

“TALKING GOD THROUGH THE LANGUAGE OF GAMING”

A REINTERPRETATION OF BINGO FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE EUCHARIST

A Thesis Presented to the
Faculty of Malua Theological College
Apia

In Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Degree
Bachelor of Theology

by

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September 2011

ABSTRACT

The much publicized controversy over the implementation of bingo by the CCCS and other denominations as fundraising activities attests to the reality that there is ambiguity in the CCCS policy over the matter. The purpose of this research paper is to engage Christians in a theological reflection, in which the communal and eschatological aspects of the Eucharist can be used as a theological tool in re-interpreting the game of bingo. In addition, a psychological analysis of the game will reveal certain truths about the game, in which the need for re-interpretation has been motivated. This paper also explores the central themes of sharing and fellowship found in the Eucharist meal, which resonates with the elements also evident in the game of Bingo.

The approach to this project in its entirety included the usage of books pertaining to this subject, as well as various academic writings, personal interviews, and a survey of bingo participants from the CCCS parishes of Vaiee and Leulumoega. The aim is for bingo participants to experience and fully participate in bingo, with a Eucharistic understanding and a sound theological approach. The reality of the present situation poses a challenge for the Church to genuinely reconsider its current theological expression and articulation on matters of fundraising and gambling activities.

DECLARATION

I declare that this work has not used without due acknowledgment of any material that has been previously submitted for a degree or diploma in another institution. I also declare that the work has not used any material, heard or read, without proper acknowledgment of the source.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

DEDICATION

*In memory of my beloved grandparents,
the Late. Tuiloma Aumua Muliava Aigofie,
the Late. Faalepo Nuutofi Malaesilia,
whose dreams and ambitions have
made me the person I am today.*

*To Rev. Kolia and Vaisola Tovio and
Rev. Meilani and Ailini Keilani
my mentors and spiritual advisors.*

To my parents, Manufalealili Atoaga and Lagavale Aiavā,
as well as my siblings, for their unconditional love and support.

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Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge my supervisor, Olive Samuelu for motivating me and his relentless efforts in putting this thesis together. I am also grateful to Reverend Elder Kereta Fuaifiva and Reverend Tunupopo Patū, together with their respective parishes, the CCCS of Vaiee and Leulumoega, for their assistance in the successful completion of my survey. I would also like to acknowledge, Leitualasa and Matagi Malieitulia and Rev. Aigofie and Ella Marino for their moral support, as well as Faalepo Tuisuga for his useful sources. Also worthy of mention is the dedicated Faculty of Theology in Malua Theological College, Rev. Maafala Limā, Rev. Siu Vaifale, and Imoa Setefano for their contribution, motivation and useful advice.

Introduction

The focus of this research is to address the game of Bingo, and how it could be viewed alongside the sacrament of the Eucharist, in its sharing and fellowship significance to the communicants or participants. The irony of Bingo is, although it serves as an effective fundraiser within the CCCS¹, it is still a form of gambling which is the wagering of money or other item of value, on an uncertain event that is dependent on chance.² Over time, the effects of gambling, according to Nancy M Petry, have caused many social and economic problems, but it has also placed great strain on one's family life, social surroundings and more importantly, mental health.³ This link between the effects of gambling and Bingo has created a negative image of the game, an image people tend to favour instead of its positive intentions. This paper hopes to clarify and address the latter.

According to the *Iloiloga o Iugafono Tumau* document,⁴ the CCCS perspective of gambling is forbidden, where it is stated that the practice of *pele tupe* and *taisi* or money games that involve cards and dice, must not be carried out by any CCCS member.⁵ Assuming that the above church policies are directly aimed at the earlier forms of gambling, it seems there is a contradiction of church policy in regards to Bingo. This is

¹ "Congregational Christian Church of Samoa," also known as, *Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa*.

² "Gambling," Alison Moore, *Macquarie Study Dictionary* (Queensland:Jacaranda Wildy Ltd Publisher, 1998), 280.

³ Nancy M Petry, "Gambling and Substance Use Disorders: Current Status and Future Directions," *The American Journal on Addictions* 16:1-9 (June 2006):153.

⁴ "Review of the General Assembly Minutes (own translation)." A document compiled by a committee led by the General Secretary of the CCCS in conjunction with appointed Church Elders and Deacons launched in May 1917. The purpose of this committee is to review, clarify and monitor the accurate documentation of the minutes of each General Assembly held annually in Malua during May. Since its inception, there have been nine reviews, in which the most recent review was the ninth review of 2003.

⁵ *Ua matuai vaoia le Ekalesia i le pele tupe ma le taisi* or *Money Cards and Dice are forbidden in the Church* (own translation). A literal translation of *Pele Tupe* is equivalent to the game of Poker. *Taisi*, on the other hand, is a direct transliteration of the English word, "dice," commonly associated with money games involving dice, Congregational Christian Church of Samoa, *Review of the General Assembly Minutes*, (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 2003), 24.

because it is not only one of the most commonly used methods of fundraising within the CCCS, and other denominations.

Bingo also has various communal aspects which attribute to its recent rise to popularity. Firstly, it invites parishioners to come together and socialize with one another once or twice a week, instead of meeting only on Sunday. In socializing and interacting with one another, parishioners counsel, assist and encourage each other directly or indirectly. It also brings together Church members of various denominations, sharing in fellowship with one another. Even the proceeds have a common higher goal, whether for the establishment of a new Church building, funding a Church project, or the extension of Church assets. Therefore the participants of the game have a vested interest not only for themselves but also as a group. The fact remains that many church buildings and other Church-related projects would not be completed today if it wasn't for the proceeds or profits from bingo, and the efforts of people who worked together on this higher goal.

In this respect, the language that ought to be associated with bingo is that of bonding and fellowship, an element deeply rooted in the Christian sacrament of the Eucharist. From its initial institution as a meal that involves the "taking together of food and drink,"⁶ the concept of togetherness has, and still plays a significant role in the Eucharist or the Lord's Supper. However this bonding is twofold. Firstly the participants feel themselves as belonging within a group and secondly there is also a vertical dimension, where there is also a bonding to the triune God, as well as the whole church, where "the many separate eucharists are really one eucharist, presided over by the one Lord of the church."⁷

⁶ John Macquarrie, *A Guide to the Sacraments* (New York: Continuum Publishing Company, 1997), 113.

⁷ Macquarrie, 117.

The paper will be divided into three chapters. The first chapter is a psychological insight of Bingo and gambling. Here the tendency of human behaviour will be highlighted in regards to both addiction and positive reinforcement. The chapter will not only look at the likelihood of humans to repeat rewarded actions, but it will also concentrate on the harsh realities caused by the cognitive processes that lead to addiction. The second chapter will outline the theology behind the Eucharist and its development since the early church. The aim of this chapter is to identify not only the communal components of the Eucharist, but also investigate its eschatological or higher goal. An emphasis on both the horizontal and vertical dimensions of the Eucharist will also form part of the discussions in this chapter. In Chapter Three, the game of bingo will be expressed as a Christian event, being no different from its present implementation in the CCCS today.

The methodology that will be used in this project include material from academic articles, journals and books. I have also conducted a survey using a questionnaire of bingo participants from the CCCS parishes at Vaiee and Leulumoega, because of their regular engagement in bingo. The purpose of this questionnaire is not only to explore bingo from the perspective of its participants, but it will also give us diverse opinions regarding communal living. The results of these findings will be discussed in Chapter One, but its full elaboration will be in Chapter Three. Finally, a personal interview was conducted with a CCCS minister, whose insights will also be discussed throughout the paper.

In conclusion, the aim of this research is not only to identify some Christian elements in the game of bingo, but also raise a theological awareness as to how the game ought to be viewed and experienced. The thesis, while acknowledging the many problems associated with the game, is not an attempt to manipulate the theology of the

Eucharist to resonate with the nature of bingo. The aim however is to offer a new theological insight that will allow people to appreciate the game in a more positive frame of mind.

Chapter 1

Bingo as a Two Sided Coin

The aim of this chapter, and hence the reason for the title, ‘the two sided coin’ is to look at both the positive aspects of the game but also reveal certain truths of its negative aspects as well. This chapter will be divided into two main sections; firstly it will look at the negative aspects of Bingo, through its link to gambling and addiction, and also the perspective of the CCCS on the matter. In the latter half it will investigate its correlation with positive rewards and outcomes.

1.1 The First Side of the Coin: Gambling and Addiction

1.1.1 Bingo as a form of Gambling

The game of Bingo begins when every participant purchases a grid or multiple grids to heighten their chances of winning; each grid has an equal amount of numbers between 1 and 75 and in lotto fashion, 75 balls are rolled and drawn individually from a device and called out by the announcer. There are variations in which a player can win a single game, either by filling in the whole grid, the four corners of the grid, a single line or multiple lines, reliant on what is announced preceding the game. The winners of each game are entitled to a prize; however these rewards vary depending on the target audience of the event. In the context of a local fundraiser for a Junior Youth, the prizes will be based on goods such as groceries contributed by the hosts. However if the event is hosted for public participants, then prizes are usually monetary.¹

Nobody in their right mind would come outright and say Bingo is good, without having to consider the negative criticism that surrounds it. Its association with gambling

¹ Tunupopo Patu, interview with author, 23 Sept. 2011.

has not only created a negative image of the game, but it has created a difference of opinion among CCCS Church members. For some, Bingo is not gambling at all, but a way of socializing and fundraising for the Church, whereas for others, it is a definite form of gambling that leads to bad habits and many social and family problems. Reflected by the responses of the survey participants of Vaiee and Leulumoega, regarding their main criticism of bingo, 22% of them allude to its potential to create social, economic and financial problems and a further 45% of them agreed that it can cause family problems. However, when asked for their purpose in going to bingo, 31% of them replied that it was to support church fundraising and 21% said they only attended as a way of showing their support for the CCCS church.²

According to the Macquarie Study Dictionary, the word, ‘gambling’ is “to play at any game of chance, in which one risks losing something, usually money.”³ In other words it is the act of risking money or something of value, on a game of chance with the favorable hope to gain. Therefore, bingo by definition is indeed a form of gambling, because it too, is a game of chance that involves a loss or gain. This immanent link to gambling has not only made the game accountable to the many bad behaviors surrounding gambling, it has also placed its participants at risk of becoming problem gamblers. In her attempt to increase awareness on the dangers of gambling, Nancy M Petry classifies pathological gambling behavior as,

a need to increase the size or frequency of bets; repeated efforts to stop or cut down gambling; becoming restless or irritable if not gambling or prevented from gambling; and foregoing social, work, or recreational activities to gamble. The other criteria are chasing lost gambling money, gambling to escape problems or negative moods, lying to others to cover up gambling, committing illegal acts to support gambling, and relying on

² Bingo Survey of the CCCS in Vaiee and Leulumoega, 23, September, 2011.

³“Gambling,” Alison Moore, *Macquarie Study Dictionary* (Queensland:Jacaranda Wildy Ltd Publisher, 1998), 280.

others to provide gambling or relieve desperate financial situations.⁴

Petry's view not only highlights the behaviors of problem gamblers, it also unveiled the seriousness of gambling by establishing a relationship between the habits of a gambler and an addicted drug abuser. In light of these findings, the severity of gambling is depicted to be as extreme as that of substance abusers, where both the individual and the social environment of those affected are at risk. Thus, any game or activity, like bingo, which falls under the definition of gambling, must also wear the undeniable yet damaging reputation of gambling.

1.1.2 The Cognitive Processes that Lead to Addiction

Gambling, on its own is only part of the problem. The other danger is the cognitive processes that take place in the minds of those affected, which leads to addiction. According to recent studies on psychopathology, gambling addictions are formed when the human mind sub consciously associates the behavior of gambling, with other experiences like pleasure or stress relief. As a result, the addiction not only becomes an integral part of our life, we find ourselves "disconnected, powerless or out of control" if we do not engage in the behavior.⁵

Similar to substance abusers, one can be so addicted to gambling, that if nothing replaces the behavior or substance, "the person is left with a large empty space in his or her life that may ultimately be filled with the same or worse."⁶ Here the addiction becomes so deeply embedded in the human mind that any attempt to re-condition or modify behavior, would lead to other problems such as withdrawal, where the

⁴ Nancy M Petry, "Gambling and Substance Use Disorders: Current Status and Future Directions," *The American Journal on Addictions* 16:1-9 (June 2006):152.

⁵ Mark A. Yarhouse, Richard E. Butman and Barrett W. Mcray, *Modern Psychopathologies: A Comprehensive Christian Appraisal* (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 188.

⁶ Yarhouse, Butman and McRay, 193.

individual's physical and mental well-being is put at risk.⁷ Thus the seriousness of addiction is not only more crucial than gambling, but it can also be much more critical. Such an argument is not only promoted by many anti-gambling campaigns, it lies at the foundation of many "church" attitudes, like that of the Puritans, Calvinists and also the Methodists, where both gambling and addiction is banned.⁸

1.1.3 The CCCS and Setu Faaniniva's⁹ Position on gambling

The danger and the consequence of gambling and addiction, may well have been at the forefront of the CCCS' decision to ban the use of *pele* and *taisi* by Church members. As mentioned earlier, according to the *Iloiloga o Iugafono Tumau*, the CCCS perspective of gambling is prohibited. However, to be discussed in the later part of this chapter is the ambiguity of the CCCS on the selling of raffle tickets, another form of gambling, according to Macquarie's definition.¹⁰ According to Faaniniva, one major challenge for the Church in Samoa and abroad was the introduction of gambling including Bingo.¹¹ Amongst Faaniniva's arguments against bingo include, the cheating of innocent money; its connection to idol worship; the likelihood of causing poverty; the creation of problems in the family; as well as the introduction of murder and theft.¹² Here Faaniniva not only shows his discontent with money being spent on Bingo, he also discourages those who use money from gambling for Church development.

⁷ Yarhouse, Butman and McRay, 189.

⁸ Setu Faaniniva, "Some of the challenges of the Gospel and the Ministry," *Fofoaivaoese* Vol II (Queensland: Print Pal Pty Ltd, n.d), 55.

⁹ Setu Faaniniva was an Elder Minister for the Methodist Church of Samoa. He has a Master of Arts degree as well as a Bachelor of Divinity, and is now retired and living in Queensland, Australia. I have translated the title of his book *O nisi o Faafitauli o le Tala Lelei ma Galuega Faa Faifeau* as "Some of the challenges of the Gospel and the Ministry."

¹⁰ *Ua faaavanoa le se'i, ma ia faia i auala ua masani ona fai ai* translated as, *raffles are permitted, but it must be practiced as usual* (own translation), Congregational Christian Church of Samoa, *Review of the General Assembly Minutes* (Apia: Malua Printing Press), 24.

¹¹ Faaniniva, 55.

¹² Faaniniva, 55.

The irony however, is that although he argues with conviction, he failed to provide some biblical evidence and the relevant research to support his view. Likewise, he mentions the leisurely and physical benefits the game has for the elderly, especially the, *tagata matutua papalagi*, or the ‘white elderly,’ yet he does not mention any benefits it has for the Samoan elderly.¹³ He also spoke against the use of buses in transporting people to and from Bingo by the Catholic Church, but did not elaborate further.

It appears that Faaniniva’s argument reflected his own personal and denominational bias. Faaniniva’s discontent towards bingo was made very clear.¹⁴ Bingo is, in one way or another, linked to gambling, addiction, and more importantly sin. Therefore money spent and received from Bingo, according to Faaniniva, should not be commended within the Christian ministry.

In the case of the CCCS’ position on ‘money received’ from gambling, a sense of ambivalence and uncertainty is found, especially in the Elder Council’s position on fundraising by way of selling raffle tickets. Here, a fine line has been drawn by the CCCS, between gambling and fundraising. In other words Bingo, though it is not mentioned as a game that is not allowed by the Church, is deemed more similar to the sale of raffle tickets than poker or dice. Although both are forms of gambling, it can only be assumed that the Elders Council saw the purchase of raffle tickets in a communal effort to fundraise, as being a lot less harmful to an individual than one who spends for personal gain.

1.2 The Second Side of the Coin: Rewards and Achievements

¹³ Faaniniva, 55.

¹⁴ Faaniniva, 55.

1.2.1 The Stimulus in Bingo

A particular behaviour like going to bingo is a behaviour that can be reinforced by a desirable stimulus.¹⁵ According to the theory of ‘Positive Reinforcement’ the more desirable the stimuli, the more likely it is that that behaviour is repeated.¹⁶ For example, when a child is rewarded with candy for good behaviour, the likelihood of that child repeating the same behaviour would be greater than if there was no reward. Likewise, for a gambler, the desirable outcome of winning may motivate him or her to continue the behaviour. However, in the case of Bingo where the rewards are barely enough to cover the costs, the reason people continue to attend the game week in and out is obscure. For instance, if an individual spent ten *tala* (\$10WST) on Bingo, and receives a prize of groceries that amount to five *tala*, or even, does not win at all, it makes no sense if he or she would go back to bingo, unless in fact, the stimulus was not the grocery prizes.

Herein lays the basis of the next argument in which the stimulus of bingo is possibly, not in the compilation of prizes but elsewhere. According to the studies of David L. Sansbury on the integration of group dynamics and behavioural orientations, he asserts that for individuals who partake in the act of,

coming together, [the] sharing of problems and goals, and discovering similarities of backgrounds, conflicts and motivations for joining the group, a sense of universality emerges.¹⁷

¹⁵ A stimulus is an experience or response that immediately follows a behaviour, which could be both desirable or undesirable, in Diane E. Papalia and Sally W. Olds and Ruth D. Feldman, *Human Development*, 7th Edition (Boston: McGraw Hill, 1998), 27.

¹⁶ Papalia, Olds and Feldman, 27.

¹⁷ David L. Sansbury, “Behavioral Group Techniques and Group Process Issues,” in Gloria G. Harris, *The Group Treatment of Human Problems: A Social Learning Approach* (New York: Grune and Stratton, 1977), 252.

In other words, when people come together in universality, they not only enjoy the fellowship of one another, they also have the opportunity to counsel and motivate one another. This sense of communal fellowship is not only useful in maintaining a healthy relationship for members of a parish who gather once or twice a week; but it can also be utilized in developing new relationships with other people in the village who do not attend their respective Church. In this regard, the desirable stimulus in bingo is fellowship and even if not all participants receive a “material prize,” all participants enjoy a special bonding as a reward.

1.2.2 A Second Stimulus: A Higher Common Goal

As mentioned above, the material or prizes are not nearly as attractive as its emotional, mental, and communal benefits. However, another key stimulus in bingo is achieving a higher common goal. This is duly reflected by James R Beck and Bruce Demarest, who asserted that “God created the [human] race to function best when in fellowship with God and with others.”¹⁸ This inter-dependence on one another and God, not only promotes communal living, but also helps small and self-doubting individuals achieve goals beyond their capabilities. According to Sansbury, when one is part of a group he or she develops a sense of belongingness; and as a result, develops a “sense of oneness of purpose and [that] purpose helps bind the members together.”¹⁹ This is important because when the critics of bingo link it to the dangers of gambling, they tend to overlook the combined efforts of people, driven and brought together by a common goal.

¹⁸ James R. Beck and Bruce Demarest, *The Human Person in Theology and Psychology: A Biblical Anthropology for the Twenty-First Century* (Grand Rapids: Kregal Publications, 2005), 349.

¹⁹ Sansbury, 253.

When fundraising to build a Church, or develop other areas of the Church, most participants of bingo oversee the minor prizes, but rather, have their eyes turned towards the higher goal of their donations. This higher goal not only stands as a communal accomplishment for some, it stands as a milestone of servitude for many. Although, “money” is a “strong external motivator”²⁰ of behaviour, the chances of one becoming financially better off from church bingo seems highly unlikely. In saying so, this does not exclude the possibility that some actually do play for personal gain. The point being made here is that as a church fundraiser, bingo offers two stimuli that can motivate people more than material rewards. Firstly, it brings people together, and secondly it gives them hope and purpose to do great things.

²⁰ Beck and Demarest, 277.

Chapter 2

Theology of the Eucharist and the Significance of the Communal Meal

Among all sacraments of the Church, the Eucharist or the Holy Communion, is described by John Macquarie as the jewel in the crown,¹ an indication of the significance given to the Eucharist, by the Church, compared to the other sacraments. Since its inception it has not only been the subject of much scholarship, but it was also the centre of an exhaustive attempt by the Ecumenical church, to unite the many divided churches.² As a result, theologians from every corner of the globe have attached to it a wealth of content; For Macquarie, the key is to be weary of being one-sided in our arguments, or we may find ourselves exaggerating the importance of one aspect that we may inadvertently eclipse others.³ Due to limitations in space, the focus on only two major dimensions of the Eucharist shall be discussed. Firstly, is its horizontal axis, as an invitation to communal living with one another, and secondly is its vertical axis, as an eschatological hope. The reason for the separation of the two axes is to demonstrate and to identify the relationship between humans, as distinct from that special bond between humanity and God.

¹ John Macquarie, *A Guide to the Sacraments* (New York: Continuum Publishing Company, 1997), 111.

² In 1982, the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, after fifty years of study, revision and consultation, produced one of the most decorated documents ever to emerge out of any inter-faith or inter-religion consultations called the BEM (Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry) document. Widely known as the *Lima Document*, the BEM text is an acknowledgement by member churches of the WCC, that “if the divided are to achieve the visible unity they seek, one of the essential prerequisites is that they should be in basic agreement on baptism, eucharist and ministry,” see *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, Faith and Order Paper No, 111, (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982) viii.

³ Macquarie, 135.

2.1 The Horizontal Axis: An Invitation to Communal Living

2.1.1 Meals in early Jewish and Graeco-Roman Societies

The first issue that must be addressed is the significance of meals in early Jewish communities, including the Passover Meal, in which Jesus practiced the “taking together of food and drink with his disciples.”⁴ Due to the limited space accorded to this thesis, this chapter will not provide a detailed discussion as to how a “meal” became associated with the ‘sacraments’ of the Roman Catholic and Protestant Church. In addition, we shall not delve into the debate, of whether or not the Passover meal that Jesus and His disciples participated in, as recorded by the gospels, was in fact the first known Eucharist. Our focus however, is a discussion on how we view “participation” and “communal living” as playing crucial roles in the context of meals in the early Jewish and Graeco-Roman communities. Furthermore, we will then discuss and analyse how these roles are depicted and amplified in the Eucharist.

Dining practices among early Jewish or Qumran communities was more than just eating and drinking. According to John Macquarrie, it was a “social phenomenon.”⁵ A meal always accompanies all kinds of social events such as weddings, funerals, childbirths, and even public festivals like the Festival of the Passover. Whenever there is a feast, there is bound to be a gathering of people and consequently, there is an atmosphere of social integration.⁶ However the cause for celebration is equally as important as whom you dine with. In the writings of Per Bilde, “[a] meal should ideally be a setting of equality and friendship, for.... true friendship is the central character of

⁴ Macquarrie, 113.

⁵ Per Bilde, “The Common Meal in the Qumran-Essene Communities” in Inge Nielsen & Hanne Sigismund Nielsen, *Meals in a Social Context* (Oxford: AARHUS University Press, 1998), 145.

⁶ Per Bilde, 145.

the banquet table.”⁷ Therefore, when people gather together in any form of meal, there is an element of partaking in a social network amongst peers and relatives, as well as participating in a forum, or communal discussions promoting mutuality and communion.

The setting is quite similar to that a Roman family, where, according to Keith Bradley, meal times were also an essential tool for maintaining and re-strengthening the relations within the family, with the emphasis falling on the “all-embracing.”⁸ Therefore, after a day of being apart, each tending to their own daily activities, meal times provided the head of the household an opportunity to fellowship with the members of his household, and to share and communicate important matters to them. As soon as a child was able to sit at a table, they were required to learn the ways and values of their elders, utilizing the context of the family as a birthplace for sociable behaviour and communal living.⁹ However, Bradley later re-emphasizes once again the socializing purpose as those in the early Jewish communities, by concluding that although familial ties were important in Roman society, a father might well prefer to dine with a brother or some other male relative from his extensive circle of kin members than his own family.¹⁰

Therefore in the context of the Roman family, meal times addressed both the relationships within the family but also the relationships with those in the wider society. This concept of embracing the ‘other’ was central to Max Thurian’s discussion for churches in ecumenical dialogue with one another. In his article Thurian emphasises

⁷ Michael White, “Regulating Fellowship in the Communal Meal: Early Jewish and Christian Evidence” in Inge Nielsen and Hanne Sigismund Nielsen, *Meals in a Social Context* (Oxford: AARHUS University Press, 1998), 178.

⁸ Keith Bradley, “The Roman Family at Dinner” in Inge Nielsen and Hanne Sigismund Nielsen, *Meals in a Social Context* (Oxford: AARHUS University Press, 1998), 36.

⁹ Bradley, 36.

¹⁰ Bradley, 52.

that when the Ecumenical Church increase the number of these moments of common life, common prayer and common liturgy, unity becomes reality.¹¹

2.1.2 The Lord's Supper during the time of Jesus

When Jesus arrived on the scene, one has to agree that he endorsed the communal and social significance already embedded in the practice of dining, a factor that helped him in his ministry. The story of Matt 9.10-12¹² contains one of many instances, in which Jesus is present in a dinner setting, along with tax collectors, social outcasts and sinners. Despite the negative connotations it had for his Jewish audience, Jesus incorporates the 'all embracing' function of meal practices into his ministry, embracing people beyond his own circle. Macquarrie asserted that "it was a way of conveying teaching, and strengthening the sense of community in an atmosphere of relaxed people who have lowered their barriers of defensiveness."¹³ Here, Jesus not only indicates his intentions through whom he chooses to dine with, but he also validated the argument proposed by Edward Schillebeeckx who believed that "the place of meals, was essential to his Galilean ministry."¹⁴ Another example of this "all-embracing, communal" nature of meals is evidenced in the case of Zacchaeus as told in Luke 19.1-10.¹⁵ Jesus once again selects an unpopular tax collector to dine with and more interestingly, he is not invited to dinner by Zacchaeus. Jesus invites himself to dinner.

This social phenomenon suggests that even Jesus was aware that he himself was part of a social network already in place. He attended wedding banquets such as the one

¹¹ Max Thurian, "BEM and Spirituality: A Conversation with Brother Max Thurian," *Ecumenical Review*, Vol. 38 Issue 1, (January 1986): 34.

¹² Holy Bible, New Revised Standard Version.

¹³ Macquarrie, 103.

¹⁴ Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co, 1979), 206.

in Cana (John 2: 1-11) and made direct references to wedding banquets through his parables (Luke 12:36, Matthew 22:3-12). Jesus also provided food for the numerous crowds that followed him (Mark 6:30, Matthew 14:13-21, Luke 9:10-17, John 6: 1-13). Yet more significant among these feasts, is the Passover meal in which the synoptic accounts present Jesus and his disciples celebrating the Passover, followed by the “Institution of the Lord’s Supper”¹⁶ (Mark 14:22-25, Matthew 26:26-30, Luke 22:14-23).

In a brief survey of the Institution of the Lord’s Supper, Macquarie observes in chronological order the Eucharistic words of Jesus as recorded by both Paul and the Synoptics, beginning with Mark.¹⁷ Unlike the other meals that took place in Jesus’ ministry, the words and actions of this meal were unique because Jesus makes no kind of address like it during any other meal. Common among all four Gospel’s are the actions of Jesus in the breaking of bread and the taking of the cup, along with his words about his future coming. According to the synoptic tradition, the Institution of the Lord’s Supper takes place during the time of the Passover meal with his disciples.¹⁸ Therefore if one is to view the Lord’s Supper, it must be viewed in the context of the Passover. In doing so, the reader can see that this meal was not only designed to bring the disciples together, it also incorporated the social significance of the events that surrounded it. In other words, the Lord’s Supper not only established for Jesus and his disciples a horizontal forum of equality and friendship, but it also provided for Jesus a relaxed atmosphere in which He could experience fellowship with his disciples and to remind them of what was to come. Similarly, when viewed from a Roman perspective that Keith Bradley suggested earlier, the Lord’s Supper could also be interpreted as an

¹⁶ The term, “Lord’s Supper,” is the term used in the NRSV referring to the Eucharist.

¹⁷ Macquarie, 107-109.

¹⁸ Macquarie, 107-109.

opportunity to re-strengthen family ties in which Jesus assumes the position as father to the twelve. In this paternal role, Jesus teaches his disciples the values and sociable behaviour required of them in the coming Kingdom.

This socializing aspect of meal times reaches its fullness when we consider closely the connection between the Lord's Supper and the historical significance embedded in the Passover. In Exodus 12:2-11 where Israel initially practiced the Passover in Egypt, Moses teaches the people when and how to observe the Passover, with the sacrifice of a year old lamb without blemish, remaining central to his instructions. Similarly in Deuteronomy 16:1-2, Moses not only re-emphasizes the command to offer the Passover sacrifice from the flock and herd that the Lord chooses, but he also reminds them of the reasons for the annual celebration, as a remembrance of their deliverance out of Egypt by night. Therefore, if we believe that Jesus was conscious of the social events around him, then his timing of the Lord's Supper and the Passover meal resonates with his pending death. With the Passover being the celebration of God's deliverance of his people and the Lord's Supper omitting the presence of a lamb, then theologically speaking Jesus was in fact, the lamb in the Lord's Supper, who was to be sacrificed in order to deliver and save the world. Here Jesus not only uses the Lord's Supper as a way of incorporating the social events, he opens the "all embracing" scope from the local and familial ties, to its infinite ends.

2.1.3 The Lord's Supper during the time of Paul

During the time of the Apostle Paul, the house church meetings were regularly organized around the Lord's Supper, located in the dining room of the house.¹⁹ Whether part of worship, or part of dinner after the service, the Christian community of Paul's day evidently participated in the Lord's Supper on a regular basis. Although it's

¹⁹ White, 179.

liturgical and sacramental rituals were yet to be fully developed to become the Eucharist as we know it today, it nonetheless continued its central function as a means for group integration.²⁰ Nevertheless, the purpose of the Lord's Supper, as an invitation to communal living with one another had its shortcomings. This is evident in Paul's response to the Corinthian church, regarding abuses of the Lord's Supper (I Cor 11:17-22). Paul discourages those who eat and become drunk at the expense of others. The Apostle's was disturbed upon discovering that church members did not eat before they came to church, and hence, relied on the Lord's Supper to indulge themselves, thus, showing respect for the dignity for the dignity of the Eucharist.

Through having no contempt for the Church of God, Church members failed to acknowledge the sacredness of the Lord's Supper. In his discussion of the Church in Paul's day, White added that the Eucharist soon became like a "boundary defining mechanism" for the sacred identity of the group²¹. It was not only important to the life of the Church, but it was also the new face of the church. Therefore, when Paul reveals his disappointment, he points out to the Corinthian community that in emphasizing the biological function of the Lord's Supper, they not only questioned the sanctity of communal living, they threatened the united image of the Church.

All the Apostle had hoped for was an atmosphere of unity and friendship. This intensified unity formed the basis of Dennis D Sontillano and Jose A Aureada's argument in their article about the 'nourishing character' of the Eucharist, where both emphasized an imperative need to continuously strengthen the bond which binds the members of the Church to one another through a more mature view of the Eucharist. As expressed in their article, unless Christians, of any era, have a more mature view of the

²⁰ White, 179.

²¹ White, 179.

Eucharist, the bonding between members of the Church cannot reach its full capacity.²² Though we cannot be too negative about the genuineness of the first century Christians, their juvenile view of the Lord's Supper proved that if it is not observed in the right manner, there will be inevitable factions and divisions.

The point that needs to be emphasised in the horizontal axis of the Eucharist, is that when it is observed correctly, it provides Christians with an opportune moment to come together in fellowship. Through the Lord's Supper, Christians are not only invited to join Christ at his table in fellowship, but are also able to invite others outside their usual circles, to share in God's blessings.

2.2 The Vertical Axis: An Eschatological Hope

2.2.1 Participation in the life of the Divine

The focus here is the higher goal of communal living, where the emphasis will shift from the relationships within the Church, to the relationship between the church and God, as implied in the use of the term, "vertical." Equally important to the bonding between members of the Church, is a bonding to the triune God. Macquarie's asserts that "the many separate eucharists are really one Eucharist, presided over by the one Lord of the church."²³ In other words, the bonding in the Eucharist is twofold. Firstly it combines separate churches and their members, and secondly, it unites them with the one Lord who regulates it. To speak of bonding as purely the bringing together of people, independent of God, would be like describing a ship without a pilot.

Thus if we are to begin with God and His intentions for gathering Christians together through the participation in the Eucharist, then there are certain questions that

²² Dennis D Sontillano and Jose A Aureada, "The Nourishing Character of The Eucharist," *PHILIPPINIANA SACRA*, Vol. XLIV, No. 132 (September-December, 2009), 606.

²³ Macquarie, 117.

need to be addressed. Firstly, ‘what purpose did he bring them together?’ Secondly ‘what is made available by God to those who partake in the Eucharist?’ According to Dennis D Sontillano and Jose A Aureada, the Eucharist was seen as that which,

perfects the participation in the life of the divine received in Baptism and with our participation in the Eucharist we are intensely united to one another with the hope of attaining the glory which God has prepared for us.²⁴

There are two significant features that stood out from this observation by Sontillano and Aureada. Firstly, the Eucharist is a participation in the life of the divine and secondly, that for those who partake in the Eucharist, there is an expectation of attaining God’s glory. This realization of man’s commitment with God defines the point of departure from the horizontal axis. Though communal living and mutuality comes as a reward in itself for those brought together by the Eucharist, the purpose that God has for its participants are equally as important.

An observation made while growing up in my local parish, was an increase in attendance at the Eucharist/Holy Communion which is held, on the first Sunday of each month, compared to other Sundays.²⁵ One can only ponder as to what the cognitive processes were, regarding the Eucharist Sunday that made it more appealing to parishioners. For those who attend only the Sunday of the Eucharist, the need to bond with one another seemed virtually secondary to their need to experience the presence of God. This upward yearning is echoed in M P Adogbo’s definition of the Eucharist, as a participation in an object outside the believer’s subjective experience.²⁶ Here, the dialectical nature of the Eucharist comes to the fore. In one way or another, the

²⁴ Sontillano and Aureada, 634.

²⁵ I have been a member of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa, Hampton Park, Melbourne, Australia, since 1999. Before that I was a member of the CCCS Pakuranga, Auckland, in New Zealand for 13 years before migrating to Australia. From a very young age, my parents have taught me by example, the importance of the Eucharist Sunday as a commitment that should not be missed.

²⁶ M P Adogbo, “A Sociological Interpretation of the Eucharist in Contemporary Nigerian Christianity”, *Asia Journal of Theology*, October 2005, Vol. 19, Issue 2 (ATLA Religion Database, 28/9/2011), 368.

Eucharist not only represented an opportunity for people to share with one another, it also represented an opportunity for people to experience that special bonding with God, thus, achieving something that previously was beyond reach.

2.2.2 The Eschatological²⁷ Goal for the Church.

Participation in the life of the Divine and expectation for God's future glory brings us to the eschatological view of the Eucharist. According to Geoffrey Wainwright, members of the primitive church practiced the Eucharist, "with eyes turned towards the return of Christ and the messianic feasting in the final kingdom."²⁸ This historical insight proves that since its inception, believers have attached to the Eucharist, a futuristic or higher meaning of what is at the end. However this understanding is reflected in Mark (14:22-25) as well as Matthew's account (26:26-29). Though the words are almost identical except that Matthew uses the word 'father' instead of 'God.' In Luke's version (22:14-23) the account is prolonged by the presence of Judas. Yet despite the discrepancies amongst the texts, the common ground is the awareness of a coming kingdom. More interestingly, the apostle Paul on the other hand, makes no mention of any kingdom at all, instead, he declares in 1 Corinthians 11:26²⁹ that it is Christ himself who will return.

Nonetheless, all four accounts point to a reality beyond the believer's subjective experience. Whether it was the coming of the Kingdom or the coming of Christ, its readers were allowed to view the Eucharist in a forward-looking way that gave them hope. In this respect, the goal of the Eucharist, according to Wainwright shifted from

²⁷ Eschatology is derived from the Greek *eschatos* meaning 'last'; the term refers to the doctrine of the 'last things,' in Sinclair B Ferguson and David F. Wright, *New Dictionary of Theology* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 228.

²⁸ Geoffrey Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 2003), 154.

²⁹ "For, as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes," Holy Bible, New Revised Standard Version.

the physical world to the transcendental realm, an idea that retained a fair degree of prominence at least as long as the church was exposed to persecution and martyrdom.³⁰

³⁰ Wainwright, 154.

Chapter 3

Bingo as a Christian Event

In the previous Chapters, the essence of the game of bingo and a theological apprehension of the Eucharist were explored in detail. The aim of this Chapter therefore is to critically analyse the two together in such a way that one enriches the understanding of the other, and in particular, exploring the game of bingo as a theological manifestation of the Eucharist. In addition, an attempt will be made to discuss the issue of abuse associated with the Lord's Supper and the game of bingo. Furthermore, a critical discussion will be made of how both the Eucharist and bingo can be theologically looked upon as the sharing of a higher common goal. Lastly, the results of the survey that was conducted as part of the research into this topic, will be introduced so as to highlight and at the same time emphasize some of the issues raised in the discussions.

3.1 Bingo as a Fellowship Meal

3.1.1 Bingo as an "All-Embracing" Event

As mentioned earlier, a meal that is shared amongst any group of people is deemed a social event. In other words, when people dine together, they socialize and experience the warmth of being in a fellowship. The feeling is literally mutual once people attend bingo gatherings. When only one person eats, a meal will only serve its

biological function. However, when many share it, the dining experience has the potential to be an enjoyable one.¹

When participants of the CCCS bingo in Vaiee and Leulumoega were asked, whether they believed the concept of sharing can be found in the game of Bingo, 80% of those in Vaiee agreed, while 73% of those in Leulumoega also agreed. However, more interesting in the responses from those in Vaiee was the fact that 60% of that group spoke about the sharing of prizes amongst each other.²

This aspect of hospitality and sharing was demonstrated no better than in the ministry of Jesus. His actions showed that, whom we share our meals with is equally important; because when we invite the ‘other’ to come and eat, it is also an invitation to share in the spirit of togetherness. During his ministry, Jesus, aware of the status of outcasts in Jewish society then, invites them otherwise, to share a meal with him. Most evident is the presence of Judas, who later on betrayed Jesus, for the entire duration of the Lord’s Supper (Mark 14:12-25, Matthew 26:17-30, Luke 22:14-23, John 13:2-38), and it is in John’s account that highlights the irony that it was, in fact, Judas who receives the “bread of fellowship from Jesus’ own hand.”³ Here Jesus does not dismiss Judas until after the communal meal, and he is allowed to dine alongside Peter who will later deny him, and the rest of the disciples who will ultimately scatter at the time of his crucifixion. Nevertheless, Jesus does not discriminate as to who he shares his meals with. He opens up the “all embracing” scope of the fellowship meal to its infinite ends,

¹ In April of 2011, my mother who attended a non-fundraising Bingo event, held regularly at a government venue in Melbourne, was fortunate enough to win a cash prize of \$2000.00 (AUD). She distributed it to those at her table, including her sister, her mother and a few friends. Her reasons for her action was, “I am a Christian, what did you expect?” This statement made it quite clear, that regardless of what we partake in, there is always a Christian way of doing things, that resembles our love and a strong sense of sharing with others.

² Bingo Survey of the CCCS in Vaiee and Leulumoega, 23 Sept, 2011.

³ Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel According to John: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: W B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 473.

including those who are deemed undeserving according to Jewish customs and traditions.⁴

In the same non-discriminatory and inclusive manner, the game of bingo also invites people from all walks of life to participate, regardless of their background, denomination or status. This ‘all embracing’ nature of the game, according to Tunupopo Patu⁵ is crucial in promoting harmony within any village or congregation. As the minister of the CCCS Church in Leulumoega, Patu admitted that bingo, has not only contributed to the success of many village projects, but also those of the Church. Working in close collaboration with the Catholic Church of St. Annes, also based in Leulumoega, the people of the village have learned to support one another, through the means of bingo. This collective spirit was further emphasised by the agreement of both the village council and the church leaders, to have the CCCS bingo on Friday and the Catholic Church one on Saturday. This arrangement minimizes any conflict and better still maximizes financial gains for both. Here, the game of bingo serves as a bridge between Catholics and CCCS members, thus setting aside any denominational differences the two may have had in the past.

A similar partnership has developed between Leulumoega and its neighbours, namely the villages of Nofaalii and Fasitoo-tai, according to Patu.⁶ This has created for the Church a mutual feeling of Christian energy, an energy so positive, that regardless of one’s village or denomination, the people will gather to play bingo. A reflection of

⁴ Ridderbos, 473.

⁵ Tunupopo Patu is the current ordained minister of the CCCS Church in Leulumoega. He was called to serve in 1996 and has now served there for fifteen years.

⁶ Tunupopo Patu, interview with author, 23 September, 2011.

what Per Bilde was aluding to when he called the banquet table, “a setting of equality and friendship.”⁷

3.1.2 A “Social Phenomenon”

As indicated by the feasting practices of the early Christian communities, the sharing of a meal was considered a “social phenomenon.”⁸ Whenever there is a feast, there is bound to be a gathering of people, and whenever people gathered around food, there is most likely, a celebration of a social event. The meal, though it is significant in the celebration, becomes secondary to the networking of the participants. Similarly, the game of bingo serves as an effective medium for social integration. Like the setting of a meal, bingo provides an atmosphere of relaxed people, all of whom, according to Macquarrie, have “lowered their barriers of defensiveness.”⁹ When asked as to why they enjoy going to bingo, 26% of those surveyed replied that going to bingo is an opportunity for leisure and to escape from their daily activities.¹⁰ Moreover, 34% of the participants replied that they enjoyed meeting and making friends, while 28% attend just for the fun of getting a prize. This means that apart from the 2% who were dissatisfied with the game, 70% of those who attend bingo gatherings enjoy it for reasons other than the prizes.

The statistics stated above suggests that, like meals enjoyed in celebration, actually playing bingo acts as a secondary role to that of enjoying the company of others. When people engage in the game as a way of relaxing from their regular activities, the barriers of defensiveness would consequently be more relaxed than normal. This relaxed atmosphere has not only made it easier for players to establish

⁷ Per Bilde, “The Common Meal in the Qumran-Essene Communities” in Inge Nielsen & Hanne Sigismund Nielsen, *Meals in a Social Context* (Oxford: AARHUS University Press, 1998), 145.

⁸ Bilde, 145.

⁹ John Macquarrie, *A Guide to the Sacraments* (New York: Continuum Publishing Company, 1997), 103.

¹⁰ Bingo Survey of the CCCS in Vaiee and Leulumoega, 23 September, 2011.

warm relations, but it also reaffirms what David L. Sansbury had in mind, when he asserted that when people are brought together for whatever purpose, “a sense of universality emerges.”¹¹

Another social phenomenon that is evident in the game of bingo is its compliance with the wider social context. Similar to the timing of the Lord’s Supper, Jesus and his disciples partake in a communal meal in “a large room upstairs (Mark 14:15),” which coincided with the feast of the Passover. However, central to the historical significance of the Passover, is the commemoration of God’s deliverance of Israel from bondage in Egypt (Exodus 12:17). Therefore while the rest of the Jewish community celebrated the event of God’s deliverance through the Passover, Jesus and his disciples were also venerating a symbolic deliverance that was about to be fulfilled through Christ. This correspondence between the Lord’s Supper and the festival of the Passover can also be reflected in bingo. Though it is held as a local event, it can also reflect important events affecting the wider context of the community. According to Patu, at the conclusion of a bingo game at Leulumoega, participants are informed of any upcoming events in the village that need their support, and to remember those who are ill and un-well in their prayers.¹² This social awareness is important because it not only promotes a spirit of Christianity within the community, it also emphasises the communal nature of the game, in addition to its monetary and material benefits.

¹¹ David L. Sansbury, “Behavioural Group Techniques and Group Process Issues,” in Gloria G. Harris, *The Group Treatment of Human Problems: A Social Learning Approach* (New York: Grune and Stratton, 1977), 252.

¹² Patu, Interview with author, 23 September. 2011.

3.2 Abuses of the Lord's Supper and Bingo

Abuses that affected the sacredness of not only the sacrament but also the sacred identity of the group has been well documented.¹³ For Dennis D. Sontillano and Jose A. Aureada, abuse takes place when people lack a mature view of the Eucharist, a religious gathering that strengthens the bond between them.¹⁴ This immaturity was clearly evident in 1 Corinthians 11: 17-22 and was frowned upon by the apostle Paul. People will experience factions and divisions, when the emphasis is placed on the meal rather than its significance, and what it is meant to be. Similarly, people need to treat the game of bingo with respect. In other words, those who take part must be careful as not to associate their experiences of pleasure or stress relief, with the behaviour of gambling, because they might fall into the dangers of addiction.¹⁵ Once participants become addicted to bingo they will not only ruin the integrity of the game, it will also affect themselves and their families.

This is a critical area of contention, given the responses to the questionnaires. Of all who replied to the question of why they attend, 23% claimed that they attend bingo to relax and to have fun, while 26% replied that they 'enjoy' the game for the same reason. For these two particular groups, a word of caution is warranted, for fear of associating this experience with that of being addicted to gambling, a point alluded to by Yarhouse, Butman and Mcray above.

Thus, what is required from each participant is a mature appreciation and approach to the game. When asked about the various problems that arise when bingo is

¹³ Michael White, "Regulating Fellowship in the Communal Meal: Early Jewish and Christian Evidence" in Inge Nielsen and Hanne Sigismund Nielsen, *Meals in a Social Context* (Oxford: AARHUS University Press, 1998), 179.

¹⁴ Dennis D Sontillano and Jose A Aureada, "The Nourishing Character of The Eucharist" *PHILIPPINIANA SACRA*, Vol. XLIV, No. 132, (September-December, 2009), 606.

¹⁵ Mark A. Yarhouse, Richard E. Butman and Barrett W. Mcray, *Modern Psychopathologies: A Comprehensive Christian Appraisal* (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 188.

abused, 30% claimed that there is a great neglect of family responsibilities, while 22% maintained that it leads to financial problems. In addition, 15% alluded to marriage problems as another concern, while 23% of the respondents say that it causes one to sin. The remaining 10% did not see any problems at all with bingo. In all, the general consensus amongst the respondents indicate that when the game of bingo is abused, it can result in family and marital problems, but more importantly, allow sin to decimate the relationship one has with God. On the other hand, if one engages in bingo with a clear Christian perspective of its purpose and goals, they would treat the game as a forum of mutuality and friendship, whilst participating and contributing to a higher common goal.

3.3 The Higher Common Goal in the Eucharist and Bingo

In both bingo and the Eucharist, there exists a higher common goal. According to Geoffrey Wainwright, the Early Church practiced the Eucharist with the hope that one day they be reunited with Christ in the midst of the “messianic feasting of the final kingdom.”¹⁶ In other words, the eschatological goal for the Church in partaking in the Eucharist, is to one day join God in his final glory. In a similar scenario with CCCS members who attend Church only on the Sunday of the Eucharist, it would be fair to say, that most saw the Eucharist in a forward-looking way, hoping to achieve something higher from God. This eschatological hope is certainly evident given the norm of those who only attend and partake in the Eucharist, on the First Sunday of the month, and for those who attend bingo gatherings during the week.

If one were to seriously consider the views of James R. Beck and Bruce Demarest, who asserted that “God created the human race to function best when in

¹⁶ Geoffrey Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology* (Great Britain: Epworth Press, 2003), 154.

fellowship with God and with others,”¹⁷ then the question, ‘why wouldn’t humanity combine their efforts to achieve bigger and better things?’ must be asked. This way of thinking is not as impracticable as many would assume. When asked for their opinion as to why they attend bingos, 52% of all the participants echoed in their responses a commitment to the collective goal of the Church.¹⁸ Of that group, 60% of the respondents specifically mentioned Church development and fundraising, whereas 40% went as a sign of their moral support towards whatever the parish is aiming to develop. As the results suggest, the majority of those who play bingo see beyond the game itself, towards that higher common goal, whether it is to raise money for Sunday School or a Youth group, or even, be able to one day own a Church building.¹⁹ It is for this task that in Sansbury’s thinking, “not only develops a sense of oneness of purpose, it is that purpose that helps bind the members together.”²⁰

3.4 A Critical Analysis of the Survey Results

Given the respondent’s approach to the questions put to them, it appears that in general, most of them lean towards the consensus that bingo is a game that promotes fellowship, and in its implementation, higher goals can be reached beyond the capability of a single person.

This is evident in that 66% of all the participants received monetary as well as material gains from prizes won during bingo games. Out of all the participants, 22% believe that the Church or the parish receives the highest financial gains and benefits from bingo games. Furthermore, 71% agreed that there is indeed a theological

¹⁷ James R. Beck and Bruce Demarest, *The Human Person in Theology and Psychology: A Biblical Anthropology for the Twenty-First Century* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2005), 349.

¹⁸ Bingo Survey of the CCCS in Vaiee and Leulumoega, 23, September, 2011.

¹⁹ Many CCCS parishes overseas like New Zealand and Australia do not own Church buildings. They either share with other denominations, or even rent halls and public venues to conduct their Sunday worship.

²⁰ Sansbury, 253.

connection between Christian living and the game of bingo, with 77% agreeing that the notion of sharing is evident whenever the game is played. Perhaps the most significant feature of the survey was the resounding response to the issue of relationships, with 80% affirming that the game itself promotes and renews friendships. Other than the hospitality shown by the host, those attending meals as invited, share that same experience.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the attempt to formulate a dialogue between theology and the language of gaming was one of difficulty. Not only is the CCCS position on bingo ambiguous, it remains questionable as to how the CCCS church will respond to this issue, as it has become the subject of much debate. The purpose of investigating the CCCS policy, however, was not with intent to ‘add more fuel to the fire,’ it is only an attempt to highlight the complexities involved in the game, which may explain the passiveness of the CCCS on the matter.

In exploring the various psychological theories related to bingo, one also comes to realise that bingo, like any other form of gambling, has its negative and positive implications. However, the lessons that can be learned from examining both sides of the ‘bingo coin’ is that of caution to those who emphasise the personal elements of the game, such as material and monetary prizes. Most importantly, the call is for an urgent reminder of the need to stress the theological significance embedded in the game of bingo itself, namely that of sharing and friendship, and working together to achieve a higher common goal.

This is the essence of bingo, that resonates with the Eucharist, where the lessons about fellowship and communal living not only revealed the intentions of Jesus for the Church, but it also brought to the fore, other ways in which humanity can relate amongst themselves, and especially towards God. From this theological insight, the simple process of sharing a meal is a process that contains a wealth of meanings which many Christians today, and in particular the bingo participants, sometimes overlook.

The common theological themes that prevailed in both the Eucharist and bingo ensues that the much publicised negative views towards bingo as a form of fundraising can be turned into what the author may call a “Christian event.” The elements of

fellowship, hospitality, sharing and the communal factor present in the game of bingo is that event.

There is nothing in the world of religion that is perfect for a number of reasons, as demonstrated by the abuses of the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 11: 17-22 and others. For secular matters, it is no exception, and the game of bingo does have its negative implications, such as the abuses attached to gambling, particularly being addicted. The objective here is that when there is a lack of theological awareness, there will be abuses. Therefore, what is required of a faithful Christian, and in particular the CCCS community is a new theological approach that encompasses a Eucharistic view of the game of bingo. In emphasizing the essence of sharing and communal living, and that of sharing the purposes of a higher goal, the game of bingo does, and will always continue to reflect God's hope for humanity, which is to live in peace and harmony as Christians in fellowship, and to share in the everlasting fellowship with God, our creator, our hope and goal in life.

Appendix A

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE IN ENGLISH

1. Name: _____ Age: _____ Parish: _____
2. Gender **Male / Female**
3. Do you attend Bingo? **Yes / No**
4. For what purpose do you attend Bingo?
5. Why do you enjoy going to Bingo?
6. Do you believe Bingo can help maintain healthy relationships in the Church as well as establish new relationships with those of other churches?
7. Do you believe there is a concept of 'sharing' in the game of Bingo?
8. What is your opinion on the link between Bingo and Christian life?
9. Has Bingo been useful to you, your family, your village, or the Church?
10. What is your main criticism of Bingo?

Appendix B

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE IN SAMOAN

1. Suafa: _____ Tausaga o le soifua: _____ Aulotu: _____
2. O lau Susuga o se? **Alii / Tamaitai**
3. E masani ona e auai i Bingo a le ekalesia? **Ioe / Leai**
4. O le a le faamoemoe e ala ai ona e auai i le Bingo?
5. O le a se mafuaaga e te fiafia ai i le Bingo?
6. E te talitonu e mafai ona aoga le Bingo e faatumauiina ai le mafutaga mafanafana a tagata
lotu aemaise le faavaeina o le mafutaga ma tagata taaalo asiasi?
7. O i ai se agaga fefaasoa'i i le taaloga o le Bingo?
8. O le a sau taofi i le Bingo ma lona fesootaiga ma le olaga faa-Kerisiano?
9. Ua i ai se aogā o le Bingo ia te oe, ma lou aiga, faapea le ekalesia?
10. O le a sau faitioga i lenei taaloga?

Appendix C

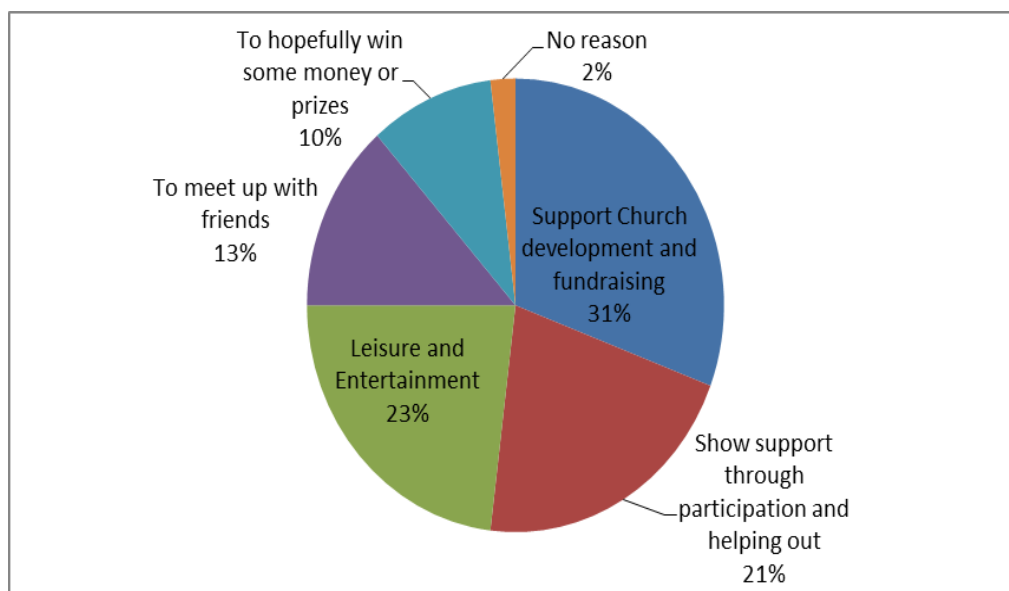
OVERALL RESULTS OF BINGO SURVEY:

23, SEPTEMBER, 2011

	VAIEE	LEULUMOEGA	OVERALL
No. of Participants	15	15	30
Gender: (M/F)	0 (M), 15 (F)	3 (M), 12 (F)	3 (M), 27 (F)
Age: 20 – 29	13%	33%	23%
30 – 39	13%	7%	10%
40 onwards	74%	60%	67%

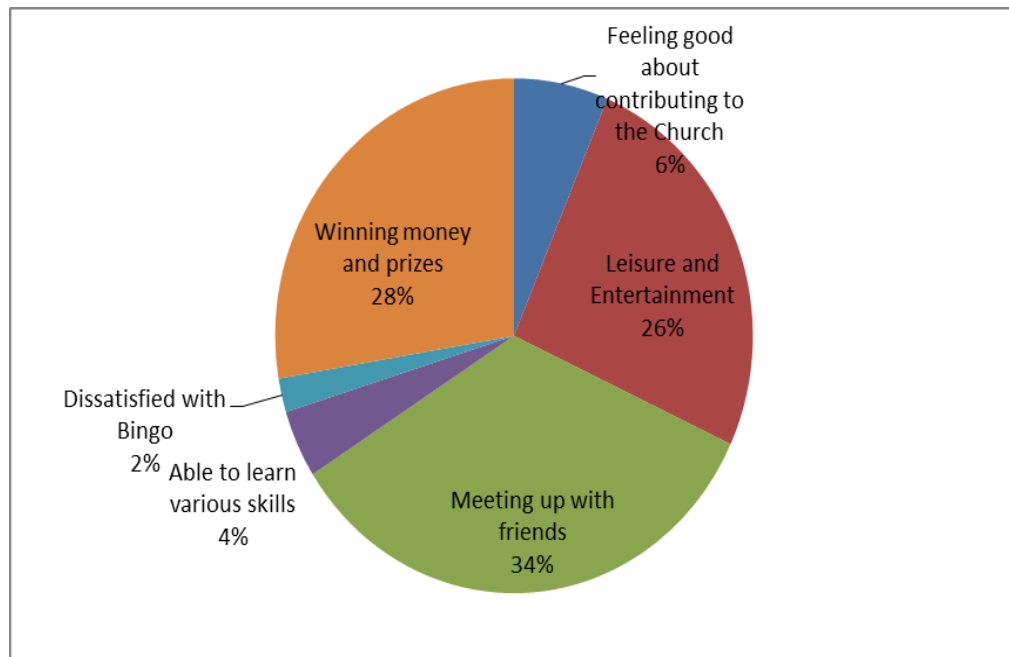
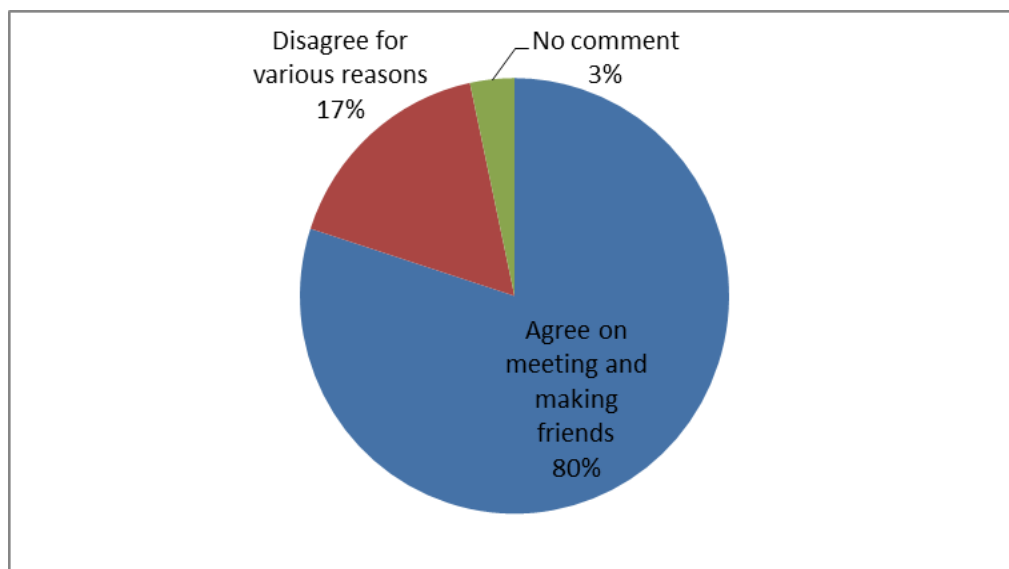
Q. For what purpose do you attend Bingo?

Typical Responses:

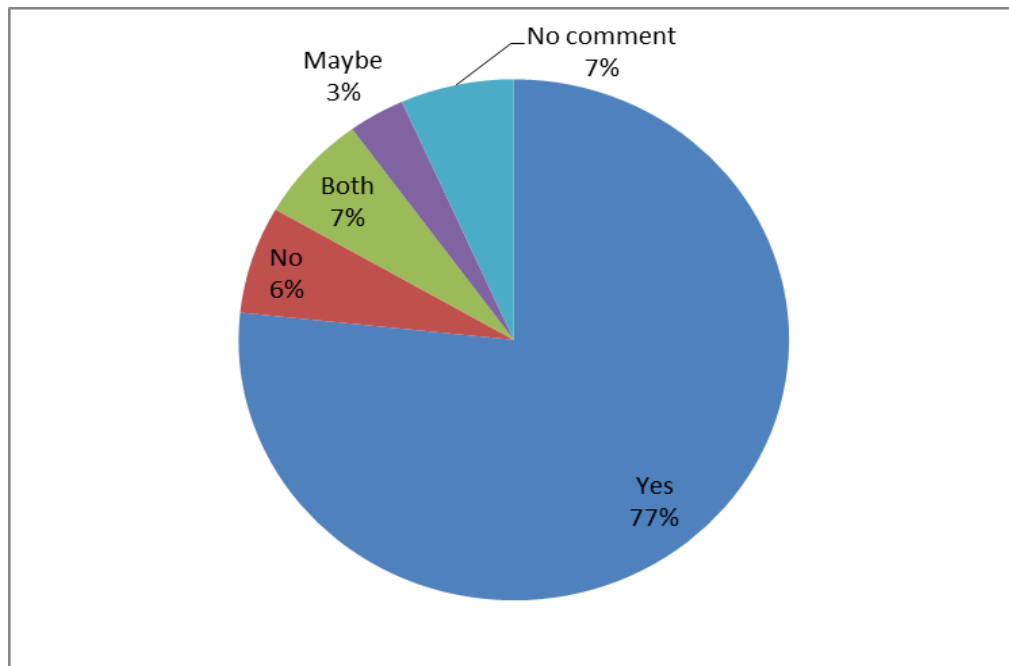


Q. Why do you enjoy going to Bingo?

Typical Responses:

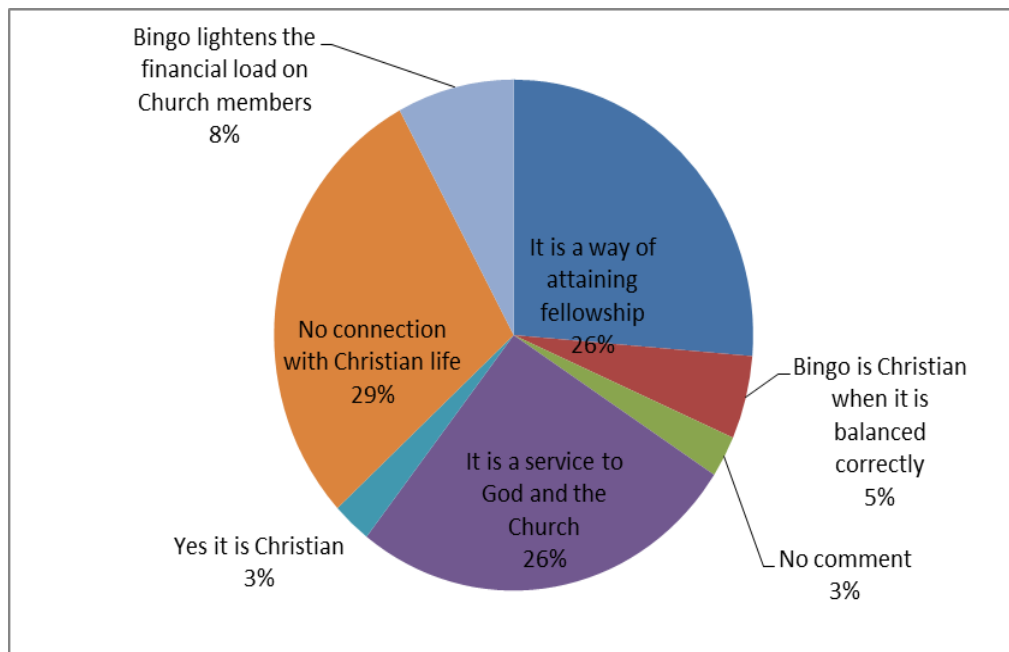
**Q. Do you believe Bingo can help maintain healthy relationships in the Church as well as establish new relationships with those of other churches?**

Q. Do you believe there is a concept of 'sharing' in the game of Bingo?



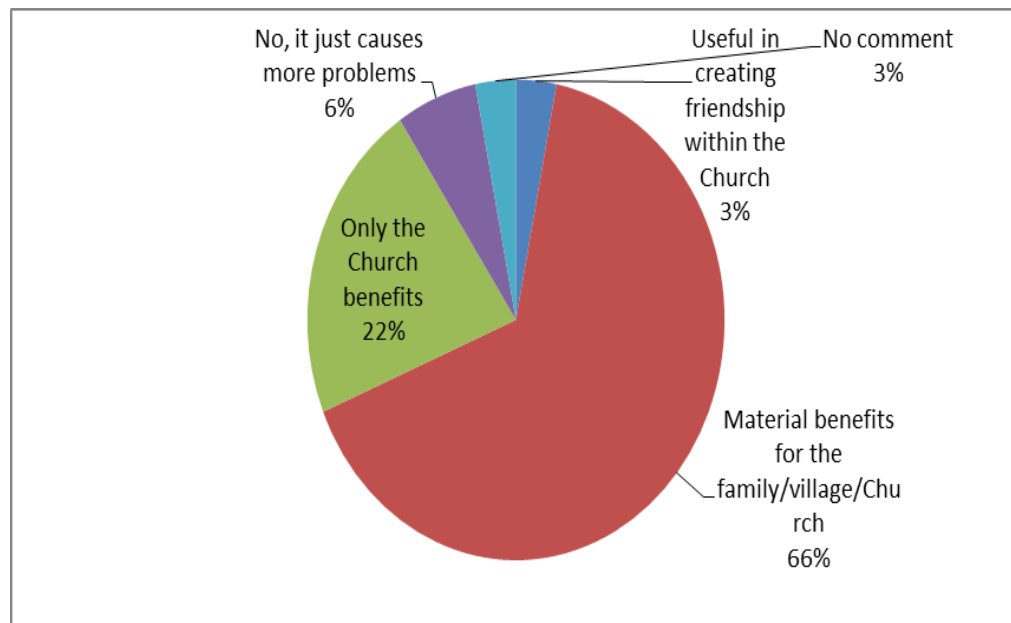
Q. What is your opinion on the link between Bingo and Christian life

Typical Responses:



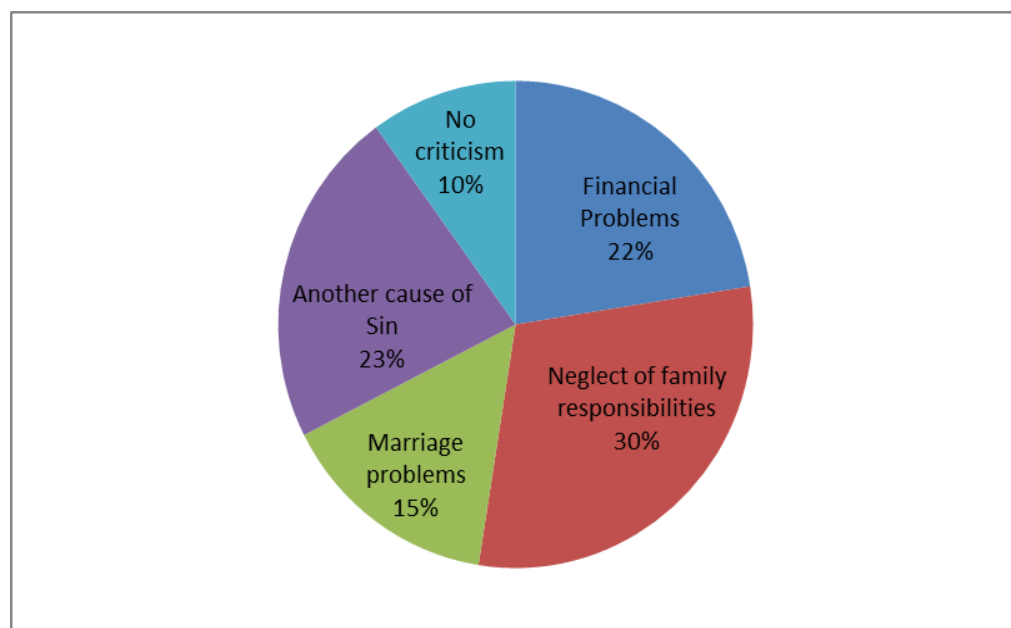
Q. Has Bingo been useful to you, your family, your village, or the Church?

Typical Responses:



Q. What is your main criticism of Bingo?

Typical Responses:



(INFORMATION OF INDIVIDUAL QUESTIONNAIRES HELD BY AUTHOR)

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