

The Relationship Between Violence and Religious Phenomena

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Abstract- *The relationship between Violence and Religious Phenomena is an issue that existed since the medieval period. In Africa, the relationship between the church and the state is complicated and contentious. The fundamental aim of this study was to investigate how the Church relates to or is entangled in the violence that has occurred in every electioneering period in Kenya since the start of multiparty politics from 1992 to 2017. To this end the study asks, how is the church linked with the violence which ensues in every general election since the inception of multiparty politics in Kenya from 1992 to 2017?. The objectives of the study is to assess the relationship between violence and Religious phenomena in Kenya. This study was guided by cosmic war theory and Just war theory. In applying cosmic war theory, Mark Juergensmeyer maintains that all religions are intrinsically bound by violence. Descriptive research design which provides a description of relationship between violence and religious phenomena. Data was collected through questionnaires and interview schedules. Religion and violence relate in different ways leading to various schools of thought. One of these schools of thought maintains that religion is inherently violent. Religion has the ability to incite enticing acts of destruction in human civilization, but it also has enormous potential for healing, restoration and hope. The local churches were culpable for the political violence inversely by either remaining silent about the violence; condoning and extenuating circumstances that lead to violence; being compliant or by endorsing violence and or by exhorting the violence.*

Indexed Terms- *Religious Phenomena, Violence, Religious violence*

I. INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background of the Study

Religion-fuelled violence is one of the century's most serious issues. This has been noted by a number of academicians who have studied the relationship between religion and violence in general. Due to their complex relationship, different researchers have differing perspectives on how religion and violence interact. While exploring the relationship between religion and violence, scholars such as Mark Juergensmeyer (2003) argue in *Terror in the Mind of God* that religion appears to be fundamentally linked with violence and that religion is intrinsically violent. Religion has the ability to incite enticing acts of destruction in human civilization, but it also has enormous potential for healing, restoration and hope. The topic of why religions appear to require violence and why some followers embrace a heavenly mandate for destruction with confidence has plagued renowned religious thinkers such as Emile Durkheim, Marcel Mauss and Sigmund Freud. Religious violence has revived in patterns aimed to horrify on massive sizes, and is frequently validated by historical precedents of religious violence, so these problems have taken on a new gravity in recent years (Juergensmeyer, 2003; p xvii & 6-7). There is a link between the medieval holy wars and the current hostilities in different regions of the world. The modern wars which begin in secular spirit seem to be acquiring increasingly religious momentum. Karen Armstrong (2001) in *Holy war: the Crusades and their impact on today's world*, points out that the two western-led offensives in Iraq, against the regime of Saddam Hussein, have been condemned as crusades or "al-Salibiyyah" in Arabic language (Karen Armstrong; 2001, i-viii).

Despite the fact that some of their teachings urge for peace, religions encourage violence. Murrin, (1971); James, (1975) and Drake, (2004); contend that as early as fourth century CE, when Christianity became state

religion, Church leaders began to abandon pacifism and integrate the use of violence (cited in Juergensmeyer, 2003; 25). In addition to this viewpoint, several studies show that religiosity does not always lead to a decrease in violence, but rather to an increase in either covert or visible aggression in specific situations. Given that at least the three Abrahamic monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam include the mandate to love one's neighbor as one of their core ethical commandments, this inclination is astounding (for an Islamic perspective, see Muslim religious leaders 2007; see also Eissler 2009).

1.1 Literature Review

1.1.1 Religion and violence

This review is not only alive to the fact that various investigations have been done on the connection between religion and violence but is similarly educated regarding the various positions taken by researchers when checking out in this area wherein probably the latest works include: *Terror in the mind of God: The global rise of religious violence* by Mark Juergensmeyer; *Fields of Blood: Religion and history of violence* by Karen Armstrong; *Not in God's name: Confronting religious violence* by Jonathan Sacks; *violence and the Sacred* by Rene Girard, and "Religion and violence in a globalized world", by Huber Williams.

Juergensmeyer (2003) in *Terror in the Mind of God; The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, holds that religion is innately rough and violent. The author examines the odd fascination and dark connection between religion and violence and further investigates how recent acts of terrorism and violence emerge from the cultures of religion. The author explains why religion is related and connected to acts of terror and violence virtually everywhere in the context of global social and political changes. He argues that despite religion providing the mores and symbols that contribute to bloodsheds, destructive acts of violence and terrorism, religious barbarism can be explained and justified by other means in some cases. However the author questions why religion is identified and associated with dreadful and vicious demonstrations practically all over. He contends that religious

brutality is used as a symbol of strength by desperate communities and other frantic networks.

Juergensmeyer exhibits this view by specifically depicting public demonstrations of savagery which have been roused, defended and coordinated by various religious worldviews. In his depiction he explains the insight views of the individuals who execute and support brutality. He does this with the fundamental aim of understanding why fierce demonstrations are related with religious causes and their ethical legitimization. The author likewise contends that religion significantly supports violence since it provides images of cosmic war and ethical support that allow activists of violence to kill believing that they are waging spiritual war or scenario.

To show this, he gives instances of deadly religious savage episodes, for example, the attack of World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001; the emergence of religious savagery among conservative Christians in the US of America; the furious Muslims and Jews in Middle East; the quarrelling Hindus and Muslims in south Asia; the native religious networks in Africa and Indonesia. He pays attention to the fact that people engaged with these demonstrations of brutality depend on religion in giving political characters and in giving permit to wrathful philosophies. Juergensmeyer predominantly gathers information on religious brutal episodes through interviews with culprits and allies of these demonstrations.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by cosmic war theory and Just war theory. Among the early proponents of these theories was St. Augustine. In applying cosmic war theory, Mark Juergensmeyer maintains that all religions are intrinsically bound by violence. He claims that the religious language about tension between order and disorder easily translates to religious violence.

1.3 Research Methodology

Descriptive research design which provides a description of relationship between violence and religious phenomena. Data was collected through questionnaires and interview schedules.

1.4 Findings of the Study

- Relationship between Religion and violence

Cleric respondent argued that different religions relate to violence differently. Some religions embrace violence while others do not. Hence pointing out that the different ways by which religion and violence relate leads to various schools of thought. In support of observation the study identified three schools of thought one of which maintains that religion is inherently violent. In this school, the religious actors claim to wage violence with the just intentions of establishing peace and social justice as sanctioned by God. In this way religion serves as a resource of violent actors and ideologies in public acts of violence hence making religion and violence inseparable. In this way religion is depicted as violent. This conservatory believes apply to the church in Kenya. Accordingly, some respondents confirmed that some churches in Kenya supplied and blessed the youth violent actors. Therefore, from this point of perception Christianity (also read as Church) as a religion inevitably stimulated violence during elections in Kenya in one way or another.

When asked if religion sanctions violence, some cleric respondents disputed the position that religion is violent thus: -

No. Religion is not violent! Neither is the church. The Church does not sanction violence because her core teachings are "Peace," "Unity" and Reconciliation (Psalms 133:1-3, 2 Corinthians 5:20, Isaiah 9:6) (Responses to research items).

Hence the study developed another school of thought maintaining that religion is not inherently violent but violence is an ascribed or acquired quality of religion. This school of thought deconstructs the mechanisms of religious violence by arguing that religion has many passages which teach about benevolence, altruism, mercy and tolerance that once ignored religion is depicted as violent when it is not. This school advances the idea that those who have little knowledge or spend too little time with religious text see religion as inherently violent whereas it is not. In this regard then Christianity as a religious institution just like other religions is non-violent save the individual faithful who through misinterpretation of the scriptures, participate in the violence during elections

in Kenya due to insufficient knowledge in the church teachings and church is blamed for it.

However, some cleric respondents argued that occasionally religion can be violent but in most cases religion advocate for non-violence hence prompting the study to come up with a third school of thought maintaining a neutral position that religion is neither violent nor non-violent. According to this school of thought the relationship between religion and violence is contingent. In this sense then religion can be either violent or non-violent depending on certain circumstances. Along this line of thinking, the architects of violence can be religious members or absolutely different people mostly the secular members of the public. Therefore, religion can be blamed for the violence in definite environments whereas it can be exonerated in other circumstances. Accordingly, therefore the church members might have participated or not, in the ethnic violence during elections in Kenya depending on the prevailing circumstances.

Religion and violence are intertwined from time immemorial. The scholars who sustain the position that religion is inherently violent, also argue that violence and religion have gone hand in hand as far back as the records from Dionysian festivities and ancient human sacrifice to contemporary fundamentalisms that would destroy entire nations or races to preserve some particular version of Truth (Rozell; <http://www.baltimoresus.com/opinion/op-ed/bs.edu> accessed on 3/3/2021). Smock (2006, 1-4) in an article, "Religious Contributions to Peacemaking: When Religion Brings Peace, Not War" attests to this fact when he argues that religion and violence are hardly strangers because religions play a role in violence. This author continues to argue that, "... in the popular thought religion brings peace but not war. Therefore, to discuss religion in the context of violence raises the vision of the many other dimensions and impacts of religion which tend to be given a low profile or even disregarded unreservedly".

A key respondent argued that the church and violence are not aliens to each other in Kenya from the time of missionary and colonial establishments through post independent era. The missionary church supported the brutal colonial government policies which perpetrated

psychosocial-economic and physical violence against the native Kenyan citizens. During multiparty era in Kenya some of the local churches were compromised and supported ethnic based violence believing it was the only means remaining to use in eradicating social evils propagated by politics and the state authority and that violence was necessary in bringing legitimate social changes that were required for peace to prevail. This position was in line with the well surveyed and elucidated views of the scholars of religion and such as Mark Juergensmeyer, Rene Girard, Karen Armstrong, Jonathan Sacks, David R. Smock, Richard Dawkins, Timothy Sisk, among others.

A key respondent pointed out that in as much as religion plays a role in violence; there are many other nonreligious factors that cause violence. Smock (2009) in *Religion in World Affairs* precisely cautions that there is need to understand that religion plays a role in international affairs and that religion is not usually the sole or even primary cause of conflict. Though on the same note, Smock also acknowledges, that no major religion has been exempted from complicity in violent conflict (Smock, 2009, p. 1). All major and most minor religions have gamboled with violence either in dogma and deed or in rhetoric and practice. The Old Testament section of the Bible which is well regarded by Christians, Jews, and Muslims is full of examples with God's fierceness and destructive retribution (quasi-genocidal vengeance).

Cleric respondents claimed that religions were not only violently founded but also support state violence in some occasions. In line with this view, Juergensmeyer; (2003) argued that religions have been violently established giving examples of how the early church was formed under violent persecutions and martyrdoms, while the Hindu scripture, *the Bhagavad Gita*, emerged on the battlefield of a fratricidal war. He further pointed out that across continents and ages, royal priests sanctified the conquests of kings, whether in Asia, Africa, or the Americas. The church blessed European mercenaries and missionaries who colonized and proselytized their colonies with physical force or violence. Even Buddhism, the religion of nonviolence, has known violence. This was illustrated by Buddhist monks in Sri Lanka who adopted arms in the war against the Tamil Tigers; the Khmer Rouge genocide which occurred in deeply

Buddhist Cambodia; and in the Burmese military junta in the 2007 saffron revolution who were crashed by Buddhist monks. Juergensmeyer also illustrates how religious violence is ubiquitous and heterogeneous (Juergensmeyer; 2003, 1-25).

The respondents maintained that religious violence is practiced in different fashions which in most cases escape general public understanding. Tanner, (2007) in *Violence and Religion: Cross-cultural Opinions and Consequences New Delhi: Concept*, argues that violence associated with religion manifests itself in different forms that elude generalized presumptions. The first form is interreligious violence between distinct religions, such as the Crusades between Christians and Muslims or today's Christian-Muslim clashes in Nigeria and Hindu-Muslim violence in India.

A key respondent pointed out that inter-religious violence has been experienced between Muslims and Christians in Kenya. On 3, January 2020 it was reported in the Standard newspaper that gunmen believed to be Al-Shabaab; a militant believed to be associated to Islamic religion, waylaid three buses and forced passengers outside. The Al-Shabaab militant group then profiled the passengers on the basis of their religion by asking them three questions; one was to recite the shahada, secondly, who is their prophet and lastly who is their God?" They then shot dead those from the Christian faith. The buses were heading to Lamu from Mombasa when the attack occurred at around 12.30 pm on 2nd of January 2020 (Benard Sanga & Weldon Kepkemoi, newsdesk@standardmedia.co.ke).

Tanner gave the second form of religious violence as that which occurs between different sects or factions of the same religion. In this regard the old Catholic-Orthodox and Catholic-Protestant conflicts are mirrored in recent wars in the former Yugoslavia and Northern Ireland. The historic Shi'a-Sunni conflict within Islam finds recent reflection in Pakistan, Iraq, and Afghanistan (Tanner, 2007, 5-7). In Kenya, violence between different factions of the same religions has been experienced in Pentecostal Assemblies of God (PAG) church in their headquarters at Nyang'ori in Western Kenya. When asked if the

church instigates violence in Kenya, a key respondent said:

To a big extent, No! In the majority of the Churches in Kenya, people from all Communities coexist as brothers and sisters in the Lord. However, it's only a few Churches that do periodically experience leadership Wrangles within their Church structures. Sometimes the violence is ethnically instigated. A good example Pentecostal Assemblies of God (PAG) Nyang'ori (interviewed on 26/10/2020)

It was reported in the standard newspaper on Friday of January 3, 2020 that officials of PAG Kenya traded barbs over alleged mismanagement of church funds. This led to the establishment of two factions in the PAG church; one faction was led by the church's General Superintendent, Pastor Patrick Lihanda and another faction was led by Pastor Nathan Ondego. The squabbles within the PAG church resulted from the contention over ten million shillings donation received from President Uhuru Kenyatta and deputy president William Ruto in 2017. The money was given to the church by Mr. Ruto on behalf of the President when he graced a church conference at Nyang'ori headquarters in 2017.

The key respondent claimed that though Pastor Lihanda claimed that "PAG is non-partisan and the funds had nothing to do with politics", he was accused of failing to remit the funds to the church scheme by Ondego. This resulted to serious tension and violence between the two factions. The Kenya police in Vihiga County were accused of interfering with the church programs because they went to Nyang'ori to calm the two factions who were fighting. However when reached for confirmation by the researcher, the then police commander in Vihiga Mr. Hassan Barua said, "We cannot just watch as people fight in the church. We were tipped off about tension in some of the churches and went there to restore order."

Another respondent claimed that the PAG church was compromised using materialism, political gifts thereby ignoring to condemn the social evils and failed to call for the social changes that were necessary in establishing peace. The church failed in performing their core function of combating social injustice.

Hence the church not only allowed conditions which favored the occurrence of violence to prevail but also the faithful engaged in violence amongst them in the church and in pocket areas in Kisumu and Siaya counties in 2017 (PAG cleric respondent interviewed on 13/11/2021 in Mbale in Vihiga County).

Tanner describes the third form of violence as that which occurs between believers and non-believers or heretics. Examples of this type of violence are drawn from theocratic regimes upholding extremist versions of their religion and often use force against citizens who are deemed to be insufficiently pious e.g. in Iran or Taliban run Afghanistan. In these countries, Zealous citizens decide to enforce piety by themselves, aggressively confront women for inappropriate clothing or men for inadequate beards, as in Taliban Afghanistan. A fourth form of violence, however, is that which occurs between secular and religious institutions or individuals. Typically, secular governments have forcefully repressed extremist or cult-like religious movements in assorted countries such as Algeria, Egypt, Turkey, China, and the United States (Tanner, 2007, 8).

The study observed that the four forms of religious violent manifestations as described by Tanner only refer to the acute, visible religious violence yet there are other countless forms of chronic systemic and structural violence caused by religion that permeate societies and resist elimination. Three types of such chronic violence are widespread; the first is violent discrimination against targeted, denigrated, or outcaste groups, despite their belonging to the same religion. For example, in Hinduism discriminations of untouchables persists despite legislation and quotas for disadvantaged castes. The Burakumin outcastes in largely Buddhist Japan continue to suffer social discrimination despite being legally liberated in 1871. Discrimination against religious minorities is sometimes imposed directly by governments or indirectly enforced by religious majorities hence leading to political violence.

A key responded pointed out that gender-based violence is a form of chronic violence which is based on unchallenged scriptural justifications. Smock, (2009; p. 1) and Jaspers (2000; p. 9) posit that this form of violence is alarmingly wide spread across

religions. It encompasses violence ranging from: female circumcision, witch burning, lapidating, bride burning, honor killings, mistreatment or burning of widows, segregation of menstruating women, socio-economic exploitation, political domination, and unequal rights among the faithful. The third type of violence is based on sexual orientation e.g. marriage of same sex; gay, lesbianism. Several religions and governments still condemn homosexuality and sodomy. For instance Uganda recently attempted to institute extreme antigay legislation, allegedly with financial support from US-based fundamentalist Christians (Smock, 2009; p. 1; Jaspers 2000; p. 9). Diverse forms of chronic religious violence are not exceptional, but instead pervasive with each religion finding ways to institute and validate them while ignoring the resultant suffering and violence hence negating the principle of peace as articulate in just war theory.

This study maintained that religions are culpable for acute and chronic violence when they remain silent, condone, absolve or comply with conditions that support violence. Accordingly Jaspers (2000), in *The Question of German Guilt*, states four categories of guilt ascribed to the church in the Nazi Germany; criminal, political, moral, and metaphysical which could be applied to religions and their involvement in violence. He says that when religious authorities remain silent about wars, oppression, or tyranny that they are aware of, then they are metaphysically guilty such as the Vatican was during the Holocaust. When religious authorities condone violence or exonerate extenuating circumstances they are morally guilty such as the Buddhist monks were in Sri Lanka.

Jaspers indicates that religions are politically guilty when they comply with situations that endorse violence. In this case religious blessings to military conquests, or clerics' benedictions to suicide bombers, are given as examples. Finally, when religions actively exhort violence as an acceptable and necessary means to save the faith or achieve religious ends, then they are criminally guilty. Historically, existential battles for survival or historical oppression war ranted force; for example, Prophet Muhammad's jihad or Guru Gobind Singh's defensive mobilization of Sikhs probably because all other peaceful alternatives to solve the

conflicts had been exhausted leaving war as their last option.

However, Jaspers: (2000; pp. 1-9) argues that all contemporary violence with religious objectives whether it is pro-life Christians killing prochoice activists; Hindu extremists eliminating Muslims; al-Qaeda and Islamic fundamentalists killing "infidels" violates the laws, and bears criminal responsibility, regardless of religious justification. He points out that blaming religions for being guilty does not change their practices. He suggests that instead, religions need to evaluate their actions, recognize culpability, and assume responsibility for shaping a less violent future (Jaspers: 2000; pp. 1-9). Therefore trading blame or seeking for justification is not the solution to violence but doing an in-depth soul searching in accounting for peace as an ultimate goal in human society.

It was also pointed out by some key respondents that religious traditions, codes and ethical validation for massacre are used in providing avenues to violence. Juergensmeyer (2003) sheds more light on these perceptions by positing that every major religious tradition seems to be connected to violence virtually everywhere; giving examples of the religious violence among Christians in the USA; among the Muslims and Jews in the Middle East; among the Hindus and Muslims in South Asia and among indigenous religious communities in Indonesia and Africa. He then concludes that religions not only give the mores and symbols that necessitate violence but also provide the moral justification for killing. Besides, religions provide the images of cosmic wars that make violent activists to believe they are waging spiritual wars (Juergensmeyer 2003, xi). Hence it is possible that the biblical texts, images, symbols and traditions, when interpreted out of context, influenced the faithful of the local church into participating in violence during elections in Kenya.

It was argued out by the cleric respondents that religious differences coupled by different political ideologies can cause political conflicts like it has occurred between Christians and Muslims in several occasions. In relation to this, Smock (2006; p. 1) and Cavanaugh, (2007; p. 1) argue that the threat of religious extremism and conflict between religious communities, particularly between two or more of the

Abrahamic faiths: Islam, Christianity, and Judaism are really and have dangerously seized the world.

Smock pointed out that there is connection between religion and violence and that to discuss religion in the context of international affairs automatically raises the spirit of religious-based conflict. Smock refers to the Islamic fundamentalists who murdered twelve people at the offices of Charlie Hebdo on seventh of January 2015 (New York Times, 2015: January 7). In the Charlie Hebdo incident, the retaliatory murders were as the result of perceived threats to the sanctity of Islam by Christians (Bilefsky and de la Baume, 2015; Wright, J.D. and Khoo, Y., 2019). Therefore from these observations, the study sustained that violence can be used as means of safeguarding the interests of a religious community from perceived threats especially when one religious group uses its holy text in justifying that their religion is the right one and that of other religious groups are definitely wrong. More so when religious communities assume that they are the only one with the legitimate authority and the responsibility of maintaining the public order and not by some individuals or any other private groups.

The study further discerned that the connection between religion and violence raises many inevitable questions in the public thought. While responding to the retaliatory murders in Charlie Hebdo incident, Nicholas Kristof of the New York Times, asked if there is something about Islam that leads inexorably to violence? (New York Times, 2015: January 7). His line of argument was that religion is more prone to violence than the secular. However while reflecting on the broader view in modern discourse that religious groups are more prone to violence than secular groups, Avalos, (2005) and Kimball, (2008) question whether there are some specific features in religion that makes it violent (Avalos, 2005; Kimball, 2008)?

This by extension rendered the local churches to be questioned if they were more disposed to violence than the general public in Kenya. The study established that violence in Kenya was in most cases as a result of contingent factors such as general social-economic hardship and ethnicity which are not only exhibited in the behavior of the public but also in the faithful who wage war with the objectives of eliminating moral evils so as to establish peace in society. While

responding to this question, a clergy argued that it is the moral responsibility of the church to ensure that society is free of injustice.

To further the argument that religious groups are more prone to violence than the secular groups, Kimball (2008, p. 1) claims that more wars have been waged and more people have been killed besides more evil being perpetrated in the name of religion these days than by any other institution in human history. Likewise, Hector Avalos (2005, p. 347) claims that religions, as opposed to secular groups, are “inherently prone to violence”. With this evidence, the study underscored the popularly argued and propagated view that religion is inherently violent as did Dawkins, (2003) and Harris, (2005). Sigmund (1921) an early figure in psychology of religion who observed the violent nature of religious groups thus;

Religion, even if it calls itself of love, must be hard and unloving to those who do not belong to it. Fundamentally indeed every religion is in the same way a religion of love for all those whom it embraces; while cruelty and intolerance towards those who do not belong to it are natural to every religion (Sigmund; 1921; p.128).

A key respondent noted that religion is violent to those who are not her faithful including the general public ideologies and other social institutions that are secular such as politics especially if they are viewed as opposing God’s legitimate authority. In the same line of argument Armstrong (2014), suggests that if religion is the cause of the world’s bloodiest conflicts then faith and politics should never mix. This could literally mean that when religion and politics intermingle, they breed violence.

On the other hand Cavanaugh, (2007; p. 1) argues that in the 18th century, God was replaced by secular liberal ideals and the nation-state, making it “admirable to die for your country, but not for your religion”. The implication is that politics creates more violence than religion. Regardless of this Cavanaugh points out that unquestionably, under certain conditions, religion can contribute to violence. However in this regard, the conventional implication that religion is prone to violence would mean that Christianity, Islam, and other faiths are more inclined

toward violence than the ideologies and institutions that are identified as secular.

In focused group discussion the clerics noted that religions are supposed to espouse peace, love and harmony though they are commonly connected with intolerance and violent aggression. They said:

The people who get involved in violence are "Carnal", they've not experienced transformation and renewal of their minds that happens to all true children of God (Romans 12:1-2, 2 Corinthians 5:17). Due to this they don't understand the "Purpose of the Church" and the Core "Mission of Christ," which was "Peace" and "Reconciliation" (Isaiah 9:6, 2 Corinthians 5:20).

However social scientists are divided on this issue. Scholars like Cavanaugh (2007) contend that even when extremists use theological texts to justify their actions, "religious" violence is not religious at all but rather a perversion of core teachings while other scholars such as Dawkins (2003) believe that religions are often the root cause of conflict because they fuel certainties and sanctify martyrdom. Meanwhile, Sisk (2017) claims that both hierarchical religious traditions such as Shi'ism and non-hierarchical traditions such as Buddhism can both be vulnerable to interpretation of canon to justify or even provide warrants for violent action (Cavanaugh, 2007; Dawkins, 2003; and Sisk, 2017).

It was observed by a key respondent that most cases religious traditions approve or become objects of violence. In relation to this, Isak and Desireé (2006) in *Religious violence has been rising for years* argue that for a millennia, every religious tradition has either fallen victim to or sanctioned violence. In their argument Svensson Isak and Nilsson Desireé point out that Saint Augustine and Saint Aquinas laid the foundations of the 'just war' doctrine under the circumstances of; self-defense, preventing a tyrant from attacking, and punishing guilty enemies. Svensson Isak and Nilsson Desireé continue to contend that Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, Jews, Muslims, Sikhs and other religions have since then summoned violence in the name of religion. In some cases, as when state and religion are knotted, mass violence may arise. They claim that the risk of

denominational religious violence is unlikely to end since more than eighty four percent of the world's population identify themselves with a denominational religious group.

In another forum, a Bishop respondent observed that though religion justifies violence when it permeates politics yet in most cases it is caught up in violence unaware. This position is articulated by Hall (2011) in *Religion and Violence: Social Processes in Comparative Perspective* by attesting that religion and violence are often woven together in history's embroideries. He further points out that a number of religions have justified violence under certain circumstances, while others have become caught up in its processes.

On the same note, Cohn (1993) indicates that in the ancient world, Zoroastrianism transformed earlier combat myths into a theology of eternal apocalyptic struggle between good and evil (Cohn 1993: 114). In addition to what Cohen said, Schluchter (1989) posits that ancient Judaism forged a federation under conditions of war (Schluchter 1989: 185, 200); noting that early Christianity had its martyrs, and the medieval Roman church had its crusades and Inquisition. Through the close association between ruler ship and religion together with the principle of jihad (or holy war) as vessels of reformation, Islam infuses politics with enduring potential for violence.

However on the contrary, the cleric respondents claimed that certain religions do not endorse violence in their core teaching, beliefs and traditions though their powers have been eroded by modern social institutions which advocate for permissiveness in society. The permissiveness creates room for people to exercise their rights including the right to riot despite the religious restrictions. In the same line of argument, Schluchter (1989: 235) indisputably indicates that modern religions do not promote violence in their central tenets with certain religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism leaving little room for violence in either their theology or practice.

Moreover, Schluchter (1989) continues to point out that the power of religion has been diminished by modern social institutions by developing legal rational frameworks legitimated only remotely by religion.

Conversely these developments cannot undermine the now unquestionably real connection between religion and violence. For instance in England, France and the Soviet Union the violence of modern movements in the struggles of reformation and counter-reformation toward the nation-state was interwoven with religious thread, or secularization that would eliminate religion. The cleric respondents further noted that in the core regions of the world economy, religiously framed conflicts became displaced in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by social struggles that played out along lines of social class and, in the latter part of the twentieth, between superpowers. However, these conflicts themselves often had religious overtones. Nevertheless Schluchter (1989: 235) undoubtedly shows that religion facilitated colonizing expansion, frequently with violent consequences for the colonized, influenced nineteenth-century English class formation and the central struggle of the post-World War II era Cold War which was frequently portrayed by its Western protagonists as a struggle of Christendom against godless Communism (Schluchter 1989: 235).

A key respondent postulated that religion plays a role in the political violence making the two bedfellows. Hall (2011; 2-3) accentuates this statement by using the episodes of The September-11 terrorist attacks; struggles between Jews and Palestinians; the Troubles in Northern Ireland; the nationalist conflicts in the Balkans; ethnic wars in Africa; simmering conflict between Pakistan and India; terrorist actions by extreme right Christian fundamentalists in the U.S.; the subway poison gas attack by the Aum Shinrikyo sect in Tokyo; the deaths of hundreds in a burning church of the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God in Uganda; the persecution of Falun Gong in China as just but a cursory list of some of the most dramatic violent events involving religion. The study highlighted the fact that the intrinsic relationship between religion and violence has been addressed by René Girard, Walter Burkert, Jonathan Z. Smith, and Georges Bataille among others. These scholars developed their analyses and took up the debates among structuralism, phenomenological, and psychoanalytic theories of religion that address the enigma of sacrifice especially the ritualized taking of animal and human life (Hamerton-Kelly 1987; Bataille 1989). These debates connect back to Emile

Durkheim's; *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* translated by Fields; (1995) more general theory that religion involves the practice of a community of believers who affirm both their idealized vision of society and their own social relations through ritual action in relation to positive and negative cults of the sacred (Hall 2011, 7-8). The ritual of religious sacrifice denotes violence in religion.

Religions which perceive war as sacred duties become more violent especially when among people who do not belong to their faith and in secular societies. Along this line of thought, Alexander (1988, 1992) noted that Durkheim's model of the sacralization of society delineates cultural boundaries of deviance and otherness that continue to operate in more secularized social formations (Alexander 1988, 1992). Bellah (1970: 90-92, 182) and Aho (1981) observe that keeping to the sphere of religion, the sacralization process described by Durkheim is open as to its contents, and thus, war and martyrdom potentially can become sacred duties. They draw examples from the Japanese samurai culture, where the zen-buddhist monk was idealized as a model for warrior asceticism and indifference to death (Bellah 1970: 90-92, 182; Aho 1981:chap. 7).

In a discussion with a key respondent, it was revealed that violence stems from perceiving the intentions of people in the rivalry (with the opposite views) as evil that must be eradicated through destruction. René Girard's (1977) theorizes sacrifice as a resolution of the cycle of violence that stems from *mimesis* (an imitative rivalry centered on desire for the objects that the 'other' values). The ritual cleansing so widespread in religious ceremony originally takes the form of sacrifice that destroys a representative bearer of evil. In essence, the core ritual practice of religion is a process of scapegoating (Girard 1986). Whereas Hall (1987) argues that although Girard's model of sacrifice concerns mimetic competition within a shared domain, the scapegoating thesis broadens its applicability to individuals or groups that become stand-ins for both wider sins within a culture, as well as external threats (Hall 1987: 294-311).

Though Girard's theory was meant to apply to archaic religion, it has been implored in studies of *nationalist struggles* by Chidester (1991), *ethno religious*

violence by Appleby (2000: 78-79), and *religious terrorism* by Juergensmeyer (2000: 168-69). In turn, Girard's theory has been used in arguing that the crucifixion of Jesus exposed the mythic process of scapegoating, and thus transformed human history by making it possible to reflexively critique the violence of scapegoating (Girard 1986: 205; cf. Williams 1975). The hope of Christ centric theories is that subsequent incidents of religious violence amount to historical remnants or resurgences of archaic religion (John R. Hall 2011; 8-9).

Thus, the salience of Girard's theory exceeds his theological frame. A theory of ritual offers a powerful basis for interpreting religiously charged violence i.e. from the highly symbolic but nonetheless physical violence of desecrating religious objects and shrines (and sometimes rebuilding on top of them, as the Spaniards did after the Reconquista in Andalusia) to "ethnic cleansing" (for debate and case studies centered on Girard, see Juergensmeyer 1992). A key respondent observed that this is not different from the various incidents of destroying holy places of worship during ethnic violence in Kenya; church buildings have been set on fire in the guise of attacking the opponents who take refuge in those places. A good example is the burning of the PAG church in Kiambaa in Eldoret in the 207/08 PEV.

Respondents observed that most of the violence is motivated by social-economic, social-political and cultural factors yet religious indifference and distinctiveness is used as a scapegoat. Wesley S. Ariarajah (2018) in an article "Religion and Violence: A Protestant Christian Perspective" says that much of the violence done in the name of religion has little to do with religion but more often than not religion is used, misused and abused in conflicts that have social, economic and political motivations. A respondent argued that there are some religious languages can be taken out of context to cause violence. He said

Some religious languages within religion or the church and in the bible characterize violence. The following two are some religious languages that are taken out of context by Pious people who perpetuate violence among Christians in Kenya: "An eye for an eye" (Deuteronomy 19:21) and "Since the time of John the Baptist, the Kingdom

of God suffers violence and the violent take it by force" (Matthew 11:12) (responses in the research items).

The respondent continued to say that many of the persons who actively perpetrate violence have little or no knowledge of the tenets of the faith in the name of which they join battle. In most of these cases it is religious identity and passion that play the major role, rather than the motivations provided by the faith itself. By and large Francois Houtart says

It is too easy in an apologetic concern, to claim that the content of the religion is essentially non-violent and that it is the human beings who, whether individually or collectively, who divert it from its meaning, adding that in fact the roots of violence can be found right back in the religions, and that is why the religions can also easily serve as vehicles for violent tendencies (Francois Houtart, 1997. p. 1).

The cleric respondents appealed that religious content is used in approving and motivating violence. Ariarajah (2018) posited that when one speaks of "religion and violence" from a Christian perspective then beyond doubt, Christianity has had a violent history, and today many trace this history to the Bible itself and to the way it has been interpreted and applied in the development and spread of Christianity as a religion. This scholar demonstrates that violence in the Bible can be traced to the story of sibling rivalry and the brutal murder of Abel by his brother Cain which was as a result of the early struggle between the pastoral and agricultural ways of life. Though in this case the violence was triggered by social-economic factors there is the religious factor in it, when God accepts the sacrifices of Abel making Cain jealous. It is in this effect that God is blamed for the violence.

The clerics argued that contemporary Christian thinking delves deeply into the impact the concept of "sacrifice", (which is at the heart of both the Old and New Testaments) has on the psychology of violence. For instance, the requirement to shed animal blood as the symbol of reconciliation between God and a person who had sinned, it is claimed, justifies the shedding of blood as a religious duty. This basic principle is worked out in Christian theology in the

theory of atonement, which claims that Jesus had to die a violent death in order to placate God's anger over the sins of humankind. Jesus' "sacrificial death", "shedding of blood for our sins", and "paying the price of sin" etc. are common themes in Christian hymnody, piety and theology today that are easily translated into violence by Christians.

When asked why religion is associated with violence, a key respondent said:

It's because most people don't know the core message of their religion and the main teachings of the founder of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ. He's the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6) and the Message he preached was the Message of "Peace" and "Reconciliation." He preached "Peace" (Matthew 5:9). However, it important to note that people who associate the Church with violence base their argument on the Old Testament oblivious of the fact that the Church was birthed in Acts 2 (responded on 05/10/2021)

The same respondent went ahead to show that another area where violence plays a major role lies in the way some biblical imagery and theology depict the problem of evil in terms of violent and ongoing "battles" between good and evil, light and darkness, God and Satan. He argued that the eschatological vision in the Book of Revelation presents a cosmic battle between the powers of evil and good in which the powers of evil, after a violent struggle, are conquered, overcome, subdued and eventually abolished by God and God's angels. Power, conquest and domination take the center stage in these biblical images prompting Christians to embrace violence as a way of fighting against social evils.

A key respondent (A Bishop) clarified further that violence is also clearly presented in the Christian images of mission and evangelization of the world. Military language like "conquering the world for Christ", "deployment of missionaries", "mission strategy", "soldiers of Christ", and "evangelistic crusades" are still very much in use in some sections of the church. It is little wonder then that parts of the history of the church are also written in blood. The burning of heretics, inquisitions, crusades, holocaust, slavery, and the ruthless violence that accompanied

the establishment of Christianity in Latin America, Africa and Australia are all part of the history of Christianity from where violence can easily emerge (interviewed on 10th July, 2021).

The clergy argued in a focused group discussion, that the complex drivers of violence and the multiple efforts to address it in Kenya can be understood by taking into account Kenya's many religious actors and beliefs. Grievances and perceptions of marginalization often fall along religious identity lines. For example, the Coast and North Eastern regions, with majority of Muslim populations, have not received equal development investments historically; the result is significant inequalities in levels of development across many sectors. Al-Shabaab (believed to be an Islamic militant group) has taken advantage of this situation when seeking recruits who are promised solutions to their problems. Some Kenyan Muslims and prominent leaders are working to counter extremist narratives, by engaging with vulnerable youth, and deal with broader tensions between Christians and Muslims (Discussions held on 11/11/2021 in Nakuru).

However, the study observed that as general elections in Kenya, which so often prefigure violence, were approaching in 2022, there were fears that too little had been done to address long unresolved underlying grievances. The IDPs respondents said, "As 2022 general elections are approaching, our problems remain unresolved. We cannot go back to our lands because we fear being attacked again".

Nevertheless, the clerics disputed that the church is doing nothing to solve problems that lead to violence. They said, "While for a moment overlooking the evidence of complicity by some church leaders in past conflicts and in acts of violence, it is important to acknowledge that religious leaders have keen interest in building capacity for reconciliation, healing, and justice despite the fact that their credibility was severely impaired by failure to respond collectively and effectively during the widespread post-election violence that followed the 2007/08 elections in Kenya". The study observed that whereas the religious leaders were seen then as partisan and even exacerbating ethnic divides; it is unclear whether they have regained public trust and thus the capacity to respond effectively to the tensions between the

competing political factions. Having addressed the question of the extent to which religion and violence are related in the foregoing arguments, now the study thus attempts to look at specific feature that make religion violent in the subsequent sections.

CONCLUSION

Therefore, the local churches were culpable for the political violence inversely by either remaining silent about the violence; condoning and extenuating circumstances that lead to violence; being compliant or by endorsing violence and or by exhorting the violence.

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