

# A BIBLICAL CRITIQUE OF THE YUNA PEOPLES' BELIEF IN *HONE HEWA* *TAWALIPA*, THE GREAT SPIRIT

**Auwi Muki**

*Auwi Muki graduated from the Christian Leaders' Training College in Papua New Guinea in 2010. This article was Auwi's Bachelor of Theology thesis.*

## INTRODUCTION

This paper is written to deal with the problem that the second- and third-generation Yuna people do not take the gospel message seriously, as did their fathers. In the book, *The Tree of Life*, the author states, "Recent studies have proven that the belief and teaching of savage tribes, living without a vestige of religion, as to be mere travellers' tales."<sup>1</sup> This means that belief in gods, or a God, is not foreign to such tribes, therefore, it cannot be ruled out as an unknown idea. Peter Ballard supports the view with a quote from Father Wilhelm Schmidt:

*The Origin of the Idea of God*, first published in 1912, to postulate a primitive monotheism at the dawn of human existence, a monotheism later overlaid by polytheistic beliefs, and yet preserved in recognisable form in the religions of primitive peoples. . . . Thus, a reversal of the usual position of those who have been influenced by evolutionary theory. . . . In any event, it is a striking fact that many primitive cultures have a belief in some sort of High God, even though there, very often, is no specific ritual directed towards such a Being.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> G. W. Trompf, C. E. Loeliger, and J. Kadiba, eds, *Religion in Melanesia* (Port Moresby PNG: University of Papua New Guinea, 1982), p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Ballard, *Similarities in Primitive Beliefs in an All-Powerful God*. Available at <http://www.peterballard.org/index.html>. Accessed on April 22, 2009.

Based on these thoughts, from evidences within the Yuna culture, and from the Bible, this paper will try to convince today's generation of Yuna men, women, and children that *Hone Hewa Tawalipa* of the Yuna, through the ages past, was none other than the God of the Bible. Evidences within Yuna culture will be discussed, and comparisons made, to demonstrate this to the reader. The questions that this paper will grapple with, in contradiction to the theory of evolution, is why would people dream of, and search for, light that they did not know about? Why would primitive Yuna people fear and believe in such a Being if there was none? Why would people act and react in the way they did if there was no Person or power out there? Those walking in darkness would agree that, if they sense something or someone in the dark, they would soon realise the reality of it being maybe a tree, a hole, an animal, or a person. The people of primitive cultures in Melanesia, who believed in a Supreme Being, had their minds clouded by the belief in every other dark, evil spirit of this world, but they would still yearn for peace and freedom from their fear. Why hope or yearn at all for freedom and peace if there was no answer for it? Yuna people's belief in *Hone Hewa Tawalipa* was no exception.

### **THE YUNA PEOPLE AND THEIR BELIEF IN A SUPREME SPIRIT**

This section introduces the Yuna people, their location, and their belief in a Supreme Spirit. The Hala Yuna<sup>3</sup> people live along the Muller Range, along the Strickland and Pori Rivers, in the Hela Province of Papua New Guinea. In mythology, they are related to the Hela Huli to the south, to the Hela Duguba located southwest of Southern Highlands Province, and to the Hela Opena people of Enga to the east. The Strickland Gorge, well known since the 1950s, lies in the land of the Yuna.<sup>4</sup> The first white man entered the land of the Yuna as recently as 1954.<sup>5</sup> The Yuna share their borders with

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<sup>3</sup> The *Huli*, pronounce an "e", while the Yuna pronounce an "a" for the same word *Hela* or *Hala*.

<sup>4</sup> J. P. Sinclair, *Behind the Ranges: Patrolling in Papua New Guinea* (Carlton Vic: Melbourne University Press, 1966), pp. 108-109.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* The land of the Yuna was discovered in 1954, and this discovery caught worldwide attention, describing it as, "the discovery of a lost Shangrila" in the Papuan wilds, peopled by thousands of primitives, who had never seen a white man.

the Hewa and the Ipili people, towards the east<sup>6</sup>, the Kalai people to the west, and the Min people to the north – beyond the Lagaip River, which meets the Strickland River flowing into the Fly River. These four peoples: the Huli, Yuna, Opena, and Duguba, are sons of the same ancestor Hela,<sup>7</sup> but they all speak different languages. They have their own spirits, and their own styles of worship.

However, there is one particular Spirit that has remained a mystery over the centuries for the Yuna, as it has for the Hela Huli<sup>8</sup> and the Hela Opena. The Yuna people called Him *Hone Hewa*.<sup>9</sup> *Hewa* is the Yuna word for “the sun”; the other name used for him was *Tawalipa*.<sup>10</sup> The Hela Huli called Him *Datagaliwabe*.<sup>11</sup> *Hone Hewa* was, however, used outside the house, as one who judges, who sees all, and knows all, gives protection, and is eternal, while *Tawalipa* was used inside the house, as a guard who knows where one sleeps, and hears every conversation. His presence was believed to be in the centre post that supports every other part of the structure. All other parts of the house touch this central piece. For convenience sake, we will refer to this Supreme Spirit as *Hone Hewa Tawalipa* in this paper.

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<sup>6</sup> *Ipili* people are the *Hela Opena*, and are brothers of the *Huli*, *Yuna*, and *Duguba* people.

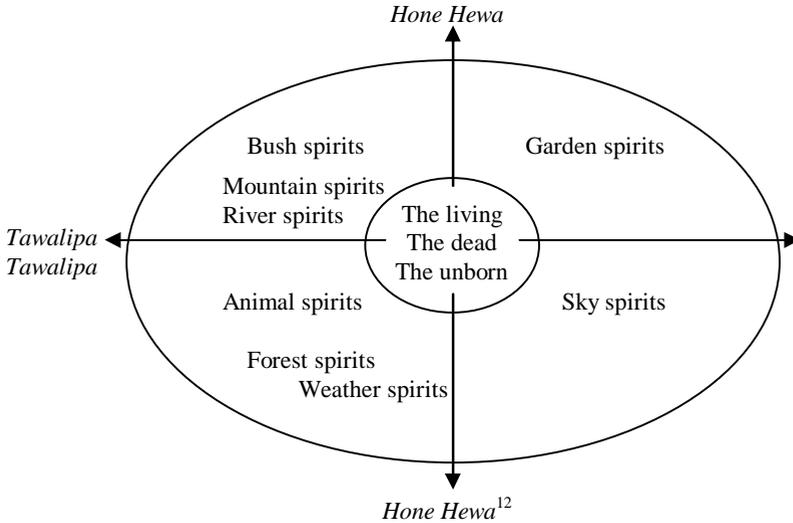
<sup>7</sup> Geshon Pokono, “Missionary Endeavour Towards the Tribal People of Hela Huli and its Challenges for Missions”, B.Th. thesis, Banz PNG: CLTC, October 2007.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> This name was used while outside, when the sun was visible, to refer to the Supreme Spirit as all-knowing and all-seeing, thus proving Yuna belief in a place and a presence beyond the visible sky.

<sup>10</sup> This name was used inside the house, anytime, referring to the Supreme Spirit as the all-seeing, all-knowing, loving, a good listener, and providing security.

<sup>11</sup> Robert M. Glasse, *The Huli of Papua: A Cognatic Descent System* (Paris France: Mouton & Co, 1968), p. 21. Glasse, a German anthropologist, studied *Hela Huli* culture in the 1950s.



**Figure 1. Yuna belief in *Hone Hewa* going beyond animistic beliefs, totems, and spirits**

The Yuna believed the Supreme Spirit, *Hone Hewa Tawalipa*, as someone above the other spirits, such as spirits of rivers, spirits of the bush, spirits of the grassland, spirits of the mountains, and spirits of ancestors. According to the Yuna way of thinking, they could not relate to the Supreme Spirit, even though they believed in His existence, and His ability to know all, see all, and hear all, and punish those who did wrong.

### **EVIDENCES OF YUNA YEARNING FOR MEANINGFUL WORSHIP AND INTIMACY**

This section deals with evidences of the Yuna people's yearning for intimacy and true worship. "Culture consists of two levels – the surface behaviour level, and the deep, worldview level. At the core of culture, and, therefore, at the very heart of all human life, lies the structuring of the basic assumptions, values, and allegiances we call worldview."<sup>13</sup> Yuna people

<sup>12</sup> Neville Bartle, "Death, Witchcraft, and the Spirit World in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea", in *Point* 29 (2005), pp. 24-25.

<sup>13</sup> Sydney Gould, "Vernacular Bible Reading in a Traditionally Oral Society", Ph.D. diss., St Lucia Qld: University of Queensland, 2005, p. 91.

are no exception to this statement. They, too, had behaviour and patterns of life that required explanation. Elderly Yuna men and women would agree that they all dreamed of being closer to *Hone Hewa Tawalipa*, but such longings remained only as myths and wishful thoughts. Many, however, acknowledged and honoured Him, but lacked intimacy and assurance.<sup>14</sup> Three examples of such yearnings are below.

Firstly, certain men, at pig-killing ceremonies, would kill the largest male pig, and then get unmarried men, who had never experienced sexual union with a woman, to toss the dead pig into the air, saying, “This is your pig for blessing us, and giving us sweet potatoes to raise these pigs.” The name addressed, while tossing it, was “the Sun, *Hone Hewa*”. The meat of this pig was to be eaten only by unmarried men.<sup>15</sup>

Secondly, as seen by the upward direction, in which the dead pig was thrown, Yuna believed that *Hone Hewa Tawalipa* existed up there in the sky, and was also known as the Father.<sup>16</sup> In the same way, the God of the Bible is our Father.<sup>17</sup> He is on His throne, in heaven, beyond the sky.<sup>18</sup> Why is the concept of this Supreme Spirit up in the sky significant? The reason is that every spirit the Yuna worshipped, feared, and served, was believed to dwell down here on earth, like the spirits of the river (*ipa tiri*), of the sacred pools (*yu ane*), the sacred stones (*awi*), of ancestors (*kene*

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<sup>14</sup> Gershon Pokono, “Missionary Endeavour Towards the Tribal People of Hela Huli and its Challenges for Missions”, B.Th. thesis, Banz PNG: CLTC, October 2007, p. 3.

<sup>15</sup> Chief Karibe Batane. Interview by author in *tok ples*, Sigri, April 6, 2009.

<sup>16</sup> Sangi Ambuabe, Abe clan chief. Interview by author in *tok ples*, Kuyebi, April 4, 2010.

<sup>17</sup> Pangu Paliago, pastor CBCPNG. Interview by author in *tok ples*, Wewak, January 10, 2010. Pangu was a pioneer Yuna graduate of CLTC in 1969, and now serves as Principal of CBC Highlands Regional Tok Pisin Bible School at Kelabo. He states that he found out, after further study and ministry experience, that the Supreme Spirit of the Yuna was, in fact, the God of the Bible, but could not make the name change, because of the two different names used, especially, *hewa*, “sun”, which today’s people could mistake for the real sun.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* On the other hand, the earth, in the Yuna mind, was Mother, from where everyone gets their food.

*rinigo*), and many more. But who, then, was this Spirit up there, and why would Yuna people acknowledge Him at all, if He were not real?

Thirdly, for centuries, Yuna yearned to fight the *rama* evil spirits, and defeat them. A common saying by those who have lost loved ones was, “If only these (*rama*) evil spirits had bodies, like humans, I would declare war against their line, and tell my son to carry on the fight after I die, until they are defeated forever.”<sup>19</sup> Though not stated, death was credited to the *rama* evil spirits, and not the Supreme Spirit, *Hone Hewa Tawalipa*. Truths that are seen in this action, and need mentioning, are:

- the Yuna people’s belief that the *rama* evil spirits were not omnipotent;
- that they could be defeated;
- that the *rama* evil spirits were not omniscient;
- that Yuna people can still dream of ways to defeat them, and be free from their powers.

Out of this heart-cry of primitive Yuna are several questions that demand answers. Why would those who had never been exposed to any other power greater than the evil spirits *rama*, dream of possible victory, unless, and unknown to them, knowledge of a Superior Being had already been implanted in them? Who could the source of this great Power be? Was there a voice telling them there is someone, who is able, and willing, to defend them, help them, and save them? Why would men and boys, who fought in tribal warfare, say, “I would tell my son to continue the fight”? The Son of the Supreme Spirit completed the work on the day of God’s choosing. Furthermore, yearning for victory over unseen, powerful spirits, sounds strange. However, such thoughts and words were never in vain, in that attaining the knowledge to make the connection between the “Supreme Spirit”, and the power available in Him to defeat the evil spirits, was just a matter of time. This leads us to another important question.

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<sup>19</sup> Kuruku Paraye, Wanga clan chief. Interview by author in *tok ples*, Sigri, March 10, 2010.

When gods and spirits are believed to see all, sense all, hear all, and punish all, how can a person ever dream about escaping unseen? On one hand, people are supposed to be totally committed to their gods, in worship and in service, but yet, the Yuna, though offering sacrifices to the evil spirits, in their times of grief and sorrow, dared to think and yearn, "If only there was a way, or a greater power, that would deal with these evil spirits."<sup>20</sup> The dream was that there had to be someone, or some way out there, to help the primitive people. Telford says, "There was clear evidence that Yuna people were sacrificing to the *rama* evil spirits, only to appease them, and out of fear, not with respect, and in worship."<sup>21</sup> No specific sacrifice was offered to *Hone Hewa Tawalipa* on a daily, monthly, or yearly basis. By the same token, there was no set requirement to attract His favour through sacrifices, though His name was used. However, he was honoured and revered as One who is there.

Finally, the Yuna yearned to look after pigs, to feed themselves and their children. But every pig the Yuna raised was killed, and the meat and blood given to appease the *rama* evil spirits. What was left for the Yuna man and his family was just skin, fingers, and bones. Whenever a large pig was sighted in the family home, Yuna men knew that the same old enemy, the *rama* evil spirits, would inflict someone with an illness, so the pig would be slaughtered for sacrifice. Unfortunately, such dreadful events would actually happen, resulting in every single bit of the pork meat being given to the *rama* evil spirit, with nothing left for the pig owner to take home to his family. The worst thing about this, for the Yuna, was that they knew it was *rama* evil spirits tricking them. Again, the yearning of the Yuna was, "When will I ever be able to multiply my pigs, and have the meat to myself,

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Brian Telford. Interview by author through skype, CLTC, March 2010. Brian and his wife, Helen, from New Zealand, settled among the Yuna people in Arou as missionaries in 1969, only five years after the Yuna opened up to the outside world. He and Ian Armitage, another New Zealander, who had settled with his wife, Aileen, and children, upriver at Kelabo, among the Yuna, made the first contact with *Kalai* people to the west at the wishes and guidance of the Yuna people. These two men were the first white men, also known as *Bogaye*, to be sighted by the *Kalai* people.

and to my family?”<sup>22</sup> Why would primitive Yuna yearn for such a possibility if there was no such power available out there? The coming of the first missionary family to settle at the Arou Mission Station arrived only three years after the area had been opened up to the outside world. The coming of the first missionary family to settle at Arou was celebrated with one of the biggest pig-killing feasts. The relief and joy of enjoying pork meat for themselves was, in fact, celebrated in style, and with great expression of emotion on that memorable day.<sup>23</sup> The Yuna, today, are still known for killing pigs and distributing meat to friends and family at religious gatherings. In this action, the Yuna are saying “thank you” to God, and showing the devil his powerlessness.

### **EVIDENCES OF YUNA RESPONSE TO THE REVELATION OF THE SUPREME SPIRIT**

This section will discuss the Yuna people’s response to the revelation of the Supreme Spirit. Mantovani recalls an interesting tale:

A common story tells of a painting in a church in the Pacific depicting the arrival of first missionaries, the strange thing about this picture was that, on the shore, among the crowd awaiting their arrival, is Christ Himself. The message, then, is clear, that the role of missionaries is to point to the One, who is already present, without having being recognised.<sup>24</sup>

When missionaries brought the gospel to the land of the Yuna, the people put up little resistance to the gospel message, and the missionaries who brought it. Only a small percentage tried to resist, otherwise every one of the first-generation Yuna people responded to the gospel positively.<sup>25</sup> In

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<sup>22</sup> Chief Karibe Batane. Interview by author in *tok ples*, Sigri, April 6, 2009.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ennio Mantovani, *Divine Revelation and the Religions in PNG* (Goroka PNG: Melanesian Institute, 2000), p. v.

<sup>25</sup> Ian Armitage, “Missionary Report: April, 1965” (Banz PNG: CLTC vertical files). Ian Armitage, and his wife, Aileen, have reported that young men, who were warriors, came to the mission voluntarily in a matter of days after their arrival from West Sepik, asking that missionaries come to their village to tell their people about Jesus.

one of his earliest reports, Armitage states, “In just 12 months, there has been a great movement, as groups of people have forsaken the sacrificing of pigs to appease and supplicate the spirits.” “They have left behind cultural marriage customs, which clash with the Word of God, and, in short, made revolutionary changes in their way of life.”<sup>26</sup> Another missionary to Yuna people in the Pori Valley, to the southeast, reports, around the same time, “It would appear that there is very little flock in the valley, who have not professed faith in Christ. Almost all (apart from these) have been instructed or counselled in small groups or family units. There has been widespread forsaking of spirit practices.”<sup>27</sup>

What could have caused such a change of loyalty in a primitive tribe in a matter of just weeks or months of having been introduced to the white man, and the gospel message he brought? To reach the Yuna with the gospel, a power encounter was not necessary. Because their positive response to the gospel proves that they had been waiting to be free of killing pigs for the *rama* evil spirits. However, we will now consider evidences of similar beliefs in a Supreme Spirit in Papua New Guinea, and a yearning to know Him more, as the Yuna people did.

### **EXAMPLES OF A BELIEF IN A SUPREME SPIRIT IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA**

This section will demonstrate to the reader that Yuna people were not isolated in their belief in a Supreme Spirit. Many tribes in Papua New Guinea, and in Melanesia, believed in a Supreme Spirit, as did the Yuna. The Kalai people are neighbours of the Yuna, and live towards the west, bordering Southern Highlands Province and Western Province. They believed in a Supreme Spirit, whom they called *Dikima* in their own dialect. “He was believed to be creator, and all-powerful, who could even turn the mighty Strickland River around.”<sup>28</sup> *Dikima* was believed to be eternal,

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<sup>26</sup> Glenda Giles, linguist, educator, and missionary. Interview with author, Wewak, January 13, 2010. Yuna people always thought murder and stealing were wrong, however, polygamy was permissible.

<sup>27</sup> Bob Dobbie, “Missionary Report: April, 1965” (Banz PNG: CLTC vertical files). Bob Dobbie and his wife were also from New Zealand, and served as missionaries among the Yuna people, in the Pori Valley.

<sup>28</sup> Sande Behelia, CBC pastor. Interview by author in *tok ples*, Kelabo, April 7, 2010.

unchangeable, holy, and without blame. The Spirit was omnipotent, to the point of knowing and seeing things done in secret (such as stealing, lying, and adultery), thus being able to reveal wrongs, and punish evildoers accordingly.<sup>29</sup> He was also believed to travel long distances with his whole house, thus showing that He was all-sufficient, needing nothing. He never stayed in houses built by other people. He was also believed to be Light and glorious, thus needing no light.<sup>30</sup> The moon was owned by *Dikima*, who originally kept it here on earth, but later it had escaped to the sky. Ancestors tried building a tall tree house to bring it back to earth, but did not succeed.<sup>31</sup>

The Kalai believed *Dikima* was married, and had a son by His wife. However, the son and wife were warned against urinating in certain places around the area where they lived, especially when *Dikima* was not at home. The story continues that they disobeyed these words, and a flood started, which became a lake, covering the whole area. The mother and son climbed up the tallest tree, but the floodwaters kept rising up to them. The mother decided to throw her only son into the water, but still the water kept rising. The husband saw what was happening, and shot an arrow, aiming at her heart. Hitting its target, the arrow took her heart to a mountaintop, with the result that the lake dried up.<sup>32</sup> Though very close to the biblical account of the great flood, and Christ's sacrificial death on the cross to save sinners' souls, there are differences. In the Kalai story, a woman is involved, and the son dies in the floodwaters, and does not rise again.

The Wapisumi people of Kagua, in Southern Highlands Province, believed that "the Father up in the sky was named *Yakali*". He was revered as one who was above all other spirits, was over all creation, and was the Father

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<sup>29</sup> David Bitaka, CBC pastor. Interview by author in *tok ples*, Kelabo, April 7, 2010.

<sup>30</sup> Daniel Gogole, CBC pastor. Interview by author in *tok ples*, Kelabo, April 7, 2010.

<sup>31</sup> Ben Homabu, CBC pastor. Interview by author in *tok ples*, Kelabo, April 7, 2010. Could this be their version of the Tower of Babel?

<sup>32</sup> Jacob Wanta, CBC pastor. Interview by author in *tok ples* by questionnaire, Kelabo, April 7, 2010. Could this be their version of Adam's disobedience, the great flood in Gen 6, and the redemption stories?

of all human beings. It was believed that all blessings flowed from Him, especially when people offered Him white pigs.<sup>33</sup>

The Kobon people, living on the border of the Western Highlands and Madang Provinces, believed in, and revered, a Supreme Being, whom they called *Rumualye*. *Rumu* means “thunder”, and *alye* means “calls”; literally “he who speaks with thunder”.<sup>34</sup> Thunder was identified as his voice, and a warning against the possible approach of enemies. *Rumualye* was called upon in times of enemy tribal attacks, when someone in the family was sick, or when people wanted to settle grievances. He was called upon to help care for pigs.<sup>35</sup> Before a pig was killed, a water basin was put near it, and someone would thank *Rumualye* for making the pig grow big, and pray that He would do the same for other pigs in future. The people also had laws for initiation (similar to the Ten Commandments). The whole tribe believed the initiation laws to be from the Supreme Being *Rumualye*.<sup>36</sup>

Before missionaries brought the gospel, the Mape people of Finschhafen, in Morobe Province, believed in a Supreme Spirit, a male called *Pangu*, who existed in the skies. He was believed to be eternal, and creator of all things seen and unseen. Lightning and thunder were believed to be caused by *Pangu*.<sup>37</sup>

The Gogodala people of Western Province believed a Supreme Spirit called *Aida*. He was believed to be the father of all kinds of good spirits, evil spirits, and of human beings. *Aida* was a male spirit, believed to be equally powerful over both the seen and the unseen. This spirit was invisible, but was able to be manifested in chiefs and hunters by giving them success in war hunting.<sup>38</sup> Success in any field was credited to *Aida*. He was believed to punish people through different misfortunes if chiefs did not give him his due share of the meat from hunting, or when women trespassed into areas

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<sup>33</sup> Bartle, “Death, Witchcraft, and the Spirit World”, pp. 135-137.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Max Martin, CLTC student. Interview by author, CLTC, March 2009.

<sup>38</sup> Buga’abo KUPIYE, CLTC student. Interview by author, CLTC, July 2009.

where he was believed to be living.<sup>39</sup> However, this spirit expected, and received, a share of food and produce from gardens, a share of animal meat, and he sometimes took on human form, and visited chiefs, or was seen by ordinary people. When this occurred, the person would become confused in his or her mind, and quickly become ill.

However, the Yuna Supreme Spirit was present, but could not be seen, and did not require a share of the hunting, gardening, or fighting spoils. The Aifhon tribal people of West New Britain Province believed in a Supreme Spirit, called *Egumin*, meaning “unseen supreme spirit, above all powers and spirits”. He was without a beginning. His name is described with a phrase *egumin mopol*, meaning “the blooming flowers”. This name describes beauty, brightness, and glory. He did not have any personal contact with people, but His presence could be felt by certain individuals, at certain places. He was believed to be a good spirit, and nothing bad was caused by him. Instead, all misfortune came from evil spirits,<sup>40</sup> thus contradicting *Hone Hewa Tawalipa* of the Yuna, who punished evil done in secret, or in public, through sickness, death, or pain. But, on the positive side, the *egumin*, like the Yuna *Hone Hewa Tawalipa*, was the source of all good things, and His presence could be sensed, just as the Yuna believed about the presence of their Supreme Spirit.

The Kupurup clan and people of Mendi, in Southern Highlands Province, believed and worshipped a Supreme Spirit called the *Sakil-Aol*, meaning “Man of Mercy”, who was believed to be watching over people in kind ways, with good intentions. On the other hand, “Mercy Man” would also kill those who did wrong.<sup>41</sup> The principal spirit, worshipped by the Dinga people of Chimbu, was named *Yanigelwa*. He was known as an all-powerful source of strength to win wars, all-knowing of things done in secret, and was everywhere at all times. He was eternal, and creator of earth and the sky, and was protector of everyone from all kinds of evil,

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Samson Kieng, CLTC student from Kimbe. Interview by author, CLTC, July 2009.

<sup>41</sup> Mark Kas, student from Mendi. Interview by author, CLTC, July 2009.

though there was no evidence of personal contact, by the way of offering sacrifices, or through prayers.<sup>42</sup>

### **EXAMPLES FROM MELANESIA AND FROM AROUND THE WORLD**

Don Richardson, in his book, *Peace Child*, recalls a certain experience among the Dani tribe. “The new missionary had grasped just two words of the local language: *ki* meaning “life”, and *wone* meaning “words”. In his first formal speech, the missionary announced that he had come to them with the *ki wone*, to which the younger generation did not pay much attention, but the older folk were awe-struck. Why? Their ancestors foretold that a white-skinned person would bring the *ki wone* or “words of life”. It was also foretold that such an event would signal the return of immortality to mankind. It was predicted that the white-skinned knew the secret to eternal life, and, if the people believed these words, it would result in immortality passing on to them. That same night, while the missionary was doing other things, the whole valley burst forth into singing. Next morning, thousands surrounded the missionary’s house, asking, “How should we welcome the words of life, the *ki wone*?”<sup>43</sup> However, Yuna people had been told by their ancestors that when men with white feet were sighted in their land everyone must prepare to die, because their coming was a sign of the end of the world.<sup>44</sup>

The Birao people of Guadalcanal, in the Solomon Islands, believed in supreme spirits called *Garehoba* and *Chacha*. People feared these spirits, because they believed that the spirits could kill if the people did unpleasant things towards the spirits, or to others in the community (such as murder, stealing, adultery, or incest). However, no sacrifice was expected by the spirits, except that, because they were male spirits, they called upon men to

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<sup>42</sup> Francis Poye, “A Biblical Critique of the Worship of the Sun God ‘Yanigelwa’ by the Dinga People of Papua New Guinea”, in *Melanesian Journal of Theology* 20-1 (2004), pp. 84-86.

<sup>43</sup> Don Richardson, *Peace Child* (Ventura CA: Regal Books, 2005), pp. 243-244.

<sup>44</sup> Hani, pioneer CBC pastor at Pori. Interview by author in *tok ples*, Mt Hagen, June 2010. Evidences of this included men crying and weeping in public, the killing of pigs in large numbers, the sharing of meat with family and friends, and yelling and shouting.

help in wars against enemies.<sup>45</sup> People, however, offered sacrifices to their own gods and spirits.<sup>46</sup>

Scholars, who claimed that human history exhibits an evolution in religion from tribal gods to monotheism, have largely been refuted, because of the findings of Wilhelm Schmidt, as expressed in his book, *Origin and Growth of Religion*. In every culture he examined, he found a belief about a supreme god. This god has characteristics, which are remarkably uniform across different cultures. This god “lives in the sky, above, is thought of as male, and a Father, the Creator”.<sup>47</sup> He has no physical representation, is an eternal, all knowing, all-good, all-powerful lawgiver, who hates evil. He is a judge, and humans have been alienated from him, due to some past misdemeanour.

Why do people all over the world, even primitive tribes, have similar conceptions of such a God if no one like Him existed? Thus, the widespread belief in the “Sky-God” agrees with what we read in the Bible<sup>48</sup>. Africans believe that such a God exists, and He is not altogether neglected in worship and prayer.<sup>49</sup> In any event, it is a striking fact that many primitive cultures have a belief in some sort of High God, even though there often is no specific ritual directed towards such a Being.<sup>50</sup> The most popular prayer in the world is addressed to “Our Father, who art in heaven” in Matt 6:9, as in the words of our Lord Jesus, when teaching His disciples to talk with Him intimately in prayer. It is possible that the earliest prayers around the world were addressed in similar words. As Mantovani put it, “Names given to the Supreme Being seem to symbolise two experiences: the otherness of the Supreme Being – He is up there, different from humans – and His care for the people, portrayed by the father image. He is

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<sup>45</sup> Nicholas Ruhia, CLTC student. Interview by author, CLTC, March, 2009.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ballard, *Similarities in Primitive Beliefs in an All-Powerful God*. Available at <http://www.peterballard.org/index.html>. Accessed on April 22, 2009.

<sup>48</sup> Ninian Smart, *Religious Experience of Mankind* (New York NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1969), pp. 53-55.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ballard, *Similarities in Primitive Beliefs in an All-Powerful God*.

experienced as the caring one, the one who provides food, shelter, and warmth.”<sup>51</sup> Examples of a belief in a Supreme Spirit all over world, at different times in history.

### ***Ancient Biblical Times***

“Altar to an unknown god”: these words were already inscribed on stones at Mars Hill in Athens. The apostle Paul read it and made the proclamation that “the god, whom you have worshipped for so long as ‘unknown’, I am going to proclaim to you” (Acts 17:22-23). Was the God, Paul was about to proclaim, really a foreign god to these philosophers? No, the God of the Hebrews that Paul was about to proclaim was anticipated in their culture. F. F. Bruce, commenting on the altar to an unknown god, said, “Even the shrine in Jerusalem, erected for the worship of the God of Israel, could not contain Him, how much less the splendid shrines of the Athenian Acropolis, dedicated, as they were, to gods, that were no gods.”<sup>52</sup> True, even pagans realised that no material house could contain His divine nature. These were words from a Greek literary classic, “what house, built by craftsmen, could enclose the form of divine within enfolding walls”.<sup>53</sup> Ps 50:9-12 confirms these words by stating that God has no need, nor is short of anything, because all things are His creation, therefore, they belong to Him. In light of these words and evidences, we could ask why there was belief in such a god, even by pagans, and why make such comments, if there was no one like Him out there.

### ***Primitive South American Tribal People***

The king of the Incas, known for building a city in the mountains of Peru, and a temple (compared to the temple of Solomon) to the sun god, became frustrated when he realised that even a simple cloud could block the mighty sun, whom he and his people had believed and worshipped as a supreme

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<sup>51</sup> Ennio Mantovani, ed., “An Introduction to Melanesian Religions”, in *Point* 6 (1984), p. 55.

<sup>52</sup> F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts* (London UK: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1962), p. 357.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 375. Bruce quotes an earlier Greek literary classic by Euripides, *Fragments*, p. 968.

god for centuries. Therefore, this monarch asked the important question, “If *Inti*, the sun is not god, who then is?”<sup>54</sup> The monarch put three important statements forward about the sun god: *Inti* cannot be universal if, while giving light to some, he withholds it from others, he cannot be perfect if he can never remain at ease, and he cannot be all-powerful, when even the smallest cloud may cover him.<sup>55</sup>

Why would this ancient monarch ask such questions if there were no such powerful person or persons in the universe, or beyond it? Why yearn for something or someone who is not really there after all? Who was responsible for putting the ability to yearn for such a God in human hearts, whether it is the Yuna people, the king of the Incas, or Greeks in Athens?

### ***The People of East Asia, India***

Two foreign missionaries, a Dane and a Norwegian, working among the Santal people of India, near Calcutta, have this to report: after the Norwegian had learned the local language, he started proclaiming the gospel to the local people. To his amazement, the locals made it very clear that they already knew about this person. They even had a local name for the God of the Bible, *Thakur Jiu*,<sup>56</sup> meaning, *Thakur*, “genuine”, and *Jiu*, “God”. These people had stories going back to the story of the great flood, and that of the fall, which were very similar to those of the Bible. The name of the first man created by the *Thakur Jiu* was called *Haram*, according to their myths. “A being called *Lita* tempted *Haram* (the first man) and his wife to drink rice beer, pour part of it on the ground as an offering to Satan, only to wake up and find out about their own nakedness.”<sup>57</sup>

### ***The People of East Asia, Burma***

The Kui tribesmen, living along the Thai-Burma border, actually built houses of worship dedicated to the true God, in anticipation of the time

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33. The king of the Incas began to realise that he had been worshipping a mere thing as creator. Bravely, he advanced to the next inevitable question: “If *Inti* is not the true God, *who then is?*”

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

when a messenger from God would enter such places of worship with the lost books in his hand to teach the people. “No idols were ever placed in such places of worship, but Kui folk would gather, and, in dim, uncertain fashion, worship the great God above.”<sup>58</sup>

### ***The People of Nigeria, Africa***

Like many other tribes and people groups on earth, the Igbo people of Nigeria were animistic, and believed in different deities. These deities included ancestral spirits, protective spirits, and household spirits.<sup>59</sup> Despite these animistic concepts, the Igbo religious worldview has a belief in a “High God”, who was called *Chukwu*. Was this a concept, adopted after the introduction of Christianity, or was it part of their belief for centuries past? Evidence has shown that the concept of a “High God” was not introduced to them after Christianity arrived, rather it was shown to be interwoven in traditional Igbo cosmology. Thus *Chukwu*, the High God, occupied a central place in the Igbo worldview, before the advent of Christianity, and continues to do so to this day.<sup>60</sup> Sacrifices offered to *Chukwu* were described as “sacrifices of joy”, and involved a pure white fowl, or other bird, offered up alive on a long pole. This bird is left to die and rot. Alternatively, a sacrifice may be a pure white egg, which parallels the Old Testament concept of purity.<sup>61</sup> However, these people do not feel obligated to offer sacrifices to *Chukwu*, because they believe He did not need to be appeased, therefore, they had no urgency to appeal to His favour.<sup>62</sup>

There are so many examples that could be discussed. However, the main issue here is why there is this uniform belief in the human mind? Why is

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38. This is very close to the story of the fall of Adam and his wife Eve in the Garden of Eden.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80.

<sup>59</sup> Mike Bews, “The Concept of the ‘High God’ in Traditional Igbo Religion”, in *International Journal of Frontier Missions* (1985), pp. 315-320.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

mankind universally cognisant of a greater, higher spirit? Why is humankind not satisfied with the gods or spirits they worship? Why yearn for some higher person or power if there is no one out there? And so this discussion must conclude by commenting, just like looking for light in the darkness, even without having any knowledge of light, there has to be Someone Higher, or Greater, than all the gods and spirits people worshipped.

### **WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT GOD, THE SUPREME SPIRIT**

Gen 1:1 is the evidence we have to the question of the existence of God, the Supreme Spirit. The author of Genesis breaks into the silence with the words “in the beginning, God”. Because the Bible is authored by Hebrews, this God is “the God of the Hebrews, the Supreme Spirit, *Elohim*. The name *Elohim* carries the meaning, “God of the Hebrews”,<sup>63</sup> while the general term for *god* is *el*, or *elohim*.<sup>64</sup> The name of God here also carries the idea of “Almighty God” or “the strong God”, and what less than almighty strength could bring all things out of nothing?<sup>65</sup> There is no argument, whatsoever, about the existence and the reality of this God in scripture. Instead, His existence is simply assumed and accepted.

### **ADAM AND HIS ENCOUNTER WITH GOD THE SUPREME SPIRIT**

Adam was the first human being to come into contact with the Supreme Being. Adam was the climax of all creation (Gen 1:26-27; 2:7-8; 2:15). The Creator took the created man and placed him in the garden, commanding him to look after it. The created man knew His Creator, and vice versa. On the same note, the man was told, and he understood, what he was created for. He also understood the command given by God not to eat of the forbidden fruit. Both Creator and creature knew each other intimately. The relationship, shared by God and man, was damaged when

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<sup>63</sup> Jacob Neusner, and William S. Green, eds, *Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period* (New York NY: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), p. 256.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Scottsdale PA: Herald Press, 1708), p. 3.

man disobeyed God, and ate the forbidden fruit.<sup>66</sup> It affected both the man and his Creator, as can be seen in the way the Creator came searching for the man. After the man had eaten the fruit, God called to him, “Where are you?” (Gen 3:9), thus showing us something about God, and His plans for mankind. It shows us His heart cry against the betrayal of His desire to have intimacy and fellowship with mankind forever.

### **ABRAHAM THE FATHER OF A NATION, AND HIS ENCOUNTER WITH THE SUPREME SPIRIT**

The customs of Abraham’s time, as recorded in Genesis, have been confirmed by recent archaeological findings. Furthermore, it is believed that Abraham’s movement from Ur to Haran, where he settled, was just before Ur was destroyed by invading Elamites.<sup>67</sup> Abraham had nowhere to go, and was stuck in Ur during the immanent invasion of the said enemies, when he heard the voice of God. Without reasoning, Abraham hears that voice and obeys it (Gen 12:1). He acted as directed, and settled in an unknown place, thus showing his faith in the Supreme Being and His promises. But the most important question is: did Abraham know God before this call? The answer to this question is negative, as confirmed in Josh 24:14-15, which says that, before his encounter with the Supreme Spirit, Abraham worshipped and served foreign gods, just like everyone else in his day. However, the Supreme Spirit graciously elected Abraham, as he, in his situation, responded with faith. Abraham, therefore, left his country, his family, and his people for an unknown land. Is this madness, or was it that this human being had an encounter with “the Supreme Being”, which he could not resist? The Bible confirms to us that it happened as a result of a confrontation and command from God. This is

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<sup>66</sup> Ballard, *Similarities in Primitive Beliefs in an All-Powerful God*. Available at <http://www.peterballard.org/index.html>. “Some misdeed of the past, as believed and told over and over again by primitive tribes, according to anthropologist and the author, as per above.” On the same note, the Hela Yuna also had a yearning in their minds to be free from death, and the fear of death. They also yearned for the day to fight against death and defeat it.

<sup>67</sup> Ninian Smart, *The Religious Experience of Mankind* (London UK: William Collins, 1969), p. 338.

another evidence of the Supreme Spirit longing to have intimacy with man, thus revealing Himself in this way.

### **MOSES AND HIS ENCOUNTER WITH THE SUPREME SPIRIT**

Moses' first encounter with the Supreme Spirit takes place on a mountaintop in the land of Midian (Ex 3:2ff). At the site, Moses understands, without hesitation, that this is a visitation from the Supreme Being. The Supreme Spirit declares Himself as the God of the patriarchs, the father of the nation of Israel, whose people were, at that moment, groaning under slavery in Egypt. There are trademarks in the way the Supreme Being visits men, like in Gen 3:8-9, when while Adam was hiding in sin and guilt; Noah, while looking for answers against all the evil in the world (Gen 6:1); Abraham, while stuck with his family, with nowhere to go (Gen 12:1).<sup>68</sup> Here are examples of humans stuck in situations, with no way of escape, when the Supreme Spirit steps in with grace, and offers help and salvation. The message is a trademark that, no matter what you do, or what you experience, God says "I care, and I will act."

In the case of Moses, God steps in and offers help. Moses' response proves that he knew who was speaking, by obediently taking off his sandals. However, Moses shows his humanity, in protesting and refusing to represent the LORD before the king of Egypt and the people of Israel. But Moses accepted the challenge and agreed to go. Only an encounter with something supernatural can make a fearful, timid, and runaway human like Moses change his mind, go, and confront the Pharaoh, son of the same man who had given orders for Moses to be killed for murdering an Egyptian officer (Ex 2:15).

### **JESUS CHRIST THE REPLICA OF THE SUPREME SPIRIT**

Of all people, and all the different ways God the Supreme Spirit used to reveal Himself to mankind, as shown in the Bible, the Lord Jesus is the greatest and the highest of His revelations. Jesus Christ was not one of the many ways, or people, God used; rather He was God in Person. This is confirmed in both the Old and New Testaments. In Jesus Christ, we see the

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

Supreme Spirit in human form. In Jesus Christ, we see the fullness of God's original plan for mankind; that the Creator, the Supreme Spirit, wants to have an intimate relationship with them. God became man, through the incarnate Christ, whose name is *Immanuel* (Matt 1:21).<sup>69</sup> In Christ, we see perfection, the kind that God planned for when He first created man. In Him, all the laws, perfection, and standards of God are fulfilled. He is without deceit (1 John 2:27); He is True (Rom 3:4); He is holy (1 Peter 1:16). This is the same person John introduced in 1 John 1:1-2 as "alive before the world began . . . was seen . . . touched . . . and listened to Him in person. . . . He was eternal, and always with God the Father."

### **PAUL, THE PHARISEE, AND HIS ENCOUNTER WITH THE SUPREME SPIRIT**

Paul was born in Tarsus, which gave him the opportunity, as a university city, to be exposed to the most advanced learning of his day.<sup>70</sup> Like his father, Paul possessed Roman citizenship, a high privilege, and was well versed in Hellenistic culture and thought.<sup>71</sup> When first seen, in the days of the disciples, Saul, later Paul, was an enemy of the church. Later, Paul became a believer, missionary, prisoner, and, eventually, a martyr for Jesus Christ. The life of this person, and his radical change from being an enemy of the church to dying for its cause, deserves an explanation.

For those who read, and believe, the words of Acts 8:1, the story of Paul's experience on the Damascus Road is the only explanation. This man was on his way to arrest and imprison Christians, with written orders from the authorities in Jerusalem. In his thinking, Paul was doing a very big favour

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<sup>69</sup> Were the yearnings of the Yuna in vain? The author believes they were not, because this is evidence that the Creator of Yuna, and all people, also had such a yearning to have that original intimacy restored. His Son is introduced to the Yuna as "God With Us", the *Hone Hewa Tawalipa*. He is with them in human form.

<sup>70</sup> Josh McDowell, *More Than a Carpenter* (Wheaton IL: Tyndale House, 1971), p. 79. Paul was raised and trained in Tarsus, a university city, respected for its Stoic philosophers and culture. Strabo, the Greek geographer, recognised Tarsus for being interested in education and philosophy.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

for the government, for the Jewish people, their religion, and, eventually, their God. Paul was a Pharisee, and he was out to destroy any group that opposed established Hebrew institutions. The Lord Jesus was a threat, and they had had to deal with Him earlier. His disciples had been a great annoyance, even after Peter was imprisoned. James was put to the sword by Herod, and Stephen was stoned to death, while Saul kept watch over the clothes of those who brought about his demise (Acts 8:1; 12:1). Paul later confessed that it was Jesus Christ, the risen Lord, who changed him (1 Cor 9:1; 15:8), and was whom he believed would raise him from death. Paul, from being a hater of Christians and Gentiles, later became a believer himself, and an apostle to the Gentiles (Eph 3:1). What other explanation can we offer for such a situation, except that it was the same experience that Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Moses had had, which changed their lives? Paul also confessed that he had met the Lord Jesus in person, who appointed him as an apostle (Acts 22:9). A personal encounter with the Supreme Spirit, the *Hone Hewa Tawalipa*, changed this man forever.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### THE YUNA PEOPLE MUST NOT SEPARATE THEMSELVES FROM THE PAST

This section will be done by SWOT analysis.<sup>72</sup> It will talk about the strengths within Yuna culture that can help young people today to change their mindset relating to the issue being discussed. It will also help those who must tell this generation about the need to know *Hone Hewa Tawalipa*; a stocktake of resources that are available to them to help them get the job done. It will also talk about the opportunities, and the threats, that the environment today presents to those who are given responsibilities to tell young people, and, particularly, the young people themselves.

*Pigono*, in Yuna, means “stories of the past”, and *malu* means “my story”, which includes genealogies, land rights, family status, tribal laws, and personal identity. Both these words go together, as far as the Yuna people and their land are concerned. The purpose of this article was to

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<sup>72</sup> SWOT is a strategic planning method, which evaluates: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, which are involved in project or business ventures.

demonstrate to the Yuna of this generation that the God of the Bible is none other than the *Hone Hewa Tawalipa* of their fathers. In endeavouring to do so, this article has examined how Yuna people, in the past, related to the Supreme Spirit, with the limited amount of knowledge they had of him. The article has also compared similar beliefs in Papua New Guinea, and the different versions and evidence of such a belief from among our Pacific Island neighbours, and, finally, the beliefs of other peoples around the world. We have also looked at examples of individuals in the Bible, who lived at different times, yet, when the Supreme Spirit touched their lives, these different characters changed, and did things they would not, or could not, normally do. The first-generation Yuna responded very differently, when they heard that God was the Supreme Spirit they had vividly known over generations past. They, like the Huli Koroba, left the ways of the spirits, and followed Jesus, never to go back again to their old ways of worship.<sup>73</sup> However, unlike their brothers, the Huli Koroba, the Yuna people do not have any stories of power encounters, which could have triggered a stampede of turning away from their old ways to believing the gospel message brought by missionaries.

Instead, there were evidences of a readiness and a willingness to leave behind the ways of the *rama* evil spirits and follow the new way, because this was the message they had been yearning to hear for centuries. “Darkness, fear, and hopelessness were replaced by light, hope, and faith in the One, with whom they were denied personal relationship and intimacy for centuries, as with their brothers, the Hela Huli people.”<sup>74</sup> This is an issue, of which Yuna people today can be proud, because of the way their fathers readily responded to the gospel and the revelation of the Supreme Spirit, *Hone Hewa Tawalipa*.

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<sup>73</sup> Ossie Fountain, “The Religious Experience of the Koroba Huli”, in *Melanesian Journal of Theology* 2-2 (1985), pp. 192-193. There was a power encounter with one of the village leaders, who earlier told the missionary that he did not want to follow the Jesus of the white man. He would rather stick with the spirits, but, when his child became ill and nearly died, he asked the missionary to pray to Jesus. The missionary prayed, and the child was healed, and, eventually, the village leader became one of the first church leaders.

<sup>74</sup> Pokono, “Hela Missionary Endeavour”, p. 3.

## IDENTIFY THE NEED TO REVISIT THE DREAMS OF THEIR FOREFATHERS

However, that response was not an issue of pride. Rather, it was a day when Yuna people realised a dream. The dream was not only of their own, but the dreams of their fathers, and others before them, for centuries. As we have already discussed, theirs was a dream to live and be free, without fear. Therefore, Yuna people, today, must identify their serious need to revisit the dreams of their forefathers. They must understand their own cultural identity and heritage, and decide the future for themselves, and for their children, with *Hone Hewa Tawalipa*, who has been revealed to them already. The Bible, which is the revealed and inspired Word of *Hone Hewa Tawalipa*, must be made the textbook to reach Yuna young people today. Because nearly everyone in Yuna has seen signs, and has heard stories of how their fathers yearned to be free from the *rama* evil spirits, to stop sacrificing pigs to them, even though they still lost loved ones in death, after offering every single family pig in their possession. Cutting fingers, and shaving hair and beards, were signs of pain, deep sorrow, and distress. This is why we say signs were written on the bodies, hearts, and faces of the first generation of Yuna people, who heard the gospel and accepted it. The Yuna attitude towards the timing and arrival of the missionaries, and the acceptance of the gospel, was well summarised by one question, asked by the Yuna people. “How long have you known this Jesus? And why did you not bring the good news about Jesus to us earlier?”<sup>75</sup> It was a dream-come-true for the Yuna, when they heard the gospel and believed it. They and their fathers had been dreaming and waiting for the day they would hear about a way to be free from the *rama* evil spirits, and their control over their lives. Today’s educated Yuna people, who have been fed by the evolutionists, with their theory of the universe, must be made to go back to the revealed Word of *Hone Hewa Tawalipa* and grapple with questions relating to Yuna myths about the great flood (*mu-u*), the identity of *Hone Hewa Tawalipa*, whom our fathers related to as One-up-in-the-sky, the origin of the laws and by-laws of the Yuna, which are very close to those of the Bible, such as, prohibiting adultery, stealing, killing, lying, betrayal,

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<sup>75</sup> Telford. Interview, March 2010.

poisoning, dishonouring parents, and many others.<sup>76</sup> History, and the heroic acts of dead relatives, are often told and retold through rhyme, poetry, and through normal story-telling, which has always been a very effective way of passing on information. Therefore, these methods must be utilised again for those who find formal Bible teaching, reading, and writing too difficult.

Gould suggested that local Huli teachers and preachers should be involved in formal learning, and teaching of literacy, and preaching and teaching in local churches.<sup>77</sup> However, this approach may take time in the Yuna context, because it is 20 years since the Lake Kapiago Station had a primary school, with enough teachers to provide effective teaching for the people. There is at least one whole generation of children who have not received formal education.<sup>78</sup>

The bulk of Yuna people today must be reached with the story of *Hone Hewa Tawalipa*, by story-telling in the gardens, on the roads, and elsewhere in the community, using stories that are appropriate to the theme and culture. An excellent example of this is in Gen 2:15, where God made man and put him in the Garden to look after it.<sup>79</sup> Gardening and marriage go together in the Yuna culture. Young women are told to marry young men, who can make a garden. Newly-married men were not asked or expected to be involved in tribal fights, but, instead, each should stay home with his new wife, and in the garden. Where did the importance of gardening and

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<sup>76</sup> Helen Telford. Interview by author, through skype, CLTC, April, 2010. This particular law was very strong in the Yuna culture, as a pioneer missionary confirmed. Part of the discipline for children caught stealing was to chop off their fingers. Brian and Helen Telford went into the Yuna land of Arou in 1969, only five years after the Yuna people had seen their first white person.

<sup>77</sup> Gould, "Vernacular Bible Reading", p. 281.

<sup>78</sup> Nicole Haley, "HIV/AIDS and Witchcraft at Lake Kapiago", in *Catalyst* 39-2 (2009), p. 116.

<sup>79</sup> It may have been a coincidence, but one of the qualities of a real man in the Yuna culture is that you must be a gardener; you must have a garden of your own. And the three qualities of a woman that a man looks for, before asking her for marriage, is that she is able to do gardening, raise pigs, and have children. (The two qualities of gardening and having children go back right to the beginning, in Eden – gardening and multiplying.)

marriage, in the Yuna culture, come from? According to the Bible, the first man was created and placed in a garden to care for and tend it. The mark of real men and women in the Yuna culture is that they must have a garden. Today, through storytelling, churches must include “knowing the Creator” as part of being a real man, because the Bible says Adam knew his Creator before he was told of his responsibility to work the garden (Gen 2:7, 15).

The Yuna were told of the term “ground finish”, which is very well understood, and described by Haley as, “a tendency towards decline and disorder is the natural state of the world. It is on this basis that environmental and social changes are interpreted and understood.”<sup>80</sup> However, the Yuna version of “ground finish” is now seen in a change of attitude of this Yuna generation. There is now an attitude of not caring about the laws and codes that guided the decisions made by individuals in the past. Instead, there are evidences of selfishness and greed, with disregard for the benefits for the whole clan, tribe, or people, and their beliefs, in terms of respect and loyalty. Is the HIV/AIDS epidemic, among the Yuna, the result of individuals, who have such an attitude towards their own bodies and lives, as well as those innocent people whom they infect knowingly? Is this the generation of Yuna, who are bringing the most feared “ground finish” upon themselves and their children, with this kind of reckless behaviour? Why are Yuna young people, especially men, blaming suspected HIV/AIDS deaths on sorcery and *sanguma*?<sup>81</sup> This way of thinking has to be one of the Yuna fathers’ most-feared social problems, which they described as “ground finish”.

### **COMPARE, CONTRAST, AND APPRECIATE YUNA CULTURE TODAY**

This is the message young Yuna today must hear and understand. Respect and reverence for *Hone Hewa Tawalipa*, the Supreme Spirit of our fathers, must be a part of their heritage, their pride, and their identity, because the Hela Yuna cannot be separated from the Supreme Spirit, whom their fathers revered and acknowledged. They need to pass this story on to their children, like they do with genealogies, *bigono*, and land rights, *malu*. The

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<sup>80</sup> Haley, “HIV/AIDS and Witchcraft at Lake Kapiago”, p. 121.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

people of Israel, in the Old Testament, were reminded, again and again, about the importance of telling their children the stories of their experiences with the God of their fathers, about how they went into their land, *bigono*, and their story, as descendants of Abraham, *malu*.

In Yuna culture, one must prove his worth in any field, like in tribal fights, land disputes, hunting, farming, leadership, speechmaking, and in believing and respecting the norms and laws of nature, and of the spirits, as everyone in the community should do, resulting in one earning approval and respect by the community.<sup>82</sup> In the same way, believing and accepting Yuna belief in the Supreme Spirit, *Hone Hewa Tawalipa*, cannot be separated from Yuna people, in any generation. Our fathers sensed Him, respected Him, and held Him in high regard. The Supreme Spirit, *Hone Hewa Tawalipa*, was a big part of Yuna everyday life. He was part of their past, and He was their future. Therefore, to forsake Him today, and have no respect for Him, will be, in fact, rejecting the Yuna identity, and becoming someone else.

### **WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED? WHEN SHOULD IT START? WHERE, HOW, AND WHY?**

Bible Schools and church denominations, in the land of the Yuna, must take the lead now, rather than later. Denominations that can be involved include Christian Brethren churches (CBC), the Catholic church, the Seventh-day Adventists (SDA), Christian Apostolic Fellowship (CAF), and the Evangelical Lutheran churches of Papua New Guinea (ELCPNG). The Lutherans and the CAF have a very good working relationship with the CBC, and this positive feature could very well enhance the challenge to reach out to Yuna men and women about the need to revisit the dreams of their fathers. Christian Brethren churches currently have three Bible Schools operating in strategic locations in the land of the Yuna: one in the Pori Valley, and two in the Tumbudu Valley, at Kelabo and Arou.<sup>83</sup> CAF has a Bible School at Hirane in Lake Kopiago. These teams of Bible

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> *Tumbudu* is the local name given for the Strickland River, which finds its headwaters in the land of the Yuna, towards the Lavani Valley.

Schools and churches must think and work as one, as Yuna, with their focus on the young people, who will be leaders of their people tomorrow. In this issue, the way forward for them, and their children, has to be a “we” ministry and approach, “not me, or my denomination” approach.<sup>84</sup> Because the issue now concerns the Yuna people, no matter what part of the land of the Yuna they come from, or to what church denomination they belong.

Churches must teach the book of Genesis, comparing it with what they learn in schools today. The evolution theory that says it all started by chance must be challenged at all costs by sound biblical teaching about the mighty power of *Hone Hewa Tawalipa*, God, the Supreme Spirit. In doing so, church leaders must take the lead in teaching young people on important biblical doctrines, in a programmed, uniform, systematic way. Though, it may take time to wait to teach in English, it is not that hard to teach young people today, in this way, using Tok Pisin. This is because these Bible Schools are taught in Tok Pisin, and, most importantly, literacy programs are also a part of the curriculum of most of the Bible Schools mentioned. The reasons for the urgency for programs to be started right away, and why it should be organised, are twofold:

Firstly, the younger Yuna generation is quickly being influenced by the outside world, and its way of thinking, thus making it difficult for them to remember the importance of the dreams and yearnings of their fathers, especially their yearning for freedom from fear of death, and of the evil spirits, the *rama*. Secondly, Papua New Guinea’s liquefied natural gas (LNG) project is hosted by the recently-granted Hela Province, of which Hela Yuna is a part, and the social issues, like the spread of HIV/AIDS, tribal fights, land disputes, breakdown in cultural norms, and of families, drug and alcohol abuse, youths not completing formal education, but, instead, going to work for money, and all the problems related to it, when economic activities, which have never been seen before, are taking place on the doorstep. Churches must step up and face the challenge by using their institutions as places where Yuna men and women can be taught and

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<sup>84</sup> Isaac Pulupe, Tuesday Chapel preaching, Banz PNG: CLTC, September 7, 2010.

reminded of who they are, where they stand today, and what their future has for them, in relation to what was foretold by their forefathers.

However, on a positive note, the God of the Bible is not someone unknown, rather He is One for whom Yuna people have always been dreaming, yearning, and hoping. Explaining and educating should begin with the question of all things having a beginning, all things having a cause, and all things having a purpose; and the question of who is mankind in relation to God. Can Yuna people truly believe the myths that they are children of the eagle, the pig, the cassowary, the dog, and the possum? However, the revealed Word of *Hone Hewa Tawalipa* tells us that He is the Creator of all things, including mankind (Gen 1-2). In doing so, the central question, for which we must find an answer, is the identity of *Hone Hewa Tawalipa*, and how our fathers related to Him as the One-up-in-the-sky. We must also provide answers to the origin of the laws and by-laws of the Yuna, which are very close to those of the Bible. Whatever way people may look at these laws, they still remain a part of who the Yuna people are today. It is part of their heritage and identity, therefore, it needs to be respected, and, most importantly, passed on to their children.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this article was to demonstrate to contemporary Yuna men and women the reason why their fathers responded, as one man, to the gospel, when they heard it from the missionaries. In doing so, we have examined evidence of people's beliefs in a Supreme Spirit in different cultures of the world. We have also looked at beliefs in the Bible, and how individuals responded, in their own way, and at different times. After all these findings and discussions, we must conclude the things we have discussed. Yuna people, today, cannot be separated from the past, because the past is their identity – where they came from – and it forms part of what they will be in the future. This does not only concern Yuna men, women, and children alone, but also their land, rivers, and mountains. The decisions they make, the things they do and say, today, are part and parcel of this whole picture, because that was the way their fathers saw it in the past. Now is the time for Yuna young people to think deeply, and ask

questions about who they are, from where they have come, and where are they going? On the same note, we need to be asking where the primitive Yuna got these ideas of the end of the world, and all other related prophecies? Who put these thoughts into their hearts? The Bible answers the question (Acts 17:27). It says God, the Creator, designed, and put that space in every human being. The desire and yearning to seek the Creator was already placed in every human heart.

Therefore, the yearnings of the Yuna people were not in vain, nor isolated to themselves, rather, it was put in them by the now-revealed *Hone Hewa Tawalipa*, God. Finally, but most importantly, every Yuna today must realise and accept the dreams and the yearnings of their forefathers, as they farm, hunt, fish, walk, and live on the land. Theirs was a yearning and a dream to live and not to die, a dream and yearning to have intimacy with *Hone Hewa Tawalipa*, and not to cut up pigs, and give them to the *rama*, evil spirits of water and stone, the death spirits. They had dreams of hope, and not despair, a longing to be free from fear. This was not only for themselves, but also for their children, who survived the fury, and the never-satisfied hunger for Yuna blood by their enemy, the *rama* evil spirits. An attitude of ignorance towards these dreams and yearnings will be an insult to them.

Consequences for such an attitude have already been foretold, like dying at a young age, the land not producing as expected, pigs not growing big and multiplying, and social disorder (also known as “ground finish”).<sup>85</sup> Therefore, the onus is now on young Yuna men and women today to revisit the dreams of their fathers, which can only find its true meaning in *Hone Hewa Tawalipa* of the Hala Yuna, because He was the One who designed this yearning in the Yuna heart that even the *rama* evil spirits could not satisfy. Why did *Hone Hewa Tawalipa* put this yearning in the human mind? The answer is found in Acts 17:27, “He could be sought and found, He is not that far away.” The way Yuna people responded to the revelation of the Supreme Spirit has clearly shown their realisation of the One, for whom they have been yearning to have intimacy with for generations.

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<sup>85</sup> Haley, “HIV/AIDS and Witchcraft at Lake Kapiago”, p. 121.

Therefore, today's Yuna men, women, and children must do something, personally, and as a people group, about their fathers' dreams and yearnings, which have now been realised through the gospel message, which is in our hands today.

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