



NORWEGIAN
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

The response of the church in Nairobi to the Al-Shabaab terror attacks:

A case study of St. Polycarp Anglican Church Juja Road Pangani
and God´s House of Miracles International Nairobi.

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*This Master's Thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the MA degree at*

MF Norwegian School of Theology, 2014, Spring

AVH5035: Master's Thesis (60 ECTS)

Master in Religion, Society and Global Issues

34702 words (including list of literature and front page)

Abstract

In October 2011, the Kenya Army entered Somalia in an operation to protect the Kenyan people and interests from attacks by the Al-Qaeda affiliate, Al- Shabaab based in Somalia. In retaliation, the Al- Shabaab intensified its attacks inside Kenya even targeting churches. The purpose of this thesis is to gain an in depth understanding how the conflict attempted to turn from “war on terror” to a religious one and how the church in Nairobi responded to the attacks. A literature review shows that religion can be said to be “back” in the public sphere today and it is playing a significant role in many conflicts going on in the world today. The research will contribute to the knowledge about the role of religion in conflicts.

A case study methodology was used and interviews were carried out with individuals and groups who were either victims of the attacks or key informants. The study found out that the Al- Shabaab failed to achieve its aim of causing religious animosity in Kenya by attacking churches largely due to the way the churches responded. Interreligious forums and communication, responsible religious leadership, religious teachings and practices and early government intervention were key contributors to the understanding and tolerance that the church exhibited. The informants also expressed that there is need to strengthen the existing interreligious communications based on honesty, openness and respect. Though they lauded the government for its intervention, they however called on the government to be bolder and open in dealing with people trying to cause conflict in the name of religion so as to prevent future occurrences and facilitate healing and reconciliation of those affected.

KEYWORDS: (Religious conflict, fundamentalism, tolerance, interreligious communication, truth telling and healing of memories)

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank my supervisor Harald Gunnar Heiene for his time, guidance, patience and support throughout the process of this master thesis. Your valuable comments and advice helped me a great deal to remain focused while writing my thesis.

My sincere thanks goes to all the respondents who took their precious time to share their knowledge and experience with me during the interviews.

My special thanks goes to all the teachers in Norwegian School of Theology and all my classmates for the knowledge and support they offered and shared in the last two years.

Furthermore I would like to thank my friend Lodwick Cheruiyot for your incredible support and skills in editing my thesis. This contributed greatly in the quality of my work.

Special gratitude goes to my beloved wife, Doreen Kerubo Mageto and my daughter Lavenda Anita Atina for their love; encouragement and peace that helped me put the pieces together.

Finally, my utmost thanksgiving goes to my God who made all this happen.

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1.0 Introduction to the study

This chapter discusses the historical background of the conflict in the case under study. This involves a brief history of the long political instability and conflicts in Somalia and the rise of Al-Shabaab as a significant militant group. The chapter also looks at the genesis of Al-Shabaab attacks in Kenya especially on churches. The research motivation, aims and objectives are also discussed in this chapter.

1.1 Historical background to the conflict

According to the World Fact Book (2014), the population of Somalia is estimated to be about 10 million and has not had a stable functional government since the collapse of the Mohamed Siad Barre`s authoritarian socialist rule in early 1991. For many years Somalia has struggled with political instability and a state of lawlessness. Somalia can be said to be a failed state.

According to Mario Silva (2010), the term “failed state” is fairly recent and can be used to describe states that are geographically defined but have internal collapse of law and order and exhibit inability to exercise legal capacity. This is a fair description of the state in Somalia today.

While addressing the UN Security Council on 16 December 2008, the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon observed that the security problems emanating from Somalia including piracy was as a result of what he called “a state of anarchy which has persisted in that country for over 17 years” (UN News Service, 2008). Since 1991 there have been several attempts (at least 15) to restore rule of law to the country (McClure, 2009) without much success.

In 2004, an interim government (Transitional Federal Government -TFG) was established by the help of the Government of Kenya, working under the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) (World Fact Book, 2014). In 2012, a formal parliament was inducted in ending the eight years of transition, though the government heavily relied on the help of African Union peacekeeping troops (AMISON) to help pacify Somalia for it to survive and have power (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2013). The resolution to form the AMISON

forces was adopted by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) on 20th February 2007 as United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Res 1744 (2007) (UNSC, 2007). The Somali government is largely restricted to the capital Mogadishu. Some parts of the country like the Republic of Somaliland to the north and Punt Land have somehow tried to maintain some order in their regions though without international recognition (World Fact Book, 2014).

The situation in Somalia has resulted into a refugee crisis and a promotion of armed conflict in the region. According to the United Nations Higher Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) spokesperson Adrian Edwards, Somali's refugee crisis can be said to be the world's longest and worst with neighboring countries, mainly Kenya bearing great hosting pressure (Edwards, 2012). In addition to hosting the refugees, Kenya has been on the forefront in resolving the Somali crisis. As of January 2013, Kenya hosted almost a million refugees of which over half were of Somali origin (UNHCR, 2013).

Somalia has been a safe haven for armed groups including religious extremists. A case in point is the notorious piracy off the coast of Somali that forced a UN Security Council resolution 1851 (2008) which facilitated the formation of the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS) to fight the menace (UN, 2011). Another armed group is the terror organization Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahideen (The Mijahideen Youth Movement) commonly called Al-Shabaab (Thomas, 2013).

1.1.1 Rise of Al-Shabaab

Matthew Thomas (2013) traces the origin of Al-Shabaab to the formation of the Al-Ittihad Mahakem Al-Islahiya or Islamic Courts Union (ICU), which was a union of different militant groups in 2000 that sought to fill the power vacuum after the collapse of Siad Barre's rule in 1991. Al-Shabaab was the youth wing of the ICU and it took a fierce militant nature focused on enforcing the strict shari'a law in the same manner as the Taliban in Afghanistan. . After the ICU collapsed due to the intervention of the Ethiopian troops in 2006, Al-Shabaab emerged as a separate independent group that merged with Al-Qaeda in 2012 (Cable News Network Wire Staff, 2012).

This group is an offspring of the Jihadist organization al-Qaeda whose aim is to fight Western interests and establish Islamic states in the world (Marchal, 2009, p.381-404). The UN Report

of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea of 2011 estimates that Al-Shabaab has an annual budget of \$70-100 million and a fighters numbering to 14 000 (UNSC 2011).

The development of Al- Shabaab can be said to be beyond Somalia. Stig Hansen, a specialist in the geopolitics of the Middle East and the horn of Africa points out that the fact that foreigners have joined the group, the Kampala attacks of 11 July 2010 and its declared merger with Al-Qaeda show its international networks and operations (Hansen, 2013, p. 3).

1.1.2 Al-Shabaab and Kenya

Stig Jarle Stig Hansen, a Norwegian historian and expert on the conflicts in the Horn of Africa, describes in detail the development of the relationship between Al-Shabaab and Kenya (Hansen, 2013, p.126-132). His research put 10% of the membership of Al-Shabaab to be of Kenyan origin. He traces the link between Al-Shabaab and Kenyan Islamic charities and radical clerics such as Sheik About Rogo Muhamed to date back to mid-1990s.

He further points out that, sympathy, financial support and recruitment for Al-Shabaab was done through these charities and clerics who portrayed the Kenyan government especially the police department as joining United States of America (USA) and European Union (EU) in fighting Islam all over the world. Al-Shabaab started recruiting youths from non-Somali origin and took them to Somalia for training. Most of the recruits were jobless youths who were promised scholarships and jobs in Somalia only to be forced into the group military training (ibid).

To make its influence felt, Al-Shabaab started cross-border attacks and kidnapping of Western tourists and other foreign aid workers from the coastal and northern areas of Kenya harming the Kenyan tourism industry, which is one of the main income earners of the country (International Crisis Group, 2012). This led to a decision by the Kenyan government to deploy the army to secure the borders and interests of the country. In October 2011, the Kenya Army set foot on the Somali soil to pursue the Al-Shabaab militant group in an operation dubbed *Operation Linda Nchi* that translates as `protect the country` (Gettleman, 2011). Though the Kenyan soldiers were initially fighting Al-Shabaab on their own, they later joined the African Union Mission in Somalia-AMISON (International Crisis Group, 2012).

Daley J. Birkett (2012) has written extensively about the question of the legality of the 2011 Kenya invasion of Somalia. His conclusion is that Kenya handled the case legally. He argues that the invasion as an initial step was permissible under the international law as a form of self-defense under Article 51 of the UN Charter, which was then followed by the Kenya army joining the UN, backed AMISON forces later.

After the Kenyan army was deployed in Somalia, the Al-Shabaab declared jihad on Kenya that was accused of playing puppet to the western powers in their `global struggle against Islam` (Hansen, 2013, p. 130-131). This confirmed the worst fears of Kenyans of being targets of the religious extremists (Allison, 2013). Al-Shabaab attacks on Kenyan soil has since taken diverse faces from killing police, abducting government officials, killing aid workers, attacking bus stops, restaurants and lately the Westgate Mall attack that killed over 70 people (Miller, 2013).

1.1.3 Al-Shabaab terror attacks on Churches in Kenya.

My interest in this research developed when Al-Shabaab reiterated the Kenya army incursion by bringing the war to the Kenyan soil and started attacking churches. This happened especially in the northern part of Kenya and some parts of Nairobi and Mombasa. Odhiambo et al (2013) have given a detailed account of the attacks that Al-Shabaab has carried out in Kenya since the Kenya army started carrying out its operation in Somali in 2011.

A good number of the attacks were on churches. A grenade attack at Garissa's Pentecostal Church on November 5, 2011 left two people dead and five seriously injured. One person was killed and 11 other hospitalized when God's House of Miracles Church at Ngara Estate in Nairobi was attacked on 29th April 2012. A simultaneous attack on two churches in Garissa on 1 July 2012 left 17 people dead and 50 injured. Those dead included nine women and 2 children. On July 21, 2012 police in Kitale (town in Western Kenya) arrested two terror suspects, who were on a mission to allegedly bomb the Umoja Catholic Church, a busy parish in the Eastlands area of Nairobi. On 20 September, a 9-year-old boy was killed when a grenade was hurled to Sunday school children at St Polycarp Anglican Church along Juja road in Nairobi.

It seemed like the conflict was slowly transforming from a war on terror to a religious one. With the help of radical Muslim Clerics, Al-Shabaab used a tactic of using converts from

Christianity especially from Christian dominated areas of Kenya to attack many churches, killing people including a 9-year old boy attending Sunday school within church premises (Osanjo, 2013, p.14). Their claim was that the "Christian" Western nations were using the "Christian" Kenya army to fight Islam in Somali and convert the Somali people to Christians (ibid). This change of tact by the Al-Shabaab and potential transformation of the conflict largely depended on how the church reacted to the attacks. My interest was to find out the response of the church to the attacks and the contribution of that response to the conflict.

1.2 Research Aim and Objectives

The study will attempt to identify and describe the response of the church in Kenya to the attacks from the Al-Shabaab terror group. It will also look at how Al-Shabaab attempted to transform the conflict from a terror related to a religious one, how the church handled it and what were the corresponding effects.

Research question

What was the response of the church in Kenya (Nairobi) to the Al-Shabaab Attacks?

Objectives

1. Find out the response of the church to the Al-Shabaab attacks on the churches in Kenya.
2. Find out how the conflict attempted to transform from "war on terror" to religious conflict.
3. Find out how the church handled the conflict transformation.

2.0 Literature Review

This chapter attempts to place the study in the theoretical perspective of ongoing debates on religion and conflict. It starts by defining the concept of religion and its relevance in modern society. The role of religion in conflict is then discussed with a focus on fundamentalism and the ambivalence nature of religion. The chapter then discusses the concept of tolerance in the light of religion. In this respect, two theories of tolerance are discussed; cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism. Lastly, the role of religion in dealing with modern conflict is explored. This includes religious communities as a safe space for healing and reconciliation, mission as a ministry of reconciliation and the role of religion in restorative justice.

2.1 Definitions of terms

“On understanding the features of conflict relies any understanding of peace.” (Crudu and Radu, 2011, p. 231). These words underline the main task of any studies on religion and conflict. The aim of any of such studies should be to help make our world more peaceful. The world today is increasingly becoming globalized and has become so interconnected to an extent of being called “flat” “borderless” “de-territorialized word” or “global village” (Eriksen, 2006). Due to advances in technology, economy and international relations, the interaction of people continues to increase. As people move and interact, their cultures do the same and religion is not an exception. The power of religion cannot be underscored in our society today, especially when talking about conflict and peace.

In the early 1990’s the political scientist Samuel P. Huntington predicted that after the cold war, the future major conflicts will be caused by cultures and religious identities (Huntington, 1996). In some countries like Norway, interaction of cultures through immigration is now being called a “cultural crisis” (Hurd, 2011). Hurd continues to report that the “nation’s experiment with Muslim immigration and multiculturalism had gone terribly wrong,” leading to the fear of the Islamization of the country, a factor thought to motivate a young Norwegian man who went on a rampage killing over 60 people in July 2011 (Hurd, 2011). Religion and culture seem to be at play here. Religion can energize and escalate a conflict that was otherwise not about religion or pacify it and bring peace. It’s ambivalent in nature.

What is Religion?

Peter Beyer, a distinguished Canadian professor of sociology of religion in his book; *Religions in a Global Society* follows Max Weber in saying that religion cannot be defined at least not in the beginning of a presentation (Beyer, 2006, p. 4). Beyer presents religion as a social concept and reality, which is observable rather than an aggregate of individual practices, beliefs and forms of religiosity (Beyer, 2006, p. 9). For example, he will classify the Norwegian society as having a form of religion despite the fact that many do not practice it and deny being religious.

I find Beyer's perspective of religion beneficial in understanding the role of religion in conflicts. For example, in the Muslim world, the west (Europe and North America) is regarded as "Christian" even though many in the west will deny being religious or being influenced by religion in their policies. A point in case is how United States of America tries to defend its key ally in Middle East, Israel. Muslim nations around Israel consider America's support as mainly due to their shared religious heritage, a fact that the USA will deny.

The case under this study is another good example. When the Kenyan Army moved into Somali to fight the terrorist group Al-Shabaab in 2011, the terrorists labeled it a religious war just because Kenya is mostly Christian and Somali is mostly Islamic. To the Kenyan government and people, this was a war on terror but to the Al-Shabaab and its sympathizers it was a religious war. A community identity with religion is a key to understanding the role of religion in a conflict.

Instead of dwelling on either philosophical or social science perspectives of defining religion which focus on theological manifestations and societal impact respectively, Jonathan Fox in his essay, *The Future of Religion and Domestic Conflict*, defines religion in ways that affects the understanding of its role in conflict (Fox, 2007). His first definition is that "religion is a source of many people's worldviews." These are the glasses that people wear as they make sense of the world and their environment. Secondly, he sees religion as the one that sets "rules and standards of behavior" for its followers. He gives an example of religions that encourage their believers to convert others to their faith. This may be seen as a provocative act by other religions thus a potential for conflict.

In the same article, Fox also presents religion as a source of legitimacy, identity and community organization through its institutions. A good example is the role of the Polish Catholic church in the struggle against communism. The church was seen as a guardian of the Polish nationhood against “foreign” invasion. The people identified with the church, which gave legitimate and logical support to the Solidarity Movement that finally brought the walls of communism down. It was said that to be a Pole was synonymous with being a catholic.

I find these different perspectives of looking at religion crucial in understanding the role religion plays in conflict especially in our world today. In Kenya people are born into different Christian denominations and Islam where they learn to practice religion. Since African communities are communal in nature, religion is mostly an aspect of communal identity. This is the reason why European Christians missionaries targeted to convert community elders and chiefs since they understood that once the leaders were converted, then the community was as good as converted. Though there are interreligious conversions today, their significance is limited.

What is a Conflict?

On their essay, *Conflict and the Problem of Peace: a Theoretical Approach*, Emanuel Ionut Crudu and Laura Radu (2011, p. 231-258) state that conflict remains a “contested concept” since it is mostly studied with an aim to development methods of its resolution leading to functional definitions at the expense of clear scientific definitions. They hold that a good definition should be able to successfully lead to the understanding of the situation and help in the construction of a way of resolution (Crudu and Radu, 2011, p. 234). According to them, a situation becomes a conflict when an actor takes an “aggressive hostile action” to achieve a goal against another actor (Crudu and Radu, 2011, p. 236).

According to Jonathan Fox (2007), the concept of religious conflict is broad and can be divided into two main categories. The first one is a conflict between two groups that are from opposite religions or confessions. The cause of the conflicts may be different for example separatism or land but since the actors in the conflict wear a religious identity, then it can be regarded as a religious conflict. The second category is the religious war where the issues at stake are religious. An example is fundamentalist fighting a secular state (Fox, 2007, p. 136). Fox’s definition is adopted as the working definition of religious conflict in this study.

Life Cycle of a Conflict

Deusdedit R.K. Nkurunziza, a conflict and reconciliation researcher in Uganda identifies the common phases of a conflict as conflict formation, conflict escalation, conflict resolution and transformation and finally social change through reconstruction and reconciliation (Nkurunziza, 2002). The conflict involving Al-Shabaab in Kenya started when this militant group started kidnapping tourists and other western workers in Kenya. It turned violent when the Kenya Army started an operation in Somalia to combat the militants. The violence escalated when Al-Shabaab reiterated by carrying out public and violent attacks in Kenya.

Nkurunziza's third stage of conflict cycle is development of a conflict into a "constructive, creative, non-violent" one (Nkurunziza, 2002, p. 311). In the case of Al-Shabaab and Kenya Army, the conflict took an interesting turn at this stage. A third innocent party was introduced. Al-Shabaab started attacking churches inside Kenya with an aim of causing social and religious disintegration in the country. They wanted the conflict to transform into a religious confrontation between Christians and Muslims in Kenya to give legitimacy to their jihad cause.

Causes of Conflict

There are many theories about categories of causes of conflict but Nkurunziza (2002) identifies the two most common ones as: proximate or immediate and fundamental or long-term. According to him proximate causes are the ones that immediately trigger the conflict while fundamental causes are more deep issues that perpetuate and complicate a conflict. He concludes that the basic causes of conflict in society are identity and unequal distribution or sharing of resources. He gives religious conflicts as an example of identity conflict whereby a threat to a people's sense of belongings can lead to violence in order to protect it.

In the case of Somalia conflict, the immediate cause of the conflict was the 1991 coup that removed the Prime Minister from power. The underlying clan divisions and the problem of sharing resources became the main causes that have perpetuated the conflict up to now. Since the problem was not managed early, it became violent and militant. Various groups

with vested interests took advantage of the vacuum of law and order to establish themselves. Al-Shabaab is such a good example.

Conflicts are not static but change over time influenced by the attitudes, behaviors and structures. The perceptions and misperceptions of parties in conflict should be taken seriously since they lead to action that can either stabilize the conflict or aggravate it. People resort to violence if they don't feel included and given a platform of expression themselves. Religion can serve as a mobilization tool for other unmet needs, interests and positions for a community. Al-Shabaab uses religion as a tool to get financial and humans resources that they need to "fight on behalf of Islam" with an aim to established law, order and a prosperous nation by entrenching Sharia laws in Somalia.

Theories of Conflict

Somalia is an excellent example that though people may have the same language and almost the same religion but that does not guarantee peaceful coexistence among them (Schlee, 2008, p. 6). Schlee criticizes what he identifies as the `popular theory` of conflict that holds that ethnicity is a cause or aggravates conflict (Schlee, 2008, p. 9). He argues that "ethnicity is not a cause of conflict but rather something that emerges in the course of conflict, or acquires new shapes and functions in the course of such events" (ibid). He holds that the same can be said of religion.

Schlee points out an important phenomenon in a conflict that I experienced in my study. He says that often, in a conflict, the way in which lines are drawn is not always seen easily (Schlee, 2008, p. 14). He gives an example of a conflict in southern Ethiopia in the 1990s which some people saw as an issue about pasture and water; others saw it as an ethno-political conflict while others saw it as a jihad (ibid).

Different actors interpret the Al-Shabaab attacks in Kenya differently. The government of Kenya sees it as a struggle against global terrorism. I keenly followed the public campaign that the Kenya army used to justify their operation inside Somalia. Their campaign was that the only reason why the Kenya army was in Somalia was to secure Kenya's economic interests in tourism that had been threatened by the Al-Shabaab who were attacking and kidnapping the western tourists in the country. To the Al-Shabaab and its sympathizers both

in Kenya and others parts of the world, the operation of Kenya army in Somalia is a “western conspiracy” of the global struggle against Islam whereby Kenya is used as a tool of war. I found out from the study that most of the local people in Kenya initially interpreted the conflict through the eyes of the public campaigns of the Kenya military but when the churches were attacked, their interpretation changed. They now looked at the conflict as a religious one.

Various groups in the churches under this study held different perspectives about the attacks. The top church leaders saw the conflict as a terror- related and refused to conclude that it was religious in any way. In contrast, the members of the church and especially victims saw the attacks as religious motivated and had affected their relationships with their Muslim neighbors. The church leaders` relationship with Muslims seemed not to be affected by the conflict. The reality is that the leaders had no Muslim neighbors since they lived in different parts of the city while the church members were living in the neighborhoods of the churches, which are predominantly Muslim.

Schlee (2008) summarizes Cashman`s theories of conflict that hold that conflicts are at three levels. The first one is the individual. This deals with personal traits and psychohistory of individuals especially leaders. The second level is the government decision making. This may be not reflect the interest of the whole but can be due to pressure from special groups. The third level is the interaction between states. At this stage parties try to gain advantages over the others in what is called the Game theory. States may also try to enforce threats on the opponents expecting certain responses in what is called the Deterrence theory (Schlee, 2008, p. 18).

2.2 Role of Religion in modern Society

The theories of secularization predicted the decline of religion in the public space. The French sociologist Emile Durkheim declared that “the old gods are growing old or already dead” (Casanova, 1994, p. 18) and in this regard he was not alone. He is supported by other notable figures of sociology like Max Weber, Karl Marx and Herbert Spencer (Casanova, 1994, p. 17).

Religion was seen as anti-modern and the “enlightenment proclaimed the death of religion” (Juergensmeyer, 2003, p. 229). There was an expectation that since modernization made religion "invisible" in Europe, the same will happen as it spread to other parts of the world. China and Japan have proved that this may not be the case. Japan is highly modernized yet it has not fallen to westernization. It took its own path of modernization but still religion remains an important social force in the country (Blasi, 2011, p. 117). China has developed without the "western democracy" but an autocratic rule.

On the other hand, United States of America has maintained its religiosity visible at the same time being a super power. Other emerging economies like Brazil, South Africa and India are relatively religious. Perhaps those who predicted the decline of religion in public sphere in the face of modernization applied the western European case generally and too soon without taking into account the complexities of societies as they develop.

But today, many will argue, "Religion is back." The significance of religion in the society today can be said to be "increasing" thus casting a doubt at the secularization theory (Demerath, 2001, p. 6). Therefore the role of religion in the society today should not be taken for granted. The reality today is that the population of the world is generally religious (Koenig, King and Carson, 2012, p. 53). In many parts of the world today, religion acts as the anchor that holds life defining individuals, communities and even nations. In such societies the definition of conflict and peace cannot exclude the religious understanding.

The revival of the influence of religion in world politics in modern society is attributed to the failure of national secularism to deliver the promised paradise and the process of globalization (Juergensmeyer, 2008, p. 4). Nicholas Jay Demerath in his book, *Crossing the Gods: World Religions and Worldly Politics*, says, “a religion without a crisis can be a religion with a crisis” (Demerath, 2003, p. 3). His argument is that for a religion to stay relevant, it must engage the society. He proposes a theory for the relationship between religion and society especially politics using the symbol: the moth circling around the flame (Demerath, 2003, p. 1). Religion can come close to politics for benefits like re-energizing but not too close to risk burning (loss). Religion can be reenergized, find legitimacy and even economic benefits by playing in public gallery but also it may be controlled, manipulated, get unfulfilled promises from politicians and suffer decline.

He also argues that for religion to be fruitful, it must interact with its context (society) and the secular (other spheres of life) (Demerath, 2003, p. 6-7). To him, “separating religion from state is both possible and desirable but separating religion from politics is frequently neither possible nor desirable” (Demerath, 2003, p. 2). He prefers that religion play role in the politics level and not at the state level.

Jose Casanova, a distinguished Spanish Sociologist of religion in his book; *Public Religions in the Modern World*, had a clear reflection on the role of religion in public life in the modern society. He argues that though secularization theories were not entirely a myth but they were more of a perception than the reality (Casanova, 1994, p. 11). He continues to state that religion is here to stay in the public sphere but must be compatible and strengthen modern democracy (Casanova, 1994, p. 6).

A brief history of pre-modern Europe is helpful in understanding the role of religion in modern society. Peter Beyer discusses the history of secularization in Europe from the medieval ages (Beyer, 2006, p. 65-78). He points out that the Roman Catholic Church was highly functionally differentiated and separated from the state but more powerful. The church also controlled other spheres of society making them weak and homologous to its pattern. He credits the protestant reformation for breaking the control of the Catholic Church on society and releasing the other spheres to develop on their own. According to him others forces that helped bring down the “monastic walls” (as Max Weber put it) were intellectualism, capitalism, the rise of independent states and the Europeans meeting other people’s religions. This differentiation process led to the development and establishment of independent but rather competing spheres of society notably science in education, religion itself, state, capitalism, law and many others.

After the differentiation, Jose Casanova observes that most of the founding fathers of sociology of religion like Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, Karl Max and Augustine Comte all agreed that religion was not going to play any significant role in the modern society without critically examining available evidence on the contrary (Casanova, 1994, p. 17). Durkheim said, “The old gods are growing old or already dead,” agreeing with other scientists that the project of enlightenment was the last blow to religion in the public life (Casanova, 1994, p.

18). Two leading sociologists, Thomas Luckmann and the German Niklas Luhmann, later supported this theory of decline of religion. Luckmann talked of religion becoming “invisible” by taking the forms of self-expression and self-realization (Casanova, 1994, p. 19). Luhmann who is a theorist of communication systems acknowledged the development of religion as a communicative functional system like any other in modern society but with lost functions in its public space. He believed that no single sphere would dominate the society like religion had done before. He put it that there will be no “birth of new gods” (Casanova, 1994, P. 37).

However, another school of thought advanced an argument that religion still had a role in modern society. Both the American Sociologist of religion, Robert Bellah and the Frenchman Rousseau saw the role of religion in society through the civil religion (Casanova, 1994, p. 58-59). This is seen as a kind of unifying sacredness behind any nation. An example is the Judeo-Christian American heritage. Jose Casanova agrees with them on the continued role of religion on public sphere but thinks it will be in the civil society level (Casanova, 1994, p. 66). From my observation, the church in Kenya was more vibrant and relevant to society during the reign of the second president when it stood in opposition to bad governance. Working together with other civil societies they pressed for the rights of the masses and the general public felt its presence. Since then, it has gotten married to the state and its relevance in public sphere has diminished.

2.3 The Role of Religion in Conflict

2.3.1 Fundamentalism

The September 11, 2001 attack on the soil of one of the world’s modern super power awakened the world to the reality of global terrorism. As Juergensmeyer points out, such acts cause widespread fear which turns to public anger when people discover that they are religiously motivated (Juergensmeyer, 2003, p. 5). Juergensmeyer also observes that although terrorism could be attributed to nonreligious causes like leftist ideologies and ethnic differences; it is increasingly getting tied with religion in our contemporary world. For example he found out that in the US, by 1980 there was no religious group among the terrorist suspects but by the year 2000 over half were religious (Juergensmeyer, 2003, p. 6).

Many religious institutions will be quick to defend religion against accusation of terrorism and blame the religious “fundamentalists.” This has led to the term fundamentalism being equated to terrorism and hence seen as violent. This means that in contemporary world, one cannot discuss terrorism without a link to fundamentalism.

According to Bruce, there are five common characteristics of religious fundamentalism (Bruce, 2008, p. 12-14). First, it claims an authoritative “inerrant text” which acts as a source of inspiration. It may be a Bible, Quran or any other sacred book. He points out that people interpret and apply these texts differently depending on their traditions and context. In his view, what leads to fundamentalism is the fact that there is no “authoritative version of the text” in the reality of high-level literacy. Secondly, though fundamentalism is a modern phenomenon, it is captured by an imaginary perfect past and desires to reproduce it in the contemporary world. For example, the Christians may admire the early church and seek to be like them. However, this imagination is in most cases selectively biased to the positive and ignores the negative and the contextual settings of their subject of the imagination.

Thirdly, fundamentalism is reactive. It arises in traditional cultures but it is not traditional in itself. It is a modern phenomenon that picks traditional symbols and tries to modernize them. As Bruce puts it, fundamentalism doesn’t seek to conserve the traditional but creatively reworks it to make it contemporary. It seeks to protect traditions which it feels are under threat by external forces for example modernity by trying to restore the lost enthusiasm in their religion. However, it does not necessarily use traditional means but embraces modern ideas and technology to achieve this aim. Fourth, it arises from a group that feels marginalized in society due to loss of control or an awareness of their inadequacies after contact with other societies. Lastly, fundamentalism combines a selected past image with modern technology. Usually, it is innovative in the use of media and other alternative technology and social structures. This is necessitated by the fact that the establishments they fight control the mainstream communication channels. For example Osama Bin Laden used fax machines and satellite telephones to control his organization.

Though most of the so-called fundamental movements use a sacred text as a source of their inspiration, it should be observed that the fact of inerrancy of the text may not necessarily be a key feature in fundamentalism. Antoun observes that focus on scripture is not “central” in

fundamentalism (Antoun, 2008, p. 37). He suggests that fundamentalist use scripture selectively to legitimize their cause (Antoun, 2008, p. 50). Steve Bruce also suggests that there are many ways of interpreting any sacred text, a feature that may be the lifeline of fundamentalism and not the fact that a text may be believed to be infallible and without error. For example, it must be stated that Christians for a long time regarded the Bible as the word of God without error until the rise of liberal movements within its circles. This belief was and still is for many non-liberal Christians, one of the cardinal pillars of Christianity (Herriot, 2009, p. 203-204). To take such a belief as one of the main feature of fundamentalism is to suggest that all non-liberals are fundamental. This simply includes those who are opposed to Christian liberalism. This is what Bruce himself seeks to distance himself from by calling it “lack of intellectual maturity” (Bruce, 2008, p. 12). Being true to the doctrine of any religion should not be confused with the notion of fundamentalism discussed by Bruce. In this regard, I suggest that Bruce must draw the line more clearly to avoid generalization.

Fundamentalism is ambiguous and largely misunderstood. Herriot rightly observes that while describing it, many may mean those “who take their religion too seriously for the liking of the rest” (Herriot, 2009, p. 2). Bruce supports the same view (Bruce, 2008, p. 11). I support Herriot when he asserts that the focus should be in the public expression of fundamentalism, which is primarily reactive (Herriot, 2009, p. 2). As observed earlier, there are many Christians outside the evangelical protestant domain (which Bruce believes are the fundamentalist within Christianity) that believe in the Bible as the Word of God without error but do not react with zealotry as he calls it. In this light, I find it unfair when Bruce likens the Islamic Jihadists with Christian protestant evangelicals. Though he tries to justify himself that fundamentalism is not always violent (Bruce, 2008, p. 7), the likening brands evangelical Christians violent. However, there are few examples of individuals and groups within Christianity who have used violence to express their opinion in the public square. An example is the abortion clinic bombings in Alabama and Georgia in 1997. These means of expressing ones belief should be condemned as criminal acts but the base of the beliefs cannot be condemned together with the acts.

I agree with Bruce that the concept of marginalization is key to fundamentalism (Bruce, 2008, p. 14). When people feel deprived, they seek for opportunity for self-expression. Other

scholars like Appleby (1997) and Furseth and Repstad (2006) have challenged this notion of marginalization in the rise of social movements like fundamentalism. However, marginalization should not be viewed only in terms of socioeconomic status. The term marginalization is not limited to poverty. Though people can be highly educated, wealthy and elite in society, they may feel that their ideologies (religious in this case) are not well taken care of in society. They feel sidelined and react by using their knowledge, expertise, money and available technology to fight back. This leads us to conclude that fundamentalism is “classless” as Herriot suggests (Herriot, 2009, p. 22). It’s about different people with a similar worldview and agenda that feel sidelined from the mainstream society.

Religion in its core seeks purity. When there is compromise in religion, a few bold people may take up the task of drawing the masses back to the original focus. They remind people of their foundations. This is important for the survival of the religion. The term fundamentalist has been wrongly associated with violence. To demonize those who take their religion seriously by labeling them fundamentalists and associating them to terrorism is to give a message of religious compromise, which is not compatible with any serious religion. To make fundamentalism and violence synonymous is a great disservice to people who believe in ideals and protection of their foundational heritage.

2.3.2. Ambivalence of Religion in Conflict

Religion can promote both conflict and peace because it gives people identity. Curt Dahlgren in his essay: *Is religion the cause of Political conflicts*, discusses three forms and sources of identity as presented by Emanuel Castells in his book *The Power of Identity* (Dahlgren, 2011, p. 200-2013). These are legitimizing identity, resistance identity and project identity. Dominant institutions in society are formed and perpetuated by a legitimizing identity in order to be accepted in society as having power over people. Sections of society that feel threatened, undervalued or stigmatized can form an identity for fighting back. An example is terrorist or fundamentalist groups. New identities can also be formed in society and use their position to try and restructure society in line with their ideals. Such a project gives them an identity. An example is the feminist’s movements in Europe, which after winning to get women rights; they have now embarked on a project to change the European society from its patriarchal foundations. Dahlgren (2011) concludes that “collective acts of violence ...require strong ideological legitimacy” which religion so easily provides.

Conflicts often get complicated when national, ethnic and religious identities get merged. As Steve Bruce, the British sociologist said, in some cases these three form “inseparably intertwined” motive with religion being the core of one’s national and ethnic identity (Bruce, 2008, p. 8). He also continues to observe that this creates a sense of superiority in a group over others justifying their acts of aggression hence making it more difficult to solve a conflict. A cursory survey from Israel, Palestine, Balkan region, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Timor just to name a few is a clear indication how region has helped form national or ethnic boundaries through conflicts. As Bruce puts it “shared religious identity can become the focus for political mobilization” (Bruce, 2008, p. 99).

In his book, *Terror in the Mind of God: the global rise of religious violence*, Mark Juergensmeyer’s study on religious terrorism focuses not on the individual per se but the community that shapes his worldview of life. The one who carries out acts of violence comes from a community that informs his values, convictions, legitimizes and morally supports him. Often religion forms such an enabling community. His observation is that it takes a community of support, moral presumption for justification of violent actions, internal conviction, social acknowledgement and “the stamp of approval from a legitimizing ideology or authority one respects” which the religious community often provides (Juergensmeyer, 2003, p. 11).

Religion can also contribute to conflict through its impact on individual personalities. Jan Hermanson’s comparative study of empirical studies on *Religion and Prejudice: Some Aspects from the Perspective of Psychology* concludes that at social levels, religious orientations are “linked to greater intolerance and increased prejudice” (Hermanson, 2011, p. 227). He also finds out that religion does not indicate to increase the “self-confidence, openness or flexibility of the individual” (ibid), which are key elements to conflict resolution. Examples from both the Presbyterian and Catholic Church in Northern Ireland seem to suggest otherwise. It’s been argued that the religious actors in both sides of the conflict were flexible and always willing to help stop violence compared to the extremist elements on both sides who were mostly not religious.

To base a conflict on the name of God has been one most powerful weapon of enhancing religious motivated conflicts. The Zionists and Hamas cannot agree to solve their land issues because they base their convictions that they are fighting for or are suctioned by God to defend the land. As Juergensmeyer observes, this makes compromise a hard nut to crack and actually justifies the continued conflict (Juergensmeyer, 2003, p. 220). Another religious motivation for violence includes spiritualizing the conflict as part of cosmic war with God and one's religion on one side and Satan and the religion of the other people on the other side. It turns out to be a spiritual war played out by human actors. Defeat or compromise is considered as suffered by gods, something that is not acceptable. In this understanding, communities can perpetuate long time conflicts and even die for the gods. Their belief that their gods will eventually win even if not in their lifetime gives them the strength to endure and continue the conflict till death.

In his great work on religious violence and peace building, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation*, R. Scott Appleby labors to prove his premise that religion has a "dynamic" power that can produce both violence and peace hence ambivalent. This is a very important perspective, which can help solve conflicts involving religion. As Bruce points out, religious fundamentalists usually claim that their actions are justified by religious text (Appleby, 2008, p. 12). In reality, they do selective reading of religious text magnifying those that support their agenda and of course even the interpretation and application of the selected texts is always a question of contestation. As Appleby argues, religious text is ambivalent. It is applicable for war or for peace.

Michael Ignatieff in his book, *The Lesser Evil* argues that religious terrorist try to justify their violent actions by use of scripture (Ignatieff, 2004). He notes that even the devil can use scripture to achieve his own end. He questions why these terrorists ignore parts of scripture that prohibits violence. In essence he advocates the arguments that terrorism group use religion to achieve other objectives that include political power. Somalia has been a good example of this. From the Islamic courts to Al-Shabaab, the goal has been to seize the rule of the country and religion has been seen as the best path towards achieving that goal. Behind the call for establishment of an Islamic nation governed by sharia law is the fight for power and resources in Somalia. However, Susan Mendus (2010) in her article *Religious tolerance*

and religious violence takes a different stand. She argues that religion in itself, as a belief, is the cause of terrorism and violence apart from the interests of politics (Mendus, 2010).

In chapter one of his book: *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation*, Appleby (2008) describes the ambivalent dynamic power of religion as militancy. He argues that this is the willingness of an individual to give up anything including self for the sake of the divine. This is called a “noble” task that cannot be fully rewarded in this world or by humans but beyond life and by the gods. He continues to explain in the same chapter that this power is obtained through mystical experiences of the sacred “an encounter with the transcendent” or of religious symbolisms with deep impressions (Appleby, 200, p. 28). The outcome is either total dedication to the sacred as a duty to serving humanity or killing them in the name of god. He gives an example of how Hamas recruits undergo a symbolic exercise whereby they enter the coffin, try to imagine the painful process of death and remerge as a sign of resurrection after the mission for Allah (Appleby, 2000, p. 25-26). After such an exercise, they are ready to give their bodies in suicide bombing of their enemy, Israel. Appleby concludes that both the religious caregiver and the suicide bombers are both religious and propelled by the same sacred motivation.

According to Appleby, since religion has been associated more with violence in history, it's so easy to suspect its role in the public life. He rightly points out that religion's equal passion for peace building and reconciliation has been mostly ignored and religion's potential for the same underrated.

2.4 Religious Tolerance

Our world is becoming increasingly interconnected and one thing that we cannot avoid is meeting and living with people from different religions. In their article; *Are religious tolerance and pluralism reachable ideal? A psychological Perspective*, Waillet and Roskam (2013) attempt to explain why religious tolerance is a more than welcome outcome in the world today and how it can be achieved. They start by distinguishing between pluralism and tolerance. They argue that pluralism is to acknowledge diversity and openly engage in a dialogue with it even if it means challenging and reconsidering one's views. On the other hand, they see tolerance as “putting up with something that one disapproves of or is prejudiced against” (Waillet and Roskam, 2013, p. 71).

They identify four obstacles to religious tolerance and pluralism: developmental psychology, social identity, terror management and personality. They argue that though adults have cognitive capacities to understand these concepts than children, not all achieve them because of other factors including their cultural environment (Waillet and Roskam (2013). Religion as part of culture gives people a sense of identity and discrimination against those of the out-group. Using the terror management theory of Solomon, Greenberg and Pyszczynski, they see religion as a real obstacle to tolerance because it gives people a worldview to deal with fear of death and give meaning to life. Since this is core to life, people find it hard to embrace or take seriously those who hold to a different worldview. Personality traits predispose people to varying degree of ability to change and be open to a different other.

In regard to developmental psychology, these researchers discourage religious-blindness and advocate that children especially at adolescence stage should be confronted with information and context of religious differences (ibid). In regard to social identity and grouping, they argue that intergroup contact largely reduces intergroup prejudice citing a meta-analytic test of intergroup contact theory by Pettigrew and Tropp (2006).

2.5. Theories of Tolerance

2.5.1. Appiah's theory of Cosmopolitanism

Kwame Anthony Appiah, a professor in the Department of Philosophy at the Princeton University in the USA in his book "*Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*" (2006) holds that people from different communities can co-exist based on moral universals and the shared sense of humanity. His point is that shared values should form the foundation for this coexistence in the name of cosmopolitanism.

Appiah traces cosmopolitanism to Cynics of the fourth century BC, who came up with the word "cosmopolitan" meaning "citizens of the cosmos" i.e. the universe (Appiah, 2006, p. XII). It was a new concept then challenging the local communities to think of themselves as belonging to a larger global community. He argues that the challenge of cosmopolitanism remains the same today posing two ideals. These are: to develop universal concern for other

people and respecting the legitimate differences among us at the same time (Appiah, 2006, p. XIII). This is to say that we are different but can learn from each other's differences.

He argues that the fact that people in different places “ have gods, food, language, dance music, carvings, medicines, family lives, rituals, jokes and children’s tales; smiled, slept, had sex and children, wept, and in the end, died” (Appiah, 2006, p. 14) coupled with the understanding that right or wrong is basically a matter of customs (Appiah, 2006, p. 15) should make us one. He attempts at reviving the old concept of cosmopolitanism not as a solution to the problems facing the heterogeneity of the world today but as a challenge to it. He argues that intellectuals emphasize and tend to magnify differences between people whereas history and reality is that there are examples of people of different cultures and religious traditions who have lived side by side successfully. He gives an example of the medieval Spain under the Moors and Ottoman where Christians and Jews lived under the Muslim rule not because they agreed on a set of universal rules but due to tolerance (Appiah, 2006, p. 70).

Appiah identifies three main characteristics that can promote cosmopolitanism. The first one is pluralism. According to him, we have to live with the fact that we have many values and different people will have different values but those values must be worthy living by (2006:144). As noted above, while challenging positivism, he argues that even beliefs are an authority in different places at different time thus should be respected. While talking about authority, one may ask, “Who is the authority in defining which values are “worthy living by?” who sets the standards? These are questions the religious may have while participating on the round table of Appiah’s “conversation” about cosmopolitanism.

Jung argues that religions with canons like the Christian faith use them as the sole illumination and with primacy over the issues of ethics setting objective standards (Jung, 1984, p. 123-141). The canon provides the basis for the ethical reflection for the religious. However, he suggests that moral ethic can overlap different religious traditions and concludes that this should not be taken as undermining the distinctiveness of a religion canon as a source of ethics but at the same time it is not counterproductive to have a religious distinctive ethic.

Jorge N. Ferrer (2009) while looking at the future of the religious diverse globalized world suggests a model of "participatory turn" which appreciates the diversity of religion and avoids the "dogmatism and competitiveness" that gives some religious groups an edge. The challenge with this proposal as Ferrer himself admits is that most religious groups claim superiority even those that accept and defend plurality. He gives an example of Dalai Lama who promotes diversity of religion but holds that his Tibetan Buddhism will finally triumph (D'Costa quoted in Ferrer, 2009).

The second characteristic of cosmopolitanism is fallibilism. This is the recognition that our knowledge is imperfect and subject to change in face of new evidence (Appiah, 2006, p. 144). Appiah argues that this should help people from different communities to open to all others even if they are different from them unlike fundamentalist who only accept those who join them. This is a big challenge to some religious that hold that their sacred books are not fallible. The Catholic Church even holds that their supreme leader cannot error when speaking in special occasions. Some Christian groups hold that the Bible is complete and without error thus not subject to any change. I find this characteristic by Appiah most challenging to put into reality. It may not be helpful for interreligious or cultural conversations to raise issues of fallibilism. How does one reconcile doctrine and reality in a mixed society? The third characteristic is toleration. There is need to interact with respect those who are different from us (Appiah, 2006, p. 145) and be open to all people from other faiths.

I agree with Appiah that people from different religions should be able to live together but I find it difficult to draw an example for coexistence in the contemporary society, especially from the religious angle, from the Medieval Spain as Appiah tries to challenge me. First of all, such societies were religiously and undemocratically ruled. It is evident that those in power may have allowed religious diversity but on the basis that others were second-class citizens. The Ottomans treated the others as their servants who belonged to second class (Inalcik, 1979). These "others" also did not have any option but to submit to the powers of the day. Given opportunity, they could have rebelled and agitated for their rightful position in society. This is not the case today in many parts of the world. In fact in regions that are multicultural rich the societies tend to be more democratic, uphold equality and human rights.

In democratic societies coexistence is possible since there is freedom of both worship and speech. Peoples' right to practice their faith is guaranteed unlike other countries especially Islam dominated where people of other faiths are often restricted and persecuted. Apart from legal guarantee of people's freedom of worship, there must be a cultural change. What I see as one main challenge to achieving religious "cosmopolitanism" is the stigma, discrimination and even persecution of the people who change their religions. This comes from immediate family members and even the wider society and further divides communities along religious lines.

The other challenge is the practice of freedom of worship and its balance with the freedom of speech. On the 11th anniversary of the terrorist attacks of September 11 last year, an American produced video castigating the Prophet Mohammed led to anti-American riots across the Muslim world and was closely associated to the bold attack of the American Embassy in Libya where Americans were killed including the Ambassador (Kirkpatrick, 2012). While responding as to why the USA had not banned the video, President Obama while giving a speech at the UN in 2012 said that the US constitution protected freedom of speech even when offense is provoked (The guardian, 2012). In the same speech he acknowledged that faith is powerful in peoples' lives and that religious differences have great potential to inflame great passions but concluded that the answer is not to restrict any speech but to speak more especially on what binds us together rather than what divides us.

I was surprised that President Obama did not talk about the responsibilities that come with freedoms. Appiah talks of respecting the legitimate differences among us if we are to live together as members of one universe. This involves taking responsibility in the exercise of our freedom of worship and speech. I like the steps my country Kenya has undertaken to temper freedom of speech with its responsibility. In the landmark 2010 constitution, freedom of expression is not absolute and can be limited when exercised in a manner that violates the rights of others (National Council for Law Reporting (Kenya), 2010). In 2008 The National Cohesion and Integration Act was passed that criminalizes hate speech in Kenya.

Contribution of Appiah`s cosmopolitanism to coexistence

Conversations across boundaries

According to Appiah, cosmopolitanism does not negate loyalties to our local communities or citizenship but it is going beyond them to seek to understand other worldview points (Appiah, 2006, p. xvi). He uses the metaphor ""conversations across boundaries"" as a bridge between people`s differences (Appiah, 2006, p. xviii). As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, Appiah argues that some values remain local but some are and should be objective thus the need for conversation and not necessarily consensus (Appiah, 2006, p. xix). To illustrate how people are different, Appiah gives an account of Sir Richard Francis Burton an Englishman of 19th c who toured many parts of the world, learned 39 languages among them French, Spanish, Italian, Greek, Latin, Indian Arabic, and Persian. He was exposed to many philosophies and customs of different people and places with a conclusion that everyone has part of the truth like a piece of a shattered mirror and not the whole truth (Appiah, 2006, p. 8). Burton`s assumption is that there is at least one truth (one mirror), which has been fragmented and pieces can be found in different places among different peoples.

However, Appiah further argues that beyond the "shattered mirror" is the fact that there is no single truth thus the point is not "shattered mirror" but "many mirrors" and the best we can do is to agree to disagree (Appiah, 2006, p. 11). He uses religion as a case in point where people of different faith may not agree on beliefs thus there being "lots of moral truths" (ibid). In his quest to bring people together, Appiah fundamentally scatters many when argues that there are many truths ("mirrors").

I agree with him that for people of different backgrounds especially religious to coexist, they have to agree to disagree but this does not mean that there cannot be objective truth. Agreeing to disagree is not necessarily the same as agree that there are "lots of moral truths". Many religious traditions basically hold that they have the truth. This is what binds them together and for an advocate of cosmopolitanism to suggest to them that there are "lots of moral truths" is to alienate them from the conversation. The lines of communication across border need to be always open. I don`t think there is need to introduce the discussion about objectivity of truth in cosmopolitanism. The challenge with cosmopolitanism in relation to

religion will be how people of different faiths can coexist without denying their belief that they hold the “truth”.

Positivism verses relativism

Appiah holds that positivism can overestimate or underestimate the obstacles that face cross-cultural understanding (Appiah, 2006, p. 18). According to him, concentration on facts and evidences appeals only to the rational positivists who tend to generalize issues and expect cultures to fit in. For example, Appiah says that beliefs in spirits are real in the Asante community in Ghana but positivist will dismiss them as false using the science as a measuring tool (Appiah, 2006, p. 36). He argues that truth is not just a matter of science noting that in some places at certain times beliefs are more important than science. He gives an illustration of a missionary who fails to convince a local community that there are invisible bacteria in water that cause diarrhea and can be killed by boiling the water. By calling them spirits that escape upon the water being boiled the missionary manages to get the community to boil water before drinking and thus avoid the disease (Appiah, 2006, p. 38). To such a community, beliefs are an authority that causes them to see things the way they see them (Appiah, 200, p. 39).

Appiah argues that beliefs are built upon inherited stories about realities holding that there is no unreasonableness in the beliefs themselves for example in witchcraft but the unfortunate thing is that some beliefs are not true. Those who are brought up with better refined stories like scientific stories have a better foundation to build on their beliefs (Appiah, 2006, p. 42-43). Appiah sees positivism as a hindrance to cosmopolitanism and tend to favor relativism in this regard. He talks of relativism and at the same time talks about communities learning from one another through conversations as a way of promoting pluralism. Is it possible for one in engaging a different other to tolerate and learn at the same time? The main religions of the world like Christianity and Islam are missionary oriented. They hold that they have the light and it's their obligation to shine it upon the rest whom they see as being in darkness. In their engagement of the “different other” their motive is to “save” them for they consider them "lost". In this line of thinking, religious traditions may find it hard to learn and tolerate the other since in their conscious, doing this will be unfair to their neighbor. The challenge for religious groups is how to deal with their “missionary engagement” of the others who are different from them. If they do not engage to convert it will be regarded as a failure of their

duty to others and to their “true faith.” At the same time if they engage in conversion this act may be offensive to others leading to conflict. This is the dilemma.

Agreeing to disagree

According to Appiah people disagree about values in three ways: vocabulary, interpretation and the weight given to them. This may complicate cross-cultural conversations but can be solved by agreeing on what to do even when we don’t agree why we disagree (Appiah, 2006, p. 67). Appiah says that in a society, people can live together without necessarily agreeing on universal values. He gives an example of the medieval Spain where Muslims Jews and Christian lived together under the Ottoman rule (Appiah, 2006, p. 70). He says that a “large part of what we do we do just because it is what we do” (Appiah, 2006, p. 73). We can have arguments and debates over what we do without any conclusion but as communities we can respect what others do without necessarily agreeing with them. His point is that we should learn and interact with others not that it will make us agree but that we get used to them (Appiah, 2006, p. 78) and that conversation across cultures should be encouraged not to change values but to get used to the others (Appiah, 2006, p. 85).

As previously argued, this will not click with the missionary religions. Their main motivation of conversation will be to change the other and not to get used to them. Even religions that accept religious pluralism hold that one day the “others” will discover that their way is the best. Furthermore Appiah will have to contend with these religions when he argues that there is no community with homogenous values and that they are all culturally impure and if we accept this then we live a rich cosmopolitan life (Appiah, 2006, p. 113). To the contrary most religions have apocalyptic dreams of one people one spiritual rule. To contribute to the realization of this dream some religions urge their followers to convert as many as possible to their fold. His argument that the issues of universal truth led to conflict European civil wars (Appiah, 2006, p. 141) can be challenged by the fact that these wars were more than of a religious nature.

While talking about dialogue, former Pope Benedict XVI in his address to the Roman Curia (Benedict XVI, 2012) said that the church must dialogue with the states, society (cultures and science) and other religions. In dialogue with states and society, he holds that the church must hold and promote values that she considers fundamental and nonnegotiable through

convincing and political action. On the issue of religious dialogue, he believes that dialogue should first be about life, coexistence and shared responsibility for society, State and humanity.

However it must move beyond this practical start to the search for the right way of living and truth as a process. He recognizes that the rules of religious dialogues may include not aiming for conversion but understanding and consciousness of identity but he holds that beyond this there should be a search for truth without fearing for our identities since human knowledge and understanding has to involve drawing closer to the truth. He advises that “learn to accept the other in his otherness and the otherness of his thinking.” However it is possible that those who are more relativist will critique the Pope Emeritus by saying that he claims are more conservative with presumptions of the absolute though tampered in a reconciliatory tone. This is a typical example of the challenge facing religions when they try to engage the “others”. To what extent should they compromise their dearly cherished beliefs for the sake of embracing the “other”?

2.5.2 Multiculturalism

Iverson defines multiculturalism as "the state of a society or the world in which there exists numerous distinct ethnic and cultural groups seen to be politically relevant; and a program or policy advocating or promoting such a society" but is quick to qualify that no one is quite sure of the details of the phenomena (Iverson, 2001).

It is interesting that most religions with messianic hopes talk of a world with order where there will be no more wars, tears, pain and conflict. Neighbors will be at peace with each other something that will be extended to the animals as well. For example a lion is envisioned lying together harmlessly with a lamb. In essence cosmopolitanism tends to paint a similar distant picture. However it is important to note that in the messianic religions, such a world will be preceded by a separation of the "evil" ones who in many instances are the religion's outsiders.

Appiah's cosmopolitanism theorizes coexistence based on the values of universality both good and bad. This is a point where Appiah is not so useful to religious diversity. Religious

traditions are primarily concerned with doing away with the bad so for Appiah to suggest that bad values can be a point of boosting coexistence does not resonate with the religious.

Sen suggests that there are two basic approaches to multiculturalism (Sen, 2006, p. 150). The first one he says is “the promotion of diversity as a value in itself” while the other is celebration of diversity with an understanding of freedom of reasoning and decision-making. His challenge is that the success or failure of multiculturalism is not separateness of people from different backgrounds but the realization that people have different cultural, religious, education and social connections and whatever they choose to be priority in their affiliations should be out their informed free will (ibid).

Vertovec and Wessendorf in their assessment of the backlash against multiculturalism in Europe, point out that though the concept had its critics from the onset these tended to increase in volume and intensity at the turn of the millennium (Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2010, p. 4). They identify some of the criticisms, which include the claim that it stifles debate (Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2004, p. 7-11). They argue that multiculturalism controls thought and speech and invokes fear of being politically incorrect or being labeled a racist. Secondly, they argue that multiculturalism fosters separateness at the expense of common values and nationhood. Multiculturalism is regarded to divide people along their ethnic, religious and cultural heritage and frustrates any efforts toward “commonality”. Thirdly, they argue that proponents of multiculturalism give a blind eye to the problems it raises and continue to promote it though it is “illusionary”. Another accusation is that multiculturalism indirectly supports backward cultures for example unequal treatment of women, forced marriages and honor killing in the name of “overbearing political correctness.” Terrorism is also seen to flourish under the cover of multiculturalism.

In an attempt to locate Appiah in the field of multiculturalism, Laird places him in the third stage of the academic history of multiculturalism, which is the "happening now" (Iversen, 2012, p. 20). According to him the first stage is the "emergence and rise of academic theories of multiculturalism". This took place in the 1990's, which included the famous, and much criticized pronouncement by Will Kymlicka that multiculturalism had "won the day". This was followed by the second stage called, "retreat from multiculturalism" (Iversen, 2012, p. 19-20). This was as a result of steady criticism of multiculturalism by scholars like Christian

Joppke, Brian Barry, Susan Okin and Gerd Baumann (ibid). Laird identifies Appiah as one of the scholars who resonate with the third stage, which tries to justify multiculturalism by answering its critics by calling for its modification in adopting new theories and policies in the management of diversity.

In the wake of the 9/11 and the growing tension due to immigration in Europe, I would like to suggest that in addition to Laird's three stages, there is a growing voice calling for the abandonment of multiculturalism altogether. In his first speech as prime minister on radicalization and the causes of terrorism, David Cameron said that "state multiculturalism" has failed and that the focus now should be on strengthening national identity. His German counterpart, Angela Merkel has echoed similar sentiments (BBC, 2011).

2.6 Role of Religion in dealing with modern Conflict

Conflicts in the world today are caused by different factors, religion being one of them. However, religion in itself is ambivalent (Juergensmeyer, 2003). It can inflame or calm a conflict. Elsewhere in this study, it has been argued that "religion is back" in the Public sphere. Therefore due to its ambivalent nature and place in society today, religion can contribute to the peace and reconciliation processes going on in the world today.

Sebastian C.H. Kim, Pauline Kollontai and Greg Hoyland (2008) in the introduction to their edited work, *Peace and Reconciliation, in search of shared Identity (2008:1-5)*, identify four contributions that religion can bring to conflict resolution. First, they observe that in many religions, peacemaking is Central in their teachings. This can be a powerful motivation in the peace making process.

Secondly, they argue that religion is a resource in understanding both war and peace. Sacred texts can be interpreted either to justify war or pacify war. These explanatory powers of religion can be used to promote peace when used in a pacifist way. Religion has well established grass root networks in many societies and "possess unique authority and capacity among followers" (Kim, Kollontai and Hoyland, 2008, p. 2). This influence can be used to promote peace and reconciliation in case of a conflict. Citing the examples of South Africa and Northern Ireland, the writers point out how the church became an agent of peace making

and reconciliation in their respective countries. Individuals and the church as an institution in these countries chose to be involved in healing the country and setting a vision for a reconciled community.

In her article, *Embracing a Threatening Other: Identity and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland* (Clegg, 2008), Cecelia Clegg brings out a very important point about peace making and reconciliation levels. She observes that much energy is given to political and societal levels neglecting the personal reconciliation. She reminds us that in a conflict situation, people need to be helped to grow psychologically and spiritually to a level of embracing "compassion and forgiveness" which are critical in sustainable peace. Since religious organizations are at the grassroots and have a regular close contact with individual victims of conflict, they have an edge in helping people in personal reconciliation. This can be reinforced with the religious teaching on key theological themes like atonement, restoration, justice, mercy, compassion and forgiveness the promote peace and reconciliation.

While undertaking this study, it was found out during the interviews victims' religious faith and institutions have been very helpful in helping them deal with one fundamental issue in the conflict, which is hate. Though some were still bitter but most confessed that teachings in the church and their personal faith have been of a great help in dealing with the situation positively.

Clegg introduces the concept of the "will to co-existence" which is critical in sustaining peace after a conflict. Clegg underlines the importance of having the will to coexist in sustainable peace by reiterating Harold Saunders' insight that "it is citizens who can make or break peace". She identifies the religious convictions as a pivotal source of the will to co-exist, which is a key component of sustainable peace. For people to enter into a reconciliation process, Clegg urges that the different parties must empathize with one another, accept that they have been victims in the conflict and accept responsibility for wrongs done. In simple terms people must accept that they are human. She argues that this can be religion's contribution to world peace.

2.6.1 Peace and Reconciliation: Central themes in the Bible

Choong Chee Pang (2008) discusses the Biblical perspective of peace and reconciliation. He notes that the concept of peace (“Shalom” in Hebrew and “eirene” in Greek) is central in both the Old and Testaments of the Bible. Tracing from the Creation, he points out that the whole story of creation was about peace and order which was disrupted by the fall of man leading to broken relationships between the Creator, mankind and rest of creation. He also notes that concept of the promised messiah has heavy tones of restoration of these broken relationships.

This is realized in the coming of Jesus Christ in the New Testament who came to bring Peace between man and God and between man and man (Jews and Gentiles). He also identifies that the theme of repentance before forgiveness is stressed in the Bible. Repentance shows the seriousness of a party in accepting responsibility to wrongs done to a point of restitution. It’s a barrier breaker and open for contact between parties in a conflict leading to reconciliation.

2.6.2. Religious Communities as a safe space of healing and Reconciliation

Robert Schreiter advocates that for social reconciliation to take place there is need for "establishing a shared identity." (Schreiter, 2008, p. 7-20). He argues that for communities that have been separated by conflict to enter a path of forgiveness, restoration and reconciliation, two elements are crucial. The first one is facing the past through memories. He argues that memories should not be suppressed nor allowed to hold victims captive. People should allow their memory to be shaped and healed through "acknowledging loss, making connections and taking new action". In other words, people should face the past, accept what happened and move away from it by doing what can restore relationship in the present.

The second element is telling the truth through narration. These two takes place in a safe social place where the parties feel trust, belonging and a sense of hope and purpose for the future. Robert suggests that religious traditions can be such places of memory and healing. He gives an example of reflections and celebrations of the Eucharist. The betrayal, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ helps victims of conflict and suffering to put their stories in the wider context of what Jesus Christ experienced making it easier for them to forgive.

2.6.3. Mission as a Ministry of Reconciliation

In their monumental editorial work "*mission as a ministry of reconciliation*" Robert Schreiter and Knud Jørgensen (2013) discuss reconciliation as new paradigm of mission. Building on the concept of *missio Dei*, they illustrate that God is in the business of reconciling humanity to himself, to one another and to the cosmos (Schreiter and Jørgensen, 2013, p. 15). They see the golden opportunity of the Christian community in the healing of humanity after battles for independence from colonialism, end of the cold war and many armed conflicts especially in the global south and the Balkans (Schreiter and Jørgensen, 2013, p. 10-11).

The church remains a credible voice of mediation in some of these areas and seeing mission as reconciliation will greatly help the church embrace this window of opportunity to bring healing to its society. These authors identify reconciliation as basically "God`s work which can be extended to and through human beings and can take place through healing, truth-telling, pursuit of justice and forgiveness" (Schreiter and Jørgensen, 2013, pp.15-20).

As religion reemerges as a force in the modern society, its contribution to world peace cannot be underestimated. The church`s understanding and embracing of reconciliation as a perspective of mission will be critical to its positive contribution to make the world a more peaceful place to live.

2.6.4. Restorative Justice

The Restorative Justice Consortium, an organization that advocates restorative justice, defines restorative justice as:

...Restorative Justice works to resolve conflict and repair harm. It encourages those who have caused harm to acknowledge the impact of what they have done and gives them an opportunity to make reparation. It offers those who have suffered harm the opportunity to have their harm or loss acknowledged and amends made (Liebmann, 2007, p. 25).

In chapter one of his book, Liebmann (2007) explains how restorative justice works. She observes that most formal criminal procedures are focused on punishing the offender but restorative justice not only focuses on having the offender take responsibility to the harm

done but also that the victim gets support in the healing process. Restorative justice also aims at reintegrating both the offender and victim back to the community by helping the victim to forgive and move on and the offender to repent and look for ways of avoiding future offending. Restorative justice often needs a neutral third party who brings the victim and offender together for mediation and reconciliation. The church can fit into this role.

Isaac Kubai (2013) on his work on the response of the Kenyan church to Ethno-political violence in Kenya argues that the church has a responsibility, which is Biblically based to initiate the reconciliation process by bringing the involved parties together. This is made possible by the use of its message on justice and forgiveness, church rituals (eucharist, baptism, worship services and songs) and its role as the moral voice of the society. Since the church is established from networks from grassroots to national level, it can be an effective mobilization tool for the process of reconciliation by facilitating victim-offender meetings. He however insists that justice must be prerequisite to reconciliation hence introduces the term just reconciliation.

3.0 Methodology

This chapter shall focus on the research methodology that was used in this study. It specifically examines the research purpose, research approach, research strategy, data collection methods, population and finally the limitations that were encountered in the research.

3.1. Research Question/ Research Purpose

This study focused on finding out how the church in Kenya responded to the Al-Shabaab attacks that were as a result of the Kenya army's operation in Somali. The study also will explore the concept of conflict transformation and how it played out in the Kenyan case. The expected outcome of the study is to document an example on the process of conflict transformation and the contribution of response of the victims in its success or failure.

3.2. Research Approach

There are two main research approaches when conducting research in social science, quantitative and qualitative research. Referring to Gorman & Clayton (2005), Pickard (2007) argues that quantitative methodology assumes the objective reality of social facts while qualitative methodology assumes social constructions of reality.

In quantitative approach results are based on numbers and statistics that are presented in figures whereas the qualitative approach the focus lies on describing an event with the use of words. The approach one chooses depends on the problem definition together with the kind of information that is needed. The two methods can in cases where it is suitable be combined (Gray, 2004).

However, Pickard (2007) points out that whichever paradigm is associated with a research, whichever methodological approach is taken, demonstrating the value of the investigation is essential and that all that is needed is for the findings to be believed. The researcher is responsible for ensuring that the findings can be believed.

“Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted” (Albert Einstein). This statement from Einstein underlines the importance of qualitative approach especially when studying to understand some aspects of social life. This study will employ qualitative research approach since it “combines the individual research participant, the researcher as research instrument and appropriate data collection techniques in a collaborative process of producing meaning from data and using that meaning to develop theory” (Pickard, 2007, p. 14).

3.3. Research Strategy

A case study will be used in this research. Case studies are generally preferred when answering the “how” and “why” questions about a particular topic (Yin, 1994). In His earlier work, Yin defines a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real life context especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2009).

He continues to argue that a case study is preferred in examining contemporary events, provided that the relevant behaviors cannot be manipulated (Yin, 2009). The choice of using the case study in this study was motivated by the fact that we have little control over the behavioral events and the events under investigation are contemporary. According to Pickard (2007), the purpose of a case study is to provide a holistic account of the case and in-depth knowledge of the specific situation, through rich descriptions situated in context. This was one of the reasons for choosing on a case study because I wanted to get an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the topic under research.

This study involves two churches, St. Polycarp Anglican Church Juja Road Pangani and God’s House of Miracles International Nairobi. Additional information was collected from the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK).

3.4. Data Collection Methods

When collecting data the researcher has specific purpose for doing it. In this research the primary data was collected through interviews and focus group discussions. Interviews, as a collection method is one of the most significant sources of obtaining case study information (Yin, 1994).

According to Gray (2004), if the objective of the research for example is largely exploratory involving say the examination of feelings or attitudes then interviews may be the best approach. This is because they allow the researcher to probe for more detailed responses where the respondent is asked to clarify what they have said. The research is primarily exploratory and the aim of using interviews as a means of gathering in-depth information from the respondents was to probe for more information and attain highly personalized data.

According to Bryman, interviewing is probably the most widely used method of qualitative research due to its flexibility (Bryman, 2012, p. 469). Since the aim of the study was to get what is important to the interviewee but with some guidelines, semi-structured interviews were used which gives a guide to the conversation but at the same time allow a great deal of leeway to the interviewee in how to reply (Bryman, 2012, p. 471).

Semi-structured interviews were used because they are non-standardized and are often used in qualitative analysis. The interviewer has a list of issues and questions to be covered, but may not deal with all of them in each interview. The order of questions may also change depending on what direction the interview takes. Indeed, additional questions may be asked, including some, which were not anticipated at the start of the interview, as new issues arise. Responses were documented by note taking and digital recording the interview. The semi-structured interviews allows for probing of views and opinions where it is desirable for respondents to expand on their answers. This is vital when a phenomenological approach is being taken where the objectives is to explore subjective meanings that respondents ascribe to concepts or events (Gray, 2004). The questions were open ended and few closed ended, in order to preserve the flexibility of the interview so that in-depth information could be gathered.

Individual interviews were carried out with key informants for example victims of the church attacks and key church leaders. Apart from getting the response of victims and church leadership, the study was also interested with group response. In addition to being time and cost effective, group interviews allow interaction of individuals' views within the group (Bryman, 2012, p. 501). These group interviews were carried out through guided focus group discussions.

There are different ways of conducting interviews that include face-to-face interviews, telephone interview and online interviewing. Face to face interviews have always been preferred and are mostly widely used as it involves a direct meeting between the interviewee and the interviewer by personal communication (Bryman, 2013). It is possible not only to obtain much more information but also one can use visual tools to encourage responses. However in some situations, one can use telephone interview especially due to geographical distance between the respondent and the interviewer. Gray states that the advantages of conducting telephone interviews is that the costs are low and it can be conducted faster and the interviewer can help the respondent with any misunderstanding or difficulties they have (Gray, 2004).

A total of nine interviews were carried out that involved 17 interviewees. The interviews were done in three different institutions: 2 churches and the National Council of Churches of Kenya, which is the largest umbrella body of the mainstream churches in Kenya. The interviewees varied from victims, youth group, local lay leaders and senior leaders in the affected churches and national church leaders.

The interview was guided by an interview guide, which can be accessed in the appendices. The purpose of using an interview guide according to Ellis as reported by Pickard is to ensure that each interview covers basically the same ground but gives the interviewer considerable discretion in the conduct of the interview (Pickard, 2007, p.173). The same interview guide was used all through the interviews. Before conducting the interviews the individuals were contacted personally and asked if they were willing to be interviewed. The researcher had already done the introduction about the study and its purpose to the church leaders who in turn explained the same to the members of their churches. Those who accepted to be interviewed were later contacted to book the dates and the time that was convenient for them to be interviewed. The respondents were given the option to choose the place they wished to be interviewed. Before the interviews, I provided a brief introduction of myself, the research topic and the aim of the research. This was done to enable the respondent to be aware of the research topic and the aim of the research. The interview guide functioned as a support tool during the interviews and the respondents were allowed to talk freely with the interview guide as the base. The interviews took relatively between 45 minutes to 2 hours each.

Notes were taken during the interviews. In addition, a digital recorder was used to record the conversations in order to capture all the information more accurately. Yin supports recording interview conversations because it gives the researcher the possibility to go back and double check the received data (Yin, 2004).

3.5. Sample

Qualitative research often works with small samples of people; cases or phenomena nested in particular contexts. Hence, samples tend to be more purposive than random. Again, in contrast to more quantitative approaches, samples may not always be pre-planned in advance, but may evolve once fieldwork has begun. So an initial choice for informants may lead to a decision to select a more contrasting set of deviant subjects (cases) as a comparison (Gray, 2004).

Purposive sampling was used in this study. The logic of purposive sampling lies in selecting information rich cases for study in depth. Information rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research according to Patton, as quoted by Pickard (Pickard, 2007, p. 64). The sample population comprised of information-rich case for study in depth. Selecting respondents with the right knowledge about the research area is crucial for qualitative research (Holme and Solvang, 1991). The population provided valuable information through the interviews and personal interaction with the researcher. The population included members who were leaders of the church, members who were victim of the attacks and other national leaders who were of great significance in this research.

The study aimed to get as much information as possible from victims, church members and leaders from the two churches in Nairobi that were the study area. The churches chosen were St. Polycarp Anglican Church Juja Road Pangani and God's House of Miracles International Nairobi. Additional information was also collected from the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK). These churches were chosen because they bore the blunt of the attacks with members being killed including a 10-year-old boy who was attending Sunday school.

God's House Miracles Church is located in the heart of Nairobi City and was the first church to be attacked in Nairobi. It was attacked on 29th April 2012. During the attack, a grenade was used that killed one man and injured many others. It has a regular attendance of about

600 people every week. Two senior leaders of the church, one victim and a focus group of four young people from the church were interviewed. The four young people were also victims of the attack.

St. Polycarp Anglican Church Juja Road Pangani is located near the Nairobi suburb of East Leigh that is predominantly occupied by the Somali-Muslim community. During the attack, one child died and several children sustained injuries and were hospitalized. The child who died was among many who were attending Sunday school at the church when the attack occurred. The church has an attendance of about 600 people every Sunday. The vicar (head) of the church, a focus group of six top leaders of the church and two victims of the attack were interviewed.

The National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) was established in 1913 and brings together 27 member churches and 17 Christian organizations in fellowship in Kenya. It is the biggest protestant organization that speaks on behalf of most churches in Kenya. NCCCK was chosen because it's the single most organization that brings out the largest number of churches under one umbrella in Kenya. It was also actively involved during the terror attacks coordinating the interreligious forums. The interview was done with the programs officer in charge of peace building and conflict prevention.

3.6. Limitations of the Study

- The population for the study was relatively small because it comprised of 17 people who represented the church in Nairobi.
- Some key informants declined to take the interview. Some cited the sensitivity of the issue while others were too affected and didn't want to remember what happened to them during the attacks.
- Time was not sufficient to conduct many more interviews

4.0 Findings /Presentation

4.1 Introduction

In this study, a total of nine interviews were carried out that involved 17 interviewees. The interviews were done in three different institutions: 2 churches and the National Council of Churches of Kenya, which is the largest umbrella organization of the mainstream churches in Kenya. The interviewees varied from victims, youth groups, and local lay and senior leaders in the churches and the national church leaders. The study sought to find out the response of the church to the terror-related attacks on the churches from four different categories of people. The first category was the members of the churches who were victims of the attacks. The second and third categories were the lay leaders and senior leaders of the affected churches respectively. The fourth category was the national leaders of the church in Kenya as represented by the NCCCK.

This chapter presents the themes as they emerged from the interaction with the notes and transcriptions of the interviews in the light of the research questions and related literature. The chapter discusses the initial and reflected reaction to the unexpected attacks. Though the attacks were carried by religious extremists and aimed at raising religious animosity, the churches did not retaliate but responded with tolerance. This was made possible through various factors among them, interreligious forums, religious leadership, role of faith and doctrine and early government intervention. This chapter also specifically reports on the role of faith in handling the conflict as expressed by the respondents.

4.2. The response of the Church to the attacks

a) Initial reaction

Unexpected attacks

Nearly all the respondents expressed that the attacks were least expected. One respondent precisely summarized it as, “Nobody expected... We were caught unawares” (respondent D). Different groups of people interviewed gave varying reasons as to why they never expected

the attacks even though similar terror-related attacks had been witnessed elsewhere in the country. The common reason given by respondents was that they understood the attacks to be related to the war between the Kenyan government and the Al-Shabaab militants and never thought the church will be a victim. Though they expressed knowledge that the Al-Shabaab had religious affiliations, they never thought that they would bring their war into the churches because the relationship between Christians and Muslims had been generally good as expressed by one Christian leader:

I did not link the attack to Al-Shabaab group...they (referring to Muslims) are our neighbors but we have never had issues like interreligious conflict. I have been here since 2005. No... no... no... We have never had any interreligious conflict...no...No...No... (Voice goes firm and low). We have had good mutual relations (Respondent D).

Two respondents narrated how unimaginable it was that a church had been attacked. They found it very difficult to reconcile the fact that the attacks happened in a house of worship. The church being a house of worship is considered a safe place. They put it this way:

We didn't expect an attack especially in church. The safest place we can be is in the church. We heard those guys were throwing grenades but I never thought that would happen in church (Focus Group A).

The attack was the least expected... I got a phone call, people were screaming in the church...“What is it?” (I was told that) a bomb had been thrown into our church service? I said, what has happened? ...And some had already died. Oh...

It was unimaginable... It was a hard experience. It was very difficult. I think that should never happen especially to people congregating to worship for these are harmless people... (Respondent A).

The attacks on churches looked very remote mainly because Christians especially in Nairobi had never experienced religious related conflicts. Most of the respondents showed that at the initial stages of the attacks, they had little understanding on the motive of the attackers. Even

after over one year since the attacks occurred, the churches were still not clear as to why they were attacked. One senior leader of the church expressed that up to the time of the study, they did not know have answers as to why the attacks occurred:

Everybody was wondering why and who (was responsible). The why questions have no answers (Respondent D).

Hatred, pain, bitterness, fear

The initial reaction of most of the respondents was shock and confusion. This is because they did not expect terror-related attacks in churches for the reasons outlined above. As the reality of events unfolded, the shock and confusion turned into anger as expressed by one respondent:

I feel anger...these people do they think...are they normal? I feel angry with these people. I wish they can be spotted and be killed so that they don't cause any more damage especially to the church... I wish they could be traced shot and killed and just die because they want to die. If they don't change...let them not live. Let them die before their time (Respondent B).

Others expressed heartfelt pain, as many of their questions were not answered. Initially they did not understand who the attackers were and why the churches were attacked since there was no impending threat. The loss of life, untold suffering by the wounded and destruction of property aggravated the pain, which quickly turned into bitterness and offence as two respondents, lamented:

First I asked many questions why it happened. Second, I felt very pained and almost bitterness began to get hold of me but I had to work it out. I had just to withstand it...I felt very offended (Respondent A).

I was very annoyed. The person killed was about to graduate from college and marry. They killed him. It made us feel very bad for killing an innocent person. The fact that he (the attacker) escaped makes me madder (Focus Group A).

In Kenya, apart from markets, the local churches represent the common meeting places of citizens. These places are considered safe and open for everyone. No one fears to go to the market or church for business or socialization. Though at this time Al-Shabaab was attacking some parts of the country, it was mostly limited to the northern and coastal parts. They looked remote especially to the common people in Nairobi and the rest of the country. These attacks in the Nairobi churches changed everything. They created fear that no place was safe. One respondent explained how the attacks developed hate and fear in her:

When this thing happened, I hated them (referring to the attackers). I didn't want to see anyone of them... I feared them. I prefer to walk especially where there are no many people (Respondent E).

Trauma

As the respondents narrate their experience during the initial moments of the attacks, it is evident that most of them were traumatized. Children were particularly affected as one church leader narrated the experience of one affected Sunday school child:

There is child who says that ...that church is a church of "boom... boom"! That church is usually bombed. The counselors have done a lot of work but that thing is still in the back of their minds (Focus Group B).

A lot has been done to help the victims of the attack to heal but one year down the line the trauma is still palpable. I experienced it when I was interviewing one respondent and there was some noise from a falling chair in the next room, the interviewee stopped talking for a while and then said:

... I don't want to hear such loud noise. Even when I was coming (to the interview place) and I heard ambulance (siren) I get shocked. I don't like loud sound, I get shocked and nervous (Respondent E).

Blame on Muslims for the attacks

Frustration and anger that followed the attacks that hurt many people quickly turned into a search for someone to blame. All the respondents were aware that the Kenya army was fighting with the Al-Shabaab in Somalia but did not expect that the Al-Shabaab would attack the churches as expressed above. However, without second thought, most of the respondents' first reaction was that the attackers were Muslims as one said while describing his initial response to the attacks:

I felt that this is Islam fighting Christians (Respondent A).

Even after considerable time after the attacks and lack of formal investigations results to show that the attackers were Muslims, most of the respondents say that they are not sure of who the attackers were but in their narration they explicitly indicate that the attackers were Muslims and affiliated to Al-Shabaab. For example, when one respondent was asked whether she knew the attackers, she said, "Maybe Bishop should answer better" (respondent B) but later on when the same respondent was asked about her feelings towards the attackers, she said:

I feel anger...these people do they think...are they normal? Al-Shabaab... I feel angry with these people (respondent B).

b) Reflected reaction

Whereas, respondents initially saw the conflict as Muslims attacking Christians, after some time of reflection, the perception of some respondents changed. Some have spiritualized attack. Asked about his reflected reaction to the attack, one church leader responded:

"Christians are on a serious confrontation spiritually... we need to step our response spiritually. The government should step up and be seriously in dealing with such criminals who injure innocent people and offer protection "

(Respondent A).

Some respondents even sympathized with the attackers for being under a delusion and expressed that they pray for them and wish their eyes to be opened to see that what they are doing is wrong. One respondent put it this way:

They don't know what they are doing. The church should go higher and be full of love and pray for them that their eyes to be opened and get out of the big lie they are in. We can avenge over the enemy, Satan, not them (Respondent A).

This is an important aspect that helped the church in Kenya not to fall into the trap of the Al-Shabaab of turning Christians against Muslims. The Christian leaders chose not to see their Muslim brothers as their enemies but by taking Satan as the enemy, they avoided retaliation. They not only spiritualized the conflict but also called on a nonreligious actor (the government) to deal with the criminal aspect of the conflict. The churches leaders used their authority to influence their members to react the same as one member observed:

Our bishop has spearheaded counseling. We spent several days in the home of the brother who died talking to the family. Several preachers from outside came to comfort us. We also talked within ourselves. We visited each other to pray and support each other (Focus Group A).

Most of the respondents confessed to have accepted what happened, forgiven the attackers and were trying to move on with life as normal. When they were asked if they would be willing to meet the attackers if given opportunity, most of them said they were eager to meet them just to let them know that what they did was hurting. However, more needs to be done to help some of the victims to heal from the attacks. Despite the fact that he had been in the same counseling sessions like the rest of the respondents in the focus group one of the respondents categorically said that he will not meet them:

I won't even talk to them...what that guy did.... If by any chance I meet him now.... God forbid... it will not be good (Focus Group A).

4.3 Effects of the attacks

a. On the churches

The attacks seem to have had both positive and negative effects on the churches. The negative ones included churches losing membership due to fear. On the positive side, some respondents testified that the attacks increased their commitment to their Christian faith and the church. One church leader observed that:

I think the blast did more good than harm. It reaffirmed their commitment to God. Some say that I have to live for God more. The faith of Christians says...if I die I will rather die in church than somewhere else.... People have become stronger in prayers (Focus Group B).

b. On the Christian- Muslim relationship

All the people interviewed said that the Christian-Muslim relationship was good before the attacks. One of the respondents remarked, “It was good, one of the best” (Focus Group B). A respondent from one church who said that Muslim youths from the community used to borrow chairs from their church when they held functions and even at one time the church and a Muslim youth group organized a football game and ate together illustrated this point well (Focus Group B).

However, the attacks seem to have changed or reinforced the negative perception of some of the respondents towards the Muslims. Most of them expressed that they had a good relationship of mutual respect and trust before the attacks but things have changed since the attacks. There is suspicion, fear and mistrust. One respondent described the change as follows:

I just knew we don't share the same faith and feel I should respect that...I used to see them as good people, who do good things like helping the poor; basically I used to see them as brothers. There was no fear....One time I got into the matatu (public transport in Nairobi), I saw this Muslim reciting prayers a bit loudly. I felt no, this guy is praying so that he can bomb us. I told the conductor “stop I have forgotten something”. I alighted very fast. I hear they pray a lot when conducting such things (attacks). They will do it in the name of Allah. That is how much my attitude changed

toward them. When I meet them putting their big clothes, I have to really check if there something bulging. I am very cautious about them even if it's a woman. The other day I saw a vehicle with a drawing of Arafat and a gun. I am scared that they even now show their Al-Shabaab on their vehicles. My attitude has changed. I don't trust them (respondent B).

Some respondents still harbor hatred in their hearts for the Muslims whom they blame for the attack. This is particularly the case for the victims and members of the church who live in the same community with Muslim neighbors. As one respondent explained, the relationship between the two is deteriorating:

These people they don't like Christians. The ordinary Muslims comment badly about Christians. They don't see us as human beings. If it continues like this it many bring problems. Christians may revenge (Respondent E).

One respondent whose child was a victim of the attack and goes to school with children from Muslim community narrated how the child's relationship with the other children has changed after the attack:

He is in school together with Muslim boys. He fears them. He sees that Muslims are bad. They can play together but they are very cautious ...I encourage him to be with them (Respondent F).

Though they agree that the attackers were Muslims, some respondents separated the actions of the attackers from the general Islam community. The fact that their Muslim friends did not support the work of the attackers helped them maintain their good relationship with their Muslim friends even after the attacks. One of the respondents described it this way:

I don't generalize Al-Shabaab as Muslims. I have Muslim friends who are good. They hate Al-Shabaab and doesn't belief in hurting people (Focus Group A).

c. Disconnect between leaders and church members

Most of the respondents whose relationship with Muslims is changing were either victims of the attacks or church members. On the senior church leadership level, the relationship between Christians and Muslims seems not to have been affected. When asked about whether the attacks had strained the relationship, one church leader responded by saying, “It was never affected. We know and greet each other and life continues” (Respondent D).

This observation is important. Leaders influence followers especially in religious circles. Leaders have authority and respect from followers. This can be positively used to foster unity and tolerance. However the leaders need to help the members have the same understanding that they have concerning the interreligious relationships. It occurred to me that the members are hurt and bear bad feelings towards the Muslims but since the leaders encourage otherwise, they suppress their feelings. The leaders are taking the right direction in maintaining good inter religious relationships but this needs to be reciprocated in the members.

One way of doing this is not just preaching about forgiveness but allowing narration and memory healing. This is an area of further research. Though the Christians showed tolerance, how this was achieved needs to be properly studied so that if systematic counseling and healing was not done then the process needs to be done for sustainable peace.

However, there needs to be honesty in dealing with the relationship between Christians and Muslims. Most of the church leaders interviewed expressed confidence that the relationship with Muslims was good but in my informal talks with them after the interviews, my impressions were different. They seem to portray an image that is not real in their hearts partly because of fear of antagonizing the status quo. There is need for honesty in order to have a sustainable interreligious relationship.

4.4 Role of religion in the Conflict

Some respondents identified the silent role of religion in the conflict. Though they are quick to point out that the attackers might have been religious extremists, they blame the larger Muslim community for promoting terrorism. They argue that Muslim leaders are quick to

call and address press conferences when an attack on a church happens but they don't take any substantial action is stemming out the terrorists who are among their faithful. They argue that the Muslim leaders ought to expose the extremists and also preach against them in the Mosques to curb terror attacks. This is how one of the church leaders argued the case:

They (extremists) have an Islam base. Muslims claim they don't support the extremists but the terrorists go the mosque. If Muslims want to eradicate terror they will do. Why are we not seeing the Muslim leaders taking an action? They are quick to condemn (extremist acts) but I wish they could do more. I have not heard them calling their brothers (extremists) and question them. We have even seen Muslim clerks preaching fierce messages, using that platform to reach many people, they preach that it's ok to hate Christians and cause terror... The Muslim community is doing very little in curbing terror. If they could do something extra, they will curb terror attacks. As much as they are condemning (extremists) during the press conferences, they are doing nothing and if they want to eradicate terror they can do it (Respondent B).

Some respondents felt that there is denial from the side of the government that the conflict had a religious element. One respondent was frustrated that every time a church is attacked, the government tells Christians to calm down by saying that the attack is not a religious war. As much as this made things better for a while, the respondent felt that it prevents the government from going to the bottom of the issue. There is a feeling that this is a short-term solution which leaves the Christians aggrieved in their hearts. Some of the respondents felt that the government should pursue the religious element of the attacks to put pressure on the Muslim leaders to openly preach against religious extremism in the mosques and expose those involved. By calling it a mere criminal activity, some of the respondents felt that the government is favoring the Muslims. One respondent lamented:

I think they want to bring religious hatred of which the sober Muslims try to refute. I also see that the government does not want to pursue that line because if they pursued it we will get more help. The government is quick to say this is not an inter-religious fight... I think if they take action especially when churches are being attacked, they

will push the Sheiks (Muslim leaders) to stop playing religion and expose the hooligans who are doing this thing in the name of religion (Respondent B).

Though many respondents did not directly blame Muslims for the attacks, they saw the role of religion in that these extremists came from the Islam religious community. They saw a role that the Muslim community has to play to curb these attacks as observed by one senior leader of the church:

So I think religion plays a big role. I think it's upon the true Muslims to start defining what true Islam is all about. They should try to reach out to the extremists and tell them that they are out of order. I think they have a very big role to play in trying to teach their people (Respondent G).

a) Importance of interreligious forums

Since the attacks had a religious element, the role of interreligious groups prominently helped to calm down the situation and avoid possible reprisals. The interreligious conferences that condemned the attacked and Muslims groups that visited the spots of violence to offer empathy and support went a long way to ease the tensions between the Muslims and Christians after the attacks. Two church leaders described it as follows:

I must say that we got support from all including the Muslim community. They sympathized with us. A group of young men from East Leigh (Muslim dominated district of Nairobi) most of them Muslims came around... the Muslim leaders together with other interreligious groups came and gave us moral support we needed most (Respondent D).

One day after the attack, the archbishop of Anglican Church of Kenya came here together with Muslims and we had a press conference here in the church and tell them that this is not a war between Christians and Muslims (Focus Group B).

b) Senior church leaders` denial of reality about role of religion in the attacks

When talking to senior leaders of the church, most of them cautiously denied that the attackers were linked to Al-Shabaab. This is the same stance taken by the government. When pressed to identify the attackers, the church leaders will refer to the inconclusive investigations of the government that did not point to any group or persons as the culprits. When directly asked whether the attacks were linked to Al-Shabaab, one senior church leader said:

I did not link the attack to Al-Shabaab group since Garissa (town in Northern Kenya inhabited by predominantly Somali community) is very far although Eastleigh is here and it is inhabited by the people from that side. They are our neighbors but we have never had issues like interreligious conflict. I have been here since 2005. No... no... no... We hold kesho (overnight prayer vigils) here every Friday. I have never heard them say that Christians have made noise for them. We have never had any interreligious conflict...no..no..no. (Sound goes firm and low). We have had good mutual relations (Respondent D).

However when one talks with the lay leaders and the victims (members of churches), they talk freely about the attacks being orchestrated by the Al-Shabaab. This disconnect was apparent during my interviews. As observed elsewhere in the study, one lay leader pointed out that the Muslim leaders were not doing enough to help in fight against terror attacks. The leader alleged that they only came out to condemn the attacks and take no further action to actively campaign against the atrocities in the mosques and Muslim community. One of my interpretations was that the senior leaders of the church feared linking the attacks to any Muslim group for fear of jeopardizing the interreligious leadership and unity that existed in the country. When asked whether the Muslim leaders were doing enough to curb the terror attacks two senior church leaders responded this way:

I will not want to comment on that since its sensitive. But I will say that they need to do more to reach out to their people especially to the youth who are being recruited (Respondent G).

There is no report. If I found a report here telling me that this is what we found out and these are the culprits, I will be a very happy person. What we did was that you don't antagonize things that are not there, we say let forget and life has continued (Respondent D).

c) Truth telling and justice in healing

Truth telling is important is the healing process. The Kenyan government, senior church leadership and interreligious partnerships seemed to overlook this aspect in an attempt to keep peace. While describing the attacks, one senior church leader remarked:

Everybody was wondering why and who (was responsible). The "why" questions have no answers. And "who" questions may not have answers unless we have evidence. There are questions that will linger in the mind and there are no answers so we say, "forget about it God knows"...The police have never given any report. We didn't know why the attack and who the attacker was unfortunately...We just comforted ourselves and the child that has died has become the sacrifice and the church must move on (Respondent D).

The victims don't know whom their attackers were and for what reasons they were attacked. This makes healing more difficult. Respondents are still yearning for justice. When asked whether he would like to meet with the attackers, one victim expressed as below:

Yes I will want to meet him and tell him that he did not do the right thing. I will not hit him but I believe in justice. I will leave justice for him not by me but by the authorities (Respondent C).

The inconclusiveness of the investigations and the call from leaders to "forget" and move on may not do much to help the victims come to terms with what happened to them. This strategy may be counterproductive. The lay people and victims who are yearning for truth and justice express this perspective. The government's investigations seem not conclusive and victims are disappointed that they see no justice done to them. The Muslim leaders are

also seen not to do enough. These two aspects need to be improved to sustain the tolerance exhibited by the church. The government needs to conclude its investigations on the attackers of the churches and bring them to justice. The church leaders also need to listen to what their members are saying about justice. Telling their members to forget about what happened and just move on may not be productive in the long run.

d) Changing perceptions

Some respondents admit that though the two religions have a working relationship, there are suspicions among themselves and the attacks affected the relationship negatively by changing people's perceptions as one leader observed:

I think the relations have been ok but if you talk to the common mwananchi (ordinary person) who is a Christian they will probably have a different opinion since the attacks changed people's perceptions (Respondent G).

This shows that business is not as usual and efforts needs not be spared in sustaining the peaceful coexistence between the two religions something some organizations like NCKK are working hard to achieve.

4.5 Role of the church in handling the conflict

Counseling

In a conflict, there are always traumatized victims. It is challenging when victims get wounded without prior warning or preparation like in the case under study. The victims were caught by surprise and there was also confusion as to who was responsible for the attacks. As indicated above by some respondents, the government was reluctant to openly name the suspected attackers for fear of the conflict turning religious. This presented a challenge in the healing process of the victims. The church though a victim of the circumstances played a major role in counseling the victims and helping them to come to terms with what had happened. One respondent expressed the need for counseling and how the church helped:

In fact what we needed was counseling.... that thing caused trauma to the Christians, parents and the children in the Sunday school. Those affected and those not affected. We (the church) stationed a team of professional

counselors here and people were coming one after another to be counseled to take away the fear (Respondent D).

The counseling was also a great opportunity to help direct the victims' anger towards the right direction-forgiveness. The church played a role in guiding victims on how to react to the situation. In one of the churches, it was the children department that was attacked leading to the death of one child. The church put in place measures to help the affected children heal from the traumas and even taught them a series on forgiveness as one elder explained:

Each and every kid was assigned someone to follow him or her up at home and hospital. Even for the children the message of forgiveness was put into practice. They had a series on that topic (Focus Group B).

Tolerance

According to most of the respondents, if Christians could have retaliated on the attacks, the situation could have easily become a flamed religious conflict. They chose to bear with the loss and allow the government to deal with the perpetrators of the attacks. This response was due to a number of factors. One of them was their judgment that the attacks were a strategic trap to turn Christians against Muslims. They chose not to fall into the temptation and thus frustrated the efforts of the attackers as explained by one respondent:

Thank God that Kenyan Christians have been able to see their agenda and reciprocate in a diplomatic way other than revenging or attacking. We have mobilized the religious leaders from other religions to condemn these attacks. They have failed in their agenda to divide the two religions (Respondent G).

This maturity was recommended even by Muslim leaders who thanked the Christians for not falling into the trap of the religious extremists. Another reason for the tolerance is the influence of the Christian teachings. One of the respondents explained how the teachings helped avert a religious conflict:

It's very recommendable that when Christians were attacked they never responded violently. Most of us subscribe to the biblical teaching that when slapped one side of the cheek you turn the other one. As for us Christians we believe that our battle is not of flesh and blood, we go down on our knees and pray. Even if we fight we aggravate the situations. We will not help. In fact it will become worse like in Nigeria. It becomes a religious conflict something we don't want here in Kenya (Respondent G)

Christian teachings

The life and sufferings of Jesus Christ seem to have shaped most of the respondents' response to the attacks. Asked on how their faith as Christians helped them deal with the crisis, here is some of the responses:

The more they increase with hate; we should love more like Jesus (Respondent A).

I was glad that I was `suffering with Christ`. I felt am part of church persecution (Respondent B).

Christian teachings especially on forgiveness and not revenging helped some of the respondents deal positively with crisis after the attacks. Jesus taught his followers that "if someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to him or her the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them" (Luke 6:29). This message of Jesus encouraging his followers not to revenge in case of injustice greatly influenced the response of the victims to the attacks. One victim explained why he did not consider retaliation:

The bible says we will go through afflictions and our response should be that we should not hit back at people who hit us but we should just pray for them...we can't revenge. It will be violating the principles of our faith. They are our brothers ...Doing that (revenging) will not solve anything but make war to go on and on. We pray for them. Let God soft their heart (Focus Group A).

A number of the respondents saw the attacks on the churches as part of the persecution of the church, which has been with us for a long time. The church tradition of patiently taking the suffering influenced the response of the attacked churches in Nairobi as one church leader explained:

We call it a persecution and as Christians we said that the church has flourished under persecution. We found that God's name will be glorified even in that situation... Christ and the church in the old had to go through persecutions and they overcame and we are also going to overcome (Respondent D).

4.6 Conflict transformation

Though most of the respondents were not very clear on the motive of the attackers, some understood it as an attempt by the Al-Shabaab to transform the conflict from a terror-related one to a religious one. One of the church leaders observed that:

“We don't know the exact motive but it may be that the exercise of the Al-Shabaab or the extremists trying to divert their attention from their targets to making it (war) religious so that churches could retaliate” (Respondent A).

One of their agenda is to sow seeds of discord between the two religions. Once we start fighting with Muslims there will be that divide between us and then they can come in strong to start attacking Christians. I think that is their main agenda (Respondent G).

Most of the respondents interviewed expressed that the general Muslim community in their neighborhoods had no problem with Christians but blamed the attacks on extremist elements within the Muslim community who tried to change the war between the Kenya army and Al-Shabaab into a religious one. One respondent made the observations below:

There are bad elements in the country that use the situation to propagate their own issues, agenda. It comes out as Muslim against the Christianity but it is not. They take advantage to make it look like its Muslims and Christians fighting. That is not the

situation at all. Generally, Christian-Muslim's relationship is good ... For me I think these are religious extremist who want to put a wedge between Christians and Muslims so that they can propagate their own agenda (Focus Group B).

5.0 Discussion

This chapter discusses the themes identified from the analysis of the data collected in the light of relevant literature and personal experience during the study. Among the many themes discussed are the factors contributing to the tolerant response of the church to the attacks. These include spiritualization of the conflict, interreligious forums and communication, government intervention, religious leadership and faith and religious practices. Other themes include role of faith and doctrine in handling the conflict (response and healing), role of religion in the conflict as perceived by different actors and the relationship of Muslims and Christians before and after the conflict, the attempt of the conflict to change course and the contribution of the Kenyan government and church in preventing the escalation of the conflict.

5.1 The response of the church to the terror attacks

Attacks not expected

It is clear from the respondents that the attacks on the churches in Nairobi were not expected. This is partly because in Kenya, places of worship are believed to be safe havens even during conflicts. I remember that when I was growing up, there was a tradition in my home county that if someone had offended the state and the police were after him, if he went into the church compound, the police will stop their chase and negotiate with the leader of the church to hand him over to them.

Though the Al-Shabaab militant group was attacking different places in Kenya as retaliation for the Kenya army incursion into Somalia, the churches never expected to be victims. They perceived the conflict to be between the government and the militant group and did not count themselves as part to it. Furthermore, the relationship between the Muslim community and the Christians in Kenya has been of relative respect. Since the Al-Shabaab were connected to the Muslim faith, the churches never expected to suffer their wrath. Since the attacks were unexpected, churches never had an opportunity to prepare themselves on how to react to them. This scenario produced two levels of response. The first one was the initial reaction and the second one was the reflected reaction.

Shock, pain, fear and bitterness

Initially, people reacted with shock, pain and fear. They could not understand why they were attacked and who was behind the attacks. The strategic attack on churches by the Al-Shabaab spread a lot of fear in the country. They achieved their purpose of spreading terror. The churches suffered loss of attendance due to the attacks and this was the aim of the Al-Shabaab. By including an innocent party into the conflict, they were hoping that the populace would apply pressure on the Kenya government to withdraw its troops from Somalia and stop pursuing them.

In trying to make sense of the attacks, the victims' shock, pain and fear turned into hatred and bitterness. Though most of them related the attacks to the Al-Shabaab, lack of clear information from the investigating authorities complicated the feelings of the victims. They did not know why they were hurt and could not get someone to explain or blame. This frustration did not help in the healing process.

My observation was that there was disconnect between the church members who were the victims of the attacks and the church leaders. Whereas the members demanded to know whom the attackers were, the leaders downplayed the issue and just wanted people to forget about it and move on. This was further confirmed by the fact that the church leaders never followed up with the government's investigation department to find out who were responsible for the attacks. These investigations remain inconclusive up to the time of the study. Truth-telling is important in the healing process of victims of a conflict (Bloomfield, Barnes, & Huyse, 2003). When the church leaders were pressed on the importance of knowing who were behind the attacks, their response was that there is no need to antagonize the situation. This is because they also suspected that the Al-Shabaab were behind the attacks and feared that openly naming them will poison the relationship between the church and the Muslim community.

My observation is that though most of the respondents especially leaders were quickly to affirm that the relationship between Muslims and Christians in Kenya is good, it is built on

fear. There is lack of trust and honesty. The relationship is unhealthy. The church and Muslim community need to approach each other without fear and work on a solid relationship based on mutual respect and honesty. It needs to be authentic in order to be sustainable. This is important to avoid giving a loophole to the religious fundamentalists to polarize the unity.

No one to blame

Victims of violence always search for whom to blame for the suffered loss. In the case under study, the victims openly blamed the Muslim community for the attacks while the church leaders were more careful during the interviews on who to apportion blame. However, in informal talks, even the church leaders were pointing fingers to the Al-Shabaab and Muslim community as the ones to take responsibility for the attacks. The question is whether the people were justified in blaming others without clear investigations? Initial reactions are usually a matter of perceptions. If people feel aggrieved, they look for ways of venting their anger. Some respondents allured to the fact that if they were not Christians they could have retaliated and attacked Muslims. Though, they did not do it physically, most of them expressed hate and bitterness towards the Muslim community. There is need for leaders to provide the right and timely information when there is a conflict. This was clearly lacking in the case under study. The results are a poisoned relationship between two communities though based on perceptions and suspicion. It would be worse were not to other factors that here hindered retaliation as discussed elsewhere in the study.

5.2. Tolerance

Using Waillet and Roskam (2013) differentiation between pluralism and tolerance, the relationship between Christians and Muslims in Kenya can be said to be tolerance rather than pluralism. As some of the respondents expressed, they respect the Islam faith and don't seek to antagonize the relationship. Though there are differences in faith and worldviews, the Christians interviewed said that this did not cause them to discriminate the Muslim or show any contempt. They have learnt on how to put up with one another's differences choosing to focus on what unites them rather than what divides them. They observed that this has helped foster the mutual relationship, a factor that helped stop the conflict from changing from terror related to religious related.

The study also found out that open channels of communication between the Christian and Muslim communities helped foster unity when it was threatened by the terror attacks. In one church, the youth had engaged their Muslim counterparts earlier in common games and picnics. They had even shared resources like chairs during functions. When the terror attacks occurred, it was easier for the two communities to talk around the suspicions that one community was responsible. Through the talks they were able to discover that the attackers were outside the community. Appiah's (2006) concept of "*Conversations across boundaries in*" cosmopolitanism befits this narration. Different religious communities can agree to disagree on details of their respective faiths but lines of communications must be open especially on common areas. These are handy in drawing common understanding during potential threats to peaceful coexistence.

The case under study is a good example of tolerance in the face of a provocation into conflict. The Al-Shabaab failed in their attempt to cause animosity between Christians and Muslims in Nairobi mainly because of the way the Christians responded. Listening to the respondents, several factors were identified that contributed to this tolerance. These factors include spiritualization of the conflict, interreligious forums and communication, government intervention, religious leadership, faith based counseling and doctrine. Below is a detailed discussion of the factors

5.2.1 Spiritualization of the conflict

Most of the respondents turned to faith to make sense of the attacks in a reflected reaction. The most common reflected response to the attacks was the spiritualization of the conflict. Most of the respondents interviewed said that they saw the attacks as the work of Satan whose motive was to challenge the work of God. In this regard, they did not see the attackers as Muslim-affiliates but as men just used by Satan. Some expressed their sympathy for them as being under illusion and need help (Respondent A). Spiritualization of the conflict one hand helped calm the situation by preventing physical retaliation.

C.B. Peter (2011) proposes seven models in which spirituality can be used to promote unity in the society. One of them is the "wider-context model" in which he argues that if a conflict is viewed from its historical and cosmic context, it "would start looking smaller and smaller,

fostering a feeling of greater relaxation thereby giving us better opportunities at resolution” (Peter, 2011, p. 2). The study showed that the church was very instrumental in helping the victims of the attack in reflecting and responding appropriately. They were able to put the attacks in a wider perspective of cosmic fights thus helping them heal from hatred and avoid retaliation, which would have worsened the situation.

On the other hand, spiritualization of a conflict may possess the danger of ignoring the facts of the attack, the physical pain caused and holding responsible the perpetrators. This may hinder or corrupt the healing process. During the interviews, I had an interaction with a group of youths from one church who were victims of the attacks. When asked about their response to the attacks, they all responded “spiritually” by telling how they saw the attack as a spiritual one and had left everything to God and moved on. Later on in the interview, I asked them whether they would be willing to meet the attackers if given opportunity and what they would say or do to them. One of them categorically said that he would not want to meet them and if by chance he met them, he would do something bad to them.

Rick Langer observed that there is “a dualistic tendency to value spirituality at the expense of the material world” (Langer, 2012) mostly among the Christian evangelical movements that affects how they relate the communities in which they are situated. The study was carried in two churches one charismatic and their other mainstream protestant. My observation was that the respondents from the charismatic church were quick to relate the attacks to the spiritual causes and effects compared to the other church. They also were quicker to express that they have forgiven the attackers and moved on with life but on further probing, they contradicted their expressions. Especially when asked if they would meet their attackers if given opportunity, their words did not seem to match their actions. Most of them expressed anger and bitterness.

My interpretation was that they were yet to enter the healing path. The spiritualization process may have hindered a true entry into the path of healing by suppressing feelings at the expense of being true to self. The respondents from the mainstream protestant church were more composed and in the path of healing. Their church had invested in professional counseling of the affected members and this was bearing fruit.

5.2.2 Interreligious Forums and Communication

The concept of multiculturalism seems to be a disaster in Europe (Iverson, 2001) but in Kenya, people from more than 40 different ethnic communities confessing more than five different religions have lived alongside each other relatively well. The two largest religious communities are Christians and Muslims making up about 80% and 10% of the population respectively though the Muslims mostly dominate the coastal and northern parts of Kenya. The former Pope, Benedict XVI, encouraged people of different religions to have dialogue by advising that religions need “to learn to accept the other in his otherness and the otherness of his thinking” (Benedict XVI, 2012). Kenya is a good example of a country that has walked the path of the words of Sen “the promotion of diversity as a value in itself” (Sen, 2006, p.150). Dialogue between the different religious communities in Kenya played a crucial role in calming tensions between the two during the attacks on churches.

One of the respondents for the study was a representative of the largest umbrella organization of Christian churches in Kenya, NCCCK. He shared his thoughts about the role of interreligious forums in promoting coexistence among the different religious identities in the country. NCCCK is part of a forum called Inter-Religious Council of Kenya, which brings together all major faith communities in Kenya. Its purpose is “to deepen interfaith dialogue and collaboration among members for a common endeavor to mobilize the unique moral and social resources of religious people and address shared concerns” (IRCK, 2014). Members of this forum held a press conference immediately the churches were attacked and condemned them. They dismissed the acts, as mere criminal acts not identifiable with any religion.

The fact that Kenyans and especially victims of the attacks were able to see united leaders from both Christian and Muslim communities together helped in calming the situation as expressed by some respondents (Respondent D and Focus Group B). Apart from making press statements, the leaders also visited the victims in hospitals together and later on visited the affected churches in solidarity. These actions quelled the rumors that were spreading fast that the Muslim community carried out the attacks. The press conferences and visits clarified that not all Muslims were behind the attacks but only a terror group using the Islamic faith to justify and propagate their ideologies through violence. Though some respondents accused the interreligious forum of not doing enough to curb the terror attacks, they nevertheless

agree and appreciate the role played by the quick action taken by the forum to calm the situation.

5.2.3 Government Intervention

When the churches were attacked, they chose to turn to the government to deal with the issue instead of taking the law in their own hands. According to the respondents in the two churches, the police responded swiftly and took charge of the crime scene after the attacks happened. They made preliminary arrests and opened investigations into the attacks to find out the perpetrators of the crimes. The respondents were not satisfied with the work of the police and up till the time of the study they had not received any formal report concerning the results of their investigations. This frustrates both the victims and the leadership of the churches but they are happy that the government responded and furthermore beefed security in the churches by sending police officers whenever the churches held meetings. The government went ahead and assisted churches on training on how to secure their meetings.

I have been following the terror attacks by the Boko Haram militants in Northern Nigeria, which has led to death of more than two thousand people this year alone, destruction of properties especially churches and kidnapping of more than two hundred school girls (Associated Press, 2014). The people for northern Nigeria reportedly feel abandoned by their government. There are claims that the security forces was tipped that the Boko Haram was preparing to take hostage the girls but the Nigeria army did not take any preventive measures. There was worldwide outrage when it was reported that there were no attempts by the Nigerian forces to recapture the girls even after three weeks hence the international pressure dubbed, “bring back our girls” (Abubakar, 2014). Iro Aghedo and Oarhe Osumah reveals that lack of confidence by the citizens that the Nigerian government can offer then adequate security has led to the rise of vigilante groups that take retaliatory attacks targeting the members and sympathizers of Boko Haram (Aghedo and Osumah, 2014). This has led to a cycle of revenge attacks, which have taken a religious angle.

In the Kenyan case under my study, it was noted that people’s confidence in the government to deal with perpetrators of the violence greatly contributed to the prevention of retaliation attacks. Though most people interviewed had a perception that the attackers were from the Muslim community, they did not consider or agree with those who wanted to revenge. They

rather called on the government to arrest and prosecute the attackers and scale up security as expressed by one respondent:

...The government should be diligent and work harder to prevent weapons from being with people. Government should do more. When you give something (bribe) and somebody pass by with anything they are carrying... (Respondent A).

There have been reported cases where the Al-Shabaab were suspected to have attacked public places in Nairobi and the youth mobilized and planned to attack the Muslim community but police always stopped such plans. The fact that the churches took the attacks as criminal acts and allowed the government to deal with it helped prevent retaliatory actions. However, it's worthwhile to note that the respondents' confidence in the government security machine is declining. This is particularly since the investigation results have never been made public. The respondents expressed disappointment that they have not seen justice for the loss suffered.

The Kenyan government needs to take measures to build on the citizens' confidence by being relatively transparent in its security operation and being keen in concluding investigations. One respondent notes that the government was holding back the results of the investigations for fear of singling out any group (Focus Group B). The understanding was that if the government feared that if it named the suspected Al-Shabaab militant group as the perpetrators of the violence, then people might find legitimate reasons to attack the Muslim community. This fear seems to have counterproductive effects. One respondent who was a victim of the attacks and was involved in the government criminal investigations of the attacks is still waiting for the report and looking forward to see justice done. The fact that it was over one year since the attacks took place and there were no signs of the report coming out were frustrating him. It was hindering his healing process. Truth telling is a very important element in healing of memories is a prerequisite to sustainable reconciliation (Schreiter, 2008) and the Kenya government should not deny victims of the attacks their rights to know who hurt them and for justice to be done.

5.2.4 Religious Leadership

Kenya is largely a religious country with over 80% of the population professing Christianity. Spiritual leaders are highly respected in the society especially in churches. Grant Ferret reported of a survey done in Africa that showed that three quarters of the people trusted their religious leaders most (Ferret, 2005). This gives them great influence in the society on decision-making. Religious leaders have a huge responsibility to give right leadership to their followers especially when it comes to relating to people of other faiths.

It is recommendable that the religious leadership in Kenya took a stand of unity in the face of the terror attacks on churches. Both Christian and Muslim leaders came together and condemned the attacks calling for calm and peace. They exposed the strategy of the attackers to cause religious animosity in the country. Back in the churches, the leaders urged their followers to be peaceful and allow the government to carry out investigations. They preached peace and encouraged their members not to revenge in any way. This exemplary leadership helped the victims and members of churches respond positively to the attacks. The religious leadership also made the members understand that the attacks were not a war between Christians and Muslims as one respondent said:

One day after the attack the archbishop of Anglican Church of Kenya came here together with Muslims and we had a press conference here in the church and told us that this is not a war between Christians and Muslims (Focus Group B).

5.2.5 Faith-based Counseling

The church leaders also carried out counseling program immediately after the attacks to help victims and members of their churches to come into terms with what had happened. Most respondents expressed that these counseling sessions helped them particularly in their response to the attacks. Koenig and Carson (2012) in their monumental work identify positive inputs of religions in people's lives. They point out that spiritual leaders usually encourage religious devotion and practice which not only benefits the spirit but also the general well-being of one's life. It brings joy, courage, peace confidence and other positive health attributes (Koenig, and Carson, 2012, p. 56). They also note that professional counseling can be based on religion as a resource in coping with problems. Another positive

aspect they observe is the fact that all the main religions have a place for faith healings where people experience physical and emotional healings (Koenig and Carson, 2012, p. 57). Roemer also reports that in his study on religion and health in Japan, he found out that those that have a “devotion” to a religion reported higher levels of life satisfaction and happiness (Blasi, 2011, p. 122). According to the same report, religion helped the respondents in coping with life’s challenges like unemployment and feelings of belonging to “low class”.

By helping members make sense of the attacks, the church made them feel better about themselves thus avoiding negative thoughts about their attackers who they perceived to be Muslims. The church leaders also gave them a platform to express their frustrations, anger and opinions about the attacks. Misconceptions were corrected at this forums and anger rechanneled towards the individual attackers and not the Muslim community from where they were suspected to have come from. In one church, the Sunday school department ran a series of teachings about forgiveness. The children who were victims of the attacks were taught on how to forgive those who attacked them.

5.2.6 Role of Faith and Doctrine

James Griffith, a professor of psychiatry and neurology argues that religion can be “either humankind’s greatest gift or its greatest curse” (Griffith, 2010, p. 3). In his book *Religion that heals, religion that harms: a guide to clinical practice*, Griffith (2010) discusses from a wealth of 38 years of experience the ambivalence of religion in psychological matters. He observes that it can harm or heal damage and protect as well. He shares stories about how people’s religiousness aggravated their illnesses. One prominent example is of one young woman who suffered depression to a point that even antidepressants could not help her. Upon keen observation it was discovered that the cause of the depression was her belief that God was angry and punishing her for her promiscuous teenage life (Griffith, 2010, p. 5). All she needed was to resolve her issues with her God.

Kenyan Christianity especially in charismatic churches is full of superstition. When something happens, people will always try to explain the cause in spiritual terms. The fact that the attacks happened in the church troubled some of the respondents. Some saw it as a message from God rebuking them. Attachment to God is an important factor in the life of

religious people. Griffith discusses how people's relationship with God either draws them close or away from him when they are under stress (Griffith, 2010, p. 105). Those who cannot feel the presence of God in their ill health tend to be insecure, despair, feel lonely, dirty, "sinner" or under punishment, attributes that negatively impact their recovery.

One respondent confessed that before the attacks, she was not so strong in her faith but the attacks acted like a wakeup call for more commitment to religious life. On the other hand, this inward reflection in trying to make sense of the attacks helped some respondents become more tolerant. Their focus was not on the attackers and how to revenge but on themselves and their religious life. In one way, this response to the attacks contributed to the prevention of retaliation. Faith led the respondents to blame themselves for the hurt suffered instead of blaming others. The danger with this kind of response is that people may not physically express their feelings about the attacks but may manifest in other ways. Griffith also discusses the negativity of the suppression of one's feelings due to religious beliefs (Griffith, 2010, p. 147).

I have interacted with many of my friends who belong to the so called "faith churches" that teach that confession of reality is lack of faith. For example, one will be having a sickness but if you ask them how he feels, he will say that he is well in Jesus's name. Such people easily avoid seeking medical attention or even admitting that they have problems. This may directly affect their health or indirectly building up stress within.

It was also notable from the respondents that church teachings and practices contributed greatly in shaping their response to the attacks. Most of the quoted the teachings of Jesus Christ from Luke 6 about not taking revenge when unjustly treated. In this passage Jesus taught his followers to give in to those who demand things from them without harboring hatred or trying to retaliate. This teachings together with other revolutionary teachings of Jesus like loving ones enemy (Matthew 5) and unlimited forgiveness (Mathew 18) helped respondents not consider revenge in the face of the attacks. The fact that Jesus forgave those who killed him even without them asking for forgiveness challenged the victims to emulate him. They were further challenged by their leaders to observe these teachings especially in this time of conflict. The Christian church's long tradition of silent suffering in the face of persecution in following the example of their founder Jesus Christ who suffered without

raising his voice became a rich resource to draw strength for tolerance in the face of the attacks.

Church symbols like Eucharist and regular worship services also helped Christians respond favorably to the attacks. In 1 Corinthians 11, Paul instructs the Corinthian Church that before they partake of the Holy Communion, they must search their hearts. If they have anything in their hearts, they ought to face it and solve it before taking part in the celebration. In the same manner, Jesus taught his followers that:

“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you; leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift (Matthew. 5:23-24 New International Version).

These two central teachings of the Bible played a critical role in shaping the respondents response to the attacks. Since they attended church meetings at least twice a week and confronted with these two cardinal teachings preceding the Christian rituals of Eucharist and offertory, they had to practice forgiveness of the attackers to have peace to join in the Christian celebrations. This clearly illustrates how Christian teachings and rituals play a role in peace and reconciliation. Since these are personal decisions, they helped the victims make individual resolutions on how to respond to the hurt influenced by the tenets of the community in which they shared identity, which was the church in this case.

Cecelia Clegg rightly pointed out that sustainable peace to exist; individual’s capacity to heal and embrace “forgiveness and compassion” must not be sacrificed at the altar of political or community peace deals (Clegg, 2008, p. 61-79). She continues to build his thesis that sustainable peace depends on individuals “will to co-exist” as he quotes Harold Saunders who holds that it is “citizens who make or break peace”. This is played out very well in the study. Many of the respondents who were victims of the attacks emphatically narrated how the faith as practiced through church teachings and rituals had helped them respond with love instead of hate for the attackers. The Islamic community who were suspected to housing the attackers also reciprocated accordingly. This created an atmosphere of tolerance between the two religious communities, a fact that helped calm the situation and prevent retaliation.

Somehow the strategy of the Al-Shabaab who was the suspected attackers was thwarted in the process.

5.3 Truth telling and healing of Memories

Truth telling and justice must be given a chance for true healing to take place. The same scenario plays with the Kenya's post-election violence of 2008. Kenya has avoided persecuting the perpetrators of crimes against humanity in the fear that the exercise will provoke animosity among the affected communities. There is relative calm in the country and even political unions bringing together the warring communities but it may be short-lived if the country does not become bold enough to face its past in order to enter a true healing process. This is the better path towards sustainable peace.

So far in the case under study, the truth about the attackers and their motivation has not been clearly outlined. This is detrimental to the victims healing. It has been argued in this study that the church though a victim in this study, can be a place of healing for its members who were victims. However, the challenge is that people cannot make sense of what happened without knowing the truth. How can someone forgive an offender who is unknown? There can be no confidence that the same will not happen again. Though the churches under the study have carried out counseling campaigns and supported the victims to move on, they need not overlook the fact that the victims have a right to know the truth about the attacks. The church may not be in a position to give this truth but it can apply pressure on the government to release the results of the investigations into the attacks and bring the cases into a closure. By simply encouraging victims to forget, forgive and move on, the church is doing a disservice to the victims and their healing may not be complete. Though Christian teachings and rituals are powerful tools for tolerance, they should not be misused in suppressing the hurts of the victims. The church as an institution has a jurisdiction to demand truth and justice for the offences done against its members without fear or favor.

5.4 Role of Religion in the conflict

5.4.1 Denial by Church Leadership

It was noted that when the churches were attacked, the government through the national police was quick to deny that the attacks were of a religious nature. The church leaders and the interreligious forums followed suit by telling the public that these were merely criminal attacks.

During the interviews, it was worth noting disconnect between the church leaders and the victims and members of the churches on the role of religion in the attacks. Whereas the leaders could not deny or accept that religion played a role in the attacks, the members were categorical that religion was the main motivation for the attacks. Most of the church leaders interviewed pointed to the inconclusive investigations by the police as the reason why they could not point whether the perpetrators of the attacks had religious links. On further questioning as to why they had not pressured the government to release the results of the investigations, most of them seemed not keen to have them. The attitude of the church leaders to the fact that religion was a factor in the attacks can be summarized by one of them as follows:

I don't think. Because we had never had any forums where we said lets us discuss the attackers and XY (the church). It ended there. It is now in achieves...There is no report. If I found a report here telling me that this is what we found out and these are the culprits, I will be a very happy person. What we did was that you don't antagonize things that are not there, we say let forget and life has continued (Respondent D).

My experience was that in formal interviews, the leaders hesitated in affirming the role of religion in the conflict but in my informal interactions with them most of them were very univocal that they believed that the Al-Shabaab was behind the attacks. As indicated from the quotation above from a conversation with one of the leaders, there is fear among the Christian leaders that if they came out strongly and expressed their views about the attackers, this could antagonize the Christian- Muslim relationship that exists.

Though understandable, it begs the question whether a relationship based on fear is healthy and can be sustainable. The relationship should be based on mutual respect, honesty and common values. If tested by a greater conflict, chances are that it may not stand. This can be supported by the fact that some of the victims that I interviewed were very bitter at the Muslim community and even avoided its members because in their hearts they have concluded that the attacks were religious motivated. This is despite the fact that their church leaders have fallen short of labeling the attacks religious. The victims also blamed the government for not doing enough to name the culprits and their motivations. The leaders themselves informally confess that they suspect that the attacks were religious. My conclusion is that the Christian-Muslim relationship especially in Nairobi is not firmly founded. If it's tested slightly more, it may collapse.

5.4.2 Denial by the Government Authorities

Immediately the churches started being attacked in Kenya in 2012, the government denied the role of religion in the conflict (Ingati and Lagat, 2012). They followed the same script when the churches under study were attacked as confirmed by the respondents. This may explain partly why the government is reluctant in releasing the results of their investigations into the attacks. Many of those interviewed were not happy that it was over a year and they had not been told who were responsible for the attacks. It seems that the government fears that if it named the suspected Al-Shabaab militants as the attackers, the Christians may react against their Muslim neighbors. The aim of the government was to delink the attackers from any religion and treat them as normal criminals but all my respondents did not believe this narrative. In essence the strategy of the government in holding information does more harm than good by providing ground for breeding suspicion.

The adapted definition of religion in this study was by Peter Beyer who sees religion as a social concept and reality rather than an aggregate of individual practices, beliefs and forms of religiosity (Beyer, 2006, p. 9). The government tried to alienate the Al-Shabaab from the wider Muslim community but in the eyes of the ordinary people, this does not work. A better strategy was to tell the people the truth. The government should tell the public that Al-Shabaab held extremist views, which are not shared with the wider Muslim community. The government could have also encouraged the Muslim community to come out aggressively

and denounce the myopic interpretation of faith by the Al-Shabaab and isolate them. This could have helped the rest of society not to confuse the terrorists with all Muslims. This could have preserved the relationship. By hiding information for fear that the relationship would deteriorate is not prudent in my view.

5.4.3 Silent Supportive Community

Though the government and partly the Christian leaders worked on delinking the suspected attackers, Al-Shabaab, and the Muslim community, the victims were not convinced. The victims seemed to understand that not all Muslims were involved in the attacks but they blamed the Muslim community for “hosting” the attackers. This was well expressed by one respondent who said;

They have an Islam base. Muslims claim they don't support the extremists but the terrorist go the mosque. If Muslims want to eradicate terror they will do. Why are we not seeing the Muslim leaders taking an action? They are quick to condemn (extremist acts) but I wish they could do more. I have not heard them calling their brothers (extremists) and question them. We have even seen Muslim clerks preaching fierce messages, using that platform to reach many people, they get preach that its ok to hate Christians and cause terror .As much as they are condemning (extremists) during the press conferences, they are doing nothing and if they want to eradicate terror they can do it (Respondent B).

These sentiments are in line with what Mark Juergensmeyer argued that religious terrorism is not only connected to the individuals or individual organizations that are directly involved but also the community that shapes the worldview of the actors (Juergensmeyer, 2003). His argument was that terrorists get their “values, convictions, legitimacy and moral support” from an enabling community (Juergensmeyer, 2003, p. 11). Unless the Kenyan government takes this understanding of terrorism seriously, there may be no lasting solution. There seems to be a lot of caution from the government when dealing with religion. Fearing to confront the role of religion in conflict is not a sustainable solution to conflicts in Kenya, which are increasingly taking a religious angle. The government must clearly identify all the religious

actors in conflicts and actively engage them without fear instead of trying to deal the problem as just a criminal act.

A comprehensive approach will help both the Christians and Muslims face the problem without suspicion. On one hand, it will help the victims in the healing process since they will identify the attackers. This will also help in clearing the suspicion that the Muslim community supports the attackers. From my interviews, the victims did not believe what the government was saying that these were just criminal attacks. Even though there have been joint press conferences between the Christian and Muslim leaders, the victims feel that it's just public relations exercise as long as the Muslim community is not pressured to put tangible measures in place in dealing with the suspected Al-Shabaab militants.

There is a feeling among the respondents that the Muslim community is not genuine in dealing with the conflict. Even some Christian leaders interviewed urged the Muslim community needs to do more in the fight against terror activities especially those directed to the Christians. The respondents feel that since the suspected attackers, Al-Shabaab confess the Islamic faith and claim to be fighting for it, the Muslim community cannot fail to take responsibility and actively stand against them and their ideology.

5.5 Relationship between Christians and Muslims

One of the Christian leaders described the relationship between these two main religious communities in Kenya as follows:

The relationship has been erratic especially in the Coast. Suspicion and perception has been there in the coast when some churches are attacked but the religious leaders have come together and calmed down the tensions. Christians have shown restraint and leaders calm the situation. I think the relations have been ok but if you talk to the common mwananchi (ordinary citizen) who is a Christian they will probably have a different opinion since the attacks change people's perceptions (Respondent G).

His assessment captures what I got from my interviews about the respondents view about the relationship between Muslims and Christians in Kenya. I had two interesting observations. The first one was that the Christian leaders that I interviewed seemed to say one thing in the

formal interviews and a different thing in informal interactions. During the interviews, most of the leaders said that the relationship with was good and mutual. They denied that the attacks strained the relationship. Some even claimed that the attacks strengthened the relationship since the two communities came together to address the issues. On the contrary, during my informal interaction with the leaders after the formal interviews, most of them expressed how the relationship is of mistrust and has worsened due to the attacks.

My interpretation is that the leaders want to portray an image of unity with the Muslim community because of the interreligious forums that they share. I found it hypocritical and unhealthy. They openly expressed to me informally how they don't trust the Muslim leaders to fight terrorism from the mosques. There is need to address this issue or else there may be a form of religious unity in Kenya, which does not in essence exist. If the purported unity is tested, it may not stand the test of time. There is a glaring need for an honest, transparent and mutual relationship between these two communities. Fear to confront the truth is a hindrance to sustainable unity of the two religions in Kenya.

The Kenyan Christian and Muslim communities need to take the advice of the former Pope Benedict XVI who holds that religious dialogues should focus at finding the right way of living and truth and this search for truth should be devoid of fear for one's identity (Benedict XVI, 2012). Kenyan religious communities should engage each other with boldness in a quest to build solid foundation in relationships that can last for generations. Kenya is relatively a young nation and a false start in interreligious relationships cannot be tolerated.

The second observation I made was that there was disconnect between how the Christian leaders perceived the relationship with Muslim community and how the normal church members and victims perceived the same. Though the normal Christians had no issues with Muslims before the attacks, they expressed that things drastically changed after the attacks. One of the respondents who were a victim of the attacks expressed it as follows:

When this thing happened (referring to the attacks), I hated them. I didn't want to see anyone of them. Even in the matatu (public transport vehicles) when I see they have come in I get out. I feared them... These people they don't like Christians. Even the (common) Muslims comment badly about Christians. They don't see us as human

beings. If it continues like this it many bring problems. Christians may revenge. Even when they bombed us youth wanted to burn the mosque but the police prevented them (Respondent E).

Another respondent also narrated how her son fears her classmates who are Muslims to a point of sometimes avoiding playing with them. My observation was that the members of the church live in the Muslim dominated estates where the churches are situated and interact daily whereas the leaders live in different estates of the town without Muslim neighbors. The respondents talked out of their experience while the leaders seemed to talk out of theory from meetings with their Muslim counterparts. My take is that the Christian-Muslim relationship especially in the Muslim dominated neighborhoods should be worked from grassroots upwards not the other way round. The church leaders ought to listen to their members and seek practical strategies of improving the normal relationships in the estate. They should not be satisfied with “press conferences” unity. It is the citizens who make or break peace.

5.6 Conflict Transformation: Conflict Changing Course

Lines in a conflict are usually not clearly drawn (Schlee, 2008, p.14). This phenomenon can be taken advantage of especially in the initial stages of a conflict to change its course. The case under study is an example of a conflict that was on the way to change course from a war on terror to a religious war. This was the intention of the Al-Shabaab but it did not succeed. The fourth stage of a conflict according to Deusdedit R.K. Nkurunziza (2002) is conflict transformation. In this stage the conflict changes face to a less violent one in an attempt by both sides to look for solutions.

The conflict between the Al-Shabaab and the Kenyan government escalated when the Kenya army moved into Somali to pursue the militants. At this stage the conflict took an interesting turn. The Al-Shabaab Militants introduced a third party into the conflict. Apart from attacking the Kenya government posts, they also started attacking churches. They were suspected to be the attackers of the churches under this study. This change of tactic caught everyone unaware bringing confusion and lack of coherent interpretation of the phenomena. Different groups of people and individuals understood the developments differently. There

was also a clear distinction between the leaders and the members of the churches and the government on perceptions about the attacks.

5.7 Role of Kenyan Government in the conflict

The government of Kenya perceived the attacks as acts of terror irrespective of where in the country they were carried out. When the churches were attacked, they were quick to emphasize their perspective and insisted that these were criminal attacks. They used the media and even visited the attacked churches to persuade the general public and the victims that these were nothing but normal criminal attacks. They were particularly keen to tell the victim churches and the general Christian religious community that the attacks had nothing to do with religion. Interestingly, they did this even before they carried out any investigation to ascertain who were behind the attacks and what the motive for the attacks was. It's more interesting that at the time the study was being carried out, it had been more than a year since the attacks took place and the Kenya Police had not given any report of their investigations. The church leaders, members and victims were still not formally informed about who attacked them during their church meetings.

One may speculate that the government intention was to prevent the conflict from changing from a terror-related conflict to a religious one. The fact that they were quick to move in and rule out the option of the attacks being religiously motivated is suspect. Why did they choose this path even before preliminary investigations? If the cause of the attacks was different, why haven't the police pointed out to the actual cause of the attacks and their motivation factors? The silence of the police over the results of the investigations is loud and speaks volumes. Furthermore it became a breeding ground for more speculations especially by the victims and some leaders of the churches.

Most of those interviewed indicated that when the attacks happened, they had confidence in the government to deal with the criminal aspect of attacks and let them know who the attackers were. They also had a high expectation that the government was to let them understand the motive behind the attacks. One year down the line, most of the respondents expressed disappointment with the government. One leader told me in our informal talks after the interviews that the police had arrested the man who carried out the attack in their church

and some of the victims were called and identified him positively. It was established that he had Al-Shabaab links but to their surprise, he was not charged in court and was released. The leader went to share with me that the security of the church has once spotted the same man near the church. There was a general discouragement from the respondents about the way the government handled the cases after the attacks.

It was noted above that one of the reasons that contributed to preventing the conflict from turning religious was the government intervention. The Christian community had confidence in the government as a religiously neutral party to deal with the criminal aspect of the attacks. They hoped that if the government found out that the attackers had a religious inclination; it would deal with the criminal aspect of the attacks and initiate a program where the affected religions could come together and find a solution to the problem. One year down the line, most of the respondents felt that the government had betrayed them. Some even expressed that the government was covering the Muslim community by not demanding them to be more aggressive in exposing the extremists among themselves. Some wondered why the government did not intervene even when some Muslim clerics used mosques to preach fierce messages inciting the faithful against the government and Christians. The respondents were disappointed that the government had not named the attackers and identified the motive for the attacks. It was more painful to the victims that justice had not been done.

This scenario, which the respondents blamed on the government, had hindered the healing process of the victims. It had also contributed to lack of boosting of the unity between the Muslim and Christian communities in the affected areas because it gave room for more suspicions and even feelings of favoritism. In general, the respondents expressed decline confidence in the government as a neutral party to handle what they perceived to be a potential religious conflict.

My observation was that the government of Kenya was losing a privileged position of promoting unity among the different religious groups in Kenya especially in the face of the war on terrorism. The terrorism that Kenya is facing is religiously inclined and the government should pay more attention to the religious voices, perspectives and involve them more actively in the fight against terror. As it has been observed somewhere else in this study, it is citizens who make or break peace. The government of Kenya may be quick to

send thousands of its soldiers across the country to Somalia, spend a lot of money equipping the police and other armed forces to combat terrorism but ignoring the religious communities that breed and support the terror activities is detrimental to its spirited efforts.

The motive of the terrorists especially the Al Shabaab had been made clear. Their strategy in Kenya was to turn Muslims against Christians. They have called for all Muslims in Kenya to arise and defend their religion which they consider to be under attack by Christians led by the “Christian” Kenyan soldiers backed the. To counter this strategy, the government needs to invest more in promoting the existing unity and religious tolerance in Kenya. They should not take it for granted that the unity will be automatically maintained. The government should also come out without fear or favor and name the perpetrators of the attacks irrespective of their religions. They should seek that justice is done to help the victim heal from the trauma. The government should not be afraid to confront any religion that seems to tolerate extremism and encourage them to expose those whose intention is to sow seeds of discord among the religious communities in Kenya.

The government needs to come out boldly in all aspects of fighting terrorism and promoting religious tolerance, understanding and coexistence. In this way, they will win the confidence of all religious communities in Kenya and remain a trustworthy actor in the fight against religious motivated wars. The government needs to do something to curb the eroding confidence in handling religious related conflicts as expressed by the respondents in this study. Most of the wars in Africa today are turning religious and the Kenyan government is dealing with a religious-related terror war. The religious community should be involved more since it is a critical player in these conflicts.

5.8 The role of the church in the conflict

Despite the fact that by the time of the interviews the government had not released any formal results of the investigations into the attacks, most of the respondents expressed suspicion that it was the Al-Shabaab that carried out the attacks. However, there was a disconnection between the church leaders and the members/victims. In the formal interviews, the church leaders remained noncommittal as to who they thought were behind the attacks on their churches. During my informal talks with the leaders, they clearly expressed that they

believed that it was the Al-Shabaab. The church members and especially the victims did not think twice when asked about their knowledge of the perpetrators of the attacks. They strongly believed that the Al-Shabaab was responsible for the attacks.

When the respondents were asked about what they thought was the motive behind the attacks, most of them said that it was to change course the war on terror. They believed that the masterminds of the attacks were implementing the strategy of dividing the Muslim and Christian religious communities in Kenya with an aim of turning them against each other. According to them, turning the war into a religious one could have been a victory for them. The respondents said that this understanding enabled them to resist the temptation of retaliation and instead allowed the government to continue dealing with the terror war. Some of the Muslim leaders appreciated and thanked the Christians for the discernment and refusal to fall into the trap of the suspected Al-Shabaab militants (Koinange, 2014).

There are those who see the response of the church as an act of cowardice. They preferred if the church also retaliated by attacking the Muslims. According to their narrative, they think this could have been the best solution to stop the suspected Al-Shabaab militants from continued attacks on churches. They believe that if the Christians could have revenged, then the Muslims being a minority in Kenya could have feared and hence done everything at their disposal to stop the attacks. The underlying understanding here is that the suspected attackers enjoy wide support in the Muslim community. If this reasoning were to prevail, it will further divide the religious communities in Kenya, a recipe for future conflicts among them. The church in Nairobi set a good example that can be emulated when dealing with interreligious conflicts.

6.0 Conclusion

This thesis has mainly attempted to find out two main issues. The first one is the response of the church in Kenya particularly in Nairobi to the terror attacks that started in the year 2012. These attacks were a revenge mission by the Al-Shabaab militants after the Kenya army's incursion in Somalia to pursue them. The second one is the attempt of the attacks to turn from terror to religious related. I have attempted to describe the reaction of the church to the attacks and discuss the factors that influenced the response. I have also explored the role of religion in the conflict, development of the conflict by introducing the church as a player, the purpose of the strategy and what factors contributed to its failure. The relationship of the two main religions in Kenya (Christianity and Islam) is also discussed particularly in handling of a potential religious conflict.

Concerning the response of the church to the attacks, I found out that the churches were caught unaware and were ill prepared to respond to the attacks. This is mainly because though the Kenya government was fighting Al-Shabaab militants, the churches understood it to be a war on terror as the government had campaigned before sending troops to Somalia and did not expect a religious angle to the conflict thus thought to be safe. Most of the people initially reacted with shock, pain and fear. Later on after some reflection, these turned into bitterness and a search for answers. Though even after one year the government had not given them any indication of who attacked them, they did not consider revenge to the perceived perpetrators of the attacks. Though the perception was strong that the Al-Shabaab had attacked the churches and thereby introducing a religious angle to the crisis, the churches opted to invite the government as a neutral party to deal with the situation.

This response immensely contributed to the pacification of the situation and prevented the conflict from turning religious. Other reasons that influenced the response according to the informants included:

- Spiritualization of the conflict. Turning to faith to make sense of the attacks made some of the respondents blame spiritual forces for the pain and not human beings.

- Existing interreligious forums that offered open communication channels between the Christian and Muslim communities.
- Religious leaders in different faith communities showed unity and condemned the attacks with one voice calling for calm and peace. They used their influence and positions of respect among their followers to discourage any form of retaliation.
- Spiritual rituals, traditions and doctrines guided the response of the informants to the attacks. Most of them quoted the teachings of Jesus Christ in the book of Matthew chapter five of the Bible about loving enemies and unlimited forgiveness in the face of sufferings caused by others.
- Confidence in the government to handle the situation decisively. The churches relied on the government as a religiously neutral party to deal with the criminal aspect of the attacks.

During the study I observed that there was a disconnection between the church followers who were mainly victims of the attacks and their church leaders. The church leaders denied that religion had a role in the conflict during the interviews though they had a different view during my informal interaction with them. The church members were categorical that religion played a role in the conflict. They pointed out that the suspected attackers, Al-Shabaab are religiously motivated and come from a silent supportive Muslim community. The leaders seem to be cautious and did not want to antagonize the relationship between the Christian and Islamic community. According to the respondents, the government took the same stand. They point out that they suspected that this was the reason why the government has not made public the findings of the investigations into the attacks. They also felt that the same reason informed the church leaders' lack of pressure on the government to release the results of the investigations.

Victims expressed disappointment at this development and seemed helpless at demanding to know who attacked and hurt them. Furthermore they don't see any justice done, factors that complicate their healing process. The victims also feel that the Muslim community is not doing enough to combat terrorism. They don't blame all Muslims for the acts of terror but feel that since these activities are associated with the Islamic faith, the Muslims need to actively take responsibility and publically stand against the group and its ideology. Christian leaders agree with them though they are afraid of openly talking about it.

While talking to the informants, I found it interesting how they described their relationship with the Muslim community. The leaders formally expressed that they had a good working relationship with their Muslim counterparts and that the attacks did not negatively affect the relationship. They cited the joint press conferences after the attacks and the joint visits they made to the victims. However, when I talked informally with the leaders, their views were to the contrary. They expressed that they did not trust the Muslim community to fight terror. On the other hand, members and victims expressed that the attacks had adversely affected their relationship with their Muslim neighbors and something needed to be done to restore it to normalcy. They described how they relate to the Muslim community with fear and suspicion.

The suspected Al-Shabaab militants involved the church into their conflict with the Kenya army as a strategy to turn the conflict religious. They aimed at causing violence between the two dominant religious communities in Kenya to divert the attention of the Kenyan government from pursuing them. The Christians especially those attacked did not fall prey into this trap. They avoided any retaliating or attacking the Muslim community. Instead, they relied on the government, which is religiously neutral, to handle the criminal aspect of the attacks. The Christian leaders rallied their followers to dialogue with Muslim leaders in a bid to forge unity between the two communities in the face of attacks.

Concerning the main reasons why the Christians did not retaliate, I got it from the informants that they had confidence in the government to deal with the perpetrators of the attacks. They expected the government to investigate the attacks and prosecute the attackers for justice to be served. At the time of the interviews, they were disappointed that the government had not made know the attackers and no one had been prosecuted in connection to the attacks. My observation is that the Kenyan government is losing this position of confidence from its citizens. The informants felt that by not aggressively dealing with the religious angle of the terrorism, the government was favoring the Muslims. This perception is not healthy especially in the face of a new surge of religious related terrorism in some parts of Africa, Kenya being one of them. The government should reconsider and formulate strategies of more involvement of the religious communities in the fight against terrorism.

There are a few recommendations that I would like to make in the light of the study that I carried out. There is need for truth telling, transparency and justice in the way the government of Kenya deals with conflicts. The government should be committed to closing investigations by prosecuting the suspected perpetrators or otherwise. There is a culture in Kenya of thinking that if acts of violence in a conflict are investigated and prosecuted, the conflict will become worse. There is preference to allow past injustice rest without proper investigation, prosecution and closure. This breeds a repeated cycle of violence to say the least. It also does not foster healing and reconciliation after a conflict.

The case that I studied is a good example. The government was quick to step into the conflict and promised to firmly act against the attackers of the churches. They commenced investigations immediately but after more than a year, they had not given any feedback to the churches that were attacked. There was no one prosecuted for the attacks. The government seemed to let the issue lie as if nothing happened. They may have their reasons of handling the case in the manner they have done but its long-term impacts will properly be negative.

As some of the respondents indicated, their confidence in the government to handle a criminal attack had been challenged. This means that in case they are attacked again, chances are that they may want to defend themselves or revenge since the government did not bring to justice perpetrators from previous cases. The church leadership also exhibited this culture. They did not follow up on the government to find out the results of the investigations. Though they have the influence to pressure the government to bring to justice those behind the attacks, they chose to play safe for fear of antagonizing the status quo. The same script is being followed in dealing with the post-election violence that almost brought Kenya to her knee in 2007/2008 general elections. There is no significant investigation, prosecution or closure of cases that has been done. Political leaders have influenced masses to just move on without proper investigations, truth telling, justice and reconciliations. There is a danger that this may be a recipe for future violence. Justice is a prerequisite to reconciliation and sustainable coexistence.

Violent conflicts are not new to Africa but the late trend is that religious conflicts are on the rise. Conflicts in Central African Republic, the Sudans, Boko Haram menace in Nigeria, Somalia conflict, Al-Shabaab attacks in Kenya, religious motivated Lord Resistance Army

menace in Northern Uganda and the crisis in Egypt all have a religious angle. African governments need to strategize on how to deal with these religious conflicts. One of them is the promotion of the unity between the different religious communities. For example, the open communication channels and interreligious forums in Kenya were identified as a key factor that helped prevent the Christians turning against the Muslims as the Al-Shabaab hoped. However, this relationship must have a proper-structured foundation to last. It was noted from the study that informants felt that the interreligious unity was just a `press conference` affair that did not affect the citizens on the ground. Even the religious leaders interviewed expressed reservation and fear in their relationship with their counterparts from other religions. For example some Christian leaders felt that the Muslims were not doing enough in the fight against terrorism but could not express it for fear that this would antagonize the relationship. There is need for interreligious unity to be built on mutual respect, honesty and cooperation for a lasting coexistence.

The government being a religiously neutral player should encourage dialogue among the religious communities and involve them more in the fight against terrorism. However, they should not compromise on issues of justice where atrocities have been committed. Criminal acts should be investigated and prosecuted without fear or favor irrespective of the religious background of the perpetrators. The study showed that the Kenyan government compromised justice for the sake of “peace” according to the informants but this is counterproductive. The very citizens who make or break peace feel betrayed by the government and in case a similar situation may arise in the future, the response may not be positive.

The case under study illustrates that if citizens have confidence that the government is religiously neutral, they can trust it to deal with a potential religious conflict. The recent violence in Central African Republic escalated because the government seemed to take sides (Lister, 2012). Some people of northern Nigeria also accuse the government of not doing enough to stomp the Boko Haram because of religious reasons (Akintola, 2014). There is need to do more study on the role of government in religious conflicts especially in Africa.

7.0 References

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Appendix

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interviewees

1. Victims
2. Church members
3. Local church leaders
4. National church leaders e.g. NCKK

Victims/Church members/Local church leaders

1. Can you tell me about the attacks on your children/ church/ family members?
Aim: to get the victims' description of the occurrence of the event
2. Could you say something about who were the attackers?
Aim: to get their understanding of the attackers
3. How can you describe your initial reaction to the attacks?
Aim: to get the first response
4. If the attacks happened again, will you react differently? Why?
Aim: to find out whether there is a change in reaction and if yes, establish the reasons behind it
5. What is your reflection on your reaction to the attacks?
6. Did you expect the attack? Please tell me why you expected/ did not expect the attacks?
Aim: try to establish whether the victims anticipate being part of the conflict
7. Why do you think they attacked the church?
Aim: what is their view of the reasons for the attack
8. Who do you feel should take responsibility for the attack? Church, government, Al-Shabaab? Why?
Aim- to get more on victims' view of the reasons for the attacks.

-Aim to get whether the victims perceived these attacks as a conflict transformation. Did they see themselves as the primary target or victims of conflict transformation?

9. How do you feel about those who attacked your children/ church/ family members?

Aim: find out the effect of the attacks on the victims

10. If you are given a chance to meet the attackers, will you meet them? What will you tell them?

11. What can you say about the role of religion in this attack?

12. What was your relationship with Muslims before the attack? What about now?

13. What did you know about Al-Shabaab before the attack?

14. What do you know about Al-Shabaab now?

15. In your opinion, how did the church (local) handle the attacks?

National church leaders e.g. NCCCK

1. Could you describe the Al-Shabaab attacks on the churches in Kenya?
2. Could you describe the Al-Shabaab attacks on the churches particularly in Nairobi?
3. Are there similarities and/or difference in the attacks in churches in Nairobi compared to attacks on churches in other parts of the country?
4. Why do you think the churches in Nairobi were attacked?
5. What was the initial response of NCCCK to the attacks?
6. How would you describe the way Christians responded to the attacks especially in Nairobi?
7. How do you interpret the response?
8. What role did NCCCK play in helping the church respond to the attacks?
9. How can you describe the relationship between Muslims and Christians before the attacks?
 - i. Generally in Kenya
 - ii. Particularly in Nairobi
10. How can you describe the relationship between Muslims and Christians Kenya after the attacks?
 - i. Generally in Kenya
 - ii. Particularly in Nairobi

11. Has NCKK been involved in any follow-up of the churches after the attacks? What have you found out?