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## **Silencing the Guns, Illusion or Reality? Why a Biblical Theology of Violence Matters**

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### **Abstract**

It is almost as if violence and the African continent are synonymous terms. Furthermore, many researchers have studied the issue of violence in the African continent. Recent studies propose that the causes of violence in Africa are multifaceted, and most of their focus is on the external causes. Such views present people only as victims of circumstances, and that which leads them towards violence is always external. This paper, however, through employing a qualitative research methodology based primarily on literature review, shows that having a proper biblical theology of violence in Africa does not place humans primarily as victims but inherently as the chief perpetrators of violence because of their fundamentally flawed human nature; further, that the issue of violence is primarily a moral issue. Thus, the question whether the African Union's quest of 'silencing the guns' remains an illusion or reality shows that it remains an illusion when the real problem is not addressed.

### **Introduction**

The paper's purpose is not to provide a comprehensive survey of wars and their nexus with the youth in the African continent and all its complexities. Furthermore, the paper does not intend to oversimplify a complex issue that has ravaged Africa for centuries. Instead, the focus is to scrutinise the African Union's (AU) call for the silencing of guns. Further, this paper does not claim to dismiss that many of the things researchers have pointed out have led to and fuelled the continued crisis brought about by violence in the African

continent. Instead, it points out that the AU, from the very beginning, has failed to get to the real issue at the heart of the problem and also ignored an important voice whose contributions are essential to finding a solution to the problem at hand. Violence is perhaps the greatest challenge facing the African continent. This is not to say that only Africans are prone to violence as we have seen other continents also ravaged by wars.

Many African leaders, led by the African Union, have put forth efforts to try and reverse this trend. However, it is notable that violence continues, and new forms of conflict continue to spring up. Even though the international organisations have all contributed significantly to ending youth involvement in violence and war in general, nothing much has changed. This paper seeks to show that though much research has associated youth with involvement in violence in Africa, none of them point to the real problem. The many intervening measures that the AU and African governments have put forth have done little or nothing to reverse the trends of escalating violence. Finally, many researchers have ignored a proper view of violence that can only be derived from the scriptures, which puts the problem of violence as an internal problem stemming from the human heart. Therefore, because the AU has not addressed the root cause of the problem of violence, the call to end violence will continue to be an illusion.

## **The Problems Associated with Conflict**

The nature of conflicts in Africa, whether fuelled by the youth or not, is a multifaceted issue, as with other wars in other parts of the world (World Food Programme 1999). The conflicts take the form of either intra-state or inter-state wars. Most inter-state conflicts were prevalent after the Cold War period and mainly revolved around border disputes but have recently been about fighting for resources.<sup>1</sup> However, the more recent reality of conflicts revolves around many intra-state conflicts that have seen civil wars that have plagued

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<sup>1</sup> According to The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), Nigeria, Sudan, Southern Sudan, DR-Congo, and Somalia are engaged in resource-related battles.

many countries in the African continent (Nsaibia and Duhamel, 2021).<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, while it is evident that many conflicts exist on the continent, it would be false to presume that the causes of many conflicts are similar or arise from similar issues. What can be agreed, however, is that the origins of many of these conflicts are multifaceted and complex.

Every African country has its own history and has a distinct geographical location. Internally, each country runs independently as a sovereign nation with its laws and policies that govern the land. Each country is at a different stage of economic development and has established religious affiliations, with its populations affiliated with different religious organisations. All these factors make the issue of conflict much more complex. Researchers have focused on economic, political, or social issues, including religion, as leading causes of conflict. That is why there is plenty of research regarding the causes of conflicts in Africa. A quick search of journals on major sites gives thousands of results,<sup>3</sup> which is a reflection of how much research has gone into the topic.

While not undermining the reality of inter-state conflicts, the African continent has plagued itself with internal conflicts with the youth being in the epicentre. Notably, the nexus between the youth and conflict in Africa<sup>4</sup> is not because the youth primarily incline themselves to conflict but because of the demographic patterns that put them at the epicentre of conflict (Ismail and Olonisakin 2021:373). A researcher posits that countries with a high youth population, referred to as the ‘youth bulge’, are most likely to experience violence (Urdal 2006:607). Nonetheless, many researchers have undertaken a multi-angle analysis of the causes of internal conflicts. For the most part, some of the economic causes of conflict have been corruption (Joly et al. 2020:7), unfavourable terms of trade (Cali 2015:2), cruel taxation regimes, exploitation

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<sup>2</sup> One of the regions that has seen persistent cycles of violence is the Sahel, which has been plagued by continued Jihadist insurgency, especially in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. The data is according to the 2021 report by The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED).

<sup>3</sup> A response rate of 77,592 results was derived from JSTOR after searching ‘Causes of Conflicts in Africa’ (accessed 30 September 2023).

<sup>4</sup> Refer to Ismail and Olonisakin’s paper ‘Why do youth participate in violence in Africa? A review of evidence’ (2021) for a detailed review of the nexus between youth and violence in Africa.

of natural resources (Funder, Cold-Ravnkilde, and Ginsborg 2012:17,18), food insecurity, poverty, mismanagement of land, and poor economic performance. Others have cited the colonial past as the primary cause of violence; colonisation and de-colonisation play a considerable role (Zezeza 2008:1). With most of the population being the youth, most of them feel the direct impact of the economic struggles as they suffer from unemployment and other factors, which may lead them to participate in conflicts (Azeng and Yogo 2013). On the socio-political front, due to the multi-ethnic nature of most African countries, many conflicts arise and have historical roots in the post-independence formation of the sovereign states. The generally applied label to the cause of socio-cultural conflicts is governance (Gilpin 2016:21). The political field has been the source of many conflicts in Africa, where there is either exclusion or perceived exclusion of some people groups from political processes.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, favouritism (nepotism), discrimination, human rights violations, ethnic marginalisation, and lack of quality leadership constitute most of the causes of conflict in Africa (Elbadawi and Sambanis 2000:1,3). Ethnicity also plays a significant role in conflicts within the borders of many African countries (Jenne and Popovic 2017). There is often a paradox regarding ethnicity because, by and large, a national identity amongst the many different ethnicities is often advocated. However, achieving a national identity is always challenging. Discrimination, elitism, favouritism, and a lack of inclusivity are often evident in many countries (Office of the Special Adviser on Africa 2020). It is challenging to develop loyalty and patriotism when different ethnic groups are always in conflict. Where researchers use the blanket term, that is, 'grievance-based' explanations,<sup>6</sup> there is no disagreement that any of these causes, which are assumed to lead to frustrations and aggressions resulting in violence, disproportionately affect the youth in the African continent (Gurr 2011).

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<sup>5</sup> Kenya is one chief example where political differences have resulted in conflicts. The post-election violence of 2007-2008 is a case in point.

<sup>6</sup> These explanations have been used to explain violence in various regions and countries on the African continent such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, the Niger Delta region, northern Mali, and Kenya.

Additionally, some researchers argue that the root causes of all these issues are colonialism and the Cold War, which destabilised most African states socially, politically, and economically (Moe 2009). In the end, in all the complexities of the cause of violence on the African continent, whether by the youth or not, what is constant and evident is that people are at the centre of violence, whether as perpetrators or victims. However, many researchers, and indeed the AU itself, ignore the issue of morality as the root cause of conflicts and violence in Africa.

## **The Interventions, Solutions, and Failures**

In light of the reality of many conflicts (PSC Report, 2021),<sup>7</sup> the push to find long-lasting solutions has always been an ongoing concern. There have been continuous efforts to address the conflicts and find solutions to ensure lasting peace in many of the war-torn areas of the African continent. Many international bodies have been keenly interested in conflicts in the African continent, whether or not it has been for varied interests. The interventions have taken different shapes, including calling for dialogue, facilitating conferences and symposiums, creating caucuses or special bodies, direct military interventions, or other interventions.

It is no secret that the United Nations and African Union have also had a keen interest in managing conflicts in the African continent. These bodies and organisations have not left the youth behind as agents of the African continent's peace efforts, especially with the primarily preconceived idea that they are violence's main instigators and perpetrators. In 2006, the African Union adopted the African Youth Charter, which, among many other things, captured the significant role of the youth in promoting peace on the continent, as recorded in Article 17 of the treaty (African Union 2006). In addition to these efforts, the African Union launched the 'Youth for Peace Africa Programme' to help in the implementation of Article 17 of the African Youth Charter and the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 2250 and 2419, which recognise the central role of youth in peace-building (Kodjo 2022). For a broader

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<sup>7</sup> The Institute for Security Studies, shared insights from its publication *Peace and Security Council Report* (2022), where it listed six African hotbeds people needed to watch in 2022, which remain unstable even in 2024.

approach to the issue of violence in Africa, some of the significant initiatives that the Organization of African Unity, whose primary objective was the anticipation and prevention of conflicts, had established include the 'Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution' established in 1993 (Muyangwa and Vogt 2000) and the African Union 'Silencing the Guns' initiative (African Union 2023). The overall push has been that there is a need for 'African solutions to African problems' towards the many conflicts that continue to plague the continent.

However, while the intentions of the AU and other stakeholders, such as the United Nations, have been commendable, there needs to be more optimism moving into the future that conflicts will end. While governments have commended several youth-led civil society organisations for their efforts in peace-building, there is an admission that not all contribute to peace-building efforts. There is also limited research on the efficacy of the prevention strategies employed by the civil society organisations (United Nations Development Programme 2023). Further, during an assessment of the 'Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution', the report highlighted some conflicts that the African Union was resolving. Some of the interventions employed included direct mediation, application of political pressure, employment of special envoys, and deployment of military missions. However, there was an admission that the Organization of African Unity, as formerly constituted, could not resolve conflicts by itself even after these interventions (Muyangwa and Vogt 2000).

Furthermore, more recently, there have already been some criticisms of the 'Silencing the Guns' initiative. During the 9,299<sup>th</sup> UN Security Council meeting, the council advocated for several solutions during the debate on 'Silencing the Guns'.<sup>8</sup> The council highlighted the necessity to address the internal and external root causes of conflicts on the African continent because partner organisations had spent much time offering traditional responses. Some of the solutions given included addressing colonial grievances, putting up effective development policies, embarking on people-centred recovery and

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<sup>8</sup> The debate was held during the UN Security Council Meeting on March 30, 2023. Cristina Duarte, Special Adviser on Africa to the United Nations Secretary-General, and Mohamed Ibn Chambas, African Union High Representative for Silencing the Guns, were among the speakers.

transformation with an emphasis on financial investment, developing sustainable industrialisation, echoing successes of the Maputo Accord, promoting social justice, and fighting extreme ideologies amongst other solutions (United Nations Meetings Coverage 2023). One of the beliefs following assessments of the initiative is that only development would create the capacities that help African countries and their youth overcome the peace and security challenges they face, which have deep historical roots.

Moreover, one of the other major blames cited as derailing the initiative to end violence on the African Continent has been a lack of political will and leadership (Human Rights Watch 2023b). In light of this, the humanitarian organisations advocated that the AU and its subregional mechanisms should, among other things, put rigorous human rights monitoring systems and reporting mechanisms in areas highly prone to violence. According to the African Director of Human Rights Watch, African leaders, through efficient deployment of robust instruments of power at their disposal, would provide practical solutions to Africa's problems (Human Rights Watch 2023a). Finally, in one of the statements by the United Nations in a report on the 'Causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa', the report reiterated:

African leaders have failed the peoples of Africa; the international community has failed them; the United Nations has failed them. We have failed them by not adequately addressing the causes of conflict, by not doing enough to ensure peace, and by our repeated inability to create the conditions for sustainable development (Office of the Special Adviser on Africa 2020).

Therefore, even though the significant call is that there is a need to find 'African solutions to African problems', that does not guarantee that it will sustain peace. Even when all parties have put these efforts into place, there is always a vicious cycle of violence cropping up. The same countries and even many others are still struggling to put an end to conflicts. There have been many highlighted causes of conflicts and interventions put in place to resolve them, but it seems highly likely that a far more significant issue still needs to be addressed. Many of those involved in the peace efforts have pointed to

identifying the root causes of the continuous cycles of conflicts, but they have missed the mark.

While many parties have addressed political, economic, and social issues, they intentionally avoid the issue of the ethical conduct of individuals in the role of conflicts on the continent. The parties have ignored the ethical underpinnings and moral aspects in all the significant assessments of African conflicts. If, over millennia, nothing has changed, then it goes to tell that there is a deeper issue. The Christian religion among the major religions in Africa posits that it knows this deeper issue. Through the Holy Bible, Christianity gives the most accurate view and diagnosis of people's tendency towards violence. According to the Holy Bible, violence is not a result of some external factors, although we cannot deny that they play a significant role. Violence is deeply rooted in human rebellious nature, as revealed through the Fall detailed in the Book of Genesis.

## **The Eruption of Conflicts after the AU's Initiative**

After all the efforts it has put in place, a drop in violence would prove that the AU understands the true nature of conflicts in the continent. Therefore, the fundamental question to ask is whether conflicts and violence in Africa are declining or on the rise. How might this complicate the 'Silencing the Guns' initiative? In 2017, the AU adopted what would be known as the 'AU Master Roadmap', which provided practical steps towards 'Silencing the Guns' by the year 2020 (African Union 2023). The roadmap continues to be spearheaded by the AU Peace and Security Council and other partners, including the UN. In 2019, during the 8,473<sup>rd</sup> United Nations Security Council meeting, the 'Silence the Guns' initiative was formally adopted by the UN to help end violent conflicts on the African continent (African Union 2023). However, at the time of the AU landmark year in 2020 towards the 'Silencing the Guns' initiative, the continent was still reeling with violence that took many shapes and forms, and many of the continent's youth were still at the epicentre of violence. It was reported then by both the International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs that there were still many conflicts that were cropping up on the continent (Allison 2020). The Sahel region, southern Sudan, Ethiopia, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique, Nigeria, Guinea, and Côte



d'Ivoire were either experiencing conflicts or faced threats of violent uprisings (Allison 2020).

Further, during a virtual conference that aimed to redouble efforts towards the initiative, the AU's Peace and Security Ambassador stated that terrorists and armed groups had failed to heed their call for a global ceasefire (Directorate of Information and Communication 2020). Thus, it would be fitting to conclude that though the efforts of the AU are laudable, the reality is that the continent is heading in the opposite direction when it is supposed to be achieving significant steps in the right direction. Fast forward to the current state of affairs. According to the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights there are currently more than thirty-five armed conflicts in the African continent (Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights 2023). Most of the countries mentioned in 2020 are still active zones regarding armed conflict, even as the Human Rights Watch reported in their World Report 2023 (Human Rights Watch 2023b). The guns are getting louder; they are far from being silenced.

## **The Real Issue**

Although there are many conflicting scholarly works on the real cause of conflicts in Africa, it seems everyone agrees that the reason that many African countries continue to suffer vicious cycles of sporadic and volatile security challenges is the fact that there has been generally a poor understanding of the fundamental causes of conflict. The clarion call to find the 'root cause' is well-intended but misguided. Even where research on the nexus between religion and violence has been addressed, many researchers have also missed the mark. Where the Church's pivotal efforts have been mentioned with regard to the eradication of violence, the moral issue has been largely overlooked. Nonetheless, religious institutions have played a very significant role in managing violence and conflicts on the African continent. It is widely recognised and accepted that Christianity has, in many cases on the African continent, played a significant role either as a catalyst for violence or an advocate for peace. The Church has often been vested with an enormous mandate in conflict resolution because it has the spiritual mandate to enhance justice and peace in society. Much of the research, however, has been focused on the Church's role in mediation and reconciliation, and its role in advocacy

against societal injustices. Even those who seem to undertake a religious inclination in addressing the issue of violence ignore the fundamental issue, which is morality. While addressing other causes is important and plays a significant role in the whole issue of violence, much research revolves around intervention measures of violence. Still, research does not address the real issue or the root cause of the problem it seeks to solve.

From the very beginning, as with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, humanity has always been apt to shift blame to others for their own mistakes. Human character is flawed, so we cannot continue to ignore people's moral conduct in assessing conflicts on the African continent. We cannot also understate that much of the conflict has continued primarily because of the questionable character of the leaders who rule many African countries and their poor governance (Moe 2009).

Further, many youths are apt to use violence to have the government listen to their pleas. In earlier research conducted by two researchers who revised their work on their theory of civil war outbreak, they re-examined the motivation behind conflicts. They classified the motivations under greed and grievance (Collier and Hoeffler 2004). Greed is fundamentally a moral issue. If these are moral issues, they need to have a solution that seeks to address human morality. There is no better objective moral standard than that contained in the supreme moral law given to us by the supreme moral lawgiver, the creator and sustainer of the entire universe who has chosen to reveal himself to us through the Holy Bible.

Most of the issues raised as a cause of conflict revolve around ethical issues, which means they have to do with morality. The AU has largely ignored this. The hostilities of the Cold War and colonialism, which researchers mention as the historical roots that pushed Africa into a continued cycle of violence, and the propensity of youth to resort to violence have to do with human morality. Thus, if all evidence points to the fact that the situation in Africa has not changed, that it might be getting worse, doesn't that show that there is a much deeper problem?

Suppose the genuine desire is to ensure lasting peace and there is a solution that would make that a reality. Should the AU not resolve to at least consider

what a group having millions of adherents across the continent has to say about the problem? The AU is indeed a secular institution, but if it has recognised and involved Christian religious institutions in conflict resolution, what Christianity has to say about the root cause of the issue is worth some consideration. The AU has done much to address the effects of violence, but considering solutions that stem from a biblical theology that addresses the root of the problem is essential. The Bible teaches that all the causes attached to violence, as with any other vice referred primarily to as 'sin', are fundamentally moral issues.

There have been attempts to address morality, especially in engagements of war. The chief outcome for those who have looked into the morality of violence is the Just War theory. The theory originates in traditional Christian thought, espoused by St Augustine and St Thomas Aquinas (Miller 1990). The theory advocates that a sovereign nation must meet a particular set of criteria in the practice of military ethics when it goes to war. Although the theory, in many instances, has been thought to express Western ideologies, researchers have done a lot on the morality of war, especially in the context of an African perspective. Several researchers have contributed to the issue. One researcher aims to articulate an African worldview of just war (Ugwuanyi 2020); another highlights the African value system in the morality of war (Cordeiro-Rodrigues 2018); another applies the theory to the situation that was prevalent in South Africa (Miller 1990); another applies the theory in the case of Al Shabaab terrorist group in Somalia (Kasembeli 2022); another spells out an African ethic and derives principles to govern the use of force and violence (Metz 2020); another provides a contemporary African thought by presenting four different arguments with regards to the justification to initiate war (Cordeiro-Rodrigues 2021); another seeks to present moral thinking within African metaphysics and ethics with regards to the theory (Badru 2019). There is a rich body of research to draw from, but it is essential to state that, while the theory lays out an extensive look into the morality of war, it is principally concerned with the morality of war between states.

Additionally, in a closer assessment of the theory, as one researcher puts it, the theory, just like all other normative theories, provides the basis of decision-making when making moral judgments to be applied when going to war but does not provide any basis on how people make moral judgments (Frankfurt

and Coady 2021). We are primarily concerned with the reason why people are engaged in violence, not how people are supposed to handle themselves when engaging in violent activities. Thus, though rooted in classical Christian thought, the theory is inadequate in giving a proper biblical theology of violence. Therefore, the proper Christian thought provides that it is only the Holy Bible, which sets down the whole counsel of God and provides our rule for life and faith, that provides a proper theology of violence for the Christian faith (Westminster Assembly 1992).

## **The Solution: A Proper Biblical Theology on Violence**

The Bible describes violence as taking two faces: the denigration of moral law and the desecration of personhood. Both stem from the fact that the human heart in its fallen state is wicked and that human beings are conceived in sin (Jer. 17:9; Ps. 51:5). The hardened heart is deliberately wicked, as Scripture posits, as can be traced in the lives of both Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar who were wicked kings (Exod. 7:3-4; Dan. 4:27). Jesus Christ also provided a profound description of man's heart (Mark 7:14-23), which shows that we can trace violence in human hearts in their fallen condition. The two faces of violence are rooted in sin and not in any external circumstance, as humanity tries to portray.

First, the denigration of an absolute moral law gives way to the degradation of any rule of law. There is no accountability in a place where people do what is right in their own eyes or for selfish gains. When we read through the Bible, it is clear that, when people take matters into their own hands and abandon the moral law given by the lawgiver, society spirals down an evil path. It started in the very beginning when Cain, following the pattern of his parents, abandoned the good prescribed by God and ended up killing his brother Abel in the first recorded act of violence. However, it is the book of Judges (21:25) that offers the foundation of an immoral society which has abandoned any form of moral code and pursued autonomy where everyone is a law unto themselves. The relationship between autonomy and morality is in the fact that, according to the Scriptures, human beings are not autonomous in defining morality. God is the chief source of ethical conduct that defines our moral behaviour, not human beings, who are the recipient of his moral law. Therefore, only God gives an objective moral law that can bind the conscience of all people, as Paul

explains in Romans (1:18-32). The moral law reflects God's holy character, and, primarily, the Ten Commandments serve as the foundation of God's law, teaching us who he is and what he expects from us.

In the sixth commandment (Exod. 20:13), we find the law 'You shall not murder'<sup>9</sup>. One of the standard confessions of the Protestant faith, the Westminster Confession of Faith, asserts some duties that Christians must observe due to this commandment. Part of the duty Christians are to undertake in order to preserve not only their lives but also that of others is careful studies and lawful endeavours of what the commandments contain (1 Kings 18:4; Eph. 5:28-29), avoidance of any occasion to take the life of any person unjustly (Prov. 1:10-11,15-16; Matt. 4:6-7), and the protection and defence of all innocent lives (Job 31:19-20; Prov. 31:8-9; Matt. 25:35-36; 1 Thess. 5:14). Not only are we told of the duties expected due to the commandment, but the forbidden sins are also listed. Those sins include the taking away of another's life (Gen. 9:6), neglect or withdrawal of a lawful and necessary means of preservation of life (Eccl. 6:1-2; Matt. 25:42-43; Jas 2:15-16), and anything else that might lead to the destruction of a life (Exod. 21:18-36) (Westminster Assembly 1992). Christian ethics are derived from God and are not optional ethical standards but commandments. God designed these ethical standards to protect humanity from their fallenness.

Second, we have the desecration of personhood. According to the Scriptures, God has provided a fundamental basis for ethical decisions about how humans are supposed to relate to one another. Violence has often arisen from abuse and misuse of power, especially when those in power practise exclusion and misuse certain groups of people. Further, fallen humanity has a great propensity to resort to violence rather than peace in the face of confrontation. According to the Bible, all human beings derive their dignity, rights, and personhood from God. These things are not the preserve of individuals who get to determine the value and worth of a life. They stem from the fact that all life is precious in God's eyes and, as such, he is the only one who has the right to life (Job 1:21; Ezek. 18:4). In the very beginning, the book of Genesis (1:26)

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<sup>9</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the ESV.

lays out what is the foundation of human dignity and personhood. Humanity is unique amongst all God's creations, having been 'made in God's image'.

God set human beings above other creatures and the rest of creation by handing them dominion as his stewards on his behalf. Bearing God's image has eternal consequences because it secures the dignity and personhood of human beings not only for a time but for as long as this universe stands. Life is invaluable to God, and he jealously seeks to guard it, as is evident from the very beginnings of Scripture (Gen. 9:5-6). However, humanity took matters into their own hands through the action of the first created beings, Adam and Eve, who rebelled against God in 'the Fall' (Gen. 3). Their rebellion led to God cursing them with death.

Humanity was now enslaved to the hatred of God and one another, evidenced through the first act of violence recorded for us in the scriptures (Gen. 4:8). The hatred of God drove humanity toward hatred for one another, which, ever since, has led to the skewed views of humanity that humanity has witnessed over millennia. Today there is evidence of many unbiblical views of humanity. People have castigated African leaders as having the 'big-man syndrome', which is a perpetuation of self-centredness whereby many tyrannical leaders dehumanise others by claiming their right to rule (Dulani and Tengtenga 2019). The youth have also been castigated for resorting to violence when seeking justice (Ismail and Olonisakin 2021). That is why having a proper biblical theology on the issue of violence pushes us to focus on the real problem, which is the real cause of violence is sin, the fallen human heart. Understanding what the Bible says is the only way we can have a proper biblical theology on the issue of violence in the African continent.

## **Conclusion**

The issue of violence in the African continent is pertinent, and we need to address it from all angles. However, the AU and many researchers who have had a keen interest in the issue have largely ignored the real issue. There is a myriad of research on the potential causes of violence in the African continent, but all those have largely avoided the issue of morality. Where researchers have addressed morality, they do not provide a proper assessment of the root causes of the human propensity to cause violence. Further, different

organisations have advocated for many interventions, and they see the youth as peace ambassadors. Many of those organisations have advocated that providing development opportunities, that is, meeting the external needs of the youth, can help bring violence to an end. However, according to the Scriptures, the problem is not external, and it is not a preserve of the youth but rather a vice carried by all of fallen humanity.

The Scriptures also tell us that when humanity fell the relationship between God and human beings was affected. War became commonplace such that not only did human beings get into war with God, but they also turned against one another. God had a falling out with all humanity, and the Scriptures reiterate that the effects of the Fall are not just some small matters that we should ignore. The Fall had far-reaching consequences. As a result, in the first passages of scripture, blame and murder became the fuel for human-instigated violence (Gen. 3-4). Paul, in his letter to the church in Rome, describes God as the 'God of peace' (Rom. 15:33), which we would interpret to mean that God is the one who justly gives peace. Humanity lost this peace in the Fall; consequently, people lost peace between themselves, and violence has been a constant reality in our world.

If this is the case, it means that the only way humanity will ever restore peace with one another is if they first secure their peace with God. The only one who can secure peace between humanity and God is the one whom Paul called the 'mediator' between humanity and God (1 Tim. 2:5), Jesus Christ. Christ secured peace by shedding his blood on the cross (Col. 1:20), which is the whole message of the gospel. Once people have put their faith in Christ, only at that point will they start to seek peace with one another. We lie to ourselves if we turn to humanity and human organisations, which are fallen by nature, to secure peace, while the same humanity is in constant opposition and rebellious against God. In no way would a call to end violence be a reality when people remain rebellious towards God. Therefore, in light of what the Bible says, it is right to conclude that the AU's initiative to 'Silence the Guns' will continue to be an illusion as long as it continues to avoid addressing the real issue, which is moral, and does not pursue a proper biblical theology on the issue of violence.

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