







## A Contemporary Pentecostal Theodicy of a Just God on a Killing Spree

Kwasi Atta Agyapong<sup>1</sup> , Emmanuel Foster Asamoah<sup>2</sup> ,  
Diana Adjei-Fianko<sup>3</sup> , & Emmanuel Agyei Kwafo<sup>4</sup> 

<sup>1</sup> Theology and Missions, Pentecost University – Ghana and Department of Religion and Theology Education, Philippines Christian University, Manila - Philippines.

<sup>2</sup> Stellenbosch University, South Africa, and Pentecost University, Ghana.

<sup>3</sup> Department of Arts Education, University of Cape Coast, Ghana & University of Education, Winneba-Ghana.

<sup>4</sup> Theology and Missions, Pentecost University – Ghana.

### ABSTRACT

The portrayal of God in the Old Testament differs from that in the New Testament, suggesting an evolving perception and understanding over time. This has led to confusion and a dualistic view of God among individuals throughout history. Particularly perplexing is the divine sanction for the complete annihilation of the Canaanite population, seemingly contradicting God's just nature. This study investigates the command to exterminate men, women, children, and infants belonging to the Canaanite nations and seeks to reconcile the notion of a just God sanctioning such perceived cruelty and bias. Analyzing the moral, religious, and theological complexities surrounding this issue, the study aims to shed light on the hypothetical inconsistency in God's attitude. Ultimately, the study asserts that God's sanctioned killings were justifiable actions driven by His foreknowledge and intended for the salvation of humanity as a whole. However, the study emphasizes that this divine approach does not justify or endorse any contemporary acts of religious extremism, as such violence serves no salvific purpose in God's current plan for humanity. Grounded in the principles of action, consequence, and responsibility, the Pentecostal theodicy explored in this qualitative investigation, based on literature review and textual analysis, provides insights into the academic question of why a just God would command the total obliteration of the Canaanites. Through this analysis, this study contributes to the advancement of knowledge on the topic.

Correspondence

Kwasi Atta Agyapong

Email: [kwasiattaagyapong@gmail.com](mailto:kwasiattaagyapong@gmail.com)

Publication History

Received 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 2023

Accepted 25<sup>th</sup> January, 2024

Published online 23<sup>rd</sup> February, 2024

*Keywords: Pentecostal Theodicy, Justice, Canaanites, Violence, Extremism, and Biblical text.*

### INTRODUCTION

God's defining characteristics were indistinguishable from those in the Old Testament before His transformation in the New Testament. This self-contradictory and duple feature of God has kept many in confusion from ancient times till date because a just God sanctioned Israel to destroy the entire Canaanite population. The Canaanites are the descendants of Canaan the grandson of Noah. Canaan's father Ham was cursed by Noah because of his sin of uncovering the nakedness of Noah in Genesis 9:20-25. This event also presents another academic debate about what the uncovering of Noah's nakedness really means. In Genesis 10:15-19, eleven distinct groups are mentioned around Syria and Palestine that descended from the Canaanites. There are also times when the use of Canaanites refers to a specific group of people (Joshua 11:3) and it also refers to any of the groups mentioned in Genesis chapter 10, in the table of nations. This study will consider the Canaanites more of an ethnic unit

than a nation. Other scholars consider the Canaanites as a social class of traders which is based on Egyptian history. The initial six of the eleven people groups in Genesis chapter 10, obviously dwelled in the south of Sidon whereas the others lived in remoter north. The northerners generally settled on the edge of the seaside plains while in the uttermost south, settlement spread eastward to the highland ranges. To the north, Canaan stretched to Latakia, just south of Ugarit, and internal to Hamath. To the south, Canaanite land extended to the Negeb desert range, with imprecise boundaries. The Old Testament (OT) references explicitly placed the Canaanites in western Palestine's valleys and coastal ranges; the highland country was dwelled by the Amorites and other peoples.<sup>1</sup> The question that underlies the study is: What really triggered the wrath of God against the Canaanites? The wrath of God has been perceived from many curvatures by scholars and the ambiguity generally stems from whether Noah's curse caused it, or the conduct of the Canaanites infuriated the God-sanctioned genocide.

There is a clue from God's promise to Abraham that the Canaanites were wicked and idolatrous people and unwilling to do what was right before God. In Genesis 15:16 the Lord referred to the Canaanites when he said, "The sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure." God waited for the fulfillment of His justice against these people and the people showed no remorse nor changed from their wicked ways and that history traipsed along because the Canaanites became more wicked and idolatrous. The Bible mentions Canaan, the forebear of the Canaanites in the family of Noah as the one who uncovered his father's shame. The Canaanites' subsequent appearance is in the Table of Nations. After this, they serve as the setting for the promise of Abraham and his descendants. God promised Abraham the land of the Canaanites.

The Bible in Numbers 13, gives an account of the spies sent to monitor the land of the Canaanites who lived in large and fortified cities. During the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, the Canaanites served several piecemeal threats to the religious sanctity of the Israelites. Their polytheistic proclivities and godless lifestyle became an enticement and a temptation to the devotion of God by Israel. The Canaanites prominently feature in the Book of Numbers and Joshua as the conquest of Israel. The Canaanites are best recalled for their destruction by Israel. In Joshua 6:21, the Israelites destroyed everything in the city of the Canaanites (Jericho), both male and female, young and old, ox, sheep, and donkey, with the edge of the sword. Did God command the killing splurge?

The narrative in Joshua 6 is clear that God ordered the Israelites to take the land. He also devoted the inhabitants of the land to destruction, and it was regarded as disobedience should they have any excuse of sparing what was sanctioned for destruction.

The polluted character of the Canaanites and religion are visibly explained in ethical and social scopes in Leviticus 18:24-25; 20:22-24 and in Deuteronomy 9:5; 12:29-31. Their sins comprised sexual promiscuity, perversion of associating with cults as well as the cruelty of child sacrifices. The historical texts of the people of Israel cite social oppression and violence of the Canaanites (1 Kings 14:24; 21:26; 2 Kings 16:3; 17:8; 21:2). If all these occurrences are considered as part of God's reasons for the carnage sanctioned in the book of Joshua, then it is more of divine judgment than a mere killing splurge.

The obliteration of the Canaanites with their possessions poses a seeming incongruity between the God of the OT and the God of the NT, and has flickered intense debate from antiquity to date.<sup>2</sup> The killing sanction does not seem to agree with the account of God's avowal in Genesis 12 to bless the nations through Abraham. How does the genocide of the nations fit the blessing of the nations through Abraham? It is in view of this that this study seeks to evaluate why an assumed just God will sanction the killing of an entire group. It also seeks to gain an understanding of what may have triggered the authorisation of such genocide, to formulate a contemporary Pentecostal theodicy, in the light of tallying the lessons and inferences for contemporary religious people in pluralistic societies.

This article explores the complex dimensions surrounding the controversial passage where God in Joshua 6:21 sanctions the killing of the Canaanites. By delving into various aspects, such as the timing of God's permission for killings, the potential effects of scriptural violence on extremism, the justice of God, the Pentecostal theodicy founded on actions, consequences, and responsibilities, and the lessons for religious movements in a pluralistic society, the article aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of this morally

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<sup>1</sup> Mike Leake, "Who Were the Canaanites, and Why Did God Order Their Destruction?," Bible Study Tools. <https://www.biblestudytools.com/bible-study/topical-studies/who-were-the-canaanites-and-why-did-god-order-their-destruction.html>, March 10, 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Charlie Trimm, *The Destruction of the Canaanites: God, Genocide, and Biblical Interpretation* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2022).

challenging biblical event. The article examines the circumstances under which God is believed to have condoned violence. By analyzing both historical and theological perspectives, it seeks to identify the factors that led to the specific instance of God allowing the Israelites to kill the Canaanites in Joshua 6:21. Drawing attention to the potential impact of violent narratives within religious texts, the article investigates whether scriptural violence can contribute to extremist interpretations. It explores the relationship between literal interpretations of violent passages and the emergence of religiously motivated extremism within certain contexts. A central focus of the article is the concept of divine justice as it relates to the sanctioned killings in Joshua 6:21. It delves into the theological principles and moral arguments that attempt to reconcile the belief in a just and merciful God with the authorization of such violence. A Pentecostal theodicy regarding actions, consequences, and responsibilities is formed to examine how this theological framework may provide insights into the justification for the Canaanites killings and the broader implications for understanding God's role in human affairs. Recognizing the challenges associated with religious diversity, the article concludes by exploring the lessons that can be gleaned from incidents like the Canaanite killings in Joshua 6:21. It discusses the importance of religious tolerance, peaceful coexistence, and mutual understanding among different faiths within a pluralistic society. By critically analysing these dimensions, the article aims to offer readers a nuanced perspective on the morally complex topic of God-sanctioned killings, encouraging thoughtful reflection and dialogue on the role of violence within religious narratives and its broader implications in today's world.

### **WHEN GOD SANCTIONS KILLINGS**

Reading from the book of 1 Samuel 15:2-3(NIV), God ordered Saul and the people of Israel as follows:

*I will punish the Amalekites for what they did to Israel when they waylaid them as they came up from Egypt. Now go, attack the Amalekites, and utterly destroy everything that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels, and donkeys.*

God ordered a similar incident when the Israelites were occupying the promised land (Deuteronomy 2:34; 3:6; 20:16-18). Why would God have the Israelites kill an entire group of people, women and children included? This is a complex and incongruent case in the assessment of the essentials of the just and peaceful God. Appreciating why God would command such devastation is complex and inconsistent because the Bible has said He is a good and just God. The complexities must prick consciences that God's ways are higher than men and His thoughts are higher than that of men (Isaiah 55:9; Romans 11:33-36).

Additionally, the infinite and eternal God knew the aftermath, of Israel's failure to destroy the Amalekites. The Amalekites would have bounced back to pester and impede the chosen Israelites from their divine and destined assignment.<sup>3</sup> An episode where Saul claimed to have killed everyone, yet spared the Amalekite king Agag incurred the displeasure of God because it would have a rippling effect on Israel and the ensuing generations (1 Samuel 15:20).

Noticeably, Saul was disobedient and a couple of decades later, the Amalekites held David and his men's families captive (1 Samuel 30:1-2). After David and his men confronted the Amalekites and saved their relatives, 400 Amalekites were left off the hook. If Saul had paid heed to the command of God to wipe out the Amalekites completely, this episode would not have surfaced. Hundreds of years along the line, a progeny of King Agag of the Amalekites, named Haman made an effort to exterminate the entire Jewish race in the account of the book of Esther. Saul's disobedience became a snare for the people of Israel throughout the age. The Omniscient God had prior knowledge of this and thus sanctioned the extinction of the Amalekites ahead of time.

Regarding the Canaanites, God instructed the Israelites, "In the cities of the nations the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, do not leave alive anything that breathes. Completely destroy them — the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites — as the LORD your God has commanded you. Otherwise, they will teach you to follow all the detestable things they do in worshiping their gods, and you will sin against the LORD your God" (Deuteronomy 20:16-18, NIV). The Israelites disobeyed the mission of God despite previous lessons, and as such what God foreknew, and told them happened in the future (Judges 2:1-3; 1 Kings 11:5; 14:24; 2 Kings 16:3-4).

A good and just God ordering the killing of the Canaanites is not to be seen as cruel, but to avert an imminent greater evil. Amongst the difficulties to understand on the part of God by most scholars is the aspect of the command which sanctions the death of children and infants as well. Would a just and good God order the death of innocent children who have not actively flouted any godly value and principle through sin and unbelief?

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<sup>3</sup> Trimm, *The Destruction of the Canaanites: God, Genocide, and Biblical Interpretation*.

It should be realized that children are not as innocent as often perceived (Psalm 51:5; 58:3). These children indisputably may grow to become adherents to the evil convictions and practices of their parents. Thus, God who knows the future would have it prevented because of its implications and inhibitions to the salvific purposes of God to use Israel as the ray of hope to the entire world.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, the children would grow up being indignant of the Israelites and seek to avenge the assumed unjust treatment of their tribe.

The focus of this study envisages stimulating humanity to trust the just God, even in the face of convolutions and perplexity in His dealings with the events of life because He is all-knowing, unlike men. The study further postulates that, God looks at things from a forthcoming and eternal perspective and that His ways are higher than the ways of men. God is just, holy, righteous, merciful, good, gracious, and loving. God's unparalleled attributes and essentials put together are a mystery to men because of His omniscience, yet the God of the OT is not dissimilar to the God of the NT because He is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8).

### **Effects of Scriptural Violence on Extremism**

Whereas the Bible stirs many to nonviolent ethics, actions and the salvation of the souls of men, extremists have likewise found their distinctiveness, inspiration, and legitimacy in the Bible. As a rich and diverse treasure trove of images is subject to rival interpretations, the Bible contains many cases that have enthused violent immoderation, providing legitimacy and validation to the trailblazers of violent groups, starting a base of collective culture and identity among extremists, and/or delivering defenses for extremist ideas.

Violent extremism refers to beliefs that encourage, condone, justify, or support terrorism, with extremism being defined as viciousness intended to destroy property or bystanders to influence another audience in pursuance of ideological, political, and/or religious opinions.<sup>5</sup> In a similar vein, other biblical characters who were akin to any form of violence or immoderation in the name of God serve as a stimulus for violent extremists, who often take the biblical text out of context and place themselves in the context of the text so that, they may become a fulfilment of the biblical texts in this contemporary pluralistic society.<sup>6</sup>

An example is the inland terrorist group, *the Covenant, Sword, and Arm of the Lord* (CSA), active from 1976 to 1985, who named their land in Arkansas "Zarephath-Horeb." This name merges the location of Elijah's home before he slayed 450 pagan prophets in 1 Kings 18:40, with the name of the mountain where Moses fled to after he slew an Egyptian out of anger in Exodus 2:11-15. Religious extremists characteristically study the historical context of the Bible to be unrelated and as an alternative seeing their own setting as the fulfilment of the scriptural text.<sup>7</sup>

A study conducted by Finkel et al. examined the effects of exposure to shared violence on support for religious extremism by claiming that in societies with elevated levels of informed violence, individuals misplace political and social confidence, develop exclusionary attitudes towards outgroups, and find legitimization in unconventional religious teachings which can endorse or provide backing for extremist viciousness.<sup>8</sup> Finkel et al. employed survey data from over 17,000 participants in 84 communes to review the span between 2013 and 2017 in Burkina Faso, Niger, and Chad. The study findings were that violent communities express considerably more support for religious extremism, with an upsurge in exclusionary outgroup biases and a turn to fundamentalistic religious interpretations being the primary machinery explaining, amplifying and legitimizing their extreme behaviors.<sup>9</sup>

Religion is widely liable for much of the extremists' proclivities in the world, both today and in the past, yet the adherents assert that most so-titled skirmishes in the name of religious conviction are in fact ethnic, tribal, nationalistic, and territorially influenced, yet they exploit religious conviction for their own selfish resolves.<sup>10</sup> This study, though very much aware of this reality, queries why religion is so cheaply browbeaten

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<sup>4</sup> P.J. Harland, "The Destruction of the Canaanites: God, Genocide, and Biblical Interpretation," *Charlie Trimm, Eerdmans, Reviews in Religion and Theology* 29, no. 3 (2022).

<sup>5</sup> K. A. Agyapong, "Religion amidst Tares and Weeds: A Pentecostal Perspective on the Hegemony of Nonreligious Movements and Scholarship on Religion in the 21st Century," *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (EHASS)* 3, no. 10 (2022): 515–38.

<sup>6</sup> Kwasi Atta Agyapong, "A Pentecostal Reflection on Christianity and Extremism: Christianity and Book Burnings in the Late Antiquity," *E-Journal of Religious & Theological Studies (ERATS)* 9, no. 7 (2023).

<sup>7</sup> Frances Flannery, "The Bible and Violent Extremism," <https://revelationbyjesuschrist.bibleodyssey.org/articles/the-bible-and-violent-extremism/>, 2023.

<sup>8</sup> Steven E Finkel et al., "Community Violence and Support for Violent Extremism: Evidence from the Sahel," *Political Psychology* 42, no. 1 (2021): 143–61.

<sup>9</sup> Flannery, "The Bible and Violent Extremism."

<sup>10</sup> David Rosen, "Violent Extremism: Is Religion the Problem or the Solution," in *World Economic Forum*, vol. 16, 2017.

for violent and extreme culminations. Nevertheless, almost all religions declare that peace and reconciliation and salvation of the souls of men are their goals, yet all too often they appear to make worse the plights of humanity.

In seeking to give meaning to members of a distinct society, religion is meant to bind up all the components of human identity and plays a key role in providing a sense of value, purpose, and security. Nevertheless, when groups or outgroups' unique and distinct identities are sacrificed on the altar of looking at what is right and most devout from a personal religious perspective and stance, self-righteousness sets in, and societal or communal peace is threatened or disparaged.<sup>11</sup> The outcome is that rival opinions and religious convictions of others are delegitimized, and conflict is sparked, thus tainting religions' most beautiful common values.

### **The Justice of God**

Justice is not a discretionary artefact of God but an unalterable dimension of His nature.<sup>12</sup> His statutory justice is in His demand for all rational beings to be orthodox in all esteems to His decrees. His distributive justice is how he deals with responsible beings according to the necessities of the law in rewarding or punishing them (Psalms 89:14). In compensable justice he dispenses rewards to His faithful ones (James 1:12; 2 Tim 4:8). In punitive or corrective justice, he exacts punishment on reason of contravention (2 Thessalonians 1:6). He cannot as an enormously righteous God, act on the contrary than consider and abhor sin as inherently detestable and worthy of reprimand. He cannot contradict himself and his very nature is rewarding right doings while not leaving sins unpunished (2 Timothy 2:13). His vital and eternal justice unchangeably regulates Him to superintend sin as such with deserved retribution. The justice of God as explained from the biblical standpoint has to do with God's very nature of dispensing deserved retribution to humans. The justice of God is not in its fulness the verdict of punishment or terror and fear. His justice is the totality of His being and sets mechanisms to ensure that every person receives fairness and mercy in this life and in the life to come.<sup>13</sup>

God's justice bestows on everyone due recompense. God's justice is the decency of His true nature, wherewith he does that which is righteous, fair, and gracious. *Shall not he render to every man according to his works?* (Proverbs 24:12). God's holiness is the cause of His justice, and His holiness will not permit Him to do the contrary. He cannot be unjust, and He cannot be unholy. Thus, the Canaanites received a just recompense from a just God who cannot do the contrary, because that is His nature. Laato asks this fundamental question, is it justice when deities allow human beings to suffer? This study from biblical underpinnings grounds it that, the justice of God can do nothing than dispensing that, which is His nature.

### **Contemporary Pentecostal Theodicy (Actions, Consequences and Responsibilities)**

Gottfried Leibniz devised the word theodicy to justify God's existence considering the apparent imperfections and inconsistencies of the world. He argued between faith and reason, freedom and necessity, and natural and divine law to build a theodicy on the goodness of God despite prevailing evil.<sup>14</sup> Theodicy means an exoneration of God in the light of ills or uncertainties. The contemporary Pentecostal theodicy in this study aims to answer the question of why a just God permits an alleged horrendous evil of sanctioning Israel to kill all the males, females, children, infants, and their animals.

This theodicy from the analysis of various scholarly works seeks to feature the core of actions, (sin and unbelief), consequences (judgement), and responsibility (willingness to accept one's charge or to account for one's actions). The justice of God in this theodicy is the constant and dependent variable being manipulated by the other independent or explanatory and moderating variables. What one does with the justice of God determines the consequence in the milieu and responsibility is key for a holistic analysis of events in a context.<sup>15</sup> The justice of God is immutable and uncompromising, and it behoves the people or groups to determine how God's justice will situate or relate with them, just as happened between the justice of God and the Canaanites. Whether the justice of God favors or reprimands, the benefactor is always the people in the setting who set the pace for how the justice of God should relate to them. The theodicy seeks to establish that, the Canaanites'

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<sup>11</sup> Rosen, "Violent Extremism: Is Religion the Problem or the Solution."

<sup>12</sup> Matthew George, "Justice of God," in *Easton Bible Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 1897).

<sup>13</sup> Joe Ibojie, *The Justice of God: Victory in Everyday Living* (Aberdeen: Cross House Books., 2009).

<sup>14</sup> Gottfried Leibniz, *Theodicy: Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man, and the Origin of Evil* (Chicago: Open Court Publishers, 1998).

<sup>15</sup> Antii. Laato, *Theodicy in the World of the Bible: The Goodness of God and the Problem of Evil* (Leiden: . Brill, 2003).

dealings with the justice of God ignited the judgement meted out to them, though it was an unpleasant judgement.

The clarifications of this defense or theodicy of God in this study are grouped into two classes. Firstly, man's freedom and right to choices often appear incompatible with the will of the divine nature of God. Nonetheless, freedom is deemed necessary so that a person or group of people may own personal actions which determine the consequence. Secondly, the conduct of the just God makes Him participate in the existence of evil even though man is a free moral, and responsible being. God participates when the freedom given to man grounds a demeanor that is conflicting with the goodness, holiness, and justice of God.

The foreknowledge of God makes the future sure and resolute, but his providence and his fore ordinance, upon which foreknowledge originates accomplish more for God. God knew what the Canaanites would become and how they may become an impediment to the trajectory of the salvific history of humankind. This does not mean they were destined to work against God. Freely they chose to become who God knew they would be according to His foreknowledge. God as a result made no sin nor blunder for sanctioning Israel to wipe out their entire population from the face of the earth. Justice demands that sin must not go unpunished, that all actions whether good or bad have consequences and that the perpetrators are accountable. God is not a man who can look upon actions with apathy and suspend his verdict, since nothing exists, except by the pronouncements of His resolve and through the act of His strength.

This theodicy sheds light on God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, saved only Lot and his family, and burned the rest together with their possessions. Lot's encounter with God in Genesis 19 made a demand on God's salvific pursuit for himself and his family and as a result, they were saved from destruction. Even in salvation, Lot's wife was destroyed when she flouted the justice of God by turning back against the instruction of God. God's justice demands that men will be found faithful and obedient to His dictates and instructions.

This contemporary Pentecostal theodicy affirms that God's dealings with the Canaanites have not changed and as a result, the God of the OT is not different from the NT God or cannot be assumed as having possibly converted during the NT era. In the same vein, the Bible has clearly stated that God has given his only Son for the whole human race and as the only savior of men in John 3:16. Nevertheless, God will save men who will avoid sin and eschew unbelief and thereafter abandon all others to the judgement of God by eternal torment, though they were all created to show forth God's goodness, justice, and qualities just like the Canaanites. This outcome just like the sanction to destroy the Canaanites inspires more horror on why a just God could sentence all men on earth who will not accept His offer of salvation through His son Jesus Christ to eternal destruction.

Additionally, how does one reconcile those countless men who by virtue of their disposition and places of birth whether male, female, or children have never heard of Jesus Christ, saviour of humans and they die, to the sanctioning of Canaanites' obliteration by God? These men who perhaps may not have heard of Jesus are also sentenced by God to the eternal and most horrifying gloom, with the worst of all creatures, and who in essence have not been more wicked than others who perchance are amongst the number of elect and thereby sanctioned to enjoy an eternal felicity. This study's theodicy presents that, the God who sanctioned the extinction of the Canaanites should not be envisaged as changed or converted in the New Testament because He is still the same due to his nature of immutability. God is still sentencing males, females, children, and infants who will not meet His just standards to eternal damnation and that is what affirms Him as a just God who cannot compromise on His standards.

The crux of the matter on the contemporary pentecostal theodicy is to diffuse the false notions that epitomize God as an out-and-out prince employing a tyrannical power, unprepared to love or to be loved, and a prejudiced and unjust figure. God's justice is best understood and appreciated in His delivery of judgements to human actions, and men's aptness to open to responsibility. The essence of piety is not only to come in awe before God, but also to show love to Him above all other things, and that cannot occur unless there is adequate knowledge of His justice and standards capable of stirring the love He deserves and that is the premise of the devised contemporary Pentecostal theodicy in this study.

### **Lessons for Religious Movements in a Pluralistic Society**

- There is no need for religious killings as the grand battle was fought for the last time on the cross by Jesus Christ.
- Religious tolerance amongst divergent religious opinions must be guarded earnestly as the peace and sanctity needed for religion to thrive is premised on tolerance for one another.
- God was in accordance with His justice when He sanctioned Israel to kill the Canaanites. However, contemporary society has no room for such miscreant demeanors because the justice of God will no

more sanction men to go contrary to the rules that govern the sustenance and preservation of lives on the globe.

- The justice of God cannot overlook human actions without due recompense, just as sin cannot go unpunished, so engaging in religious violence or vehemence in this contemporary time is deviant behavior.
- Contemporary society just as in the New Testament does not permit religious guerrilla fighters to advance the cause of a just God. God is better armed to fight unbelievers than His devotees should He want to do so.
- Religious attempts to fight for God are deemed as living in the past to destroy the God-ordained peace ignorantly or maliciously through the earnest work of God throughout the past. The present is the toil of the past and none must be justified for living in the past life to destroy the present.
- Any religious extremist proclivities to work ill toward the present contemporary society is a premeditated or ignorant attempt to work against the God who through past principles made foundational the present.
- Religious intolerance and killings in the name of a just God must be 'killed' in its entirety in any contemporary society for religious movements to thrive and survive the twenty-first century.

### Discussion Summary

God's sanction to exterminate the Canaanites was not simply a killing spree for nothing but about launching God's kingdom amongst people and driving out sin and unbelief which has the power to influence and taint the chosen people of God. This can be likened to the *Missio-Dei* (mission of God) through Jesus Christ's death on the cross as he utterly destroys all sin and unbelief while replacing them with the worship of the Father in truth and in spirit (John 4:24). The primo *Missio-Dei* of God is accomplished fully in Christ, therefore, the contemporary society has no business in reinventing the wheels of venturing into killings for the sake of displacing sin or unbelief as that may equate unjustified religious extremist proclivities unsanctioned by the just God, but simply led by fantasy and ignorance of the timings in God's dealings.

Jesus through His death on the cross is rescuing and saving everything that comes with viciousness and extremism and swapping them with the peace of the just God. Contemporary believers must acknowledge that Jesus conquered the world of sin and unbelief through the cross and his violent death ultimately put an end to all violent religious killings.

Contemporary Pentecostal theodicy holds it that, sin is a serious commerce with God and carries with it actions, consequences, and responsibilities. A just God must not allow sin to flourish in his domain as sin is contagious and deadly. The wage of sin is death (Romans 6:23) and that is what the Canaanites merited. Nevertheless, "For the Law was given by Moses but Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17, KJV). Christ was revealed and grace and truth have prevailed, and none in the society must be killed as under the dispensation of Moses where God sanctioned the killing of the disobedient by Israel. God's intention to bless the nations through Abraham's seed means, through Jesus Christ, the unscrupulous genocide of sinners and unbelievers by similar fates men have been dealt with entirely.

### CONCLUSION

This study has examined the command of God to exterminate the Canaanites in the light of why a just God would sanction a purported horrendous act of cruelty. The study acmes that, God is still destroying people from every tribe because of sin and unbelief by pricking their hearts and consciences, and he is eventually doing it through the self-sacrifice of His Son Jesus Christ. Jesus physically died in place of sinners and unbelievers and as such, none must be killed physically for unbelief. A just and peaceful God will always sanction what is right as he did with the Canaanites, yet Christ died for all, and none must be killed for sin or unbelief to religious dogma.

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## ABOUT AUTHORS

Kwasi Atta Agyapong holds a Bachelor of Theology degree, a Master of Arts degree in Pentecostal Studies, and is currently pursuing a PhD at the Philippines Christian University. His area of expertise lies in the study of African Pentecostal Spirituality and Cultural Adaptation within academia. His research primarily centers around Pentecostalism, witchcraft studies, mythology, and philosophy of religion. Alongside his academic pursuits, he is an ordained minister within The Church of Pentecost, a member of the American Anthropological Association, and actively contributes as a reviewer for several peer-reviewed journals.

Emmanuel Foster Asamoah is a Ph.D. candidate at Stellenbosch University, South Africa. He is actively involved in the academic community as a member of the Institute of Biblical Scholarship in Africa. He contributes to scholarly discourse by reviewing works for various peer-reviewed journals. Ordained as a minister of The Church of Pentecost, he currently serves in Winneba Abasraba, Ghana. Committed to education, Asamoah is also an adjunct lecturer at Pentecost University, Ghana. His diverse scholarly interests span Bible Translation, New Testament Biblical Studies, Mother Tongue Hermeneutics, African Christianity, Pentecostal Studies, and Missiology.

Diana Adjei-Fianko, MPhil, is currently pursuing her PhD at the Department of Arts Education, University of Cape Coast, Ghana. Alongside her academic endeavors, she serves as a Religious and Moral Educator at the University of Education, Winneba, located in the Central Region. With a wealth of teaching experience spanning from basic education to tertiary levels, she brings a diverse educational background to her research pursuits. Her research interests encompass Biblical Exegesis and Hermeneutics, Comparative Religion, Pedagogies and Approaches for teaching Religious and Moral Education, and the intersection of Faith-Based Organizations and Child Development.

Emmanuel Agyei Kwafo (Bachelor of Science Education, MA Theology and Missions, MPhil Leadership) is an adjunct lecturer at the Pentecost University, Ghana. He is an ordained minister of the Church of Pentecost and the National Coordinator for the Home and Urban Missions of the church of Pentecost from 2019 to date. His research interest focuses on leadership and Missions to the Unreached People Groups of Africa.