

## EVANGELICAL/PENTECOSTAL SOLUTION TO GAMBLING IN THE PHILIPPINES

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### 1. Introduction

Sometimes we are tempted to think of our Christian faith as a means of escape from the demands and realities of life and social action. We know little about getting involved in the arena of social action, although as Evangelical/Pentecostals we are now beginning to step into the spheres of social and political change.<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, we fail when it comes to opposing evil and injustice actively, or to alleviating human problems and suffering. Too often, right in our homes, we turn away from a neighbor's social, physical, psychological and spiritual needs.

I am convinced that now is the time for Christians to become actively involved in social action. For this reason, I single out gambling as a moral, ethical and spiritual problem of people in the Philippines<sup>2</sup> generally and fellow citizens in the province of La Union<sup>3</sup> particularly.

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph R. Suico, "Pentecostalism: Towards a Movement of Social Transformation in the Philippines," *Journal of Asian Mission* 1 (March 1999), pp. 7-19 (7-9).

<sup>2</sup> "Revilla assured of no nonsense drive against jueting," *Manila Bulletin*, June 22, 1999, p. 2. Department of Interior and Local Government Secretary Rolando Puno and Philippine National Police (PNP) Chief Deputy Director General Edmundo Larroza disclosed the nationwide operation of gambling.

<sup>3</sup> On March 2, 1850, La Union was born in the context of boundary disputes between Pangasinan and Ilocos that caused so much bloodshed. La Union attracts tourists due to its nice beaches especially during weekends. Even Filipinos have caught the "beach fever" by spending their picnic and family reunions at beach

Indeed, the issue of gambling, specifically jueting,<sup>4</sup> is one of the grounds for the impeachment trial of the thirteenth president of the Philippine Republic, Joseph “Erap” Estrada.<sup>5</sup> Ilocos Sur Governor Luis Chavit Singson, Estrada’s long-time gambling and drinking friend, allegedly called him “the lord of the gambling lords”.<sup>6</sup> This paved the way to Estrada’s ouster as the head of the nation. I strongly assert that gambling is an evil that needs to be confronted and dealt with in a spirit of justice and agape love.

Evangelical and Spirit-filled Christians can offer solutions to today’s moral decadence related to gambling as a Spirit-empowered community.<sup>7</sup> How will Evangelical and Pentecostal churches involve themselves in social action? I have two specific objectives in writing this essay: 1) to present a biblical and theological perspective on gambling, and 2) a proposal for action suggesting how the Philippine churches in general, and Pentecostal churches in particular, can impact this particular ethical, social, and spiritual problem.

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resorts. Although, La Union is declared as one of the twelve industrial centers throughout the archipelago, one of the greatest ethical and moral problems is gambling. The presence of jueting is found even the remotest barrios. Cockfighting arenas are found in all the twenty municipalities of La Union. *Jueting* operators and cockfighting arena owners are *babaknang* (the wealthy) and *nagadal* (the educated), and some influential politicians who have guns, goons and gold.

<sup>4</sup> Jueting is a game of chance using 37 balls, numbering from 1 to 37 put in a box. Two numbers are drawn and returned in the box and if one of the drawn numbers is drawn again this determines the winning numbers. For example the first two drawn numbers are 3 and 7 and if the last drawn number is 3, the winning numbers are 3/37 (pronounced three, thirty-seven). If the gambler bets for one peso, he wins four hundred pesos. The kumbrador (collector) of jueting is entitled for 10% (P40.00) from the winner and another 10% (P40.00) from the jueting operator.

<sup>5</sup> “Erap’s jueting links, wrecking havoc in RP,” *The North Tribune*, October 18-24, 2000, p. 2. The editorial title of the local newspapers shows that the president was allegedly receiving up to P400 million jueting collections nationwide from November 1998 to August 2000.

<sup>6</sup> “Ilocanos applaud expose on jueting,” *Norluzonian Courier*, October 12, 2000, pp. 1, 12. This local newspaper is based in San Fernando City.

<sup>7</sup> Murray W. Dempster, “Pentecostal Social Concern and Biblical Mandate of Social Justice,” *Pneuma* 9 (Fall 1987), pp. 129-49.

## 2. Gambling: Its Biblical and Theological Perspectives<sup>8</sup>

Gambling, whether in the form of betting, lotteries, card games, bingo, raffles, jai alai, pool, dice, poker, cockfighting or jueting (both legal and illegal) is gaining unprecedented acceptance in the Philippines. Jonathan Gallagher wrote about the gambling problem in the Philippines. He stated: "With more than 15 million 'problem and pathological gamblers' and hundreds of billions of pesos spent on gambling some two years ago, the impact of gambling is huge."<sup>9</sup> Gambling indeed is a great business. Because of its nationwide influence, Christians must form an opinion that determines the ethical and moral implications of it.<sup>10</sup> As a prophetic community, we must be involved actively in minimizing or *better* in eradicating the social evils of our society, because we are "the light" and "the salt" of the earth.

### 2.1 Gambling Defined

Gambling often means different things to different people at different times.<sup>11</sup> A tract attributed to St. Cyprian held that gambling violates the first commandment and charged Lucifer with inspiring dice, and the Christian church generally has held it to be sinful.<sup>12</sup> The Talmudic laws equate the acceptance of gambling winnings with thievery.<sup>13</sup> During the Middle Ages, rabbis in European Jewish communities banned games of chance. Eastern religions such as Confucianism and Islam forbid all games of chance.<sup>14</sup> The Puritans

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<sup>8</sup> This portion is based on the outline of the position paper of the US Assemblies of God on the issue of gambling. See, "American Assemblies of God Position Paper on Gambling" at [www.ag.org/top/beliefs/position-papers-4186-gambling.cfm](http://www.ag.org/top/beliefs/position-papers-4186-gambling.cfm).

<sup>9</sup> Jonathan Gallagher, "7 Reasons for Not Rolling Seven," *Health & Home: The National Journal of Better Living* 4:4 (July-August 2001), pp. 10-11, 18, 39 (39).

<sup>10</sup> "American Assemblies of God Position Paper on Gambling," p. 12.

<sup>11</sup> Jerome S. Meyer, "Gambling," *World Book Encyclopedia*, 20 vols. (Chicago: Field Enterprises Educational Corporation, 1946), vol. 8, p. 18.

<sup>12</sup> Cited in "Gambling and Betting," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 23 vols. (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1957), vol. 9, p. 997.

<sup>13</sup> "Gambling and Betting," p. 997.

<sup>14</sup> "Gambling," *Microsoft Encarta 98 Encyclopedia* (Microsoft Corporation,

condemned all games of chance as “blasphemous in that they violate the third commandment.”<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, some religious groups, charities and governments have frequently been utilizing game cards, bingo, raffles and lotteries to raise money.<sup>16</sup>

Those who argue in favor of gambling argue that spending to be happy is justifiable as spending money on a concert, a cinema-show or anything else that gives us pleasure. They describe business, insurance, farming and even some investments as gambling because the outcome is either gain or loss.<sup>17</sup> Further, they argue that gambling can be used to raise money for charity. A portion of money received may be allotted to a hospital, for the disabled or natural calamity victims. Gambling, especially lottery money, is employed by some religious sectors and the government for a good cause and for a good end. Senator Ramon Revilla, the author of Senate bill 1621 legalizing a form of jueting under the supervision of the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation, states:

Instead of devising additional forms of taxes, the revenues from jueting are more than enough to finance the government’s pro-poor programs. Conservative estimates show that illegal operators in Luzon alone net at least P6 billion annually.<sup>18</sup>

However, the end does not justify the means. Gambling does bring in tax money for the government that can be put to use for the improvement of the welfare of the nation. Nonetheless, the problem of gambling creates costs greater than what the government receives through taxes upon gambling. Gallagher argued:

Some gambling operations cloak this hard fact by designating a percentage of gambling income to “good causes,” as though funding public welfare or education somehow makes the basic selfish drive to gamble more acceptable. Would “good cause,” donations from alcohol or tobacco manufacturers make the use of their product more acceptable?... [The] truth is that gambling is hard-core selfishness of

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1993-1997).

<sup>15</sup> “Gambling and Betting,” p. 997.

<sup>16</sup> “Gambling,” *Microsoft Encarta 98 Encyclopedia*.

<sup>17</sup> “Position Paper,” p. 12.

<sup>18</sup> “Revilla assured of no non-sense drive against jueting,” *Manila Bulletin*, June 22, 1999, p. 2.

the worst kind: the feverish craving for me at the expense of every body else.

The Roman historian Tacitus, who lived about 100 AD, stated that gamblers among the tribes of Germany would even stake their lives on the outcome of a game.<sup>19</sup>

Basically, gambling is an effort to gain money without working. It is an attempt to become wealthy with no contribution whatever to the common good. It is a deliberate striving to bypass the essential social principle that reward should go to productive labor, thus, gambling is contrary to the work ethic of the scripture.<sup>20</sup>

Gambling literally is staking something of value in a game of chance or is endeavoring to get something for nothing. True games of chance demand no skill and its result depends solely on good or bad luck.<sup>21</sup> Statistics show that chances of losing are far greater than those of winning, and that the real winner is the operator or the financier.

L. M. Starkey, Jr. succinctly describes the risks that gambling produce:

Life does have its risks that one must accept with faith and courage. These normal risks are in no sense equivalent to the risks in a game of chance. Gambling devises artificial risks in the hope of excessive gain far beyond what the investment of time, money, or skill would justify. In gambling the chance is unrelated to any creative effort called for by the farmer or the stockbroker in the responsible investment of his mental monetary and physical funds.<sup>22</sup>

Gambling then is recognized as any activity in which wealth changes hands, mainly on the basis of chance, and with risk to the gambler. Gambling causes serious loss to many individuals and brings economic distress and poverty to many families.<sup>23</sup> Because of the evil of gambling, responsible Christians "must form an opinion concerning its propriety. The legalization of gambling...or its acceptance by some religious

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<sup>19</sup> Meyer, "Gambling," p. 18.

<sup>20</sup> Meyer, "Gambling," p. 13.

<sup>21</sup> Meyer, "Gambling," p. 18.

<sup>22</sup> L. M. Starkey, Jr., *Money, Mania and Morals* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1964), p. 201.

<sup>23</sup> Meyer, "Gambling," p. 18.

organization cannot be a criterion for evaluation.”<sup>24</sup> What matters is God’s word on gambling.

## 2.2 The Evils of Gambling

Although there is no definite biblical injunction against gambling, we have to approach the issue from biblical principles which indicate that gambling is a social evil to be avoided and a thing to be confronted. These principles are absolute and non-negotiable. To obey them means joy and happiness but ignoring them will bring regrets.

First, gambling is evil because it means trusting luck rather than God. God clearly explicates his attitude toward his chosen people concerning gambling. He sternly warns those “who forsake the Lord and forget my [his] holy mountain; who spread a table for fortune and fill bowls of mixed wine for destiny” (Isa 65:11, NIV). As indicated in some modern translations of the Bible, “fortune” and “destiny” were names of pagan deities Gad and Meni in olden times. Gad was the god of “fortune” or “good luck”; Meni a god of “fate,” “destiny” or “bad luck.”<sup>25</sup> It was an ancient belief that the gods favored a lucky gambler. The earliest designs, for example, of “dice and playing cards have been convincingly related to...divinatory devices.”<sup>26</sup> Mishnah (Sanh. iii, 3) condemns dice-players among the Jews,<sup>27</sup> and the Roman soldiers who cast lots for the raiment of Jesus at the cross are believed to have used dice (Matt 27:35; Mark 15:24; Luke 23:34; John 19:24).<sup>28</sup>

Isaiah points out that trusting in God and luck, or faith and fate, were not compatible. If people rely on chance, they do not rely on God and *vice versa*. Isaiah described those who trust in luck as those “who forsake the Lord” and forget his holy mountain, that is Zion, the city of the Most High.

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<sup>24</sup> “Position Paper,” p. 12.

<sup>25</sup> J. A. Alexander, *The Prophecies of Isaiah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1977), pp. 445-46.

<sup>26</sup> “Gambling,” *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 5 vols., 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, eds. Merrill C. Tenney and Steven Barabas, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1975), vol. 2, p. 650.

<sup>27</sup> William Taylor Smith, “Games of Chance and Skills,” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 5 vols., gen. ed. James Orr (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1939), vol. 2, p. 1169.

<sup>28</sup> Smith, “Games of Chance and Skills,” p. 1169.

Second, gambling is evil because it is a form of greediness and covetousness, a form of the love of money which is the root of all evil (1 Tim 6:10). By this love, we join ourselves to money's fate: "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt 6:24). We cannot "halt between two opinions": we cannot be divided. We can neither serve nor love two masters. Because love compels us to follow the Lord and nothing else, we cannot love two things (or have two masters) at the same time. We will either hate the one, and love the other (Matt 6:24). Insofar as the love of money is concerned, it is a violation of God's word; it is certainly a root of all evil that causes separation from God. The Bible declares, "He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth, with gain" (Eccl 5:10), and "he that is greedy of gain troubles his own house" (Prov 15:27).

Third, gambling is evil because it is contrary to the principle of love. In gambling, all winning is based on someone else losing. In order that one should win, another must lose. One person's good fortune is based on another's losses, losses that all too often the loser ill can afford. The hope of gambling is centered on purely selfish success,<sup>29</sup> and the suffering caused by it is totally inconsistent with the spirit of divine love. In gambling, "the attempt to make profit out of the loss and possible suffering of others is the antithesis of that love of one's neighbor on which our Lord insisted."<sup>30</sup> In gambling, the gamblers do not care who they may hurt in doing it.

The spirit of Christianity, which is divine love, causes Christians to oppose any effort by the government or any religious sector to legalize gambling based on the weakness of people, which degrades society. Indeed, even Senate President Blas F. Ople expressed his strong opposition to gambling, whether it is in the form of Jai-alai, lotto lottery, the sweepstakes, the Philippine Amusements and Gaming Corporation casinos, horse racing or cockpits: "The proliferation of gambling opportunities while courting foreign tourism belies government claims to underdevelopment and efforts at overcoming poverty."<sup>31</sup>

Fourth, gambling is evil because it is contrary to the egalitarian principle. Whether or not the financial loss is excessive, gamblers are

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<sup>29</sup> Herbert E. Kahler, "Gambling," *The World Book Encyclopedia*, 22 vols. (Chicago: World Book Childcraft, 1979), vol. 8, p. 21.

<sup>30</sup> William Temple, "Gambling and Ethics" (London: Churches Committee on Gambling, n.d.).

<sup>31</sup> "Ople opposes jai-alai even it might boost tourism, gov't revenue," *Manila Bulletin*, March 4, 1999, p. 6.

basically losers while operators or financiers are the winners. Indeed, since some operators of gambling depend for their livelihood on the profits of the game played, or since some financiers are big people in the government,<sup>32</sup> they are very careful to see to it that they win regularly. In order to prevent losses, operators employ a variety of dishonest tricks: the use of marked cards, controlled roulette wheels, the loaded or magnetic dice, among many. They enable the professional gamblers or operators to be certain of winning at will and thus, showing that seldom there will be fair play.

Fifth, gambling is evil because of the troubles it may bring to the gamblers and their families. Losers tend to become embittered and curse their luck. Often they lose money which should be spent on their families, and which they have no right to lose. The losses frequently lead to poverty, distress, robbery, suicide and other immoral effects.<sup>33</sup> Gambling is a major cause of criminality<sup>34</sup> and immorality.<sup>35</sup> Gallagher wrote, "An increased suicide rate, more frequent car accidents, and an increased incidence of child abuse are also associated with gambling behaviors."<sup>36</sup> Further, he argues:

Direct crime (such as robbery and crimes of violence), associated criminal activities (such as drugs and prostitution, and indirect crimes (such as fraud and embezzlement) abound in gambling environment... [Thus], where there is gambling, there is crime.

Illegal gambling is admittedly claimed as one of the major causes of graft and corruption disclosed by Senator Revilla.<sup>37</sup> Court cases reveal that gambling is one of the greatest reasons given by employees charged

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<sup>32</sup> "Ilocanos applaud expose on jueting," *Norluzonian Courier*, 12 October 2000, p. 12. Gonzales revealed, "It is a public knowledge that relatives of the Presidents, from Marcos, Aquino, Ramos and Estrada are apparently involved in the Protection of Jueting; because of their influence, the top leaders of the police agency will always accede to money-sharings in the operation of Jueting."

<sup>33</sup> Meyer, "Gambling," p. 18.

<sup>34</sup> "Gambling," *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, 5 vols., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., eds., William Bridgwater and Elizabeth J. Sherwood (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), vol. 2, p. 745.

<sup>35</sup> "Ople opposes jai-alai," p. 6.

<sup>36</sup> Gallagher, "7 Reasons for Not Rolling Seven," p. 11.

<sup>37</sup> "Revilla assured of no nonsense drive," p. 2.

with embezzlement and falsification of accounts,<sup>38</sup> because they are impelled to appropriate their employer's funds with the hope of repaying when their good luck turns. Fortune does not turn, and criminal law then takes its course.

Sixth, gambling is evil because it disregards responsible stewardship. Stewardship is the recognition that all possessions, not only a fragment, belong to God and we hold them in delegated trust. We are not owners but simply managers.<sup>39</sup> Biblical stewardship views God as the rightful owner of all things (Ps 24:1) and we, individually or collectively, as stewards. Every person is accountable to God for the use of whatever he or she has (Gen 1:26-30; 2:15). The person's responsibility as a steward is to maximize God's return on his investment by using it to serve others (Matt 25:14-30), and not for selfish purposes such as any form of gambling.

Giving of self (2 Cor 8:5) is the first step in a faithful administration of this stewardship. Every Christian must recognize he or she is not his own, he has been bought with a price. Therefore, everyone should glorify God with his or her own body (1 Cor 6:19; 1 Pet 1:18-19). Because of this, churches or individuals do not need to depend upon bingo or raffles to support their own activity and ministry. God's ministry is supported through tithes and offerings (Mal 3:8-10) or any biblical ways and means that glorify Him.

The position paper of the US Assemblies of God states well:

When people recognize their stewardship responsibilities, they will not consider gambling in any form a proper administration of divinely bestowed resources, time and ability. Even the ethics of the world will not tolerate those who gamble with resources put in their trust. Christian responsibility transcends all other responsibilities, and for the Christian gambling is wrong. It is a total disregard of the principle of stewardship. It is a prostitution of God-given assets, which should be used to glorify God and advance His kingdom.<sup>40</sup>

Seventh, gambling is evil because it is inconsistent with the work ethic of the scripture. Throughout the scripture the importance of work is emphasized. "Work expresses who we are, what we are and what we

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<sup>38</sup> E. B. Perkins, "Betting Facts" (London: British House of Commons on Betting Duty, n.d.), p. 101.

<sup>39</sup> Georgia Harkness, *Christian Ethics* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1957), p. 145.

<sup>40</sup> "Position Paper," p. 13.

believe.”<sup>41</sup> In work we reflect the image of our maker (Gen 1:26), for he too is a worker (Gen 2:2; John 5:17), and the very time he created us he commanded us to work (Gen 1:28). Work is a means of dominion (Gen 1:26). A major purpose of our work is to make a meaningful contribution to the kingdom of God and to the community that consequently should glorify his name.<sup>42</sup> Work in short is an essential factor in reducing poverty and possessing wealth, and indeed, a means of fulfilling God’s purpose for our lives. Proverbs 4:5 says, “Poor is he who works with a negligent hand, but the hand of the diligent makes rich.” Paul wrote to the Thessalonians: “When we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat” (2 Thess 3:10).

We are warned in the scripture against the “get-rich-quick” approach. “He that makes haste to be rich shall not be innocent” (Prov 28:20). “He that makes haste to be rich has an evil eye, and considers not that poverty shall come upon him” (Prov 28:22). Gambling, which is a “get-rich-quick”<sup>43</sup> approach is inconsistent with what the scripture teaches about work.

Eighth, gambling is evil because it is detrimental to society and physical health. It is argued that “both legal and illegal gambling have negative impacts on society. Making gambling legal does nothing to change these [broken families, broken individuals, unproductive activity, personal damage of futile and pointless lives] consequences.”<sup>44</sup> Mahjong for example is one of the causes of hypertension, lung sickness and heart attack, primarily due to lack of sleep and exercise, smoking and alcoholism.<sup>45</sup> Gambling leads to behavioral problems and also hinders people from improving industry and self-reliance.

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<sup>41</sup> E. Calvin Beisner, *Property and Poverty* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1988), p. 29.

<sup>42</sup> Beisner, *Property and Poverty*, p. 31.

<sup>43</sup> In “Revilla assured of no nonsense drive,” p. 12, J. G. Gonzales disclosed that regional police commanders were given at least a minimum of P2 million per month, municipal mayors in highly urbanized towns and cities not less than P200 thousand to P500 thousand each per month and the chief of Police in a low class municipality not less than P50 thousand per month by Regional operators-financiers of Jueting. Because of the large amount of money these people succumb to the temptation and play the ‘game’ of graft and corruption.

<sup>44</sup> Gallagher, “7 Reasons for Not Rolling Seven,” p. 11.

<sup>45</sup> Berlin Cuesta-Tadina, MD, interviewed by the author in San Fernando City, La Union, on September 1, 2001.

Ninth, gambling is evil because it tends to be an addiction. Here is a personal experience of a dedicated Christian worker in our area:

I was once a compulsive gambler. During those days I even stole money and properties for my gambling habit. I hated to work on the farm and I loved to gamble. But when I was "born again" in the Spirit, to my amazement I was delivered completely from this vice. I also saw my uncle gamble his cow and parcel of land to satisfy his addictive habit that consequently brought debts and financial suffering upon his family.<sup>47</sup>

Any pleasure that becomes an addiction can never be right. The formation of a habit is one of the most terrifying things in life. It is better to have nothing to do with gambling which is liable to become an addiction. Once a gambler is addicted, he is dominated to the extent that he risks not only money, but also everything meaningful in life.<sup>48</sup> He has lost control of himself and that is contrary to the teaching of the Bible (Gal 5:23).

There are at least six symptoms characterized by the compulsive gambler including: 1) gambling becomes habitually repetitive; 2) gambling becomes a "mania" which makes a person irresponsible, forgetting even the family; 3) the gambler displays "a pathologic optimism" that one day his good luck may come, forgetting previous losing experiences; 4) "the ability to stop in a winning situation no longer exists"; 5) in spite of initial decision to gamble only so much, the addict invariably risks too much; and 6) gambling seems to produce an enjoyable tension consisting of both pain and pleasure.<sup>49</sup>

Gambling can pave the way to rebellion, superstition, self-centeredness, brooding, sudden outbursts of anger, frustration, lack of achievement, passive-dependent manipulation, depression and even self-destruction. Therefore, one may ask him or herself, "Do I possess the pleasure of gambling?" or "Am I possessed by it?"; "Do I control it?" or "Does it control me?"

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<sup>47</sup> Cuesta-Tadina interview.

<sup>48</sup> "Position Paper," p. 13.

<sup>49</sup> "Position Paper," p. 13.

In sum, gambling is evil because it is against Christian principles, detrimental to society, immoral, bad for the economy, promotes crime, and is unproductive, wasteful and personally destructive.

### 3. A Proposal for Action

The problem of gambling cannot be minimized overnight. Steps are to be taken. I would like to make a proposal for action, namely: visualization, vitalization and verbalization. Applying this strategy for action would help solve the evils of gambling.

#### 3.1 Visualization

Gambling is embedded in our culture as evidenced in our words as *buenas* (fortune), *malas* (bad luck), *suerte* (good luck), and *tadhana* (destiny), which are expressions of *bahala na* (fatalism). Christians should visualize gamblers as psychologically “harassed,” socially and physically “helpless” and spiritually “like sheep without a shepherd” (Matt 9:36). We need to practice the good Samaritan’s example of meeting our neighbor’s holistic needs. Christian involvement means being a neighbor in Christ’s name and this is hard and costly. It requires our time, effort and money. We cannot be a neighbor by proxy, nor get involved *in absentia*. We are not to fold our hands, relax and do nothing but wait for the rapture, but rather we are instructed to “occupy” until Jesus comes again (Luke 19:13).

We need to see them as part of our *sakop* (group alliance) and to focus on their welfare. “The *sakop* is a multipurpose group. It can be a social security system, an employment agency, or an emotional support group. But one common thing predominates: the *sakop* prevails over the individual.<sup>50</sup> It includes “relatives, peers, classmates, town-mates, officemates, *lolos*, *lolas*, extended family by consanguinity, affinity, or spiritual relationship.”<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Leonardo N. Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Theology* (Tacloban City, Philippines: Divine Word University Publications, 1975), p. 55.

<sup>51</sup> Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Theology*, p. 111.

### 3.2 Verbalization

We should also verbalize our sentiment. We need to encourage the government to promote a more viable, sustainable, creative and productive means of livelihood as well as leisure. We should not be spectators in the legalization of gambling but we should be Warriors, using peaceful means to minimize or better eradicate the gambling mentality of our people. Let us rally behind those congress members and senators who oppose gambling and behind the leaders of the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches and the Philippines for Jesus Movement in a peaceful way.<sup>52</sup> The Jesus Is Lord Church even made a public demonstration against pornography by applauding President's banning of the film "The Live Show."<sup>53</sup> We need to learn from the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) which stands against any immoral practices of the government executives and general populace.<sup>54</sup> The RCC was instrumental of the ousting of the former president because of the issue of gambling and other related social evils.<sup>55</sup> With the legalization of jueting or other forms of gambling we are now becoming a nation of gamblers rather than a nation of producers. Legalizing jueting in casinos and lotto can lead to a "doom" and not a "boom" of the economy.

I believe that Evangelical churches have a significant role in voicing opinions against any social evils or social ills as the "salt" and "light" of the world. We need to educate the people about the evils of gambling that are against the law of God and the positive aspect of *utang na loob* (indebtedness).<sup>56</sup> A person who gambles possessions actually manifests an attitude of *walang utang na loob sa Dios* (no recognition of

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<sup>52</sup> The best example of the peaceful means is the EDSA Revolution. Some prominent Evangelical leaders such as Dr. Isabelo F. Magalit, president of Asian Theological Seminary took an active stand. See "Three Nights at the Barricade," *Evangelical Thrust* 13:4 (April 1986), pp. 8-9 (8).

<sup>53</sup> "Dangerous Liaisons: Arroyo Uses the Church as her Proxy," *Asiaweek*, April 13, 2001, p. 26.

<sup>54</sup> "Philippines: More Power to the Powerful," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, February 1, 2001, pp. 16-20. Jaime Cardinal Sin called for people to go to EDSA and fight by peaceful means during the EDSA 1986 Revolution.

<sup>55</sup> The whole nation was a witness of the fact that Cardinal Sin and RCC rallied again in peaceful ways, ousting President Estrada in a four-day EDSA 2001 Revolution on January 17-20, 2001.

<sup>56</sup> See the discussion of Tomas D. Andres, *Positive Filipino Values* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1989).

indebtedness to God), ignoring God who rightfully owns everything (Ps 24:1). Further, it is *nakakahiya* (shameful) to God to gamble what is not legally ours thus, violating the good side of *hiya*.<sup>57</sup> Gambling is closely associated with the *bahala na* (whatever will be, will be) syndrome. This is a moral and ethical problem whereby people are trusting in luck rather than the Lord. People must trust God for this is the way of saying *bahala na ang Dios* (dependence upon God). This is the positive side of a fatalistic attitude.

As a prophetic community, the church needs to stand without wavering for *katuwiran* (righteousness),<sup>58</sup> to stand for the truth and nothing but the truth. Like the prophets of old, the church should be a theological and social reformer, rebuking the social and moral evils of the nation and call people to repentance.<sup>59</sup> The church must design social programs to promote the welfare of the society through the empowerment and direction of the Holy Spirit.<sup>60</sup> As a Spirit-empowered community, the church should form a *bayanihan* (unity) group,<sup>62</sup> teaching people reasons why this is important in making a social impact that would captivate adherents to true Christianity. If people would really understand the nature and purpose of such a group, it would be easier for them to join the cause, which is a manifestation of *pakikisama* (*esprit de corps*).

Finally, the church should try to secure the removal of the stimulus to gambling by using the press, advertisements, circulars, radio and television<sup>63</sup> as employed by the RCC in EDSA Part One, Two and Three.

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<sup>57</sup> For further discussion of *hiya*, see Tomas, *Positive Filipino Values*, pp. 100-115.

<sup>58</sup> Vitaliano Gorospe, S.J., *Filipino Values Revisited* (Manila: National Book Store, 1988), p. 141.

<sup>59</sup> J. Carl Laney, "The Prophets and Social Concern," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 147 (Jan-March, 1990), pp. 32-43.

<sup>60</sup> Dempster, "Pentecostal Social Concern," pp. 129-53.

<sup>62</sup> Andres, *Positive Filipino Values*, pp. 160-62.

<sup>63</sup> Senator Leticia R. Shahani, *Moral Imperatives of National Renewal: Readings on the Moral Recovery Program* (Manila: Senate, September 30, 1993), p. 47 emphasizes the importance of media, culture and arts as strategies for the Moral Recovery Program of President Fidel V. Ramos' administration: "Media encompasses all channels of information- newspapers, television, radio, movies, and advertisements. It has two main subjects--entertainment and news; and Entertainment programs should be used as a vehicle for moral recovery by encouraging the educated and those who are trained to be involved in the movie

The church should provide a wholesome substitute which will counteract monotony and offer lively interests to occupy the minds of the people. The church needs to convey its conviction about the evils of gambling through letters to the city councils, city mayor, the governor, House of Congress, House of Senate or to the President of the nation. Letters are effective especially when coupled with earnest prayers as positive expression of *bahala na ang Dios*.<sup>64</sup> Prayer touches the heart of God and moves his hand.

### 3.3 Vitalization

As Christians we need to strengthen our grip on social action, following Jesus in going everywhere and doing good (Acts 10:38). We need to have a ministry of word (evangelism), work (social action) and wonders (power ministry).<sup>65</sup> God commands us to obey. He calls all of us to lose our lives for Christ's sake (Matt 10:39), to love our neighbor as ourselves (Luke 10:27), to be kind (Eph 4:32) and to do good to everyone (Gal 6:10). The command of God for his people is that they are to be involved in meeting people's needs whether they are physical, social, psychological or spiritual.

Some of the most important opportunities for serving others come to us unexpectedly. Thus, it requires a type of readiness and sensitivity to the guidance of the Holy Spirit for the operation of the charismatic gifts, knowing that what our people need is *not* revolution, *not* reformation but *regeneration* by the Holy Spirit. We must therefore build a reservoir of love, knowledge and insights, which God may use as the need arises.

Further, we need to strengthen our positive concepts of Filipino values<sup>66</sup> such as *pakikisama* (being-along-with), *pakikipagkapwa* (continuing act of reciprocal action), *pakikiisa* (being-one-with),

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industry; acting as a moral pressure group to movie producers to make films upholding wholesome social values; and promoting and supporting the production of films with positive social and moral themes."

<sup>64</sup> Jose M. De Mesa, *And God Said, "Bahala Na!"* (Quezon City, Philippines: Publishers' Printing Press, 1979), pp. 122-24.

<sup>65</sup> A note from Joseph Suico's class, "Pentecostalism and Social Action" (Asia Pacific Theological Seminary, Baguio City, Philippines, January-March 1994).

<sup>66</sup> Joseph Rommel L. Suico, "A Strategy of Social Action, A Filipino Pentecostal Perspective" (unpublished Th.M. thesis; Asia Graduate School of Theology-Philippines, 1994), pp. 78-114.

*pakikibagay* (in-conscience-with) and *bayanihan* (unity).<sup>67</sup> *Pakikisama* is “rooted in the intrinsic value of *pakikipagkapwa-tao*,”<sup>68</sup> which is the continuing act of reciprocal action among Filipinos in terms of “helping, sharing and cooperating with others.”<sup>69</sup> Revilla insisted that to solve illegal gambling there would be *pakikisama*<sup>70</sup> between law enforcers and local executives.<sup>71</sup> Employing the positive Filipino values could help the Evangelical churches to effectively halt the spread of gambling. Shahani’s Resolution (Resolution No. 10) enjoins the government to conduct an “Inquiry into the Strengths and Weaknesses of the Character of the Filipino with a View to Solving the Social Ills and Strengthening the Nation’s Moral Fiber.”<sup>72</sup> Based on this Resolution, President Ramos made Presidential Proclamation No. 62. He urged that government officials actively participate in the Moral Recovery. The Kabisig People’s Movement National Operations Centers were assigned to serve as the implementing arm of the Moral Recovery Program. A Council of Advisors on Moral Recovery was also to be created.<sup>73</sup>

Further, we need to recognize (and do something about) the condition of the Philippines which is known as the “sick man of Asia.”<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> F. Landa Jocano, “A Family as Old as Racial Memory,” *Time*, April 27, 1992, p. 4 (an advertisement).

<sup>68</sup> Evelyn Miranda-Feliciano, *Filipino Values and Our Christian Faith* (Manila: OMF Literature, 1990), p. 21.

<sup>69</sup> Feliciano, *Filipino Values*, p. 21.

<sup>70</sup> An example of this is the Executive Order No. 98-15 of Tarlac Governor Jose Yap, “enjoining all mayors, barangay chairmen and PNP [Philippine National Police] personnel to enforce strict and faithful compliance of all laws and ordinances against all forms of gambling and other illegal activities in their respective areas of jurisdiction. The provincial government will not hesitate to institute any and all of the necessary legal and disciplinary actions, against all officials and peace officers and men who fail to execute and enforce laws against illegal activities.” Cited in “Jueting rampant in Tarlac,” *Manila Bulletin*, June 9, 1999, p. 18.

<sup>71</sup> “Revilla assured of no-nonsense drive against jueting,” *Manila Bulletin*, June 22, 1999.

<sup>72</sup> The full text of Shahani’s Resolution is in her *Moral Imperatives of National Renewal*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>73</sup> The full text of President Fidel V. Ramos’s Presidential Proclamation No. 62 is in Shahani, *Moral Imperatives of National Renewal*, pp. 62-65.

<sup>74</sup> A term used by Leticia Ramos Shahani in her speech in the House of Senate before the presence of President Fidel V. Ramos entitled “The Urgent

This condition has been described as a social cancer that needs major treatment. Senator Shahani delineated:

The sickness afflicting this country, Mr. President, is moral in nature. It is my view that at the bottom of our economic problems and political instability is the weakness and corruption of the moral foundations of our society. We do need an economic recovery program: we also urgently need a moral, intellectual and spiritual recovery.... Let us minimize our weaknesses and strengthen our virtues, of which we have many. Let us look inward and cleanse and heal ourselves before it is too late. We cannot expect to implement our national vision[s] unless we have clean hands and pure hearts. A strong national character based on patriotism, unity, honesty and self-reliance is our ultimate and surest defense. *Our greatest hope lies within ourselves.*<sup>75</sup>

On the contrary, I believe that “our greatest hope lies [not only] within ourselves but in Jesus Christ the bearer of the Holy Spirit *par excellence*. For this reason, we need to pray for revivals in the Philippines. When the Spirit comes down powerfully, the church goes out successfully for missionary service, social service and social action.<sup>76</sup> The history of revival convinces us that revivals can help eradicate social evils and social ills. I would like to cite three examples of revival that took place in the history of Christianity that solved these social crises. First, the revival in England. This occurred during the time of George Whitefield and John Wesley. Whittaker depicted the desperate situation in England before the revival came as follows:

The theater was shockingly vulgar and depraved.... The literature of the period would even mostly as hard-core pornography. Polygamy, fornication, homosexuality, were not considered sinful. Violence was rampant. Gangs of drunken ruffians paraded the streets and subjected women to nameless outrages and defenseless men to abominable tortures.... Sport was cruel and brutal, such as bearbaiting, bullbaiting, and cockfighting.<sup>77</sup>

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Need for a Moral Recovery Program,” pp. 2-5.

<sup>75</sup> Shahani, “The Urgent Need,” p. 2. Emphases mine.

<sup>76</sup> Donald W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Metuchen, NJ and London: Scarecrow Press, 1987), pp. 24-28.

<sup>77</sup> Collin C. Whittaker, *Great Revivals* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1984), p. 50.

In the midst of this desperate situation, God answered the prayers of His people and then revival came. Wesley claimed, "I will show you him that was a lion-now a lamb; a drunkard-now sober; a whoremonger-now pure."<sup>78</sup>

Second, the revival in Ulster. In his summary of the Ulster revival in 1858, Edwin Orr, himself an Ulsterman mentioned that "converts remained generally steadfast, liberality seemed greatly increased, *vice was greatly decreased, and crime was tremendously reduced*" (emphasis mine).<sup>79</sup> Throughout Ulster, as Whittaker commented,

Judges several times found themselves without any cases to try. In Antrim County at one period during the awakening, it was noted that there was not one prisoner in police custody and not one crime reported to the police.<sup>80</sup>

Third, the revivals in Britain and Pensacola changed society for the better. The revival in Britain in 1859 attested that "crime dropped significantly. In 1860 the criminal cases before the Welsh courts decreased from 1,809 to 1,228.... The roads were quiet and the public drinking bars and gambling houses were empty."<sup>81</sup> About a million people came to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.<sup>82</sup> Recently, the Pensacola, USA revival, which began in 1995 and lasted over five years, disclosed that over 100,000 conversions were registered from 1995-1997 and social evils dropped significantly.<sup>83</sup> Steve Hill reported in his preaching, last October 3-5, 2001 in Putra Stadium, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia that about 4,000,000 people visited the Pensacola revival from all over the world. And that gamblers, prostitutes, disco owners, drug addicts, criminals and people from all walks of life ran to the altar and experienced the saving grace of Jesus Christ.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Whittaker, *Great Revivals*, p. 61.

<sup>79</sup> Edwin Orr, *Fervent Prayer: The Worldwide Impact of the Great Awakening of 1858* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), p. 51.

<sup>80</sup> Whittaker, *Great Revivals*, pp. 93-94.

<sup>81</sup> Whittaker, *Great Revivals*, p. 97.

<sup>82</sup> Edwin Orr, *The Second Evangelical Awakening* (Fort Washington, Penn: Christian Literature Crusade, 1964), cited in Whittaker, *Great Revivals*, p. 100.

<sup>83</sup> Geoff Waugh, *Flashpoints of Revival: History's Mighty Revivals* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image, 1998), pp. 136-37.

<sup>84</sup> Steve Hill's preaching in Putra Stadium, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on

#### 4. Conclusion

In view of the Old and New Testaments teachings, I am convinced that we as Evangelical Christians must be involved in social action and service. Spirit-filled believers may have greater success because of the empowering of the Holy Spirit for service.<sup>85</sup>

What is the crux of the matter in the above-mentioned discussion? We need methods and strategies to solve social evils (such as gambling) and social ills (such as graft and corruption). We also need human machinery but no one can take the place of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit majors in changing lives and in difficult and impossible situations. He is at work in making a culture more Christ-like. But he is at work transforming individuals and their cultures to become more like Christ. Thus, we are co-laborers together with the Holy Spirit.

Living in the midst of social evils and ills, in the Philippines generally and my province particularly, we are desperately in need of revival. True revival always produces lasting converts and raises the social and moral standards of the community. David Rice reported in 1803 of the Kentucky revival, "Towns are reformed in their morals. Families are profoundly transformed.... People are struck by the need to be sanctified, not just justified."<sup>86</sup> In short, revival is the coming of God's presence in a powerful way (Hab 3:2-3), sovereignly, supernaturally and suddenly (Acts 2).<sup>87</sup>

Stibbe concluded:

Revivals always begin with a visitation of God, resulting in the awakening of both Christians and not-yet Christians. This is precisely what we human beings cannot achieve in our own strength. In our emptiness, we need God to fill us. In our weakness, we need God's power. In our attempts to reach the lost, we need a tornado of God's presence to sweep with revival power through our communities. However good our strategies, however brilliant our sermons, in the

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October 3-5, 2001. I attended this "Revival and Evangelistic Rally."

<sup>85</sup> Robert P. Menzies, *The Development of Early Christian Pneumatology with Special Reference to Luke-Acts*, JSNTSup 54 (Sheffield: JSOTPress, 1991), pp. 52-112.

<sup>86</sup> Cited in Ian H. Murray, *Revival and Revivalism: The Making and Marring of American Evangelicalism, 1750-1858* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1994), pp. 151-71.

<sup>87</sup> Mark Stibbe, *Revival* (East Sussex, UK: Monarch Books, 1998), pp. 107-108.

final analysis we desperately need the Lord to rend the heavens and come down.<sup>88</sup>

Mindful of our needs, we acknowledge with repentance that we have fallen short of providing strong and urgent involvement in social action. We have been silent, when we should have spoken about the evils of gambling and the consequences it may bring. We are divided, when we should be united in this noble endeavor. We are unloving, when we should be compassionate about the holistic needs of our fellow citizens. We are aloof, when we should be outgoing, doing the work of social action. Our failures call us to awake from non-involvement. Who will be involved? If not us, who? If not now, when?

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<sup>88</sup> Stibbe, *Revival*, p. 240.