

# **DEATHS CAUSED BY SORCERY: A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Sorcery plays a major role in animistic, traditional societies. Melanesians are born into this tradition, which shapes and forms their way of life, and belief systems. The arrival of the gospel on our shores was a major breakthrough. However, many Christians, who have long held these traditional belief systems, find it very difficult to part with them. One reason for this is that they simply have not allowed their traditional worldviews, rooted deep within them, to be replaced with the truth of the gospel message.<sup>1</sup>

Melanesian Christians continue to live in fear of sorcery. This thesis will offer the way forward to eliminating this fear, and replacing it with scriptural truth. It will examine what the Bible says about overcoming fear in relation to sorcery, and, more importantly, will contextualise the biblical message in combating fear, in terms of the victory we all have in Christ.

## **THE TRADITION OF SORCERY IN MELANESIA: THE HULA PERSPECTIVE**

Among the Hula people,<sup>2</sup> if a child dies of pneumonia, the parents do not ask how and why. They will not blame themselves for being careless, or the child for being foolish. They will go to their magician to ascertain the cause of the illness. They will ask if the child has been bewitched, and by whom. If not, they will ask if one of the spirits has been offended, and

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<sup>1</sup> Michele Stephen, *Sorcery and Witchcraft in Melanesia* (Melbourne Vic: Melbourne University Press, 1987), p. 121.

<sup>2</sup> The Hula people are located in the Central Province of Papua New Guinea.

what must be done to appease it. They know that, unless harmony with the spiritual forces is restored, death will inevitably result. However, more and more deaths are now occurring through sorcery, because people are purposely paying sorcerers to kill someone.<sup>3</sup>

Although the gospel has penetrated through some of the strongholds of animistic beliefs, such as ancestral worship, the fear of spirits is still a major issue. In December, 2008, three deaths occurred in Hula. First, was a young girl, then a middle-aged man, followed by a middle-aged woman. All deaths these days are blamed, first of all, on the sorcerer.<sup>4</sup> Why? They are blamed on the sorcerer, because all of the deceased were in excellent health, and died suddenly. This suggests the intervention of an evil spirit at work.<sup>5</sup> In the past, it was believed that, if someone died without a good reason, he had, in some way, made the spirits angry. However, today, it is believed that deaths through sorcery result from many reasons, such as, jealousy, payback, a power struggle, adultery, and wealth.

Many sorcerers use their power to cause sickness, misfortune, and death.<sup>6</sup> In other societies, and abroad, there are specialised sorcerers, who practise as individuals, and can be hired to use their power against their enemies.<sup>7</sup> According to Vuirakava Alu, the hiring of sorcerers is quite common in Hula. Many others, interviewed by the author, also agreed.<sup>8</sup>

So then, what is sorcery? It is using harmful substances, or objects, which have the power to kill people. This power to kill depends on the sorcerer's ability to control the powers to which he has access.<sup>9</sup> He might mix leaves, tree bark, sticks, or excrement into a mixture and subject it to magic, for the

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<sup>3</sup> Joseph A. Taruna, "God's Power Exceeds Melanesian Power" (BTh thesis, Christian Leaders' Training College, Banz, 1980), p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Ai Noka, Hula village councillor, interview by author, Hula village, January 2, 2009.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Taruna, "Gods Power Exceeds Melanesian Power", p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> Pamela J. Stewart, Andrew Strathern, *Witchcraft, Sorcery, Rumours, and Gossip* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 125.

<sup>8</sup> Vuirakava Alu, SDA Women's Group, interview by author, Hula village, January 11, 2009.

<sup>9</sup> G. W. Trompf, *Melanesian Religion* (Port Moresby PNG: UPNG Press, 1980), p. 89.

victims to die. Yet, it is important to note that the only time these objects become fatal is when they are related to supernatural evil powers.<sup>10</sup> And, whether the people know this or not, they are crippled by the fear of sorcery and death.

A Hula man said that sorcerers woke up his father one night, some years ago, and led to the pit toilet outside his house. There, he was badly beaten until he was unconscious. He had his head, and the insides of his stomach, smashed, and excreta shoved down his throat. He was then brought back to consciousness, and walked back into his house without showing any signs of what had happened to him.<sup>11</sup>

A group of sorcerers working together for evil are called “*Sangumas*”. They are men with special powers that can make themselves invisible. They can travel long distances mysteriously in a few minutes. Sometimes, they turn into animals to perform supernatural feats, or turn into beautiful girls to seduce men. It is believed that, originally, the main *sanguma* areas in PNG were the Sepik Province, Madang, and the Papuan Islands. It is believed that *sanguma* then spread to other places along the coast, like Hula, and into the highlands.<sup>12</sup> Today, stories of sorcery and *sanguma* are heard throughout PNG, with the question being asked as to who has the most powerful form of sorcery. Is it possessed by the Sepiks, the highlanders, the Papuans, or the Islanders?

Secondly, their attack is personal and immediate, and the person being attacked has no power to defend himself. The assailants spring on their victim from an ambush, brutally overpower him, and jab poisons directly into his body.<sup>13</sup> However, there have been some instances where *sanguma* has been overpowered. One Hula man was attacked, but managed to fight

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<sup>10</sup> R. Freund, R. Hett, and K. Reko, *Religion in Melanesia Part C* (Port Moresby PNG: UPNG Press, 1970), p. 72.

<sup>11</sup> Roland Kepo, United church member, interview by author, Hula village, January 9, 2009.

<sup>12</sup> Trompf, *Melanesian Religion*, p. 92.

<sup>13</sup> Taruna, “God’s Power Exceeds Melanesian Power”, p. 5.

his *sanguma* attackers off. He subsequently fell sick for two weeks, but recovered. In this instance, the *sangumas* only caused sickness, not death.<sup>14</sup>

Village court magistrate, Gima Kana, who has presided over many cases of sorcery, says that the *sangumas* (or *waras*, as they are called in Hula) have a group network. One *sanguma* man specialises in calling out the victim from his sleep through a dream; a second attacks, and knocks his victim out; the third beats him to death; while another feeds him poisons. The last of the *sanguma* men has the power to wake up his victim, heal the outside of his wounds, and send him back into his house.<sup>15</sup> However, not all groups operate in such numbers; some have more than one of the powers described above.

Kepo tells how his father died as a result of *sanguma*, with death occurring two days after he was attacked. His body showed signs of being badly beaten. Usually, a dark black patch appears on either the face or the chest, to prove it was a *sanguma* attack, but medical post-mortems have not always noticed these.<sup>16</sup> The *sanguma* people were also present at his father's funeral, without revealing their identities. Their purpose was to remove poisons from the body, to obtain an increase in power for the next victim. It is also a tradition for the warrior to take back his weapons, as evidence, in case another *sanguma* was hired to find out who the killers were.<sup>17</sup> This scenario, in the PNG highlands, of having the killers present themselves at their victim's funeral is a suicide attempt. It is a common thing in the highlands to torture, and burn alive, sorcerers. However, sorcerers in Hula would not dare present themselves at their victim's funeral, but rather stay away.

The question to be addressed here is: who is responsible for these deaths through sorcery? Although non-Christians and Christians differ on many

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<sup>14</sup> Isu Aluvula, chairman, Koke United church, interview by author by telephone, August 8, 2009.

<sup>15</sup> Gima Kana, Hula village court magistrate, interview by author, Hula village, January 13, 2009.

<sup>16</sup> Roland Kepo, Hula villager, interview by author, Hula village, January 9, 2009.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

fronts, they both often point the finger towards *sanguma*, as those responsible for the deaths. According to Revd Karo, not only non-Christians, but Christians, too, become very fearful, when a death, suspected to be caused by sorcery, occurs.<sup>18</sup>

Kapa believes that the greatest enemy is fear.<sup>19</sup> As one youth pastor put it, "Fear is all over the place, even in the pews, because that's where it starts."<sup>20</sup> There has also been much talk recently of church elders being involved in sorcery. The church denies this outright, although substantial evidence has led to some church elders being stood down. The church hierarchy defends its integrity by saying that its leadership and membership have been victimised by the devil and his cronies simply to stop the good work of serving the gospel.<sup>21</sup>

Fear is the main weapon Satan uses to keep people from believing in biblical truths concerning his destiny and his defeat (as a result of Christ's victory on the cross). According to Ezekiel Ivihi,<sup>22</sup> for those who believe in sorcery, sickness, death, misfortune, and disasters befall them. However, sorcery, in a community setting, has some positive impacts. Anti-social behaviour is discouraged. It provides the community with an explanation for death, sickness, and misfortune. The weak, the old, and the marginalised can obtain power and respect. It also provides society with a scapegoat for voicing anger.

In the PNG highlands, sorcery is condemned. Negatively, sorcery arouses suspicion among relatives, creates fear in the community, and enables sorcerers to become powerful people. Through fear, people are afraid to go to certain places (a bird's cry may signal bad news), and they choose not to go to certain places at certain times in fear of spirits being present. There is

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<sup>18</sup> Revd Walo Karo, United church minister, interview by author in *tok ples*, Hula village, January 8, 2009.

<sup>19</sup> Alu Kapa, chairman, Hula United church, interview by author, Hula village, January 15, 2009.

<sup>20</sup> Kila Walo, youth pastor, interview by author, Hula village, January 15, 2009.

<sup>21</sup> Anonymous United church member, interview by author, Hula village, January 17, 2009.

<sup>22</sup> Ezekiel Ivihi, CLTC Principal, Seminar Presentation on Sorcery, CLTC, August 13, 2009.

also a lack of initiative, for fear of jealousy. For example, a man may want to commence a business. If others become jealous of him becoming a successful businessman, it may cost him his life through sorcery.

Sometimes, innocent people are blamed for practising sorcery. False accusation and persecution is the result. The accused are normally the defenceless, the elderly, and the weak, and are mostly females, widows, or mothers with no grown-up children (who may be able to stand by them if accused), outcasts, and often older people, with land and coffee. They have no community support. They are tortured, murdered, and eliminated, and their properties are destroyed, all for Satan's pleasure. These beliefs cause family break-ups, social tension in the community, loss, and a claim of authority and property. (For example, a man may be killed, because he has a big portion of land.) Interestingly, according to media reports, women are accused more than men.

There are also psychological implications from sorcery. Victims, who are blamed for sorcery, live with guilt for the rest of their lives. Their families carry public shame, and the community approves the actions of their accusers. According to case studies from Chimbu Province, the accused are burned alive, thrown into rivers, or over cliffs, suffocated, hung on trees, dragged behind moving vehicles, or burnt with a hot iron. Those involved are the community, the accused, the accusers, and the leaders.<sup>23</sup>

The standard of sorcery is shifting, and rising to a new level that is linked to new development. Wealth, money, politics, and modern technology are used in some of the methods of killing. For example, the improvement of telecommunications, through mobile phones, makes it easier for sorcerers to reach their victims.<sup>24</sup> One would think that, with more Western influence, the traditional ways of doing things would decline. But sorcery seems to be growing stronger than ever, and is using modern technological development to its advantage. It is amazing that even the educated believe

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<sup>23</sup> David Tago, CLTC first-year student, interview by author, CLTC, August 15, 2009.

<sup>24</sup> Henry Asgar Kelly, *The Devil, Demonology, and Witchcraft* (New York NY: Doubleday, 1974), p. 57.

in it.<sup>25</sup> Doctors are saying to their patients, “*em i sik bilong ples*”, indicating there is no obvious medical diagnosis. People are, therefore, advised to seek a traditional cure.<sup>26</sup>

How can the problem of sorcery be approached? Especially, amid changing mind-sets, why do church leaders continue to live in fear? Tupuru says that one weakness Christians have is how they pray for sorcery-related cases. They tell the individual that a named person has done this to them. This encourages the belief in sorcery. They say the Spirit of God has told them, but could it be some other spirit?<sup>27</sup> Usually, a person with this sort of ability must possess a special gift of discerning. However, often they are not spiritually gifted, but do it for self-gain, and popularity – and people named can be falsely accused. And Satan uses Christians to do this! As long as Satan keeps people fearful, they will always be bound under his control.

A strong belief in spirits is part of everyday Melanesian life. This is the reason why many Melanesian Christians still hold onto their cultural beliefs. For the Westerner, it is like eating cake. You just cannot go without it. Even though many Melanesians have become Christian in their beliefs, they truly are Melanesians by the way they respond, especially, to sorcery. Such fear, in Melanesians, has its roots deep within their being – in speech, thought, and deed. In Hula, many Christians still continue to blame *sanguma*, or the sorcerer, for many deaths, and why should they not do so? This is the Melanesian way of life. In light of this Melanesian overview of death by sorcery, and, in particular, the beliefs of Hula Christians, what does scripture have to say about this real-life Melanesian issue?

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<sup>25</sup> John Middleton, *Magic Witchcraft and Curing* (Austin TX: University of Texas Press, 1967), p. 34.

<sup>26</sup> Sorcery is the cause of illness, but it cannot be medically proven.

<sup>27</sup> Samuel Tupuru, CLTC fourth-year student, interview by author, CLTC, August 13, 2009.

## AN OVERVIEW OF THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD AND THE ROOT OF EVIL

### A BIBLICAL VIEW OF SATAN

The Bible says that wicked spirits are under the command of Satan, who is called the ruler of this world (John 12:31). Being evil, the devil is a liar, deceiver, destroyer, murderer, and is in opposition to God.<sup>28</sup> Against this dark world, the Bible says that Jesus came, as light, to set man free from the bondage of darkness. On the cross, Jesus broke loose the power of darkness. The coming of Christ on earth confirms to us the defeat of the satanic revolution, which had taken place against God. Corrie Ten Boom warns that the lack of knowledge about these spiritual powers in the world is dangerous.<sup>29</sup> Billy Graham also says that he believes in the devil, because of the biblical evidence.<sup>30</sup>

This world is under the control of the evil one, according to 1 John 5:19. In order for one to understand the New Testament (NT), it is important to realise that Satan is the god of this world. He is the evil one, and his power controls the present evil age (John 5:19).<sup>31</sup> Scripture teaches of God's indirect control of the ungodly that involves sinful people, evil, cruelty, and injustice.<sup>32</sup> That does not mean that God is responsible for all suffering in the world, nor is everything that happens His perfect will.<sup>33</sup> The Bible indicates that, at this present time, the world is not under God's dominion, but rather is in rebellion against His rule, and is enslaved to Satan. It is, therefore, unwise to use the statement "God is in control", in order to free ourselves from the responsibility of battling sin, evil, or spiritual lukewarmness.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> John W. Gwilliam, *Significant Religious Beliefs* (Goroka PNG: University of Goroka Press, 1974), p. 3.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *The Full Life Study Bible New International Version* (Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 1992), p. 1984, footnote 1.

<sup>32</sup> Luke 13:16; 2 Cor 4:4; Gal 1:4; Eph 6:12; Heb 2:14; Matt 4:10.

<sup>33</sup> Matt 23:37; Luke 13:34; 19:41-46

<sup>34</sup> *The Full Life Study Bible*, John 5:19, p. 1984, footnote 1.

On the other hand, there is a sense that God is in control of the ungodly world. God is sovereign, and thus some things happen under His permissive will and oversight, or, at times, through His direct involvement, according to His purpose. Nevertheless, at this time in history, God may have limited His supreme power and rule over the world. But the good news for us, and bad news for Satan, is that God's limited rule is only temporary.<sup>35</sup> As is written in scripture, God, in His wisdom, will destroy Satan and all evil, and then the kingdom of the world will become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ, and He will reign forever and ever.<sup>36</sup> However, there is a fine line between God's permissive will and His perfect will, as far as His sovereignty is concerned. For example, in His permissive will, He allowed Satan to test Job, but Job never lost his faith, despite his anger and fury at the situation.<sup>37</sup>

Natural disasters, such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tidal waves, cyclones, and hurricanes, which result in millions dying, can be described as happenings under the permissive will of God. The current HIV/AIDS epidemic, bird and swine flu, and diseases of all sorts, also claim millions upon millions of lives. Man-made destruction, such as mining exploration, criminal activities, suicide bombers, chemical and nuclear world wars, and sorcery and witchcraft, continue to keep the list of those victimised rising up to the billions. The big question is: where is God in all of this? Can He not intervene? Are the victims responsible for their own deaths? If God gives life, and takes life, how is it that a loving, merciful, gracious Father sends such destruction to end millions of lives? God allowed Satan partial control over Job's life.

In other words, Satan currently has power over all evil, destruction, and suffering, but it will come to an end when God brings His final judgment on the world.<sup>38</sup> From God's perspective, Satan lost the battle, when Christ died and rose again from the dead. However, does Satan really believe that he has lost the battle? Could it not be, from the anticipated gathering of his

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Rev 19:20; 11:15.

<sup>37</sup> Job 1:2.

<sup>38</sup> Rev 16:20.

forces for the battle of Armageddon, that Satan might be thinking he could still win?<sup>39</sup> Although scripture says that he will be taken captive by the archangel Michael, has Satan chosen not to believe this?<sup>40</sup>

According to scripture, the Devil was once a glorious angel.<sup>41</sup> But, in his arrogance and pride, he rebelled against God, and was cast out of heaven. As a created being, Satan has limited powers. He is not omniscient, omnipotent, or omnipresent. He is trying to turn everyone away from God. In Hula villages, he uses the fear of death, through sorcery, to achieve his purposes.

The battle is the Lord's.<sup>42</sup> It is no use fighting a battle without Christ, because God has won the battle for all. Through Christ's resurrection, He defeated sin, Satan, and death. Christians, therefore, are able to also defeat death, regardless whether it is from suicide bombings, criminal attacks, HIV/AIDS, or natural disasters. The victory, for Christians, is spiritual. Eventually, though, all believers will be raised with a glorious body.<sup>43</sup> Many Christians today are short-sighted. The victory they focus on is the victory for today, because of Satan's present dominion in the world. A Christian's victory for this world needs to be fought out, lived out, and experienced. The Christian, however, must never forget that the ultimate victory is theirs in Christ.

According to scripture, before Christ went back to His Father, He claimed to have been given authority over this universe. He then commanded His disciples to go everywhere to carry on the work He had started in the name of the Trinity.<sup>44</sup> If these words are true, Christians should have no fear when dealing with other powers, because they are subject to Jesus' authority. Even more comforting is that He has promised to be with

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<sup>39</sup> Rev 16:14-16.

<sup>40</sup> Rev 20:2-3.

<sup>41</sup> *NIV Life Application Bible* (Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 1997), p. 10.

<sup>42</sup> Deut 3:21-22; 2 Chr 20:15.

<sup>43</sup> 1 Cor 15:42.

<sup>44</sup> Matt 28:18-20.

Christians everywhere they go, to ensure Satan is reminded of his defeat on the cross.<sup>45</sup>

However, Melanesian Christians' perspective of protection is not spiritual, but physical. Some Christians carry weapons to defend themselves, in case of trouble. They profess to believe in Christ's protection, but will carry a bush knife in the event of an attack. One pastor (who did not wish to be named) hides a firearm under his pulpit, in case enemy, warring tribes attack. This is a classic example of culture verses the gospel.

When the Bible affirms God as the creator of the universe, it acknowledges Him as sovereign over everything, seen and unseen. Human power operates on the basis of what God has created, and is, therefore, subject to Him. Seeking after other powers is idolatry, because God desires us to worship and honour only Him. On that basis, He warns us not to turn to sorcerers, or witchcraft, and be defiled by them, because God is a holy God, and these things are detestable to Him.<sup>46</sup>

## **EVIL POWERS – A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE**

### *Old Testament*

In Old Testament (OT) law, God gave warning and judgment against sorcery. The people of Israel saw God perform miracles to challenge the heathen gods in Egypt. Upon defeating these gods, the Lord made a covenant with Israel that they would worship only Him, and no other gods. He warned them not to turn to sorcery,<sup>47</sup> or witchcraft,<sup>48</sup> because they would surely die.<sup>49</sup> The same principle is seen throughout the OT prophets. They, too, warned the people not to turn to mediums.<sup>50</sup> But, more importantly, was the call for the sorcerers to turn back to God.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Taruna, "God's Power Exceeds Melanesian Power", p. 22.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Deut 18:9-14.

<sup>48</sup> Lev 19:26, 31.

<sup>49</sup> Taruna, "God's Power Exceeds Melanesian Power", p. 24.

<sup>50</sup> Is 47:9-13.

<sup>51</sup> Is 57:3.

In Melanesia today, many sorcerers are never given the chance to repent. Instead, they are tortured and killed, when found out. This is not a godly approach to the situation. The Bible exhorts all Christians to condemn the wrong they do, but to also call them into repentance. This is a better way to deal with the problem. It causes one to realise that there is a loving, forgiving Father, and He only wants the best for people. However, because of syncretism, this is a hard thing to do.

Furthermore, according to the OT, there were prophets, who saw visions, and practised divination and sorcery, but God warned the people not to listen to them<sup>52</sup>. As His judgment, God punished those who turned to evil practices, to seek guidance and power. King Saul was judged, and died as a result of his consulting the witch at Endor.<sup>53</sup> The Northern Kingdom of Israel was judged and punished for burning their children, and practising divination, which angered God.<sup>54</sup> As a consequence, they fell into the hands of the vicious Assyrians. King Manasseh faced judgment, and was taken to Babylon for burning his son, as a result of communing with mediums.<sup>55</sup> When the Israelites journeyed to Canaan, Balak paid a witchdoctor to put a curse on the people of Israel. However, under God's own protection, Balaam, who was hired to curse Israel, could only bless them.<sup>56</sup> Finally, when Josiah came to the throne, he restored God's standards of the law.<sup>57</sup>

In Melanesia, as in many parts of the world, the ultimate aim of sorcery and divination, in this modern age, is to make a large profit. During the time of our ancestors, these things were traditional issues. Now, they are economic issues. In fact, it is for financial gain that sorcery and witchcraft have produced so many con men. However, looking at the bigger picture, ultimately, it is Satan's permitted dominion in this world, and his longing

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<sup>52</sup> Jer 27:9.

<sup>53</sup> 1 Sam 28:7.

<sup>54</sup> 2 Kings 18:11.

<sup>55</sup> 2 Chr 33:11.

<sup>56</sup> Num 23:21-23.

<sup>57</sup> 2 Chr 34:31-32.

for people to follow him, instead of God, that these activities continue to occur.

### ***New Testament***

In the New Testament (NT), Paul identifies sorcery among the works of the flesh.<sup>58</sup> John, in Revelation, says sorcery is wickedness, and those involved were called to repent.<sup>59</sup> Paul met Bar-Jesus, and rebuked him for his plans to stop the Governor, Sergius Paulus, from becoming a Christian.<sup>60</sup> In Philippi, Paul and Silas crossed paths with a slave girl, whom people used for divination, for their monetary gain. Paul commanded the evil spirit to leave her that instant, and it did.<sup>61</sup>

God's view towards sorcery is clear. He hates it, condemns it, and punishes those who will not turn back to Him. However, in nearly all biblical accounts of sorcery, one thing is clear: God loves the sorcerer, and calls upon all Christians to condemn sorcery. But God also calls Christians to try, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to lead the sorcerer to Christ.

Interestingly, God sometimes protects His people, whether it is in His perfect or permissive will. According to Num 23:8, when Balaam was paid to curse the people of Israel, he said what God had intended him to say; he claimed he had no power to do otherwise. However, there are also other examples in scripture, where it seems that God did not protect His people from harm.<sup>62</sup>

In addition, God has His army of angels to help protect us. They are God's messengers, and His servants to help care for all who receive salvation, to guard, strengthen, and help us in times of oppression and danger.<sup>63</sup> God's angel told Philip to go and help the Ethiopian receive Christ.<sup>64</sup> Another

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<sup>58</sup> Gal 5:18.

<sup>59</sup> Rev 21:8.

<sup>60</sup> Acts 13:1-13.

<sup>61</sup> Acts 16:16-18.

<sup>62</sup> Heb 11:35.

<sup>63</sup> Heb 1:14.

<sup>64</sup> Acts 8:26.

angel told Cornelius to send for Peter to come and talk to him about Jesus.<sup>65</sup> And, in answer to prayer, an angel led Peter out of prison.<sup>66</sup> During Jesus' temptations, and at the Garden of Gethsemane, God's angels came to strengthen Him.<sup>67</sup> However, many Christians want to be autonomous. Satan knows this tendency well, and he used the idea of autonomy to convince Eve to think independently, to be her own boss, and to do whatever she pleased. The end result was disobedience to God – sin.

### ***The Sovereignty of God, in Spite of All Evil***

Many Christians expect God to do things the way they want. They would like to manipulate Him, but God will exercise His prerogative to do whatever He pleases with His creation. One of the hardest things that Christians need to know about God is that He can do whatever He wants, because it is all His.<sup>68</sup> As far as His sovereignty is concerned, it is important for Christians to stop telling God who He is, but rather to allow God to tell them who He is. Christians need to learn to allow God to be God. For example, many people judge each other for their characters. If someone is humble, others find it difficult to see him as an angry person. If someone is generous, he cannot be greedy. If someone is sympathetic, he cannot punish. When people judge others, based on their good character, sometimes, they will use that good character to manipulate the person. They know what other people expect, and so find it hard to act outside of that expectation.

If a death occurs, for which, it seems, God was not responsible for, such as sorcery, they question whether He had no part in it. Was it God's plan for that life to die from sorcery, as a result of disobedience? This is not to imply that God caused it. But, maybe, He allowed it to happen through this means. Should that be so, who can question God for it? To do so would surely question His sovereignty. Christians must allow God to be God, and stop making a fuss, whenever they cannot find satisfactory solutions to deaths such as these.

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<sup>65</sup> Acts 10:22.

<sup>66</sup> Acts 12:11.

<sup>67</sup> Matt 4:11; 26:53.

<sup>68</sup> Ps 24:1.

This calls for patience and perseverance, in times, when such deaths occur, and, most of all, for Christians to have faith, dependence, and trust in God always. If Christians continue to say that God is this, and God is that, then faith, dependence, and trust in Him mean nothing. Faith, dependence, and trust in God mean allowing Him to work in ways that only He knows best. Once Christians start to challenge the sovereignty of God, depending on the nature of situations, and unexplainable events, they judge God by what they see and experience, and do not leave these matters in the realm of faith. Every Christian is commanded by Christ to walk by faith, and not by sight.

If a non-Christian dies of sorcery, can the death be rationalised in some Christian way? Can it be argued that he did not take God's love, through Christ, seriously? Is it wrong to think that he may have been stubborn, and unwilling to repent, and thus faced God's wrath? Yet, if a Christian dies in the same way, should sin be blamed for his death, if Christ has already paid for his sins? Definitely not! So what conclusions may be drawn from the Christian's death?

Taking into consideration the many attributes God has, one would have to say that God is sovereign. He is timeless, while humans are time-limited. Maybe God allowed Satan to orchestrate the death without our knowledge. However, one thing remains: He is sovereign forever, and people just need to keep on living by faith.

Some questions to ask are: Why did God drown Pharaoh's army? Why did David have an affair with Bathsheba? Why did not Moses see the Promised Land? Why did Cain kill Abel? Why was there so much bloodshed and killing between Israel and the Philistines, the Babylonians, Assyrians, and the Romans? Why were the Israelites freed from Egypt, after spending over 400 years there? There may be all sorts of answers to these questions: like sin, disobedience, hardened hearts, the worship of other gods, and pleasurable desires, but, through them all, God revealed His character, His being, His attributes, His personality, and His sovereignty.

If a person dies from sorcery, what attribute may God be choosing to reveal? The answer does not really matter, if it is admitted that, in some way, God is working out His purposes. God said to Moses, "I AM that I

AM”, the Sovereign Lord. As limited human beings, we cannot always understand God’s ways.<sup>69</sup> Just moments after Peter professed Christ to be his Lord, Christ amazingly rebuked him, and said, “Away from me, Satan.”<sup>70</sup> This rebuke must have shocked and devastated Peter. According to Christ, Satan, through Peter, was dampening God’s purposes for Him. Jesus rebuked the devilish thoughts Peter had that instant.

In view of this, Christians need to be reminded that, sometimes, death through sorcery may not be the most comfortable way of dying, but the question to ask is: was the death of Jesus a comfortable one, such that we all would like to die like Him? Maybe not, according to our human thoughts, but His very uncomfortable death served God’s purposes, and thus saves all who believe. Peter tried to comfort Jesus, by pulling Him aside, and telling Him that he will never go through suffering. Jesus realised Satan’s plot to confuse Peter, and rebuked him immediately. Christians must be careful not to ignore deaths through sorcery, because they could be leaving God out of His own foreknowledge.<sup>71</sup>

On the whole, it is important for Christians to remember that they operate in a world in which God has ultimate control, by causing (perfect will), or by allowing (permissive will), all that takes place. Scripture does not deny that Satan is in partial control of the world today, but only because God allows it. Proof of this is found in Rev 16 and 20. If Satan is in total control, then why do we still exist? Why has this world not come to an end? Can Satan ever destroy what God has created? Even if he takes physical life, can he really still be in control of those who go to heaven or hell? Why cannot he save those who are now in hell, given that they worshipped him while they were alive? He certainly cannot touch those Christ has saved, who are now enjoying the blessings of heaven. The difference between God’s sovereignty over the universe and Satan’s rule now on earth is that Satan’s is temporary, whereas God’s is eternal.

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<sup>69</sup> Perhaps, by one death through sorcery, God could be sparing hundreds of lives.

<sup>70</sup> Matt 16:23.

<sup>71</sup> Acts 2:23.

Can we now say that Satan is responsible for all evil? Yes, because he is the evil one, and also plays his part in the sins of the flesh, and the system of the world. In fact, to reject the thought that Satan is in control of the world questions the sovereignty of God. According to Prov 16:4, “The Lord has made everything for His own purpose, even the wicked, for the day of evil.” According to Job, whatever God desires, He does. The scriptures affirm He does whatever He pleases.<sup>72</sup> Isaiah says, “The one, forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being, and creating calamity, I am the Lord who does all these.” The NT does not remain silent, either. Paul says that God works all things after the counsel of His will.<sup>73</sup>

Is there, then, a scriptural understanding for the prevalence of sorcery? According to Murphree, the fall of nature is roughly the natural consequence of the human fall. Humankind held the natural world as a trust from God. So, when its relationship with God was disrupted, its relationship with the environment became distorted also. The discord between humans and nature reflects the tension that has developed between them and God.<sup>74</sup> In that light, the idea of harmful spirit activity in Melanesia can be better understood. God’s natural creation is under a curse. Deaths by sorcery, and the natural disasters that claim millions of innocent lives, cry out aloud that this world is in rebellion against God. These things happen, not because a loving Father wills it, but, rather, they are the consequences of man’s sin, and Satan’s dominion in the world.

Pink says that it is only from the word of truth that we can learn about God’s relation to this world.<sup>75</sup> For Christians in Melanesia, this is a vital element in understanding God. C. S. Lewis argues that the greatest miracle of divine omnipotence, and the greatest testimony to God’s sovereignty, is the fact that God created beings, who possess the power to say “no” to

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<sup>72</sup> Ps 115:31; 35:6.

<sup>73</sup> Eph 1:11.

<sup>74</sup> Jon Tal Murphree, *A Loving God and Suffering World* (Downers Grove IL: IVP, 1973), p. 94.

<sup>75</sup> A. W. Pink, *The Sovereignty of God* (Edinburgh UK: Banner of Truth Trust, 1993), p. 12.

Him. As a result, we are not forced to worship Him, but, rather, will worship Him out of our own free will.<sup>76</sup>

Rom 8:20 speaks of God subjecting His creation to frustration, bondage, and decay. He has, therefore, chosen to exercise His power in this way, and not exercise all the power that He could have. Sadly, in Melanesia, the idea of a power struggle is the way in which people see life and its happenings. If God cannot, in His power, seemingly do anything to stop the forces of evil, then fear remains in a Hula believer, because he has not seen God's power manifested. He lacks the understanding of the sovereignty of God in this regard. Therefore, Christians must always remember that, when someone dies as a result of sorcery, it is never a victory for Satan. Jesus says that evil can hurt the flesh, but never the spirit.<sup>77</sup> The issue of the sovereignty of God is not about how we see life, but how God sees all that is happening, according to His planning and good pleasure. It is never about us, it is all about Him.

In terms of using scripture to overcome death through sorcery, the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, and, particularly, His resurrection, is our assurance that we need not fear death through sorcery. According to Luke 22, Judas, who was one of Christ's 12 disciples, was a key player in the planning of Christ's physical death. It came to pass, and Satan had many believing he was victorious. Christians must realise that Christ's resurrection meant that He defeated death. This means that all who are in Christ at death will be resurrected, too, even if they die at the hands of evil men through sorcery. This is the best example set for us in scripture. The powers of Satan, sin, and death have been overcome, and, because of this, we are victorious in Christ, and have nothing to fear.

### **THE OUTCOMES OF DEATH THROUGH SORcery, AND HOW IT AFFECTS CHRISTIANS IN HULA**

Belief in God is always in tension with practice in tradition. In the case of sorcery, Christians in Hula believe two things: (1) God gives life; but (2)

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., quoting C. S. Lewis.

<sup>77</sup> Matt 10:28.

sorcerers take life. From this, an unbeliever may draw the conclusion that God has no part in the taking of one's life. Yet, it is important for any believer to always remember God's omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence. He must remain sovereign at all times.<sup>78</sup> However, it needs to be noted that evangelism is meaningless to a Hula unbeliever, once he realises Satan's dominion in the world. The church's integrity, respect, status, and cause become null and void in the eyes of the unbelieving world.<sup>79</sup>

To say that God is in control of one's death through sorcery, through His permissive will, encourages unbelievers and sorcerers to continue thinking, "If God allows sorcery, then it must be okay." Again, the cause of the gospel becomes pointless to an unbelieving world. So what can be said of the situation? Are Hula Christians naturally responding, as they should, pointing the finger at the sorcerer, as the agent of death, since Satan is in control of the world today? Or is their response derived from their animistic background, and the fear of spirits?

### **BIBLICAL ISSUES THAT NEED TO BE ADDRESSED**

Due to a lack of Bible teaching, animistic roots are still deep within their thinking, and fear is one of Satan's greatest weapons to maintain a hold on these people. When a person dies as a result of sorcery, be they either Christian or non-Christian, many become fearful.<sup>80</sup> Many Hula Christians are unaware that Satan is in partial control of the world we live in, because God has allowed this to happen. Many Christians believe that God is a loving, merciful, gracious Father, and that violent deaths, as such, are not of Him. Thus, a Hula Christian will always point the finger to sorcery, as the cause of death. It is believed that Satan is using this strategy to confuse the Christian's mind, and will do anything to maintain his opposition to God and His people.

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<sup>78</sup> Seik Pitoi, CLTC student, and United church pastor, interview by author, CLTC, July 24, 2009.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Revd Mari Kila, United church minister of Koudeurika and Redscar circuits, interview by author, January 29, 2009.

The suggestion here would be to point people back to scripture. A good passage to commence with could be 1 John 5:19, “that the whole world is under the control of the evil one”. However, Christians must come to understand that God’s self-limitation of His control over this world is only temporary – until Satan and his cohorts are finally destroyed.

If Christians respond, “Well, if the Bible states that Satan is in control of the world I am living in, there has got to be an explanation”, it would be a good idea to bring out God’s purposes, and, in particular, His sovereignty. The story of Job may be one to share, and explain God’s part in allowing Satan to take partial (that is restricted) control of Job’s life.<sup>81</sup>

It is very important to make Hula Christians understand the place of the sovereignty of God in such circumstances. This would reduce the level of fear. It is essential to keep one step ahead of Satan, stand on the truth of scripture, and be guided by the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, to have the upper hand in these situations, declare that Satan’s rule is only temporary. He is fighting a losing battle. Satan lost when Christ died and rose from death, but he still continues his strong opposition to God, and God’s people. The next step is to give further evidence from Rev 16-20 that Satan is heading towards destruction. Christians and non-Christians alike should be made aware of God’s coming triumphs, as told in Rev 16 and 20, which biblically confirm Satan’s destiny. These passages explain God’s sovereign rule and power. On the one hand, Satan is in control, but on the other hand, it is only temporary, because the fact is he faces doom for all eternity.

Prov 16:4 would be a good passage for Hula Christians to ponder on, “The Lord has made everything for His own purpose, even the wicked, for the day of evil.” This verse sheds light on unanswered questions that many Hula Christians may ask. It helps to explain why Satan, and the forces of darkness, are at work in the lives of people. Thus, their thinking, at the times when deaths occur through sorcery, will not be based on fear, but on biblical truth.<sup>82</sup> This strategy is aimed at helping Hula Christians to

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<sup>81</sup> Job 1-42.

<sup>82</sup> Tony Evans, *Our God is Awesome* (Chicago IL: Moody Press, 1994), p. 91.

eliminate fear, and to know, and believe, through scripture, the truth about sorcery, its roots, its worth, and its destiny.<sup>83</sup>

## CONTEXTUALISATION

### *The Word of God*

It would also be very helpful for Hula Christians to understand the differences in Melanesian evil powers, and what they use to enforce their power. Magicians use gingers, pieces of clothing, human waste, bone, herbs, leaves, tree barks, and all kinds of mixtures, through which their power is transmitted. At other times, for *sanguma*, or witches, the people become mediums of power, through rituals and initiation ceremonies.<sup>84</sup>

The use of these animistic powers can be compared, similarly, to the uses of God's vessels of power, in the context of scripture. In contrast to the power of sorcery, the power of God is far different, and incomparable with any other power. It is in His Word, and the name and the blood, of Jesus, with which Christians are equipped to overcome the devil. God created all of creation through His Word – the Word existing before the beginning of all things. The Word of God is not one of the created things, nor was it part of the world which came to being. It was with God for all eternity.<sup>85</sup> For a Melanesian to better understand Christ, as being the very Word of God, is easy. Sorcerers not only use objects and words, but are also, themselves, vessels that carry out the work of the evil one. Christ is the vessel of God, and so are all Christians.<sup>86</sup>

While God's power rests on His Word, which is the basis for the whole of creation, the man who practises evil powers, uses God's created things, which are powerless in God's eyes, because His Word still remains the source of all powers. A biblical example is when Jesus cast spirits out of demon-possessed people, by speaking words each time.<sup>87</sup> When Satan

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<sup>83</sup> Havea, Sione, Amanaki, R. B Johnson, Josaia Rayawa, Djiniyini Gondara, Fotama Vamarasi, *South Pacific Theology* (Oxford UK: Regnum Books, 1987), p. 45.

<sup>84</sup> Taruna, "God's Power Exceeds Melanesian Power", p. 27.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> 1 John 4:4.

<sup>87</sup> Matt 8:16.

came to Jesus in the desert, Jesus resisted him by repeatedly quoting scripture, “It is written . . .”.<sup>88</sup> When Paul was sharing the Word with Governor Paulus, the devil hated it, and tried to hinder him.<sup>89</sup> The Word is a double-edged sword that cuts through the root of evil.<sup>90</sup>

Along with the various forms of sorcery, words also have power. Those who practise such magic usually utter words, based on knowledge passed down from their ancestors. These words are very powerful, for either for blessing or cursing, depending on the situation. Likewise, if Melanesian Christians in Hula have this same kind of fear for God and His Word, and believe that every word of scripture also has power and authority, in the same way they believe the words of their ancestors are powerful, Satan and his army stand no chance of continuing to put more fear into Christians. This is one way of eliminating fear of animistic spirits. There is a replacement of allegiance. The Word of God fills the gap of the word of animism.<sup>91</sup>

One of the biggest problems that Christians have is being unable to replace their existing worldview, which is so deeply rooted within them. The replacement worldview needs to be contextualised, if it is to be understood by the person willing to make the change. The key thing is to fill in the missing gaps. If that is not done, the chances are the old values and habits will remain. This is a general idea that can be used in any culture. Hula Christians will continue to battle with the fear of spirits unless they replace it with a reverential fear of God.<sup>92</sup> This kind of fear is honouring to Him, giving Him glory, praise, thanks, acknowledging His sovereignty, and revering Him for who He is. It also means giving no allegiance to any other god but Him (Ex 20:3). As Christians, they need not fear the

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<sup>88</sup> Matt 4:4, 7, 10.

<sup>89</sup> Acts 13:8.

<sup>90</sup> Heb 4:12.

<sup>91</sup> Dr Kofi Anane, Lecturer in Physics, interview by author, CLTC, March 17, 2009.

<sup>92</sup> Philip Manuao, “Communicating the Gospel in Meaningful Cultural Forms in Melanesia”, in *Melanesian Journal of Theology*, 16-1 (2000), p. 69.

Melanesian spirit gods, because Christ's death and resurrection has set them free from all powers, rulers, and authorities (Col 2:15-21).<sup>93</sup>

### ***The Manifested Word – Christ***

John says that the Word, through which the whole creation came to being, became flesh, in the person of Jesus Christ.<sup>94</sup> When He died on the cross, He stripped Satan of his power, making the cross our reference for victory. From the cross, we have two other things available to us with which to knock down the powers of evil, and Satan himself.

*His Blood.* Firstly, it was by the blood of Christ, and the word of their testimony, the saints overcame Satan, as martyrs of the early church. The place of safety for Christians is being in the shelter of His blood.<sup>95</sup> In that holy moment, when Jesus was shedding His blood, it looked like Satan was victorious. But, when Jesus rose again from the dead, it was a great testimony for His followers to preach about. But it was also a devastating defeat for Satan.<sup>96</sup> However, Satan uses many people to think that Christ was defeated, and that He never rose again. It was for this reason that Paul persecuted Christians.

To shed blood in Melanesia is a very common thing. Firstly, blood shed through revenge is not a new thing to the Melanesian way of life. In the PNG highlands, shedding blood, or tribal fighting, is a way of life. It, more or less, brings the community together, and encourages compensation, which often leads to reconciliation between two warring tribes. In coastal areas, as in Hula, animals were slaughtered, and offered to spirit gods, to receive blessings, or to put one right with the spirit world. This brought peace and harmony between the spirits and the people. But, most importantly, it removed the fear within the people, so that they could be free of the spirits' curses. Likewise, the blood of Christ, if shared in this context, would be very powerful. Satan never wants to be reminded of the

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<sup>93</sup> Penuel Ben Idusulia, "Biblical sacrifice through Melanesian eyes", in John D'Arcy May, ed., *Living Theology in Melanesia*, Point 8 (1985), p. 297.

<sup>94</sup> John 1:14.

<sup>95</sup> Taruna, "God's Power Exceeds Melanesian Power", p. 32.

<sup>96</sup> Paul E. Little, *Know What You Believe* (Wheaton IL: Victor Books, 1981), p. 23.

blood of Christ, because it signifies his defeat. If the Hula Christians can do the same, Satan will flee from them, thus removing the fear from within them.

*His Name.* Secondly, the scriptures show that the name of Jesus was used for victory over Satan's power. To understand the power in the name of Jesus, we need to understand its meaning. It implies His divinity, authority, and His death, through which He won victory, His power to forgive sins, His power to save, His resurrection power, His sovereignty, and the rule that He exercises from on high. When we call on the name of Jesus, we acknowledge all these aspects of His power. And when we do that in faith, He transmits His power to effect what we want for His glory.<sup>97</sup>

Melanesians believe that, in naming someone after places, ancestors, or others, it often carries with it a characteristic. In Hula, if an uncle gives his name to his nephew, the nephew is seen to possess certain characteristics of his uncle. If one is named after a place, usually that place becomes his home. His gardens and land will always provide good food for him. However, if someone comes from another place, and resides there, he will not be as prosperous.<sup>98</sup>

Names have a huge effect on Melanesians, and, usually, the name of a person makes them out to be whatever the background of that name carries. At conversion, Melanesians carry the name "Christian". All Christians are named after Christ. They are His namesakes. Given the description of that name, Hula Christians ought to be proud. They are supposed to take after their namesake, Christ, who possesses all the attributes of God. One such attribute is authority. Christians have all authority over the powers of evil, because Christ has defeated sin, Satan, and death, and He is above all powers, ruling with authority and power. Nothing stands in comparison to the superiority of Christ. He has the highest standing in the entire universe, and Christians, for that matter, stand with Him.

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<sup>97</sup> Taruna, "God's Power Exceeds Melanesian Power", p. 32.

<sup>98</sup> Veva Vele, Hula community police law and order, interview by author, Hula village, January 17, 2009.

### ***The Holy Spirit***

The Holy Spirit also has a very important part to play, with these two weapons that Jesus has given to us from the cross. The Holy Spirit is the witness of the name and the blood of Jesus. He is also the witness of Satan's defeat on the cross. So, when Satan stands against us as an accuser, indicting us of our sins, the Holy Spirit rebukes him, and reminds him of Jesus, and His blood on the cross.<sup>99</sup> Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would guide us into all the truth.<sup>100</sup>

In Melanesian animism, evil spirits control the way of life. For Melanesian Christians, the Holy Spirit is meant to control and guide them. He gives them power to overcome Satan's temptations.<sup>101</sup> The Holy Spirit also helps to overcome the struggles Christians have in their lives, by constantly reminding them of their victory in Christ, while, at the same time, constantly reminding Satan of his defeat.<sup>102</sup>

Anderson affirms that it is traditional for Melanesians to orally pass down to generations the ways and practices of cultural beliefs. Sitting around a campfire at night, an elder, "with a big-man mentality", surrounded by a group of youths, may talk for hours on how the spirits are meant to be treated and respected. In this way, Satan uses his "big man" status to cause the younger generations to do four things: (i) lift up Satan's name; (ii) strengthen their beliefs in spirits; (iii) increase the fear that already exists within themselves; and (iv), most importantly, make the younger generation become even more fearful than the previous one.<sup>103</sup>

Anderson believes the challenge to contemporary Christian Melanesians is to share with their children about the present, living Christ, and the message of their salvation. In turn, this also does four things: (i) lifts up the name of God; (ii) strengthens their belief in Christianity, and helps them to

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<sup>99</sup> 1 John 3:8; 5:6-8.

<sup>100</sup> Caspar To Vaninara, "Melanesian stepping stones for the preaching of the kingdom", in John D'Arcy May, ed., *Living Theology in Melanesia, Point 8* (1985), p. 146.

<sup>101</sup> Luke 10:19.

<sup>102</sup> Taruna, "God's Power Exceeds Melanesian Power", p. 33.

<sup>103</sup> Dan Anderson, CLTC lecturer, interview by author, CLTC, August 16, 2009.

grow; (iii) decreases fear in spirits, and increases fear for God; and (iv) it changes the mind-sets of the younger generations.<sup>104</sup> The mind-set of the present generation can never be changed, unless this is done in the power of the gospel message. Otherwise mind-sets will not be changed; not even by advanced technology, money, business, or even politics.

Why did Judas betray Jesus? Scripture says he was a thief.<sup>105</sup> Many sorcerers today are thieves. Satan used Judas to plot the death of Jesus. Judas was driven by the motive of becoming rich, just like many Hula sorcerers are today.<sup>106</sup> Even though King David predicted the outcome of Judas life,<sup>107</sup> Judas chose to reject Christ's warnings, in the same way that many sorcerers do today. Judas, like many Hula Christians, professed to know Christ, but, in fact, Judas was a hypocrite. Many Hula churchgoers, who are involved in sorcery, are like Judas.<sup>108</sup> Furthermore, as scripture points out, Judas was ready to be the formal accuser in case a trial was called.<sup>109</sup> Similarly, acts of sorcery usually result in innocent people being accused. Finally, Judas' remorse was too little, too late. Even though Judas sinned, Satan maintained the guilt within him as Satan quickly used the priests to show Judas that it was his doing, and that there was no room for forgiveness.<sup>110</sup>

Sorcerers in Hula are left to live with guilt for the rest of their lives, and die never repenting. Even though God purposely sent His Son to die for our sins, His death was at the hands of the evil one, and man was evidently responsible for His physical crucifixion. Christ died a physical death at the hands of man, which Satan orchestrated. In contextualising this biblical message, from a Melanesian standpoint, Judas was the sorcerer. Satan used him to operate at night, like many of the Hula sorcerers do today. He had

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> John 12:4-6.

<sup>106</sup> Matt 26:14-16.

<sup>107</sup> Ps 69:25; 109:8.

<sup>108</sup> Mark 14:19.

<sup>109</sup> Matt 26:48.

<sup>110</sup> Matt 27:4.

greed for money, just as sorcerers make their living today, as paid murderers.

The most amazing fact is that Christ, who was crucified on the cross, rose from the dead: defeating Satan, sin, and death. If God sent Christ for a purpose, and, if Satan unintentionally fulfilled that purpose, God's will was done. Satan may have thought that he was victorious, but, in reality, his victory was actually his defeat, and Christ's seemingly defeat was actually His victory.

The good news for all Christians is Paul's affirmation, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil 1:21). In the light of this, Hula, and other Melanesian Christians, should see deaths through sorcery as victories, rather than defeats. Fear is no longer an issue, because the Christ, who was victorious, now lives in them, thus making them victorious, too. The fear of sorcery, after all, is a physical fear. However, the greatest fear, for every Christian, should be the fear of God and of the judgment, which comes after death. No other fears can compare with this fear. Thus, this fear should cause men to repent, and turn away from sin, and turn to God.

When a death through sorcery occurs in Hula, 1 John 5:19 affirms that Satan is responsible for all evil, because God has granted him worldly rule. But Satan has taken this biblical truth, and used it against Christians. He has kept them from thinking that God has only given him temporary authority, for God's own sovereign purposes. Furthermore, Satan keeps people guessing as to whether Christ has been really victorious on the cross, and whether he has been truly defeated. Satan does not want Christians to know the truth of his fate, because the truth will show them his true destiny. Because Satan wants God's glory for himself, he keeps people in fear, and makes them believe that he is in total control of death. These thoughts by many Christians only elevate Satan, because people then fear his work, and cannot see what God has done for us through Christ.

Even though Christ knew beforehand of Judas' plot, He chose not to oppose him so that God's purposes would be fulfilled. Likewise, Hula Christians must always maintain their trust, dependence, and faith in God, and not in their animistic spirits, passed down to them through the

generations. A change of allegiance from animistic spiritual beliefs to Christ is a step forward in eliminating the fear of spirits. The ultimate aim of Satan is to keep fear in Melanesia, and spirits are his main means of doing this.

For Christians in Hula to eliminate the constant fear of spirits, it is recommended that clear biblical teaching be given on the following topics:

1. how God would want them to deal with sorcery;
2. Satan, his motives, character, and status in the spiritual realm;
3. the sovereignty of God;
4. the root of sin, and the consequences that man and his world now face, at present;
5. Christ's victory on the cross, and
6. victory through the gospel, contextualised for the Hulas. The message must become identifiable, acceptable, life-changing, but, more importantly, it must become a permanent replacement for their animistic traditions.

### CONCLUSION

In order for Hula Christians to remove their fear of spirits, it is essential that the need for contextualisation of biblical truths, such as, the Word, Jesus Christ's resurrection, and the Holy Spirit, be properly addressed, so that Melanesian Christians can permanently replace their animistic worldviews with a Christian worldview. Failure to contextualise these teachings will result in a lack of worldview change.

Many Hula Christians still live in fear of sorcery and *sanguma*. Without contextualisation, they will not be able to understand the sovereignty of God and His power. Recognition of Satan is also an important factor in fully understanding the sovereignty of God.

Since Christ has all authority over the universe, Christians should have no fear when dealing with other powers, because these powers are subject to

Jesus' authority. Jesus will be with Christians to ensure Satan is reminded of his defeat on the cross.<sup>111</sup> However, a Melanesian Christian's perspective of protection is not spiritual, but physical. Yet, to seek power, for protection, or other benefits, for a better life now, apart from God, is idolatry. God wants us to wait upon Him, in patience, faith, and perseverance, because He desires us to worship and honour only Him.

Scripture points out that the body was meant to die, because of the fall in the Garden of Eden. Yet, the good news for all, is that Christ has risen, defeating death, and becoming a remedy for sin. However, in the context of this thesis, it is very important for Melanesian Christians to see the parallel between Judas' wickedness in orchestrating Christ's death and sorcerers' wickedness in causing victims deaths. Even though Satan seemed to be victorious, God was the ultimate victor. Satan's power of death was defeated by God's power of life, and Christ is the living testimony of that, for all Christians.

Those who are in Christ will be resurrected to life, irrespective of death through sorcery, which causes many Hula Christians to remain fearful. This is the power of God, which, through receiving Christ as their Lord and Saviour, they are sealed with His blood, have the written Word on their hearts, and possess the Holy Spirit to remind Satan that he is defeated. Christians are no longer engaged in a physical, but a spiritual battle, one in which they are victorious with the truth, leaving no room for Satan to deceive them any longer with fear.

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<sup>111</sup> Taruna, "God's Power Exceeds Melanesian Power", p. 22.

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