading of blessings (berekah), and ritual handwashing. This ritual, likely observed by Jesus and His disciples, influenced the Church's tradition of "breaking bread." The blessings, rooted in thanksgiving and praise, reflect God's provision and His wonderful works (mirabilia Dei). The Eucharist remains a profound spiritual practice, connecting believers to Christ's sacrifice, sustaining their faith, and offering hope of eternal communion with God.

The Early Church and the Breaking of Bread

When the Sabbath and Seder meals are closely examined, they bear a remarkable resemblance to both contemporary behaviours and the Eucharistic ceremonies of the early Church. Since the majority of the early Church was Jewish, it is probable that they used the same definition of "remembrance" in their own customs, which are still essential to our religion today (Sundberg, 1958). Dr. Luke provides insight into the early Church's community life in his writings from approximately AD 85 (Wilson, 2024). Prayer, companionship, the breaking of bread, and apostolic instruction were the hallmarks of this life. It was a New Testament technical word that especially referred to the Lord's Supper and the customary supper that the apostle Paul was used to when he spoke to the Christians at Corinth.

In the Greek, "the breaking of bread," the definite word "the," denotes a particular, unique feast. The Lord's Supper is referenced by the fact that it contains both unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine. In a letter to Emperor Antoninus in 150 AD, St. Justin explained the Eucharistic feast in the early Church. According to him, believers gathered to listen to the memories of the

apostles, read the writings of the prophets, and receive admonition from the leader. This was followed by prayers, the exchange of a kiss, and the communion meal (bread, water, and wine) after prayers had been said over them. Clearly, the early Church had adopted the Sabbath and Seder meals, but unlike the Jewish tradition, they experienced the real presence of Christ in their rituals. Holy Communion was frequently associated with agape, or love feasts, during the Christian eras of the Apostolic, Reformation, and Post-Reformation. During these, individuals brought oblations, or essential food, to be blessed by the priest while offering prayers of gratitude. Over time, these foods were applied to the elements of the Holy Eucharist to be consecrated. Church fathers like Origen, Basil, Gregory, and Augustine, along with Reformers such as Zwingli, Calvin, and Luther, made significant contributions to the symbolism. The New Testament writers used different terminologies to describe the concept of the Holy Eucharist, including:

- ✓ The Lord's Supper ("Deipnon kuriakon," 1 Cor 11:20): This term is common among Protestants. Here, Paul distinguishes between the Agape feast, where wealthy Corinthians would invite the poor as guests and dishonor them, and the Lord's Supper, where Christ provides for all, regardless of social status.
- ✓ The Lord's Table ("Trapeza kuriou," 1 Cor 10:21): Paul contrasts the Lord's Table with pagan sacrificial meals, where participants commune with the devil.
- ✓ The phrase "Klass tou artou," which means "the breaking of bread," is used to describe both the Lord's Supper and the love feasts (Acts 2:42; 20:7).
- ✓ Gratitude ("Eucharistia," 1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:24; Matthew 26:26,27): This was used to describe the blessings and gratitude given throughout the meal.

Before establishing the Holy Eucharist, Jesus did not finish the customary Jewish Passover dinner, according to Klein (2024). According to him, Jesus chose regular wine since it was the most widely consumed beverage in Palestine at the time and unleavened bread because it was readily accessible. The posture in which the disciples received the elements (reclining) does not preclude Christians from receiving the Eucharist today in any position (standing, sitting, or kneeling), according to Berkhof, who contends that leavened bread and any type of wine would have been acceptable.

Historical Perspective of the Holy Communion Elements

In the Passover ceremonies, the third cup of wine which was given a new meaning was used to celebrate the Holy Eucharist (Reece, 2024). One of the main points of contention was whether or not the wine used in Holy Communion should be fermented or unfermented, or if it should be combined with water or substituted with other liquids like milk, honey, or water. A report from a committee set up by the Archbishop of Canterbury regarding the nature of Holy Communion wine, published in 1917, highlighted the following points:

- ✓ In the early Church, the fermented wine was always combined with water.

- ✓ Until recently, only fermented grape wine has been used for Communion in both Eastern and Western Christian traditions, with minor exceptions.

Their belief is summed up in a 1919 publication, "Unfermented v. Intoxicating Communion Wine," which states that intoxicating wine is unscriptural, while unfermented grape juice is the "wine of wisdom" found in the Scriptures. They also point to the wine miraculously made by Jesus at the Marriage Feast of Cana, claiming that it must have been unfermented, since God's Word condemns intoxicating wine. Historically, the Council of Dorin in Armenia (527) forbade the use of new wine, while the Fourth Council of Orleans (AD 541) ordered the use of only grape wine. Other councils, such as the Third Council of Braga (AD 675), prohibited the use of milk in place of wine. The Roman Catholic Church today uses fermented wine mixed with water in the chalice for Communion, while the use of freshly pressed grape juice is held to be valid but never licit. Many priests personally supervise the wine-making process to ensure that only naturally fermented wine is used for the Eucharist. In African churches, water is sometimes used instead of wine due to cultural considerations, such as the fear of women being associated with the scent of wine early in the morning. Milk was used in Communion in places where wine was in short supply, such as Galicia and Asturia. Despite ongoing controversy, most Christian denominations agree that the wine used in Holy Communion must be made from grapes, fermented, and combined with water in conformity with long-standing customs.

Elements of the Holy Eucharist

The elements used in the Holy Communion vary across Christian denominations.

- **Wine:** Some Christian traditions use red wine to symbolize the blood of Christ. This wine is often made from grapes and fermented, but with minimal alcoholic content.
- **Wafer:** **A wafer is a circular, thin bread baked with salt, water, and wheat flour. The wafer is produced from unleavened bread, which lacks yeast and does not rise like ordinary bread, in the Roman Catholic Church and several Orthodox churches (Church, 2022).** The bread is usually baked until it is crisp and dry, making it brittle and easy to break into pieces for Communion. Pentecostal churches often use crackers, which draw attention to the simplicity and humility of Christ's sacrifice. Some churches still use bread rolls or loaves, which are broken and shared with the congregation after the prayer of consecration. These open Communion services invite all believers, regardless of denomination, to participate, emphasizing the spiritual experience.

The Rise of African Christian Identity

African theology has long advocated for the indigenization of Christianity, tailoring the faith to suit African thought and cultural life (Agboada, 2023). In an effort to prove the superiority of European culture, early missionaries frequently disregarded African cultural traditions, calling them "fetishism," "paganism," and "idolatry." Rev. Canon Prof. Harry Sawyr, a theologian who

served as the first principal of Sierra Leone's Fourah Bay College, emphasised the need of presenting Christianity in a way that appeals to Africans. In his writings "Creative Evangelism" and "God, Creator and Ancestor," he made the case for establishing a connection between African culture and Christianity in order to more effectively spread the gospel. Idowu (1965) criticized the church in Africa, particularly in Nigeria, for adopting fabricated theology, liturgies, and European traditions that had little to no connection with the indigenous beliefs and culture of the people to whom the gospel was delivered. While acknowledging the efforts of early missionaries, Idowu called for the urgent need to indigenize theology to ensure the Church in Africa remains relevant to its people (Okegbile, 2023). Bishop William Vincent Lucas of Masasi, Ghana, also emphasized the importance of a strong link between the Church and African cultural life, without necessarily embracing what Christians term "paganism." He observed that Africa was losing its identity in favour of European cultural influences through Christian missions and colonialism. In other words, while building churches in Africa, missionaries also established Western civilization, ideologies, and culture, causing Africans to unknowingly lose their identity. This work aims to restore African identity by localizing the elements of the Eucharist, ensuring the faith is presented in a way that aligns with both African culture and Christian doctrine.

3. Case for localizing the elements of the Holy Communion.

From the foregoing, it is clear that the elements of the Holy Communion vary both with time and among denominations. It is also observed that local foods have often been used to represent the body and blood of Christ. The Anglican Book of Common Prayer highlights this, emphasizing that the elements are works of human hands, items made by man that are used to symbolize Christ's body and blood. This reflects the understanding that the elements of Communion are simply human food that is safe for consumption within a given locality, and which the Church agrees upon for that time. These elements could also be subject to change as new discoveries and circumstances arise (Capriola, 2022). The rubrics of the Anglican BCP (number sixteen) state, "For avoidance of unnecessary superstition, the Eucharistic elements should be either wafer or bread and wine." What matters most, however, is the consecration prayer said over the elements and the faith with which members of a particular denomination receive them. Some possible alternatives to the current Eucharistic elements, especially in Nigeria, are as follows:

✓ **Palm Wine:** Palm wine is a fermented beverage made from the sap of palm trees and is consumed across Africa, Asia, and Latin America. It typically contains 80-90% water, 5-15% sugar and carbohydrates, 2-6% alcohol, and small amounts of acid, proteins, and minerals. Palm wine is often used in cultural events like weddings, funerals, and social gatherings, which speaks to its health and economic benefits, as well as its safety (GreenViews, 2023). As a substitute for grape wine at the Holy Eucharist, palm wine is culturally and religiously significant (Richard, 2012). Its availability and familiarity make it a relatable choice, and its fermentation symbolizes the

transformative power of Christ's sacrifice. However, to ensure its safety for use in Communion, it must be prepared and handled hygienically.

✓ Izobo: The sap of the izobo palm tree (*Elaeis guineensis*) is used to make izobo, a traditional beverage in several African tribes, especially in Nigeria. Prior to ingestion, this juice is fermented and cooked for many days. It has a somewhat sweet and sour taste, a creamy texture, and an alcohol content of 2–6% on average. In addition to being a substitute for wine in the Eucharist, izobo is frequently utilised in rituals and social gatherings.

✓ Kunu: In West Africa, particularly in Nigeria, kunu is a traditional beverage that is widely consumed. It is prepared with millet or sorghum flour, water, sugar or honey, cow's milk or plant-based milk, and occasionally spices. Protein, fibre, vitamins, and minerals are all abundant in kunu. Its use at festivals and social gatherings demonstrates its cultural value. Kunu can be used in place of Holy Communion wine, just like palm wine and Izobo.

✓ Tapioca: It has a mild flavor and a flat, thin texture that makes it easy to break, distribute, and store. In African communities, tapioca is widely accepted, making it a suitable substitute for the traditional wafer used in Holy Communion.

✓ Okpa: African beans or Bambara nuts are used to manufacture okpa, which can be used to make wafers or flatbread. A staple dish that is popular in Eastern Nigeria. Okpa is a culturally appropriate choice for Communion. African communicants are able to establish a connection with their cultural background and foster a sense of identity via the symbolic representation of Okpa as the body of Christ.

✓ Moi-moi: This protein-rich dish is widely consumed among the Yoruba people of South-West Nigeria. If Moi-moi were used as a substitute for the Holy Communion wafer, it would help Yoruba Christians feel more connected to their faith, creating a sense of cultural relevance within their spiritual practices.

These alternative elements not only reflect the local culture but also embody the call for indigenization in African theology, making Christianity more relatable and meaningful in African contexts.

4. Findings.

The study delves into the theological and cultural dimensions of the Holy Eucharist, focusing on its elements, significance, and the evolving practices surrounding it. In 1 Corinthians 11:23-34, Paul articulates a profound theology of the Eucharist that anchors the sacrament in the teachings of Christ during the Last Supper. The bread, which Jesus calls His body, transcends mere symbolism, forming a connection between believers and the living Christ. It is not merely a representation, but a medium that brings the faithful into communion with Christ, offering spiritual life and the sustenance of faith (Oluwaseun, 2023). Although it isn't mentioned specifically in the scripture, the wine symbolises the blood that Christ sacrificed in order to save humanity and create the new covenant. According to experts, this covenant is a transformational act of divine grace and

the fulfilment of Old Testament predictions. The new covenant would not exist without life, which is represented by the blood. The debate surrounding the type of wine used (fermented or unfermented) reflects concerns over purity and tradition, particularly given the symbolism of the Passover meal, which prohibited yeast. Some scholars argue that the use of unfermented elements aligns with Jewish purity laws and Christ's adherence to these rituals. The Eucharist is fundamentally about remembering Christ's sacrifice and embracing the hope of His return (Lumen, 2024). It nourishes the soul, strengthens faith, and fosters fellowship with the divine (Lawrence, 2024). The connections to the Passover and the Sabbath meals are evident in the ritual practices of the early Church, which adapted Jewish. Deeply ingrained in the early Christian community's conception of Christ's flesh and blood, the "breaking of bread" evolved into a crucial communal worship ritual.

Theological arguments and cultural factors have influenced the Eucharist's history, especially the composition of the bread and wine. Early Christian rituals preserved elements of the Passover feast, but over time, different Christian traditions have adapted these practices to their local contexts. African theologians have emphasized the importance of tailoring Christianity to resonate with local cultures and beliefs, ensuring that the faith remains relevant and meaningful to African Christians. The study suggests that local foods and drinks, such as palm wine, Izobo, and Kunu, could serve as culturally significant alternatives to the traditional Eucharistic elements. These substitutions not only reflect the cultural identity of African communities but also align with the theological understanding that the elements of the Eucharist are works of human hands and can be adapted to local contexts. By ensuring that African Christians can participate in the Eucharist in a way that links their religion to their cultural history, the indigenisation of the sacrament fosters a more genuine and significant Christian practice. The research emphasises the Eucharist's theological depth, historical development, and continuous discussion between tradition and cultural adaptation. In addition to serving as symbols of Christ's sacrifice, the bread and wine components of the Eucharist can also be interpreted to represent the many cultures and customs of the Christian community across the world.

5. Conclusion.

In conclusion, this study has explored the theological, cultural, and historical aspects of the Holy Eucharist, providing a comprehensive understanding of its significance in the Christian faith. It has highlighted how the elements of bread and wine serve as profound symbols of Christ's body and blood, offering spiritual nourishment. The connection to Christ's sacrifice, as outlined in the New Testament, is central to the Eucharist, acting as both a memorial and a reminder of the hope of Christ's return. The study also emphasizes the dynamic nature of the Eucharist, noting how its practices have evolved over time, particularly within diverse cultural contexts. The early Christian Church's adaptation of Jewish rituals, such as the Passover and the Sabbath meals, showcases the deep roots of Eucharistic traditions in Jewish history, while also demonstrating the Church's

capacity to shape these practices in light of Christian beliefs. As the Church spread across the world, these traditions have continued to adapt, reflecting the cultural realities of the communities they serve. The exploration of African theological perspectives further enriches this discussion by highlighting the importance of indigenizing the Eucharist. The study advocates for the use of local foods and drinks, such as palm wine, Izobo, and Kunu, as alternatives to the traditional bread and wine. These elements resonate with the cultural identity of African Christians while also staying true to the core theological understanding of the Eucharist. By adapting the elements to local contexts, the Church can make the sacrament more relatable and meaningful, ensuring that it speaks to the spiritual and cultural needs of African communities.

The implications of this study are significant for the Church's ongoing journey of cultural engagement and theological reflection. The indigenization of the Eucharist is not merely a matter of adapting cultural practices but also a means of enriching the global Christian experience, ensuring that Christianity remains vibrant and relevant across diverse contexts. Theological discussions surrounding the Eucharist, particularly regarding the nature of the elements, should continue to be open to cultural diversity and local practices, as they offer new insights into the rich mystery of Christ's presence in the sacrament. This ongoing dialogue will strengthen the universal Church, enabling it to grow deeper in faith while remaining connected to the unique cultures of its members.

References

- Agboada, E. (2023). African Christian Theology and Christology: A Study of the Contributions of Kwame Bediako, John S. Mbiti, Justin Ukpong and Charles Nyamiti.
- Ascough, R. S. (2008). Forms of commensality in Greco-Roman associations. *Classical World*, 33-45.
- Berkhof, L. (2003). Systematic Theology; The Banner of Truth Trust: USA, p 644
<https://www.quora.com>
- Capriola, P. (2022, February 16). *Subject to change: meaning and proper usage*. Strategies for Parents. <https://strategiesforparents.com/subject-to-change-meaning-and-proper-usage/>
- Church, W. (2022, August 15). Orthodox vs Catholic Church: Understanding the Key Differences - WesternChurch.net. *My Blog*. <https://westernchurch.net/churches/orthodox-vs-catholic-church-understanding-the-key-differences/>
- Cline, A. (2019, June 25). *Jesus' Last Supper with his Disciples (Mark 14:22-25)*. Learn Religions. <https://www.learnreligions.com/jesus-last-supper-with-his-disciples-248756>
- Davenport, T. (2023, November 14). *Modern science doesn't disprove the doctrine of transubstantiation*. Church Life Journal. <https://churchlifejournal.nd.edu/articles/modern-science-doesnt-disprove-the-doctrine-of-transubstantiation/>
- Fasholé-Luke, E. W. (1976). The quest for African Christian theologies. *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 29(2), 159–176. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0036930600042575>

- Fuller, L. (2017). *A Missionary Handbook on African Traditional Religion*, 2nd Edition; Ade Printing Press: Jos, pp3,4
- GotQuestions.org. (2022, January 4). *GotQuestions.org*. Retrieved January 18, 2025, from <https://www.gotquestions.org/Jesus-last-hours.html>
- GreenViews. (2023, November 8). *What is Palm Wine? - Health benefits and cultural significance*. Green Views Residential Project. <https://greenviewsresidential.com/palm-wine/>
- Idowu, B. (1965). *Towards an Indigenous African Church*.
- Juris, J. (2024, November 10). *The Mass Explained - Moody Catholic*. Moody Catholic. <https://moodycatholic.com/the-mass-explained/>
- Kearney, S. (2024, February 19). *What Is the Lord's Supper or Communion – Christian.net*. *Christian.net*. <https://christian.net/theology-and-spirituality/what-is-the-lords-supper-or-communion/>
- Klein, C. (2024, May 2). *How to Celebrate Christian Passover: A Step-by-Step Guide*. *Temporary*. <https://christianeducatorsacademy.com/how-to-celebrate-christian-passover-a-step-by-step-guide/>
- Lawrence, J. (2024, December 1). *What is spiritual food in the Bible: Understanding its role in your faith journey [Solved!]*. Brain Wise Mind. <https://brainwisemind.com/what-is-spiritual-food-in-the-bible/>
- Lumen, C. (2024, January 6). *The Eucharist: A Divine Encounter with the Living Christ*. Catholic Lumen. <https://catholiclumen.com/the-eucharist-a-divine-encounter-with-the-living-christ/>
- MackArthur, J. (1997). *The MackArthur Study Bible*; Word Publishing: U.S.A, p1746
- Mark 14:12-25 (CEV). (n.d.). Bible Gateway. <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark%2014%3A12-25&version=CEV>
- National Catholic Education Commission. (2011). *The last supper and the mass*. <https://www.togetheratonealtar.catholic.edu.au/media/0vrhlhl/the-last-supper-and-the-mass.pdf>
- Okegbile, D. (2023, November 27). *REMEMBERING PATRIARCH BOLAJI IDOWU: EPISCOPACY BEYOND 'ECCLESIASTICAL COSMETICS.'* Deji Okegbile's Blog. <http://dejiokegbile.com/remembering-patriarch-bolaji-idowu-episcopacy-beyond-ecclesiastical-cosmetics/>
- Oluwaseun. (2023, December 28). *Language and Identity: How Multilingualism Shapes Cultures*. *Medium*. <https://medium.com/@zoeoluwaseun/language-and-identity-how-multilingualism-shapes-cultures-87bcee1a32cc>
- Reece, A. (2024, February 24). *What Bread Is Used for Communion – Christian.net*. *Christian.net*. <https://christian.net/theology-and-spirituality/what-bread-is-used-for-communion/>
- Richard, P. M. (2012, September 1). *What led to grape juice being used in communion?* <https://steadfastlutherans.org/blog/2012/09/what-led-to-grape-juice-being-used-in-communion/>

- Rom-Shiloni, D. (2012). Ezekiel and Jeremiah: What might stand behind the silence? *Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel*, 1(2), 203. <https://doi.org/10.1628/219222712802916808>
- Sundberg, A. C. (1958). The Old Testament of the Early Church (A Study in Canon). *Harvard theological review*, 51(4), 205-226.
- Taber, P. D. (2024, December 29). *Unveiling Paul: a transformative journey of faith and legacy*. Answered Faith. <https://answeredfaith.com/bible-character-study-paul/>
- Thompson, M. B. (2019). Paul and Jesus. In *Oxford University Press eBooks* (pp. 389–405). <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199600489.013.007>
- Wilson, L. J. (2024, February 29). Why read the Early Church Fathers? - The Sacred Faith - Medium. *Medium*. <https://medium.com/thesacredfaith/why-read-the-early-church-fathers-46860c9df5f2>