Christian Response to Terrorism in Kenya: A Case of The Gospel of Luke 6:27-31

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Abstract: Terrorism is an Anxiety inspiring Method of repeated violent action, employed by (Semi-) clandestine individual, group, or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal or political reasons, whereby – in contrast to assassination – the direct targets of violence are not the main targets. The immediate human victims of violence are generally chosen randomly (targets of opportunity) or selectively (representative or symbolic targets) from a target population, and serve as message generators. This paper explores if non-resistance, Christian pacifism or non-violence on the part of the victim should be or is a viable option in the face of terror. The immediate human victims of violence are generally chosen at random and include Christians who are ostensibly guided by the teachings found in the biblical Sermon on the Plain. In this teaching found in the Gospel of Luke (6:27-31), as part of his command to "love your enemies"' Jesus Says:… but I say to unto you which hear, love your enemies, do good to them who hate you, Bless them that curse you, and pray for them who despitefully use you. And unto him that smitteth thee on one cheek offer also the other…The Gospel of Mathew 5: 39 is more descriptive of the expected Christian response…but I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek turn to them the other check also… To respond to the challenges highlighted by the listed options, the paper has largely applied the use of desk research methodologies comprising of the examination of available literature on terrorism as well as existing, potential Christian responses to help situate this current study within the context of existing evidence. It is hoped that the discussions generated by this paper will benefit practitioners in the areas of governance, public policy formulators and comparative religion.

Key words: Terrorism, Christian teachings.

I. INTRODUCTION

Background information

The history of Terrorism dates back to the Sicarii who were a first century Jewish group. They murdered their enemies and collaborators in their campaign to oust their Roman rulers from Judea. On the other hand the *Hashhashin,* whose name gave us the English word "assassins," were a secretive Islamic sect active in Iran and Syria from the 11th to the 13th century. Their dramatically executed assassinations of Abbasid and Seljuk political figures terrified their contemporaries, (Chaliand,2007). Zealots and assassins were not, however, really terrorists in the modern sense. Terrorism is best thought of as a modern phenomenon. Its characteristics flow from the international system of nation-states, and its success depends on the existence of a mass media to create an aura of terror among many people. Jongman (1988) observes that terrorism is an anxiety inspiring method of repeated violent action, employed by (Semi-) clandestine individuals, group, or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal or political reasons, whereby – in contrast to assassination – the direct targets of violence are not the main targets. The immediate human victims of violence are generally chosen randomly (targets of opportunity) or selectively (representative or symbolic targets) from a target population, and serve as message generators. Notably, the word terrorism comes from the reign of terror instigated by Maxmilien Robespierre in 1793, following the French revolution (Scurr, 2006). Robespierre, one of twelve heads of the new state, had enemies of the revolution killed, and installed a dictatorship to stabilize the country. He justified his methods as necessary in the transformation of the monarchy to a liberal democracy, "Subdue by terror the enemies of liberty, and you will be right, as founders of the Republic" Robespierre's sentiment laid the foundations for modern terrorists, who believe violence will usher in a better system. For example, the 19th century Narodnaya Volya hoped to end Tsarist rule in Russia, (Derek, 1986). But the characterization of terrorism as a state action faded, while the idea of terrorism as an attack against an existing political order became more prominent.

The rise of guerilla tactics by non-state actors in the last half of the twentieth century was due to several factors. These included the flowering of ethnic nationalism (e.g. Irish, Basque, Zionist), anti-colonial sentiments in the vast British, French and other empires, and new ideologies such as communism. Terrorist groups with a nationalist agenda have formed in every part of the world. For example, the Irish Republican Army grew from the quest by Irish Catholics to form an independent republic, rather than being part of Great Britain. Religiously motivated terrorism is considered the most alarming terrorist threat today. Groups that justify their violence on Islamic grounds such as al Qaeda, Hamas and Hezbollah and lately ISIS come to mind. But Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism and Islam among other religions have given rise to their own forms of militant extremism as evidenced in history, (Armstong, 2001).

II. THEORETICAL CONSIDERATION

A theory by Appiah (2007) on tolerance, also referred to as cosmopolitanism is worth considering regarding this paper. He contends that people with different upbringings coexist based on moral universals and a shared sense of humanity. A collective sense of humanity is what binds people together and thus cosmopolitanism, a concept that he borrows from 4th century cynics. Here, citizens were implored to coexist and to

consider themselves as belonging to a larger citizenry. Challenges to cosmopolitanism remain twofold, namely: developing a cosmopolitan or universal concern for other people and respecting any differences that may be inherent because of social, economic, political or even religious postures. There is an impetus to focus on the areas that may be viewed as global as opposed to highlighting prevailing differences, either perceived or real. Appiah reasons that although people in different areas have diverse customs, practices and even religion, there is need for oneness by focusing on aspects that convey unity. He continues to suggest that although cosmopolitanism may not be a response to a heterogeneous locus, it may present a notable challenge to such perspectives at the same time. He presents views of ancient Spain where Christians and Jews lived under the Muslim rule because they agreed under a set of rules that advanced tolerance.

III. RELIGIOUSLY MOTIVATED TERROR

The world's great religions all have both peaceful and violent messages from which believers can choose. Religious terrorists and violent extremists share the decision to interpret religion to justify violence, whether they are Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh or even Christian.

Buddhism is a religion or approach to an enlightened life based on the teachings of the Buddha Siddhartha Gautama twenty five centuries ago in northern India. The edict not to kill or inflict pain on others is integral to Buddhist thought. Periodically, however, Buddhist monks have encouraged violence or initiated it. The primary example in the 20th and 21st century is in Sri Lanka, where Sinhala Buddhist groups have committed and encouraged violence against local Christians and Tamils. The leader of Aum Shinrikyo, a Japanese cult that committed a lethal sarin gas attack in the mid-1990s, drew on Buddhist as well as Hindu ideas to justify his terrorist beliefs, (Michael, 2010).

Hinduism, the world's third largest religion after Christianity and Islam, advances non-violence as a virtue, but advocates war when it is necessary in the face of injustice. A fellow Hindu assassinated Mohandas Ghandi, whose non-violent resistance helped bring about Indian independence, in 1948, (Robb, 2002). Violence between Hindus and Muslims in India has been endemic since then. However, the role of nationalism is inextricable from Hindu violence in this context.

Adherents of Islam define themselves as believing in the same Abrahamic God as Jews and Christians, whose instructions to humankind were perfected when delivered to the last prophet, Muhammad. Like those of Judaisim and Christianity, Islam's texts offer both peaceful and warring messages. Many consider the 11th century "hashishiyin," to be Islam's first terrorists. These members of a Shiite sect assassinated their Saljuq enemies. In the late 20th century, groups motivated by religious and nationalist goals committed attacks, such as the assassination of Egyptian president Anwar Sadat, and suicide bombings in Israel. In the early 21st century, al-Qaeda "internationalized" jihad to attack targets in Europe and the United States, (Young, 2010).

Judaism began around 2000 BCE when, according to Jews, God established a special covenant with Abraham. The monotheistic religion focuses on the importance of action as an expression of belief. Judaism's central tenets involve a respect for life's sanctity, but like other religions, its texts can be used to justify violence, (Pedahzur, 2009). Some consider the Sicarii, who used murder by dagger to protest Roman rule in first century Judea, to be the first Jewish terrorists. In the 1940s, Zionist militants such as Lehi (known also as the Stern Gang) carried out terrorist attacks against the British in Palestine. In the late 20th century, militant messianic Zionists use religious claims to the historical land of Israel to justify acts of violence.

Christianity is a monotheistic religion centered on the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, whose resurrection, as understood by Christians, provided salvation for all mankind. Christianity's teachings, like those of other religions, contain messages of love and peace, and those that can be used to justify violence, (Rapoport, 2006). The fifteenth century Spanish inquisition is sometimes considered an early form of state terrorism. These Church-sanctioned tribunals aimed to root out Jews and Muslims who had not converted to Catholicism, often through severe torture. Today in the United States, reconstruction theology and the Christian identity movement have provided justification for attacks on abortion providers.

IV. A BRIEF CHRONOLOGY OF RELIGIOUSLY INSPIRED TERRORIST ACTS IN KENYA

Kenya has been the battlefield of tragic religiously inspired terrorist attacks since 1981. Terrorists linked to the Palestinian Liberation Organization attacked the Jewish-owned Norfolk hotel in Nairobi killing 15 people, most of them Kenyans. In 1998, the U.S. Embassies in Kenya and the neighbouring Tanzania were bombed. 213 people were killed in the blast that gutted the U.S. Embassy building in Nairobi. More than 4,000 Kenyans were also injured in the explosion. In 2002, three suicide bombers attacked an Israeli-owned hotel, killing 11 Kenyans and 3 Israelis while wounding dozens others. Almost simultaneously, at least two missiles were fired at - but missed - an Israeli airliner taking off from Mombasa airport. (Aronson, 2013). A previously unknown militant group calling itself "The Government of Universal Palestine in Exile", issued a statement in Lebanon claiming responsibility for the attack. In May 2003, warnings of possible imminent attacks in Kenya were issued by officials in Washington, London and Berlin. London immediately ordered British airlines to halt flights to Kenya due to fears of attacks in the East African country. Additionally, London told its citizens to avoid visiting Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Tanzania, and Uganda due to what it called a "clear terrorist threat." The U.S. and German governments also issued similar warnings about travel to east Africa after Kenyan authorities reported sighting a known Al-Qaeda

terrorist in neighbouring Somalia, (Daily Nation, 2003). September 2013, unidentified gunmen attacked Westgate shopping mall, in Nairobi, Kenya. The attack resulted in at least 67 deaths, and more than 175 people wounded in the mass shooting. The extremist Islamic group al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the incident, which it characterized as retribution for the Kenyan military's deployment in the group's home country of Somalia. Kenyan authorities arrested dozens of people in the aftermath of the attack. In November 2013, a Kenyan court charged four Somali nationals with harbouring the gunmen in their homes, the suspects pleaded not guilty, (Aronson, 2013). April 2015, saw gunmen storm the Garissa University in Garissa, Kenya, killing 148 people, and injuring 79 or more. The militant group, al-Shabaab, which the gunmen claimed to be from, took responsibility for the attack. The gunmen took over 700 students hostage, freeing Muslims and killing those who identified as Christians. The attack is considered to be the deadliest in Kenya since the 1998 United States embassy bombings. A contemporary distressing advancement of religious intolerance occurred in 2019. 5 gunmen attacked the Dusit-D2 hotel and business complex in Nairobi killing at least 20 people and injuring several others. This attack was allegedly conceived and staged by the al-Shabaab terrorist group. Again towards the end of January 2019, an IED inadvertently detonated right in the middle of the central business district of Nairobi injuring 2 people as a result. A group with extremist ideologies is suspected to be behind this latest incident, (Otieno, 2019).

The above examples of religiously instigated attacks have raised a lot of concern not only in African country like Kenya, Egypt and Nigeria among others, but also in countries like America, Iran, Pakistan just to mention a few. The common factor is that the attacks are levelled against the Christian faith. This is despite the fact that the Constitution of Kenya (2010) contains laws related to freedom of religion and the right to security. Article 29 deals with the freedoms and security of the person. It highlights the freedom of conscience, religion, belief and opinion governed by Article 32 of the Kenyan constitution which exclusively states that;"...Every person has the right to freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief and opinion."

V. ASSOCIATED RELIGIOUS CONSIDERATIONS OF THE GOSPEL OF LUKE 6:27-31

In the Gospel of Luke (6:27-31), as part of his command to "love your enemies"' Jesus Says: But I say to unto you which hear, love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. And unto him that smitteth thee on one cheek offer also the other…the Gospel of Matthew (5: 39) is more descriptive of the expected Christian response…*but I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek turn to them the other check also…* This passage seems to suggest that Christian Pacifism or non-violence on the part of the victim of terror may be or is a viable option.

Richard (1978), suggests that any form of violence is incompatible with the Christian faith. Christian pacifists state that Jesus himself was a pacifist who taught and practised pacifism, and that his followers must do likewise. Notable Christian pacifists include Martin Luther King, Jr., and Leo Tolstoy. Whilst pacifism is only a minority practice in modern Christianity, the concept has scriptural and historical support, (Daryl, 2005). For example, in the Old Testament, although there are many recounts of war and retaliation, Christian pacifists argue that violence was a mark against someone and never God's ideal. "You have shed much blood and have fought many wars. You are not to build a house for my Name, because you have shed much blood on the earth in my sight." (1 Chronicles 22:8). God's ideal is further explained by Isaiah, who prophesies a future Messianic age where there will be peace amongst all humankind: they will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nations will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war any more. (Isaiah 2:4). Also the commandment; you shall not murder (Exodus 20:13) has been viewed as an instruction for pacifism. Jesus later appeared to teach pacifism during his ministry when he told his disciples: You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. (Matt. 5:38-39). Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. (Matt. 5:43-48, Luke 6:27-28). Put your sword back in its place...for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. (Matt. 26:52). Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. (Matt. 5:9).

Several Church Fathers and proponents of non-violence approaches interpreted Jesus' teachings as advocating non-violence. In Tatian's address to the Greeks he observed that he does not wish to be a king; he is not anxious to be rich; he declined military command... and hoped to die to the world, repudiating the madness that is in it…he further noted that whatever Christians would not wish others to do to them, they must not do to others. They should comfort their oppressors and make them their friends; they should do good to their enemies…through love towards their oppressors, they persuade them to become Christians, (Orr,1958).

Hippolytus of Rome noted that a soldier of the civil authority must be taught not to kill men. He must refuse to do so if he is commanded, and to refuse to take an oath. If he is unwilling to comply, he must be rejected for baptism. A military commander or civic magistrate must resign or be rejected if he commits atrocities. If a believer seeks to become a soldier, he must be rejected, for he has despised God. Tertullian observed that one soul cannot be due to two masters—God and Cæsar. Tertullian wondered how a Christian can engage in war, (Orr,1958). Arnobius on the other hand contended that evil ought not to be requited with evil, that it is better to suffer wrong than to inflict it, that we should rather shed our own blood than stain our hands and our conscience with that of another…, an ungrateful world is now for a long period

enjoying a benefit from Christ, inasmuch as by His means the rage of savage ferocity has been softened, and has begun to withhold hostile hands from the blood of a fellow-creature, (Orr,1958).

Menno (2010) on the other hand is of the view that the scriptures teach that there are two opposing princes and two opposing kingdoms: the one is the prince of peace; the other the prince of strife. Each of these princes has his particular kingdom and as the prince is so is also the kingdom. The prince of peace is Christ Jesus; His kingdom is the kingdom of peace, which is His church; His messengers are the messengers of peace; His Word is the word of peace; His body is the body of peace; His children are the seed of peace. Martin Luther King, Jr is remembered to have said: 'We shall match your capacity to inflict suffering by our capacity to endure suffering. We shall meet your physical force with soul force. Do to us what you will, and we shall continue to love you.' (Garrow, (1989).

The discussion on pacifism or Christian view of non-violence happens against the backdrop of other contexts rejecting pacifism and the notion of non-violence. Pacifism for them is seen as a refusal to take responsibility for the necessary use of violence to stop evil people in our rough-and-tumble world. This includes Christian leaders and theologians as well. Popes Paul VI and John Paul II expressed views equating pacifism with "a cowardly and lazy conception of life" and "peace at any cost," respectively.

The right-wing American pundit, Michael Kelly, asserted that, in relation to the war on terror, "American pacifists…are on the side of future mass murderers of Americans. They are objectively pro-terrorist." Pacifists do not want the U.S. to fight back and neither do the terrorists. Therefore they are on the same side. And since terrorism is evil, he concluded flatly that the "pacifists' position…is evil." (Hershberger, 1944). Kelly did not give examples or specify whom he had in mind in his characterization of pacifism. It would appear that he defined pacifism primarily as principled opposition to the use of American military might, including opposition to going to war to resist the obvious evils of "global terrorism." So, according to Michael Kelly, pacifism seems largely to be understood as the refusal to fight back (or even to support fighting back) in the face of evil. As such, it is directly complicit in the furtherance of the said evil.

It would appear; however, that Jesus embodies the pacifist vocation, directly engaging the powers of evil (offering forgiveness to outcasts, healing to the powers' victims, establishing counter-cultural communities of resistance to the domination system). Jesus' engagement, while clearly confrontational enough to elicit an enormously violent response from the powers, provides a paradigm both for perceiving the human situation (e.g., his critique of how the so-called "Benefactors" of the nation's actually exercise their power in tyranny) and responding to this situation with creative and transforming pacifism (e.g., his "transforming initiatives" in his "Sermon on the Mount among his other teachings such as in the Gospel of Luke (6:27-31), as part of his command to "love your enemies"

VI. CONCLUSION

Christian pacifism has the connotation of a complete rejection of involvement in warfare, and usually other forms of violence, and a possible Christian response to acts of terror ordinarily perpetrated by others. Beyond that simple assumption, however, the term pacifism is used in many different kinds of ways some of which have been variously contested as in (Yoder, 1992) classic analysis. Given this variety, no one is in a position to make claims for all pacifists because "pacifism" is an essentially contested concept. The paper however argues that Christian pacifism involves Jesus' message of "turn the other cheek" and not to resist evil with coercion, non-violent resistance is still resistance. Jesus directly links human beings loving even their enemies with God loving all people. "I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven: for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous" (Mt 5:44-45). So, the first and most basic biblical theme grounding Christian pacifism, finding clarity in Jesus but reflecting the biblical story as a whole, is the centrality of the love command, (Hershberger, 1944) The love command provides the central building block for Christian pacifism. Avoid the negative sense and reject the participation in war as a morally acceptable choice commonly advanced by terrorist groups. Christian pacifism or non-violence on the part of the victim should be or is a viable option in the face of terror.

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