Priority of Preaching and Conviction Towards the Essential Doctrines of Christianity Among the Filipino-American Evangelical Churches in New York City

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Abstract

The essential doctrines of Christianity are the substance of Christian faith; for without these essential doctrines, Christianity would not have its framework and corporeity. With this set of essential beliefs as a solid guideline for what Christians believe and what should be preached in church, Christians can avail of a close study of doctrines, so that in turn, they can personally examine what they believe and how they live these beliefs. This study determined the priority level of preaching and the conviction level towards essential doctrines of Christianity among the Filipino-American evangelical churches in New York City, with the respondents grouped by church role, gender, and age group. It furthermore determined the significant differences in the priority level of the preaching of and the conviction level towards the essential doctrines of Christianity among respondents when they are grouped accordingly. Results of this study showed that the respondents have placed a high level of priority of preaching the essential doctrines in the church. The priority levels of preaching the essential doctrines of pastors, ministry leaders, and church members did not significantly differ among each other. The priority levels of respondents grouped as young adult, middle-age adult, and senior adult groups likewise did not significantly differ among each other. The female respondents though had a significantly higher priority level of preaching the essential doctrines of Christianity than male respondents.

Just as the results showed a high level of priority of preaching the essential doctrines, these also showed that the respondents had placed a high level of conviction towards these essential doctrines. The

conviction level of pastors towards these essential doctrines was significantly higher than the conviction level of church members, although there was no significant difference in the conviction levels between pastors and ministry leaders, and between ministry leaders and church members. The conviction level of male respondents was also significantly higher than that of female respondents. The conviction levels of respondents grouped as young adult, middle-aged adult, and senior adult groups did not significantly differ among each other.

Keywords: Essential doctrines, Christianity, evangelical churches

Introduction

The Essential Doctrines of Christianity[1] is the core belief of the Christian faith that has defined Christianity for more than 2,000 years. Without these essential doctrines, Christianity wouldn't have its framework. This framework of faith consists of 14 salvation doctrines[2] that must be true for anyone who knows God and is assured of salvation. These essential doctrines are grouped into three doctrines; namely, the essential doctrine on the trinity (God's oneness, God's triunity), essential doctrines of Jesus Christ (Christ's virgin birth, Christ's sinlessness, Christ's deity, Christ's humanity, Christ's atoning death, Christ's bodily resurrection, Christ's bodily ascension, Christ's intercession, Christ's second coming), and essential doctrine on salvation (human depravity, the necessity of God's grace, the necessity of faith)[3].

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[1]Ed Stetzer, *99 Essential Doctrines Christians Should Know*, n. p. 27 July 2016. Online: http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2016/july/99-essential-doctrines-christians-should-know.html [12 October 2016].

[2]Norman L. Geisler. *Essential Doctrine Made Easy*, Torrance, CA: Rose Publishing, Inc., 2007.

[3]"14 Essential Doctrines Comparison – LDS/Mormonism, Scientology, and More!" *Rose Publishing/Aspire Press*, 7 January 2016. n.p. Online: http://blog.rose-publishing.com/2016/01/07/14-essential-doctrines-comparison-ldsmormonism-scientology-and-more-free-echart/#. V_5mOI8rKUk [12 October 2016].

Bill Pratt[4], author of "What are the essential beliefs of Christian?", describes the essential doctrines in terms of the three stages of salvation for the believer, i.e., *justification* (human depravity, Christ's virgin birth, Christ's sinlessness, Christ's deity, Christ's humanity, God's unity, God's triunity, the necessity of God's grace, the necessity of faith, Christ's atoning death, and Christ's bodily resurrection), *sanctification* (Christ's bodily ascension and Christ's present high priestly service), and *glorification* (Christ's second coming, final judgment, and reign).

As the Bible itself reveals those doctrines that are essential to the Christian faith[5], these essential doctrines also emerged from a historical standpoint as contained in the old-time statements of faith, such as the Apostles' Creed[6], the Nicene Creed[7], the Athanasian Creed[8], and the Creed of Chalcedon[9].

The Apostles' Creed is historically traced back to Ignatius[10], who lived in the late first and early second centuries AD, long before the roots of Roman Catholicism began. Although the creed was not written by

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[4]Bill Pratt, "What are the essential beliefs of Christians?" *Tough Questions Answered*, 30 December 2008, n.p. Online: http://www.toughquestions answered. org/2008/12/30/what-are-the-essential-beliefs-of-christians/ [12 October 2016].

[5]Matt Slick, "Essential Doctrines of Christianity," *Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry*, 23 November 2008. n.p. Online: https://carm.org/essential-doctrines-of- christianity [12 October 2016].

[6]Norman L. Geisler, "The Essential Doctrines of the Christian Faith (Part One)," *Christian Research Institute*, n.p. Online: http://www.equip.org/article/the-essential-doctrines- of-the-christian-faith-part-one/ [12 October 2016].

[7]Robert Goff, "3 Things Christians Should Understand About the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed," *Transformed*, 16 January 2014. n.p. Online: https://www.westernseminary.edu/transformedblog/ 2014/01/16/3-things-christians- should-understand-about-the-nicene-constantinopolitan-creed/ [12 October 2016].

[8]Matt Slick, "Athanasian Creed (500 A. D.)," *Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry*, n.p. Online: https://carm.org/athanasian-creed-500-ad [12 October 2016].

[9]"The Creed of Chalcedon (451 A.D.)," *Tony Cooke Ministries*, 2001-2016, n. p. Online: http://www.tonycooke.org/riches-from-history/chalcedon-creed/ [12 October 2016].

[10]Eric Barger, "Some History on the Apostles Creed," *Eric Barger's Take a Stand Ministries*, n.p. Online: http://www.ericbarger.com/apostlescreed.history.htm [27 December 2016].

the apostles themselves, it reflects the theological formulations of the first-century church[11]. An early version of what later became the Apostles' Creed was called the Old Roman Creed[12] and was in use as early as the second century. It was discovered that the earliest form of this creed is found in Marcellus of Ancyra's letter to Julius, the bishop of Rome about AD 341[13].

he Nicene Creed was assumed to be an enlarged version of the Creed of Nicaea[14], which was promulgated at the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea in AD 325[15]. It was expanded at the Second Ecumenical Council at Constantinople in AD 381 to balance its coverage of the Trinity by including the Holy Spirit[16].

One of the lesser-known Christian faith statements, the Athanasian Creed was attributed to Athanasius[17], a bishop of Alexandria who was a staunch defender[18] of the divinity of Jesus Christ and the Trinity. It is considered a precise mini-theology lesson on the Trinity and counters the claims of Arianism[19] that believes that Jesus Christ was

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[11]"The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Part I," *Book of Confessions.* Louisville, KY: Geneva Press, 1996.

[12]Elliot Ritzema, "The Apostles' Creed: Its History and Origins," *Family Life Blog.* 11 April 2015. n.p. Online: https://blog.faithlife.com/blog/2015/04/the-apostles-creed-its- history-and-origins/ [27 December 2016].

[13]James Orr, "The Apostles' Creed," *Center for Reformed Theology and Apologetics.* n.p. Online: http://www.reformed.org/documents/index.html? mainframe=http:// www.reformed.org/ documents/apostles_creed_orr.html [27 December 2016].

[14]"Nicene Creed," *Encyclopedia Britannica.* 21 December 2016. n.p. Online: https://www.britannica.com/topic/ Nicene-Creed [27 December 2016].

[15]Tim Challies, "7 Councils: The First Council of Nicaea," *@Challies,* 15 December 2013. n. p. Online: http://www.challies.com/articles/7-councils-the-first-council-of-nicaea [27 December 2016].

[16]Ken Collin, "The Nicene Creed," *Rev. Ken Collin's Website.* n.p. Online: http://www.kencollins. com/ explanations/why-07.htm [27 December 2016].

[17]Jack Zavada, "The Athanasian Creed," *About Religion,* 01 October 2015, n. p. Online: http://christianity. about.com/od/christiandoctrines/a/the-athanasian-creed.htm [27 December 2017].

[18]Beth Davies-Stofka, "Eastern Orthodoxy," *Patheos Library.* n. p. Online: http://www.patheos.com/Library/Eastern-Orthodoxy/Historical-Development/Early-Developments [27 December 2016].

[19]Zavada, op. cit.

a created being and not equal with God the Father and the Holy Spirit[20].

The Creed of Chalcedon, approved by the fourth ecumenical council of the Christian Church held in Turkey in 451 A.D.[21], established the orthodox view of Jesus Christ's two natures—human and divine—that are unified in one person[22].

With the framework of essential doctrines, Christians at present are impressed with a solid guideline of what they should believe and what should be preached in church. With a close study of doctrines, Christian believers can personally check what they read, hear, or study.

Setting of the Study

This study on essential doctrines of Christianity aims to determine the level of priority of preaching and the level of conviction towards these doctrines by Filipino evangelical churches in New York City. The affirmation of Christian faith and conviction among present-day believers and the understanding of the emphasis on preaching and practices in the church are manifestations of the ongoing work of God among the churches. It would be fitting to study the state of faith among Filipino evangelical churches against the 2014 religious scenario based on the 2015 Pew Research survey[23] that finds that the percentages of the American public who say they believe in God, pray daily, and regularly go to church or other religious services all have declined modestly in recent years.

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[20]Dwight Longenecker, "Arianism Today," *Patheos Library*. n. p. Online: http://www.patheos.com/ blogs/standingonmyhead/2012/01/arianism-today.html [27 December 2016].

[21]"Council of Chalcedon," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 24 October 2003: n. p. Online: https://www.britannica. com/event/Council-of-Chalcedon [27 December 2016].

[22]Matt Slick, "Chalcedonian Creed (A. D. 451)," *Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry*, n. p. Online https://carm.org/christianity/creeds-and-confessions/chalcedonian- creed-451-ad [27 December 2016].

[23]"Event: Is the American Public Becoming Less Religious?" *Pew Research Center*, 16 November 2015: n.p. Online: http://www.pewforum.org/2015/11/16/ event-is-the-american- public-becoming-less-religious/ [12 October 2016].

New York City has been described as one of the many cities in the United States that have adopted a more humanistic and atheistic lifestyle. The atheist population in the city, for example, is estimated to be about one million[24] and represents roughly 12% of the estimated 8,550,405 of the city population[25].

The Filipino-American churches in New York City evidently exist among the many other churches in the US whose members are abandoning the Christian faith[26]. Unfortunately, when believers leave a particular church, they do not switch churches but join the growing ranks who do not identify with any religion[27]. A validated state of faith, evangelical resurgence, and adherence to spiritual truths[28] among the believers in the city represents the very active movement of God in the present times. Consequently, a strong and unwavering belief and practice of Christianity in the evangelical church have been observed[29] to influence the daily lives of present-day Americans. This study finds that people who adhere to their Christian faith, other than being happier with their present lives, are more engaged with extended families and are more likely to be involved in their communities.

Conceptual Framework

A study on the levels of the priority of the preaching and the conviction towards the essential doctrines of Christianity in the church could provide a solid and an updated report of the present attitudes and

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[24]"Atheist ads to appear in NYC subway stations," *New York Post*, 2009: n. p. Online: http://nypost.com/2009/ 10/19/atheist-ads-to-appear-in-nyc-subway-stations/ [12 October 2016].

[25]"New York City Population," *World Population Review*, 06 August 2016: Online: http://worldpopulationreview. com/us-cities/new-york-city-population/
[12 October 2016].

[26]Laurie Goodstein, "Percentage of Protestant Americans Is in Steep Decline, Study Finds," *The New York Times*, 9 October 2012. n.p. Online: http://www.nytimes. com /2012/10/10/ us/study-finds-that-percentage-of-protestant-americans-is-declining.html [12 October 2016].

[27]"None on the rise," *Pew Research Center*, 9 October 2012: n.p. Online: http:// www.pewforum.org/ 2012/10/09/ nones-on-the-rise/ [12 October 2016].

[28]J. Rodman Williams, *Renewal Theology, Vol. 1* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), 27.

[29]"Religion in Everyday Life," *Pew Research Center*, 12 April 2016: n.p. Online: http://www.pewforum.org/2016/04/12/religion-in-everyday-life/ [12 October 2016].

practices of the Filipino evangelical churches in New York City. As the core belief of the Christian faith, the Essential Doctrines of Christianity[30] have defined Christianity for more than 2,000 years; for, without these doctrines, Christianity wouldn't have its framework.

For so long, Filipino-American churches have existed in New York and this study could be a way to show the priority and conviction of faith by Filipinos and Filipino-Americans in a land that provides them with utmost religious freedoms. With an updated report and an authentic data for support, church leaders of Filipino evangelical churches in New York City can be provided with an outlook into what the church members believe and what they prioritize. Pastors and church leaders can then realign their teachings into what the church exists to achieve in terms of unity, solidarity, and adherence to Christian faith and practice.

It is expected that the Filipino evangelical churches in New York would show a high level of personal conviction and a high level of priority of preaching the essential doctrines of Christianity. Despite the groupings, i.e., church roles, gender, and age groups, the churches would not show any significant difference in both their personal conviction and priority of preaching the essential doctrines of Christianity, considering that the levels of personal conviction and priority of preaching the essential doctrines could be true for all.

It is still with high hopes that the church leaders are expected to preach, teach, and nurture the church to the biblical standards of Christian doctrines, practice, and lifestyle.

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[30]Ed Stetzer, *99 Essential Doctrines Christians Should Know*, n. p. 27 July 2016. Online: http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2016/july/99-essential-doctrines-christians-should-   know.html [12 October 2016].

Statement of the Problem

This study aims to determine the level of priority of preaching and the level of conviction towards the essential doctrines of Christianity among the Filipino evangelical churches in New York City.

This study specifically provides answers to the following research questions:

1. What is the priority level of preaching the essential doctrines of Christianity among the Filipino evangelical churches in New York City when the respondents are grouped into church roles, gender, and age group?

2. What is the conviction level towards the essential doctrines of Christianity among the Filipino evangelical churches in New York City when the respondents are grouped as to church role, gender, and age group?

3. Is there a significant difference in the priority level of preaching the essential doctrines of Christianity among respondents when they are grouped according to church role, gender, and age group?

4. Is there a significant difference in the conviction level towards the essential doctrines of Christianity among respondents when they are grouped according to church role, gender, and age group?

Based on these research problems, the following research hypotheses are advanced:

1. It is hypothesized that despite the highly urbanized and diverse nature of New York City, the Filipino evangelical churches in New York City will show a high priority level of the preaching of the essential doctrines of Christianity.

2. It is also hypothesized that despite the highly urbanized and diverse nature of New York City, the Filipino evangelical churches in New York City will show a high conviction level towards the essential doctrines of Christianity.

3. It is also hypothesized that there is no significant difference in the priority level of the preaching of the essential doctrines of Christianity among respondents when they are grouped according to church role, gender, and age group.

4. It is further hypothesized that there is no significant difference in the conviction level towards the essential doctrines of Christianity among respondents when they are grouped according to church role, gender, and age group.

In this study, the independent variables are the church roles, gender, and age group of the respondents. Based on church roles, respondents were classified as pastors, ministry leaders, and church members. Based on gender, respondents are grouped as male and female. Based on age group, respondents are categorized as young adults (18-39 years old), middle-aged adults (40-64 years old), and senior adults (65 years old and older).

The dependent variables of this study are the respondents' priority level scores and conviction level scores towards the essential doctrines of Christianity.

This study expects that the Filipino evangelical churches in New York City to show both a high priority level of the preaching of and a high conviction level towards the essential doctrines of Christianity.

Scope and Delimitations of the Study

This study gathered results from 129 respondents who are pastors, ministry leaders, and church members of 5 Filipino evangelical churches in New York City. This is a low number of a specific church group from which the data could be used to represent the 15-21% of the New York City's evangelical population[31].

Because of the nature of the purposive sampling that was employed in identifying the church respondents of this study, i.e., Filipino-American churches, the results are confined to this specific group of

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[31]Tony Carnes, "The Protestants of Metro NYC," *A Journey through NYC Religions*, 5 April 2015: n.p. Online: http://www.nycreligion.info/protestants-metro-nyc-easter-day/ [12 October 2016].

believers; hence, the results cannot be inferred for the whole Filipino evangelical populations.

This study on the priority of preaching and the conviction towards the essential doctrines focuses on 14 essential doctrines. The Gospel Project Chronological 31[32], though, summarized a total of ninety-nine comprehensive doctrines of Christianity[33].

Data on the priority of preaching and the conviction towards these essential doctrines were gathered using two survey instruments. This study focused solely on pastors, ministry leaders, and church members of five Filipino evangelical churches in New York City.

The study did not attempt to determine the factors that caused the achieved levels of the priority and conviction of the churches. It also did not attempt to correlate urban lifestyle, professional career, and financial status with the conviction and priority of the aforementioned doctrines of the faith.

The Essential Doctrines of Christianity

Christianity, as in most religions, has its doctrines that are considered essential to the faith of its believers. These doctrines are defined[34] as the content of teachings intended to be accepted and believed as truth. Doctrines are essential to the Christian faith[35] and Christianity would not have its framework without these essential doctrines[36].

The essential doctrines of Christianity may come in diverse numbers and diverse groupings. The essential doctrines can be grouped into three, namely, the essential doctrine on the trinity (God's unity, God's

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[32]"99 Essential Gospels," *The Gospel Project Chronological.* n.p. Online: https://www.gospelproject.com/adults/99-essential-doctrines/ [12 October 2016].

[33] Ed Stetzer, "99 Essential Doctrines Christians Should Know," n. p. 27 July 2016. Online: http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2016/july/99-essential-doctrines-christians-should-know.html [12 October 2016].

[34]Robert M. Bowman. "A Biblical Guide to Orthodoxy and Heresy, Part One: The Case for Doctrinal Discernment," *Christian Research Journal* (Summer 1990), 28.

[35]Matt Slick, "Essential Doctrines of Christianity," *Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry*, 23 November 2008. n.p. Online: https://carm.org/essential-doctrines-of- christianity [12 October 2016].

[36]Stetzer, loc. cit.

triunity), essential doctrines of Jesus Christ (Christ's virgin birth, Christ's sinlessness, Christ's deity, Christ's humanity, Christ's atoning death, Christ's bodily resurrection, Christ's bodily ascension, Christ's intercession, Christ's second coming), and essential doctrine on salvation (human depravity, the necessity of God's grace, the necessity of faith)[37].

The doctrines can also be viewed as five basic doctrines[38], namely, the trinity, the person of Jesus Christ, the second coming, salvation, and the scriptures. These essential doctrines of Christian faith can also be understood in terms of the three stages of salvation for the believer[39]: i.e., justification (human depravity, Christ's virgin birth, Christ's sinlessness, Christ's deity, Christ's humanity, God's unity, God's triunity, the necessity of God's grace, the necessity of faith, Christ's atoning death, and Christ's bodily resurrection), sanctification (Christ's bodily ascension and Christ's present high priestly service) and glorification (Christ's second coming, final judgment, and reign).

As these doctrines are essential to saving faith, they are therefore fundamental[40] to the Christian faith. Not only are they fundamental, but they are also practical; for nothing is more practical than sound doctrine[41]. Those who listen to the right doctrine are transformed by this right doctrine.

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[37]"14 Essential Doctrines Comparison – LDS/Mormonism, Scientology, and More!" *Rose Publishing/Aspire Press*, 7 January 2016. n.p. Online: http://blog.rose-publishing.com/2016/01/07/14-essential-doctrines-comparison-ldsmormonism-scientology-and-more-free-echart/#.V_5mOI8rKUk [12 October 2016].

[38]Sandy Simpson, "The Five Basic Doctrines," *Deception In The Church*, 1999: n. p. Online: http://www.deceptioninthechurch.com/5doctrines.html [29 December 2016].

[39]Bill Pratt, "What are the essential beliefs of Christians?" *Tough Questions Answered*, 30 December 2008. n.p. Online: http://www.toughquestions answered.org/2008/12/30/what-are-the-essential-beliefs-of-christians/ [12 October 2016].

[40]Tim Challies, "Essential Doctrines," *@Challies*, 3 August 2004: n. p. Online: http://www.challies.com/general-news/essential-doctrines [29 December 2016].

[41]John MacArthur, "Doctrine: The Essential Foundation," *Crosswalk.com*, n. p. Online: http://www.crosswalk.com/faith/spiritual-life/doctrine-the-essential-foundation-11579518.html [29 December 2016].

While the Bible is the divine revelation of doctrines that are essential to the Christian faith[42], these essential doctrines also emerged from a historical standpoint as contained in the Apostles' Creed[43], the Nicene Creed[44], the Athanasian Creed[45], and the Creed of Chalcedon[46].

For almost 2,000 years, virtually all orthodox Christian theologians have defined their beliefs with reference to the Creed of Chalcedon[47], i.e., Jesus Christ is truly God and truly man. The Creed particularly countered heresies that challenged the biblical teaching concerning Jesus Christ's human and divine nature in one person[48].

The essential doctrines of Christianity are beliefs on which Christians cannot compromise[49]. It is so fundamental that they should be revealed in the Scriptures. Scriptures can make humans wise unto

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[42]Matt Slick, "Essential Doctrines of Christianity," *Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry*, 23 November 2008. n.p. Online:
https://carm.org/essential-doctrines-of- christianity [12 October 2016].

[43]Norman L. Geisler, "The Essential Doctrines of the Christian Faith (Part One)," *Christian Research Institute*. n.p. Online:
http://www.equip.org/article/the-essential-doctrines- of-the-christian-faith-part-one/ [12 October 2016].

[44]Robert Goff, "3 Things Christians Should Understand About the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed," *Transformed*, 16 January 2014. n.p. Online:
https://www.westernseminary.edu/transformedblog/ 2014/01/16/3-things-christians- should-understand-about-the-nicene-constantinopolitan-creed/
[12 October 2016].

[45]Matt Slick, "Athanasian Creed (500 A. D.)," *Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry*, n.p. Online: https://carm.org/athanasian-creed-500-ad [12 October 2016].

[46]"The Creed of Chalcedon (451 A.D.)," *Tony Cooke Ministries*, 2001-2016, n. p. Online: http://www.tonycooke.org/riches-from-history/chalcedon-creed/
[12 October 2016].

[47] Nicholas Needham, "Truly God, Truly Man: The Council of Chalcedon," *The Ligonier Ministries*, n. p. Online:
http://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/truly-god-truly-man-council-chalcedon/ [29 December 2016].

[48] Kenneth R. Samples, "The Importance of Christendom's Historic Creeds," *RTB 30*, 13 September 2011: n. p. Online:
http://www.reasons.org/blogs/reflections/ the-importance-of-christendom %E2%80%99s-historic-creeds [29 December 2016].

[49] Jack Wellman, "Essential Beliefs of Christianity: Beliefs Christians Should Not Compromise On," *What Christians Want to Know*, n. p. Online: http://www. what christianswanttoknow.com/essential-beliefs-of-christianity-beliefs-christians-should-not-compromise-on/ [29 December 2016].

salvation through faith in Jesus Christ (2 Timothy 3:15). And if a doctrine is essential for salvation, then it must be supported by the Scriptures, making the believers adequate and equipped for good work (2 Timothy 3:17). This makes a

doctrine truly fundamental, i.e., its origin is the Scripture and not tradition, papal decrees, or other sources of authority[50].

Fourteen essential statements were examined in this study.

The first doctrine pertains to God's unity, which advances the belief in only one God, Creator of the Universe, who has always existed and will always exist. God is[51], and such is the primary affirmation of Christian doctrines[52].

The second doctrine pertains to God's triunity, which advances the belief in only one God who eternally exists in three Persons. In the Bible, the Father is called God, the son Jesus Christ is called God, and the Holy Spirit is called God. Hence, there is one being, one reality. There are not three Gods[53], but only one.

The third doctrine pertains to human depravity, which advances the belief in the spiritual separation of humans and God. Humans are sinful and cannot please God by their works; humans are incapable of saving themselves; humans need a new birth in Jesus Christ to have eternal life. It is the actuality of sin[54] that has destroyed the human situation from the beginning of human history.

The fourth doctrine pertains to Jesus Christ's virgin birth, which advances the belief in Jesus Christ becoming a human being through a supernatural conception in Mary's womb. The Bible is clear about Jesus Christ not having human paternity, but His conception is through the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit upon Mary (Luke 1:35).

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[50]John F. MacArthur, *Reckless Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1997), 108.

[51]John Piper, *Doctrine Matters* (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2013), 1.

[52]J. Rodman Williams, *Renewal Theology Vol. 1* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), 47.

[53]Ibid., 90

[54]Ibid., 221.

Hence, it was the power of the Holy Spirit[55] that Mary was enabled to conceive the Son of God.

The fifth doctrine pertains to Jesus Christ's sinlessness, which advances the belief in Jesus Christ being born of a virgin and does not have a sinful nature; Jesus Christ was perfect and was without sin. If the perfection of humanity may be described as a person in proper relation to God and fellow human beings[56], Jesus demonstrated this to the fullest degree.

The sixth doctrine pertains to Jesus Christ's deity, which advances the belief that Jesus Christ is God; Jesus Christ is divine and not just a good teacher or a righteous man.

The seventh doctrine pertains to Jesus Christ's humanity, which advances the belief that Jesus Christ was fully humans and fully divine; Jesus Christ needed to be fully divine to have the power to save humans and needed to be fully human to adequately represent humans. Although Jesus Christ has two natures, there is no confusion of the two natures nor is one nature ever absorbed into the other[57].

The eighth doctrine pertains to the necessity of God's grace, which advances the belief that humans cannot save themselves because of human depravity; Salvation is possible through grace alone, without which, no human could come into a personal relationship with God. The doctrine of God's grace points to one central truth, that salvation is all of grace because it is all of God; and because it is all of God, it is all for his glory[58].

The ninth doctrine pertains to the necessity of faith, which advances the belief in faith that connects humans to God; As no human being can earn salvation, faith is trusting God to do what humans cannot do for themselves. By faith, humans trust God for the power to fulfill

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[55]J. Rodman Williams, *Renewal Theology Vol. 1* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), 345

[56]Ibid., 336

[57]Ibid., 343.

[58]James M. Boice and Philip G. Ryken, *The Doctrines of Grace* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2002), 32.

all His powerful effects in our lives[59]. The work of faith is the means that humans receive the power to fulfill the resolve of God and turn it into a deed of faith.

The tenth doctrine pertains to Jesus Christ's atoning death, which advances the belief that the penalty to sin is both physical and spiritual death; The penalty that humans owe God was paid by Jesus Christ through His death on the cross; Only the sinless life, the sacrificial death, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ can bring humans to God. Since the death of Jesus Christ was for humans' sins, then His death was a sacrifice[60]. It was not for Jesus Christ's sins for He had none.

The eleventh doctrine pertains to Jesus Christ's bodily resurrection, which advances the belief that Jesus Christ rose bodily from the grave; The atoning death of Jesus Christ paid humanity's sins, but the process was not complete until Jesus Christ had defeated death by physically resurrecting in the same body; Because of Jesus Christ's victory over death and resurrection to a new glorified, physical body, all of humanity will be resurrected and live forever in either heaven or hell. The resurrection of Jesus Christ should be a doctrinal strength of Christianity for the Christian faith is null and void, empty of all significance, if Jesus Christ was not raised from the dead[61].

The twelfth doctrine pertains to Jesus Christ's bodily ascension, which advances that belief that Jesus Christ ascended to God in both body and soul; Jesus Christ did not only die for humanity's sins; Jesus Christ also physically resurrected from death and ascended to heaven for humanity's salvation; Because Jesus Christ has ascended to the Father, the Holy Spirit now guides humans, shows humans where they are wrong, and comforts them when they hurt; Jesus Christ's going to the Father means humanity's life is kept safe in heaven with God.

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[59]John Piper, *Doctrine Matters* (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2013), 120-121.

[60]J. Rodman Williams, *Renewal Theology Vol. 1* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), 357.

[61]Ibid., 382

The height of the victory of both Jesus Christ's death and resurrection is His ascension, for He elevated[62] human nature upon His physical ascension to Heaven.

The thirteenth doctrine pertains to Jesus Christ's intercession, which advances the belief that Jesus Christ represents humanity's best interests before God; Jesus Christ's bodily ascension allowed Him to serve as humanity's mediation before God; In God's presence, Jesus Christ prays continually on humanity's behalf, an assurance that humans' prayers are heard by God. The exaltation of Jesus Christ brings benefit to believers through continuing intercession, as related to both humanity's salvation and ongoing Christian walk[63].

The last doctrine pertains to Jesus Christ's second coming, which advances the belief that Jesus Christ is coming again soon, and humans should be ready; Just as Jesus Christ left the world physically, so He will return in the same manner; When Jesus Christ returns, dead believers will receive their resurrected body while believers who are alive when He returns will not die but will be transformed into immortal, physical bodies. The return of Jesus Christ to earth is the crown of history[64]. Without the return of Jesus Christ, history would be incomplete. With His return, all things reach their final destination. The apologist Bill Pratt describes the essential doctrines in terms of the three stages of salvation for the believer[65], i.e, justification, sanctification, and glorification. These stages of salvation were based on Norman Geisler's article on essential doctrines[66].

Bill Pratt furthermore described the three stages of salvation: Justification, which is freedom from the penalty of sin[67], covers the essential doctrines of human depravity, [Jesus] Christ's virgin birth, [Jesus] Christ's sinlessness, [Jesus] Christ's deity, [Jesus] Christ's

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[62]J. Rodman Williams, *Renewal Theology Vol. 1* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), 393-394.

[63]Ibid., 410-411

[64]Ibid., 297

[65]Bill Pratt, "What are the essential beliefs of Christians?" *Tough Questions Answered*, 30 December 2008, n.p. Online: http://www.toughquestions answered.org/2008/12/30/what-are-the-essential-beliefs-of-christians/ [12 October 2016].

[66]Norman L. Geisler, "The Essential Doctrines of the Christian Faith, Part 1," *Christian Research Journal, Volume 28, Number 6* (2005).

[67]Pratt, loc. cit.

humanity, God's unity, God's triunity, the necessity of God's grace, the necessity of faith, [Jesus] Christ's atoning death, and [Jesus] Christ's bodily resurrection. The second stage of salvation is sanctification. Sanctification, which is the freedom from the power of sin[68], covers the essential doctrines of [Jesus] Christ's bodily ascension and [Jesus] Christ's present high priestly service. The third stage of salvation is glorification. Described as freedom from the presence of sin[69], covers [Jesus] Christ's second coming, final judgment, and reign.

Other theologians categorized these essential doctrines according to various biblical perspectives.

Although Christianity believes that the Bible is the authority for the establishment of the doctrines that are essential to the Christian faith[70], these essential doctrines came into light from different old-time statements of faith, such as the Apostles' Creed[71], the Nicene Creed[72], the Athanasian Creed[73], and the Creed of Chalcedon[74]. Other than the establishment of the essential doctrines of Christianity, the Bible has also profoundly influenced the culture, thought, and history of the world[75]. The Bible's authority, after all, lies primarily on its

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[68]Ibid.

[69]Ibid.

[70]Matt Slick, "Essential Doctrines of Christianity," *Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry*, 23 November 2008. n.p. Online: https://carm.org/essential-doctrines-of- christianity [12 October 2016].

[71]Norman L. Geisler, "The Essential Doctrines of the Christian Faith (Part One)," *Christian Research Institute*. n.p. Online: http://www.equip.org/article/the-essential-doctrines- of-the-christian-faith-part-one/ [12 October 2016].

[72]Robert Goff, "3 Things Christians Should Understand About the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed," *Transformed*, 16 January 2014. n.p. Online: https://www.westernseminary.edu/transformedblog/ 2014/01/16/3-things-christians- should-understand-about-the-nicene-constantinopolitan-creed/ [12 October 2016].

[73]Matt Slick, "Athanasian Creed (500 A. D.)," *Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry*, n.p. Online: https://carm.org/athanasian-creed-500-ad [12 October 2016].

[74]"The Creed of Chalcedon (451 A.D.)," *Tony Cooke Ministries*, 2001-2016, n. p. Online: http://www.tonycooke.org/riches-from-history/chalcedon-creed/ [12 October 2016].

[75]Bruce Wilkerson and Kenneth Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc, 1983), xiii.

account of God's mighty acts, i.e., creation, redemption, and glorification[76].

The doctrines of Christianity have been founded on deeds, although beliefs on creeds are not nearly so central to most other religions as it is to Christianity[77]. Not all religions, therefore, have creeds. Other religions have scriptures, practices, ethics, lifestyles, philosophy, manuals, and even mystical regulations for worship. But except in response to Christianity, these religions have not developed creeds[78], of which the standard beliefs are supposed to be based.

The creeds of the Christian Church had been gradually developed[79] and elaborated[80]. Clauses have been added from time to time to expand the profession of belief.

It is important to see that the creeds establish the beliefs of the Christian Church. That is why it is a practice of the Church to recite the creed as an act of belief. To act on one's belief, the Church would have experienced and recognized the truths of such beliefs. Thus, belief can be arrived at in different ways [81]: experiment and demonstration, a process of reasoning, and acceptance of authority. Furthermore, faith can be derived from the argument[82] of cause and effect, the argument from life, and argument from design.

The addition of clauses to the creeds was in response to these probable causes[83]: Firstly, there was a natural desire for clearness and precision of beliefs that should be rendered intelligible to the converts new to the faith. Secondly, there was a need for the

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[76]J. Rodman Williams, *Renewal Theology, Vol. 1* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), 47.

[77]Luke Timothy Johnson, "*The Creed, What Christians Believe and Why it Matters*" (USA: Doubleday, 2003), 9.

[78]Frances Young, "*The Making of the Creeds*"(USA: SCM Press Ltd, 1991), 1.

[79]Edgar C. S. Gibson, *"The Three Creeds"* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1912), 26.

[80]C. E. B. Cranfield, *"The Apostles' Creed"* (London: T&T Clark, Ltd., 2004), 5.

[81]William Barclay, *"The Apostles' Creed"* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 8.

[82]Ibid.

[83]Gibson, op. cit., 27.

introduction of words and phrases with an expressed purpose of guarding against the intrusion of those who held heretical views. Thus, the development of creed is not a late and violent imposition[84] upon the statements of faith, but a natural development of Christianity best understood in the light of the specific character of the Christian religion[85] and more so, in the gospels of the New Testament[86].

Since Christianity is a direct experience of God in Jesus Christ[87] [88], the doctrines that Christianity must be based on the varied experiences of Christians with God and with the knowledge of Jesus Christ. It is, therefore, necessary for the establishment of these sets of doctrinal beliefs that would substantiate these experiences.

Creeds are generally the profession of faith, the rule of faith, the definition of faith, and the symbol of faith[89].

Firstly, creeds provide a statement of personal and congregational commitment, as believers publicly profess their faith in God and His plan with humanity. Here, the New Testament practice of confessional summaries[90] is being handed over to be learned by heart and giving it back by recitation. Creeds, furthermore, provide a way for Christian identity to be exercised and the Christian faith to be lived. With this, believers can simply test[91] their faith and thought by the faith and thought of the universal Church. Creeds also provide a boundary for Christian beliefs and limiting the extent of faith and the exercise of such faith. Through creeds, believers define[92] their faith by openly stating what they believe. Lastly, creeds provide a manifestation[93] of

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[84]Luke Timothy Johnson, "*The Creed, What Christians Believe and Why it Matters*" (USA: Doubleday, 2003), 10.

[85]Frances Young, "*The Making of the Creeds*" USA: SCM Press Ltd, 1991), 2.

[86]Cranfield, op. cit, 6.

[87]Barclay, op. cit., 4.

[88]Johnson, op. cit., 12.

[89] Luke Timothy Johnson, "*The Creed, What Christians Believe and Why it Matters*" (USA: Doubleday, 2003), 41-57

[90]Frances Young, "*The Making of the Creeds*" (USA: SCM Press Ltd, 1991), 9.

[91]William Barclay, *"The Apostles' Creed"* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 6.

[92]Ibid.

[93]Johnson, op. cit., 64.

reception and membership, as well as affirmation of the congregation's shared experiences.

The Apostles' Creed

The apostle's creed has been described by a legend to be authored by the twelve apostles on the tenth day after Jesus Christ's ascension[94]. Each apostle is believed to have added a clause to form the whole creed. There was virtually no evidence though[95], that this actually transpired, or even that any apostles were directly involved in the writing of the creed.

A commentary of Rufinus[96] [97], church elder of Aquileia in North Italy, described that the apostles, having met together and being filled with the Holy Spirit, composed this brief statement of their future preaching, each contributing his several sentences to one common summary.

The early text of the Creed was believed to have been based on the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19 AKJV)[98]. By the second century, the Creed was already in written form.

The Old Roman Creed was quoted in Greek by Marcellus of Ancyra[99] in A.D. 340. It was also quoted in Latin by Rufinus about A.D. 400[100].

The Apostle's Creed is considered up to these days as the basic statement of faith of the Christian Church. As Christian believers

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[94]Alex Tang, "*Understanding the Apostles' Creed*" [Monograph], 2004, Spiritual Formation Institute, Johor Bahru, Malaysia, 4.

[95]*The Apostles' Creed: The Articles of Faith* (Casselberry, FL: Third Millennium Ministries, 2012), 2.

[96]Luke Timothy Johnson, "*The Creed, What Christians Believe and Why it Matters*" (USA: Doubleday, 2003), 40.

[97]William Barclay, *"The Apostles' Creed"* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 2.

[98]Barclay, op. cit., 3.

[99]C. E. B. Cranfield, *"The Apostles' Creed"* (London: T&T Clark, Ltd., 2004), 5.

[100]Ibid.

repeat the Creed, they are using a statement in which for more than eighteen hundred years the Church has expressed its faith[101].

The Nicene Creed

The Nicene creed is generally accepted throughout the Christian community as representing the orthodox Christian faith[102]. It was written in affirmation of the divinity of Jesus Christ by the Council of Nicea[103] convened by Emperor Constantine. This Council was summoned by the Emperor in an effort to unify the newly Christian empire that had been divided severely by the teachings of Arius[104], thus it is also called the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed.

Considered as the other most stable and widely recognized ancient creed[105], the Nicene Creed expresses the authoritative understanding of the Trinity[106] and defining the relationship of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

What Christianity Believes

Christianity is the belief in the teachings of Jesus Christ. Since Christianity, or any other religion, centers its interest in God[107], its beliefs are based on God and not what Christians said or did about God in the past. This focus on God though has changed dramatically when humanism[108] broke free from the teachings of the Christian church and proclaimed that man is the measure of all things.

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[101]William Cherry, *"The Apostles' Creed"* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 4.

[102]J. Rodman Williams, *Renewal Theology, Vol. 3* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 26.

[103]Alex Tang, "*Understanding the Apostles' Creed*" [Monograph], 2004, Spiritual Formation Institute, Johor Bahru, Malaysia, 5.

[104]Luke Timothy Johnson, "*The Creed, What Christians Believe and Why it Matters*" (USA: Doubleday, 2003), 33.

[105]Matt Stefon, "*Christianity: History, Belief, and Practice*" (New York: Britannica Educational Publishing, 2012), 55.

[106]Arthur J. Bellinzoni, *The Future of Christianity* (New York: Prometheus Book,
     2006), 15.

[107]Owen Chadwick, *A History of Christianity* (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1995), 7.

[108]Page Smith, *Rediscovering Christianity* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 34.

Yet, Christianity as a religion was not something that Christians primarily thought but something that they did. For Christianity, its teachings become truth when acquired through practice[109]. Christianity, therefore, has its own set beliefs based solely on God that Christians practice.

The foundational issues[110] of Christianity include how to view the Bible, God, Jesus, faith, and the Christian life. At the beginning of its development, Christianity has changed from the religion of Jesus Christ into a religion about Jesus Christ[111]. The early century Christianity saw the more intellectually inclined Christians started to interpret the common ideas of philosophers and other thinkers in a Christian light[112]. Thus, the beginning of Christian theology.

From this, countless Christians are seeking new ways to renew and reform Christianity[113]. Through the years, Christianity had seen its believers have seized upon ideas from the cultural mainstream[114] and made them their own. Additionally, the quest for temporal power has played a leading role in most current disagreements and differences[115] in both the world's religions and Christianity. The new era of learning and education has also encouraged humankind to grow from childhood to maturity where the mind and heart no longer need to be told what to believe but are conditioned to believe that it is both proper and healthy to explore what we think about God[116].

[109]Karen Armstrong, *The Case for God* (New York: Anchor Books, 2010), xii.
[110]Marcus J. Borg, *The Heart of Christianity: Rediscovering a Life of Faith* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, Inc., 2003), 3.
[111]Bellenzoni, op. cit., 27.
[112]Jonathan Hill, *What has Christianity Ever Done for Us* (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 25.
[113]Frank Viola, *Reimagining Church* (Tennessee: Daniel Literary Group, 2008), 15.
[114]Hill, op. cit., 26.
[115]Arthur J. Bellenzoni, *The Future of Christianity* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2006), 13.
[116]Hilary Wakeman, *Saving Christianity, New Thinking for Old Beliefs* (Dublin: The Liffey Press Limited, 2003), 8.

What was interestingly obvious about the spread of Christianity during the reign of Constantine is the moral influence that society has on men and women who were not even religious[117]. Constantine embraced Christianity in the fourth century [118] after his victory in battle in the year 313[119]. He believed he received the vision that the Christian God commanded him to conquer through the sign of the cross[120], was convinced that the Christian God delivered Rome into his hands[121], and presumed that the Christian God would assume unity and welfare of the Roman Empire[122].

Beginning the seventeenth century, Christianity has felt the threat of emerging secularism[123] and responded by the emergence of the absolute truth of Christianity. In the nineteenth century, many Protestant Christians began to affirm the Bible's infallibility while the Roman Catholic Church affirmed the infallibility of the papal authority[124]. The corruption in the

teachings and beliefs of the Christian church has led the believers to hopeless and darkest spiritual blindness. Not until the Reformation has brought forth the lives of John Wycliff who advanced the reformation in England, Martin Luther in Germany, and John Calvin in France[125]. Objections in doctrines of faith in the Catholic church are directed to the doctrine of the number of books of the Bible[126],

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[117]Owen Chadwick, *A History of Christianity* (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1995), 60.

[118]Marcus J. Borg, *The Heart of Christianity: Rediscovering a Life of Faith* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, Inc., 2003), 127.

[119] Bellenzoni, op. cit., 28.

[120] Page Smith, *Rediscovering Christianity* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 16.

[121]Bellenzoni, loc. cit.

[122]Ibid.

[123]"Scientific Revolution and Secularism," *UK Essays*, November 2013. n. p. Online: https://www.ukessays.com/essays/religion/the-scientific-revolution-and-secularism-religion-essay.php?vref=1 [Accessed 7 May 2018].

[124] Marcus J. Borg, *The Heart of Christianity: Rediscovering a Life of Faith* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, Inc., 2003), 212.

[125]Page Smith, *Rediscovering Christianity* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 37-59.

[126]Mario P. Romero, *Unabridged Christianity* (California: Queenship Publishing Company, 1999), 8-9.

justification by faith[127], transubstantiation [128], the Holy Eucharist[129], purgatory[130], mediation of Mary and the saints[131], prayer to Mary and the saints[132], prayer through rosary [133], traditions [134], Peter as the builder of the church [135], infallibility of the pope [136], Mary's immaculate conception [137], forgiveness through the ministry of the priest[138], priestly celibacy[139], worship of statues[140], and infant baptism[141].

The essential doctrines based on creeds are simplistic ways to divide the essentials from the nonessentials. Thus, creeds consistently affirm *what* without trying to specify *how*[142].

When LifeWay Research conducted an online survey of 3,000 Americans in 2014 and published the results that showed that 70% of Americans believe there is one true God in three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit[143]. The same survey showed that 67% of Americans say heaven is real; 61% say hell is real; 53% say salvation is in Christ alone; Furthermore, 67% say most people are good; 18% say even small sins should lead to damnation; 55% say God has a wrathful side; and 71% of Americans say that people must contribute some effort toward their salvation.

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[127]Ibid., 50

[128]Ibid., 65.

[129]Ibid., 106.

[130]Ibid., 101-103.

[131]Ibid., 122-123.

[132]Ibid., 149-153.

[133]Ibid., 159-162.

[134]Ibid., 208-209.

[135]Ibid., 228-234.

[136]Ibid., 248-252.

[137]Ibid., 266-270.

[138]Mario P. Romero, *Unabridged Christianity* (California: Queenship Publishing Company, 1999), 286-289.

[139] Ibid., 299-304.

[140] Ibid., 310-313.

[141] Ibid., 323-329.

[142]Luke Timothy Johnson, "*The Creed, What Christians Believe and Why it Matters*" (USA: Doubleday, 2003), 514-515.

[143]Bob Smietana, "Americans Believe in Heaven, Hell, and a Little Bit of Heresy," *Life Way Research Online*. October 28, 2014. Available: https://lifewayresearch. com/2014/10/28/americans-believe-in-heaven-hell-and-a-little-bit-of-heresy/ [31 March 2018].

Pew Research Center in its July 2017 report shows that while Americans overall have become somewhat less religious in recent years, measures of various beliefs and practices have relatively stable among those who identify with a religion[144], e.g., Protestants and Catholics.

The 2014 Religious Landscape Study, a follow-up to an equally extensive survey on religion in America conducted in 2007, describes the changing size and demographic characteristics of the nation's major religious groups[145]. Results of the study show that the share of U.S. adults who say they believe in God, while still remarkably high by comparison with other advanced industrial countries, has declined modestly, from approximately 92% to 89%, since Pew Research Center conducted its first Landscape Study in 2007. The share of Americans who say they are "absolutely certain" God exists has dropped more sharply, from 71% in 2007 to 63% in 2014. And the percentages who say they pray every day, attend religious services regularly, and consider religion to be very important in their lives also have ticked down by small but statistically significant margins.

In 2014, another Pew Research Center finding showed that in an average week, one-in-five Americans share their religious faith online, about the same percentage that tunes in to religious talk radio, watch religious TV programs, or listen to Christian rock music[146]. The same findings showed that nearly half of U.S. adults see someone else share their religious faith online in a typical week.

Christian beliefs are based on faith. This Christian faith means believing in biblical truths, i.e., there is a God, believing that the Bible is the revelation of God, and believing that Jesus is the Son of God and that He died for our sins[147]. Most Christians extend the list of biblical truths that make up the more complete set of beliefs. Most

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[144] "Religious Beliefs and Practices," *Pew Research Center*, July 26, 2017. n. p. Online. Available: http://www.pewforum.org/2017/07/26/religious-beliefs-and-practices/ [31 March 2018].

[145] "U.S. Public Becoming Less Religious," *Pew Research Center*, November 3, 2015. n. p. Online. Available: http://www.pewforum.org/2015/11/03/u-s-public-becoming-less-religious/ [31 March 2018].

[146] "Religion and Electronic Media," *Pew Research Center*, 6 November 2014. n.p. Online: http://www.pewforum.org/2014/11/06/religion-and-electronic-media/ [12 October 2016].

[147] Marcus J. Borg, *The Heart of Christianity: Rediscovering a Life of Faith* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, Inc., 2003), 26.

Christians believe that the Bible is the inerrant Word of God. They believe in Genesis than in evolution. They believe that Jesus Christ was born of a virgin, that He walked on water and raised the dead, that He was raised from the dead in a physical bodily form, and that he will come again someday.

These sets of beliefs that have been embraced and taught in the Christian Church have come from Christian's understanding of the Scriptures and the traditions of the Church[148]. Yet some Christians have tried to justify the introduction on unbiblical church practices by introducing the context of culture[149], such that the church is different in every culture and the

church adapts to the world in which it lives. Take for example the wearing of bathing suits in youth gatherings, which is culturally acceptable in the American culture yet a taboo in some Asian cultures.

This contextualization of culture into faith has become a reason for the adaptability of faith to culture. In the words of Richard Halverson[150], the Greeks who received the gospel turned it into a philosophy, while the Romans turned it into a government; the Europeans turned it into a culture and the Americans have turned it into a business. Yet the Church should be identified through the centrality of Jesus Christ, the experience of authentic community, familial love, and devotion of its members to one another, the native instinct to gather together without static ritual, the innate desire to form deep-seated relationships that are centered on Christ, the internal drive for open participatory gatherings, and the loving impulse to display Jesus Christ to a fallen world[151].

Ultimately, faith as believing is central to Christianity[152]. It is through believing that the Bible and the traditions, which are hard to believe in these modern times, become the reality of the heart. It takes faith

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[148]Hilary Wakeman, *Saving Christianity, New Thinking for Old Beliefs* (Dublin: The Liffey Press Limited, 2003), 23.

[149]Frank Viola, *Reimagining Church* (Tennessee: Daniel Literary Group, 2008), 45.

[150]George Hunsberger and Craig Van Gelder, *The Church Between Gospel and Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 149.

[151]Viola, op. cit., 47.

[152] Marcus J. Borg, *The Heart of Christianity: Rediscovering a Life of Faith* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, Inc., 2003), 26.

to believe in Christian doctrines[153]. With faith, Christians are synonymous with "believers"[154]. Thus, all our doctrines about God and all our statements about God is captured into reality by faith[155].

The dissertation study conducted by James Patton [156] emphasizes the need for the preaching of Christian doctrines in a post-Christian society to be Christological, i.e., preachers point to Christ. Furthermore, the study advances the truth that scripture and experience can be framed and interpreted in the light of who Jesus Christ is, rather than fitting Jesus Christ into the emerging cultural context.

Similarly, Joel Randall Breidenbaugh's[157] dissertation identifies the lack of theological and biblical clarity and convictions in many modern pulpits as the reasons for the necessity, relevance, and practicality of the study. The study offers a solution to this biblical-theological identity crisis in the church is doctrinal exposition, where expositors preach Jesus Christ and His Lordship in the believers' life.

The dissertation conducted by Ann Christie[158] shows an interesting result. Determining the answer to the inquiry on who do ordinary believers say Jesus is and what significance do they attach to Jesus, the study shows that majority of the ordinary, Evangelical and traditionalist believers do not say either that Jesus is God, or that his significance resides primarily in his atoning death. It was found out that the respondents of this study do not adhere to Christological norms and the right doctrine is not that important for their Christology. While the traditionalist believers say that the right belief is important, for them it is the fact of believing rather than the content of that belief that seems to matter most. Right belief is based on

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[153]Arthur J. Bellenzoni, *The Future of Christianity* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2006), 26.

[154] Borg, loc. cit.

[155]Wakeman, op. cit., 56.

[156] James Patton, "Preaching Christian Doctrines in a Post-Christian Society" (MinD dissertation, Asbury Theological Seminary, 2005), 171-172.

[157]Joel Randall Breidenbaugh, "Integrating Doctrine and Expository Preaching: A Proposal and An Analysis for the Twenty-First Century" (PhD dissertation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2003), 209.

[158]Ann Christine, "Ordinary Christology: A Qualitative Study and Theological Appraisal" (Thesis, Durham University, 2005), 256-257.

practice and experience. To them, it is the central experience of God that matters most, and doctrine is not that important. The majority of the respondents responded that they could do without the doctrine of the Trinity, the doctrine of the incarnation, or any doctrine or theory of atonement. The respondents expressed that they do not need these doctrines for their religion or spirituality.

One of the major conclusions to be drawn from this study is that ordinary believers only take what they need. The conclusion that they do not need much conceptual theology is perhaps not surprising. What is more surprising is that they do not need Jesus to be God or for Him to have saved the world through His atoning death.

The thesis conducted by Stephen B. Yeich[159] advanced the renewing of Christian perfection as a vision for evangelism, which can hold conversion and discipleship in tension, and thus, repairing the fragmentation. This thesis, furthermore, proposed a new vision for evangelism that aligns more with the process of making disciples as observed in the early Methodist movement.

A study was conducted by George O. Folarin[160] to identify the tenet of faith of the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) on inspiration and authority of the Scripture, locate this tenet in the context of evangelical theology, and compare the initial understanding of the concept of Bible inspiration in CAC with the way it is perceived by the church members today. Ultimately, CAC holds that the Scriptures have controlling authority not only on Christians but also on non-Christians on all issues. All these indicate that the church has a very high view of the inspiration of the Scriptures.

Another study was conducted by Karl Edwin Kuenzel[161] that attempted to define the doctrines of the church, the doctrines of the church ministry, and the doctrines of the church fellowship. The study of these doctrines is not difficult to define when people allow

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[159]Stephen B Yeich, "Christian Perfection As A Vision for Evangelism" (Doctor of Philosophy thesis, University of Manchester, 2014), 224.

[160]George O. Folarin, "Theology and practice of Christ Apostolic Church in Bible inspiration and its authority in the context of Evangelical theology" (Thesis: Obafemi Awolowo University, 2018), 102.

[161]Karl Edwin Kuenzel, "The Doctrine of the Church and Its Ministry According to the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of the USA" (Doctor of Theology dissertation, University of South Africa, 2006), 315- 316.

Scripture to speak, and when people allow Scripture to interpret Scripture.

James Henry Owino Kombo[162] assessed and found inadequate the notion of a simple identity between the African concepts of God and the Christian understanding of God. Because of this, it appeals to African inculturation theology to deal with the understanding of God among African Christians critically and creatively.

Method of Research

This descriptive study was designed to gather data from the pastors, ministry leaders, and church members of Filipino evangelical churches in New York City through two survey instruments with data results that were subjected to appropriate statistical data analyses.

There was no social, psychological, or theological treatment introduced to the respondents that would warrant a cause-and-effect nature of the study. Using the two survey instruments designed specifically for this study, the data gathered are used to conclude about the level of priority of preaching and the level of personal conviction toward the essential doctrines of Christianity descriptively and inferentially among the Filipino evangelical churches in New York City, thus a descriptive type of study.

Research Instruments

Two survey instruments were specifically designed for this study, namely, the Survey on Personal Conviction Towards the Essential Doctrines of Christianity and the Survey on the Priority of Preaching the Essential Doctrines of Christianity. Each survey instrument consists of 14 statements of doctrines on a Likert scale. Respondents completed the Survey on Personal Conviction Towards the Essential Doctrines of Christianity by indicating the level by which they agree or disagree with the statements of the doctrines of the faith. Respondents also completed the Survey on the Priority of Preaching the Essential Doctrines of Christianity by indicating the

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[162]James Henry Owino Kombo, "The Doctrine of God in African Christian Thought: An Assessment of African Inculturation Theology from a Trinitarian Perspective" (DTh thesis, Stellenbosch University, 2000), 1.

level by which they give priority in the preaching of these statements of the doctrine of faith.

Designed purposely for this study, these survey instruments were based on Dr. Norman L. Geisler's Essential Doctrine Made Easy[163] pamphlet. The instruments were subjected to face-validity and content-validity by a panel of 5 educators and pastors in the Philippines. These survey instruments were also subjected to a reliability testing by a group of pastors and church members of various Philippine churches in the Philippines before the actual conduct of the surveys using the Cronbach's alpha test[164].

Validity testing of the research instruments employed in this study is essential[165] in establishing the extent to which the results of these instruments measured what they are supposed to measure. The reliability testing of these research instruments, on the other hand, is essential[166] as it can describe the extent to which the results can be reproduced when the research is repeated under the same conditions.

The average priority level scores on the preaching of the essential doctrines of Christianity of the respondents were interpreted based on the following descriptions:

Very high level of priority   4.3 - 5.0 average score
High level of priority   3.5 - 4.2 average score
Moderately high level of priority   2.7 - 3.4 average score
Low level of priority   1.9 - 2.6 average score
Very low level of priority   1.0 - 1.8 average score

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[163]Norman L. Geisler. *Essential Doctrine Made Easy*, Torrance, CA: Rose Publishing, Inc., 2007.

[164]P. Wessa, Cronbach alpha (v1.0.3) in Free Statistics Software (v1.1.23-r7) 2014. *Office for Research Development and Education.* n. p., 2014. Online: http://www. wessa.net/rwaspcronbach.wasp/ [11 October 2016].

[165]Christopher L. Heffner. "Chapter 7.3 Test Validity and Reliability," *Psych Central's Virtual Psychology Classroom*, 21 August 2014. n.p. Online: https://allpsych.com/research methods/validityreliability/ [22 February 2017].

[166]Kendra Cherry. "What is reliability?" *Very Well*, 08 January 2016: n. P. Online: https://www.verywell.com/what-is-reliability-2795786 [22 February 2017].

The average conviction level scores towards the essential doctrines of Christianity of the respondents were also interpreted based on the following descriptions of the levels of conviction:

Very high level of conviction   4.3 - 5.0 average score
High level of conviction   3.5 - 4.2 average score
Moderately high level of conviction 2.7 - 3.4 average score
Low level of conviction   1.9 - 2.6 average score
Very low level of conviction   1.0 - 1.8 average score

The reliability testing of the Survey on Personal Conviction Towards the Essential Doctrines of Christianity was 0.833 and the Survey on the Priority of Preaching the Essential Doctrines of Christianity was 0.938, which are considered good and excellent reliability[167] [168], respectively.

Iacobucci and Duhachek[169] cited Nunally and Bernstein's[170] accepted reliability value of 0.7 for the Cronbach alpha test of instrument reliability.

Statistical Treatment

Different statistical tools were employed in analyzing the data results from this study. The mean was employed to express the average priority level scores on the essential doctrines of Christianity among pastors, ministry leaders, and church members; between male and female respondents; and among respondents belonging to the three age groups. It was also used to express the average conviction level scores on the essential doctrines of Christianity among pastors, ministry leaders, and church members; between male and female

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[167]Joseph A. Gliem & Rosemary R. Gliem, "Calculating, Interpreting, and Reporting Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Coefficient for Likert-Type Scales," *2003 Midwest Research to Practice Conference in Adult, Continuing, and Community Education*, n. p. Online: https:// scholarworks.iupui.edu/bitstream/ handle/ 1805/344/Gliem% 20%26%20Gliem.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y [27 December 2016].

[168]D. George and P. Mallery, "SPSS for Windows step by step: A simple guide and reference," 11.0 update, 4th ed. Boston, 2003.

[169]Dawn Iacobucci and Adam Duhachek. "Advancing Alpha: Measuring Reliability with Confidence," *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, Vol. 13, No. 4, 2003, pp. 478-487.

[170]J. C. Nunnaly and I. H. Bernstein, *Psychometric Theory*, 3rd edition, (New York: McGraw Hill, 1994).

respondents; and among respondents belonging to the three age groups.

The t-test of independent sample means was employed to determine the significance in the difference in the conviction level scores and priority level scores on the essential doctrines of Christianity between male and female respondents. The One-Way Analysis of Variance was employed to determine the significance in the difference in the conviction level and priority level scores on the essential doctrines of Christianity among the pastors, ministry leaders, and church members. It was also employed to determine the significance in the difference in the conviction level and priority level scores on the essential doctrines of Christianity among young adults, middle-aged adults, and senior adults.

Both the t-test and the One-Way ANOVA were set to 0.05 alpha level of significance. The statistical tests were done using the VassarStats: Website for Statistical Computation[171].

Results and Analysis of Data

Priority level scores among the respondents

As a group, the mean priority level score of the respondents is 4.0085, which is considered a high priority level of preaching the essential doctrines of Christianity.

Based on gender, female respondents (N= 80) achieved a higher mean priority level score of 4.0275 compared with male respondents' (N= 49) mean priority level score of 3.9776.

Despite the differences in their priority level scores, male and female respondents both achieved a high level (4.0085) of priority of preaching the essential doctrines of Christianity.

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[171]Richard Lowry, *VassarStats: Website for Statistical Computation.* n.p. Online: http://www.vassarstats.net/ [11 October 2016].

***Table 1. Means of priority level scores of respondents as a
group, and based on church roles, gender, and age groups***

Dependent Variables	Group	Category	N	Scores	Description
Priority Level	Church Roles	Pastors	6	4.1167	High level
		Ministry Leaders	23	4.1217	High level
		Church Members	100	3.9760	High level
		Whole Group	129	4.0085	High level
Priority Level	Gender	Male	49	3.9776	High level
		Female	80	4.0275	High level
		Whole Group	129	4.0085	High level
Priority Level	Age Group	Young adults (18 – 39)	35	4.0029	High level
		Middle-aged adults (40 – 65)	75	4.0227	High level
		Senior adults (66 and older)	19	3.9632	High level
		Whole Group	129	4.0085	High level

Table 1 shows the data.

Based on church roles, the ministry leaders (N= 23) achieved the highest mean priority level score (4.1217) while the church members (N= 100) achieved the lowest priority level score (3.9760). The pastors (N= 6) achieved a mean priority level score of 4.1167.

Despite the differences in their priority level scores, the pastors, ministry leaders, and church members all achieved a high level (4.0085) of priority of preaching the essential doctrines of Christianity.

The respondents who belong to the middle-age adult group (N= 75) achieved the highest mean priority level score of 4.0227 while the respondents who belong to the senior adult group (N= 19) achieved the lowest mean priority level score of 3.9632. The respondents who belong to the young adult group (N= 35) achieved the mean priority level score of 4.0029.

Despite the differences in their priority level scores, respondents in all age groups achieved a high level (4.0085) of priority of preaching the essential doctrines of Christianity.

Conviction level scores among the respondents

As a group, the mean conviction level score of the respondents is 4.1015, which is considered a high conviction level towards the essential doctrines of Christianity.

Table 2 shows the data.

In terms of conviction level scores, the pastors (N= 6) achieved a very high conviction level (4.3667) while the ministry leaders (N= 23) and church members (N= 100) achieved only a high conviction level (4.2043 and 4.0620, respectively) towards the essential doctrines of Christianity.

Based on gender, male respondents (N= 49) achieved the higher mean conviction level score (4.1163) than the female respondents (N= 80) who achieved the lower mean conviction level score (4.0925).

Table 2. Means of conviction level scores of respondents as a group, and based on church roles, gender, and age groups

Dependent Variables	Group	Category	N	Scores	Description
Conviction Level	Church Roles	Pastors	6	4.3667	Very high level
		Ministry Leaders	23	4.2043	High level
		Church Members	100	4.0620	High level
		Whole Group	129	4.1015	High level
Conviction Level	Gender	Male	49	4.1163	High level
		Female	80	4.0925	High level
		Whole Group	129	4.1015	High level
Conviction Level	Age Group	Young adults (18 – 39)	35	4.0343	High level
		Middle-aged adults (40 – 65)	75	4.1320	High level
		Senior adults (66 and older)	19	4.1053	High level
		Whole Group	129	4.1015	High level

In terms of conviction level scores though, both the male and female respondents achieved a high (4.1015) conviction level on the essential doctrines of Christianity.

Respondents who belong to the middle-age adult group (N= 75) achieved the highest mean conviction level score of 4.1320 while respondents who belong to the young adult group (N= 35) achieved the lowest mean conviction level score of 4.0343. The respondents who belong to the senior adult group (N= 19) achieved the mean priority level score of 4.1053.

Despite the differences in their conviction level scores, respondents in all age groups achieved a high level of conviction (4.1015)   on the essential doctrines of Christianity.

Based on church roles, the pastors (N= 6) achieved the highest mean conviction level score (4.3667) while the church members (N= 100) achieved the lowest conviction level score (4.0620). The ministry leaders (N= 23) achieved a mean conviction level score of 4.2043.

Significant differences in the priority level scores among respondents

The One-Way Analysis of Variance (One-Way ANOVA) determined the significance of the differences in the priority level scores among the pastors, ministry leaders, and church members. The decision to accept or reject the null hypothesis of the study was based on the results of this test of significance.

Based on the church role, the null hypothesis was accepted, as shown by the p-value of 0.081311, which is $p > 0.05$ alpha level of significance.   Thus, the One-Way ANOVA signifies that there is no significant difference in the priority level means among pastors (4.1167), ministry leaders (4.1217), and church members (3.9760).

Table 3 shows the data.

Despite the differences in mean priority level scores among pastors, ministry leaders, and church members, their priority levels of preaching the essential doctrines of Christianity are the same. Furthermore, the pastors, ministry leaders, and church members all achieved a high level of priority of preaching the essential doctrines of Christianity.

Table 3. One-Way Analysis of Variance of the significant difference in the priority level scores based on church roles and age group

Group	Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Church Roles	Treatment [between groups]	0.4708	2	0.2354	2.56	0.081321
	Error	11.5699	126	0.0918		
Age Groups	Treatment [between groups]	0.0552	2	0.0276	0.29	0.748762
	Error	11.9854	126	0.0951		

*Significant at 0.05 alpha level

**Significant at 0.05 and 0.01 alpha levels

The One-Way ANOVA, also determining the significance in the difference in the priority level scores among the three age groups, showed that the p-value is 0.748762, that is, $p > 0.05$ alpha level of significance.   This shows that the priority level of preaching the essential doctrines of Christianity is the same among the respondents, regardless of their age group.

Furthermore, the respondents in these three age groups all achieved a high level of priority of preaching the essential doctrines of Christianity.

The t-test of independent sample means determined the significance in the difference in the priority level scores between the male and female respondents. The decision to accept or reject the null hypothesis of the study is based on the results of this test of significance.

Based on gender, the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating the female respondents' mean score (4.0275) is significantly higher than the male respondents' mean score (3.9776). This is shown by the p-value of 0.019098, which is $p < 0.05$ alpha level of significance.

Table 4 shows the data.

There is, therefore, a significant difference in the mean priority level scores between male and female respondents. The mean priority level score of female respondents is significantly higher than the mean priority level score of male respondents.

Both male and female respondents though achieved a high level of priority of preaching the essential doctrines of Christianity.

<u>Significant differences in the conviction level scores among respondents</u>

The One-Way ANOVA, determining the significance in the difference in the conviction level scores among the pastors, ministry leaders, and church members, showed that there is a significant difference in the scores among the respondents based on these church roles. This is shown by the p-value of 0.000134, that is, $p < 0.05$ alpha and $p < 0.01$ alpha levels of significance.

Table 5 shows the data.

Since the One-Way ANOVA proved a significance in the differences in the conviction level among pastors, ministry leaders, and church members, the post hoc test of significant difference was run. The post hoc test determined further in which two groups among the church roles did the significance of the difference exist.

The Tukey HSD test was used as the post hoc test of significance in this study. The test showed that a significant difference existed between the pastors' mean conviction score (4.3667) and church members' mean conviction score (4.0620) based on the p-value of 0.01, which is $p < 0.05$.

Table 6 shows the data.

Table 4. t-test of the significant difference in the priority level scores and conviction level scores based on gender

Sources of Scores	Groups	Mean	df_1	df_2	F	P
Priority Level	Male	3.9776	48	79	1.69	0.019098**
	Female	4.0275				
Conviction Level	Male	4.1163	48	79	5.14	< 0.0001**
	Female	4.0925				

*Significant at 0.05 alpha level

**Significant at 0.05 and 0.01 alpha levels

Table 5. One-Way Analysis of Variance of the significant difference in the conviction level scores based on church roles and age group

Group	Source	SS	df	MS	F	P
Church Roles	Treatment [between groups]	0.8212	2	0.4106	9.58	0.000134**
	Error	5.3985	126	0.0428		
Age Groups	Treatment [between groups]	0.2282	2	0.1141	2.4	0.094854
	Error	5.9915	126	0.0476		

*Significant at 0.05 alpha level

**Significant at 0.05 and 0.01 alpha levels

The Tukey HSD test showed though that there is no significant difference in the conviction levels between pastors (4.3667) and ministry leaders (4.2043) as shown by the p-value of 0.19, that is, $p >$

0.05. There is also no significant difference in the conviction levels between ministry leaders (4.2043) and church members (4.0620) as shown by the p-value of 0.19, that is, $p > 0.05$.

Table 6. Tukey HSD post hoc analysis of significant difference among sample means for One-Way Analysis of Variance

Sources of Scores	Sample Means	HSD [0.05]	HSD [0.01]
Conviction Level	Pastors vs. Ministry Leaders	0.19	0.24
	Pastors vs. Church Members	<0.01**	<0.01**
	Ministry Leaders vs. Church Members	0.19	0.24

*Significant at 0.05 alpha level

**Significant at 0.05 and 0.01 alpha levels

With the differences in mean conviction level scores among pastors, ministry leaders, and church members, their conviction level towards the essential doctrines of Christianity is not the same. Although pastors achieved a very high conviction level towards the essential doctrines and ministry leaders achieved only a high conviction level, their levels of conviction are the same.

Since pastors achieved a very high conviction level towards the essential doctrines and church members achieved only a high conviction level, their conviction levels towards the essential doctrines are not the same. Ultimately, the pastors' conviction level towards the essential doctrines is significantly higher than that of the church members.

The One-Way ANOVA, also determining the significance in the difference in the conviction level scores among the three age groups, showed that there is no significant difference in the mean scores among respondents based on these age groups. This is shown by the p-value of 0.094854, that is, $p > 0.05$ alpha.

The differences in mean conviction level scores among respondents in the three age groups are not significantly different among each other. This showed that the conviction level towards the essential doctrines of Christianity is the same among the respondents, regardless of their age group. Furthermore, the respondents in these three age groups all achieved a high level of priority of preaching the essential doctrines of Christianity.

The t-test for independent sample means, determining the significance in the difference in the conviction level scores between male and female students, showed that there is a significant difference in their mean scores. This is shown by the *p*-value of 0.0001, that is, $p < 0.05$ alpha level of significance and $p < 0.01$ alpha level of significance.

Table 4 shows that the male respondents' mean score (4.1163) is significantly higher than the female respondents' mean score (4.0925). Thus, male respondents have a significantly higher conviction level towards the essential doctrines of Christianity than female respondents.

Findings

The results of this study showed that the respondents have placed a high level of priority of preaching the essential doctrines in the church. The priority levels of preaching the essential doctrines of pastors, ministry leaders, and church members did not significantly differ among each other. The priority levels of respondents grouped as young adult, middle-age adult, and senior adult groups likewise did not significantly differ among each other. The female respondents though had a significantly higher priority level of preaching the essential doctrines of Christianity than male respondents.

The study showed that the essential doctrines of Christianity had etched a considerably great impact among the 129 respondents who represented the five evangelical churches in New York City as they demonstrated a high level of priority of preaching the essential doctrines of Christianity. This finding showed a solid adherence to the

doctrinal preaching that, according to Reisinger[172], is the foundation of all true Christian experience. It authenticated the heart of the Filipino-American churches that at this point of social confusion of today's congregation that marginalized the pulpit [173], is thriving in the city of New York.

Placing a high priority in the preaching of essential doctrines is in fact, a recognition of Jesus Christ's preaching the kingdom of God (Luke 4:43) as His purpose. It is a clear understanding of Paul's charge to the young Timothy to teach and preach (1 Timothy 6:2) these doctrinal principles. As this preaching of doctrinal principles is not unique to Paul but runs through the New Testament[174], the ministry of the church should be prioritized on preaching and teaching (Mt 4:17 NASB). John McArthur[175] says it best when he wrote that no man's pastoral ministry will be successful in God's sight who does not give preaching its proper place.

It is believed that as Christians at this present age face the daunting task of strategizing which Christian doctrines and theological issues are to be given the highest priority[176], they should consider which issues deserve to be at the top of the church agenda. Considering that a high level of priority of preaching the essential doctrines of Christianity prevailed in five evangelical churches in New York City, it must be conscientiously practiced, as true biblical doctrines are practical[177], albeit they are both of essence and priority.

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[172]Erbest Reisinger, "The Priority of Doctrinal Preaching," *The Reformed Reader*, 1999: n.p. Online: http://www.reformedreader.org/pdp.htm [14 December 2016].

[173]Albert Mohler, "The Priority of Preaching," *Ligonier Ministries*, 31 August 2018: n.p. Online: https://www.ligonier.org/blog/priority-preaching/ [18 December 2018].

[174]Candace Waggoner, "Preaching Must Have the Proper Priority," *Church Source*, 21 March 2016: n.p. Online: https://blog.churchsource.com/preaching-must-have-the-proper-priority/ [14 December 2018].

[175]Ibid.

[176]R. Albert Mohler Jr, "A Call for Theological Triage and Christian Maturity," *Albert Mohler Theology*, 20 May 2004: n.p. Online: https://albertmohler.com/ 2004/05/20/a-call-for-theological-triage-and-christian-maturity-2/ [14 December 2016].

[177]John MacArthur, "Doctrine: The Essential Foundation," *One Place*, 2018: n.p. Online: https://www.oneplace.com/ministries/grace-to-

Among the respondents, the ministry leaders had acknowledged the greatest impact of the essential doctrines of Christianity as they placed the highest level of priority of preaching these doctrines, although pastors and church members also placed a high level of priority of preaching these doctrines. Statistical testing showed though, that the priority levels of preaching the essential doctrines did not differ significantly among these groups.

The priority given to preaching the essential doctrines may be of the same degree for the faithful in the church, i.e., pastoral leaders, ministry leaders, and the church members, yet different degrees of religious practices continue to show gaps in practices.

Highly religious Christians, for example, are reported[178] to be more likely than those who are less religious to say each of these beliefs and behaviors is essential to what being Christian means to them. Additionally, a study[179] on the association between Christian's conservatism and the centrality of Christian self-identity shows a dissonance between conservative Christians and liberal Christians; more so a correlation between their religious identity and their political ideology.

Both the male and female respondents in this study had also recognized a considerable impact of the essential doctrines of Christianity as shown by their high level of priority in the preaching of these doctrines. The female respondents, though, showed a higher priority level of preaching the essential doctrines of Christianity compared with the male respondents. The statistical test proved that

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you/read/articles/doctrine -the-essential-foundation-9928.html [13 November 2018].

[178]"Essentials of Christian identity vary by level of religiosity," *Pew Research Center*, 12 April 2016. n.p. Online: http://www.pewforum.org/2016/04/12/ essentials-of-christian-identity-vary-by-level-of-religiosity-many-nones-say-honesty-vital-to-being-a-moral-person/ [10 December 2016].

[179]Lee Ross, Yphtach Lelkes, and Alexandra Russell, "How Christians reconcile their personal political views and teachings of their faith: Projection as a means of dissonance reduction," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 06 March 2012. n.p. Online: https://www.pnas. org/content/109/10/3616 [10 December 2016].

this level of priority is significantly higher than that of the male respondents.

Studies about women's religiosity had been found to be of a greater level for decades[180]. Gallup surveys [181] have attested to the idea that women are more religious than men, hold their beliefs more firmly, practice their faith more consistently, and work more vigorously for the congregation. After all, women are encouraged to not only to be reverent in the way they live but also to teach what is good, to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure (Titus 2: 3-5).

In another survey[182], women are found to be significantly more likely than men to say religion is very important in their lives. As it is true that women may be considered the backbone of Christian churches[183], but the presence of a significant number of men is often a clear indicator[184] of spiritual health in congregations.

The essential doctrines of Christianity translated to the highest priority level of preaching these doctrines among the respondents in the 40 to 65 age group and translated to the lowest priority level of preaching among the respondents in the 18 to 39 age group, despite all groups have shown a high level of conviction. Even with these differences in priority levels, the statistical test proved that the priority level of preaching the essential doctrines was the same among the respondents, regardless of their age group.

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[180]"Theories explaining gender difference in religion," *Pew Research Center*, 22 March 2016. n.p. Online: http://www.pewforum.org/2016/03/22/theories-explaining-gender-differences-in-religion/ [10 December 2016].

[181]George Gallup Jr., "Why Are Women More Religious?" *Gallup News*, 17 December 2002. n.p. Online: https://news.gallup.com/poll/7432/why-women-more-religious.aspx [10 December 2016].

[182]"Chapter 1: Religious Beliefs and Practices," *Pew Research Center*, 01 June 2008. n.p. Online: http://www.pewforum.org/2008/06/01/chapter-1-religious-beliefs-and-practices/ [11 December 2016].

[183]"Christian Women Today (Part 1 of 4): What Women Think of Faith, Leadership, and Their Role in the Church," *Barna Research*, 13 August 2012. n.p. Online: https://www.barna.com/research/ christian-women-today-part-1-of-4-what-women-think-of-faith-leadership-and-their-role-in-the-church/ [11 December 2016].

[184] Gallup loc. cit.

The results of this study proved that the younger members of the church appeared to be the most precarious in terms of setting priorities. It was found out among young Catholics who were raised as Catholics that only a third of these have remained as Catholics[185]. The need to address the uniqueness of the millennials in the church has prompted one church to update its church mores[186], i.e., dress codes, preaching styles, attitudes toward the secular, and a willingness to discuss the taboo. It would also be helpful for churches to see that one out of every six young adults with a Christian background said that their faith does not help with depression or other emotional problems that they experience[187], thus the younger members of the church need very much of help. Contrary to what some may think about young adults, they are thinking deeply about the meaning of life[188]. About half of the young adults surveyed in 2014 showed a deep sense of wonder about life and the universe at least once a week and thought about the meaning and purpose of life weekly[189], which is similar to older adults.

The middle age group showed the highest priority level although this level was not significantly different from the young adult group and the senior adult group. Yet the senior adults are holding the important task of communicating the word of God and assuming the privilege to be listened to[190] by younger members of the church. Described in a

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[185]Mark G. Gray, "Young people are leaving the faith. Here's why," *Our Sunday Visitor Newsweekly*, 27 August 2016. n.p. Online: https://www.osv.com/OSV Newsweekly/Story/TabId/2672/ ArtMID/13567/ArticleID/20512/Young-people-are-leaving-the-faith-Heres-why.aspx [11 December 2016].

[186]Aaron Randle, "Bucking a trend, these churches figured out how to bring millennials back to worship," *The Kansas City Star*, 13 December 2017. n.p. Online: https://www.kansascity.com/living/ religion/article188544194.html [11 December 2016].

[187]"Six Reasons Young Christians Leave Church," *BioLogos*, 05 June 2017. n.p. Online: https://biologos.org/blogs/guest/six-reasons-young-christians-leave-church [11 December 2016].

[188]Sharon Greenthal, "How Young Adults Are Finding Religion," *Very Well Mind*, 18 May 2018. n.p. Online: https://www.verywellmind.com/how-young-adults-are-finding-religion-4128793 [11 December 2016].

[189]Becka Alper, "Millennials are less religious than older Americans, but just as spiritual," *Pew Research Center*, 23 November 2015. n.p. Online: http://www. pewresearch. org/fact-tank/2015/11/23/millennials-are-less-religious-than-older-americans-but-just-as-spiritual/ [11 December 2016].

[190]Maria Angeles Infante, "The elderly as viewed from the perspective of the Bible and the Church's magisterium," *Vincentian Encyclopedia*, 2013.

recent study by the MacArthur Foundation[191] as rather than in a time of despair and crisis, the new breed of older adults is self-confident, in good health, and personally productive.

In assessing the impact of the essential doctrines of Christianity in the conviction of respondents towards these essential doctrines, this study showed that the respondents had placed a high level of conviction towards the preaching of these doctrines. This is probably part of the present trend of affirmation in a public response to the issue of belief in God or of a universal spirit. In the 2007 Religious Landscape Survey[192], 92% of more than 35,000 respondents affirmed their belief in God. Results of this study among Filipino-American churches are in stark contrast with the result of the 2018 State of Theology survey[193] that found out the following statements

of faith among evangelicals: most people are good; God accepts the worship of all religions; and Jesus was the first and greatest being created by God. This has led to the conclusion that many Christians are confused about several core beliefs of Christianity[194]. George Barna[195], the author of numerous researches on American's faith, also suggested that Americans are constantly trying to figure out how to make sense of biblical teachings in the light of their daily experiences.

n.p. Online: https://famvin.org/wiki/The_Elderly_as_viewed_from_the_perspective_of_the_Bible_and_the_Church%27s_magisterium [11 December 2016].

[191] Charles Arn, "The New World of Senior Adults," *Assemblies of God Enrichment Journal*, 2018. n.p. Online: http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/200201/200201_012_new_world_sa.cfm [12 December 2018].

[192] "How many people would say that they believed in God if they were able to answer with complete anonymity?" *Pew Research Center*, 21 December 2010. n.p. Online: http://www.pewresearch. org/2010/12/21/how-many-people-would-say-that-they-believed-in-god-if-they-were-able-to-answer-with-complete-anonymity/ [11 December 2016].

[193] "The State of Theology," *Ligonier Ministries*, 2018. n.p. Online: https://thestate oftheology. com/ [20 December 2018].

[194] Kayla Koslosky, "Evangelicals Are Confused about Christianity's Core Beliefs, Survey Says," *Christian Headlines,* 16 October 2018. n.p. Online: https://www. christianheadlines.com/blog/ evangelicals-confused-about-christianity-core-beliefs-survey-says.html [20 December 2018].

[195] "Most American Christians Do Not Believe that Satan or the Holy Spirit Exist," *Barna Surveys*, 2018. n.p. Online: https://www.barna.com/research/most-american-christians-do-not-believe-that-satan-or-the-holy-spirit-exist/ [20 December 2018].

Yet 90% or the vast majority of Americans believe in some kind of higher power[196], while 56% profess faith in God.

The pastors in the New York City churches showed the highest conviction level towards the preaching of the essential doctrines while the church members showed the lowest. The statistical test proved that the conviction level towards the preaching of essential doctrines of the pastors was significantly higher than the conviction level of church members. The ministry leaders' level of conviction though did not significantly differ from the pastors' and also did not significantly differ from the church members'.   The highest level of conviction shown by the pastors towards the preaching of essential doctrines is considered the foundation[197] for the transfer of these convictions into the hearts of God's people. It is the definite convictions[198] regarding the pastoral works those pastors can carry

out the functions and purposes of the ministry, as their commitment to the ministry rose from their deep-seated conviction to do so[199]. As church leaders, pastors are expected to possess "convictional intelligence"[200], i.e., the type of intelligence that must be developed by diving deeply into the truth of the Bible and learning to think like a Christian[201]. For Christian leaders, pastors, and ministry leaders

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[196]Dalia Fahmy, "Key Findings about Americans' belief in God," *Pew Research Center*, 25 April 2018. n.p. Online: http://www.pewresearch.org/facttank/ 2018/04/25/key-findings-about-americans-belief-in-god/ [20 December 2018].

[197]Albert Mohler, "The Pastor's Conviction," *Crosswalk*, 7 May 2006. n.p. Online: https://www.crosswalk.com/church/pastors-or-leadership/the-pastorsconviction-1395396.html [17 November 2017].

[198]Herbet W. Byrne, *The Pastor As Church Leader and Educator* (USA: Xulon Press, 2006), 4.

[199]Mel Lawrenz, "How to Study the Bible: Conviction and Commitment," *Bible Gateway Blog, 10 June 2016.* n.p. Online: https://www.biblegateway.com/blog/ 2016/06/how-to-study-the-bible-conviction-and-commitment/ [20 December 2018].

[200] Albert Mohler, "The Pastor's Conviction," *Crosswalk*, 7 May 2006. n. p. Online: https://www.crosswalk.com/church/pastors-or-leadership/the-pastorsconviction-1395396.html [17 November 2017].

[201]Tim Challies, "The Conviction to Lead," *Tim Challies Blog,* 06 November 2012. n.p. Online: https://www.challies.com/book-reviews/the-conviction-to-lead/ [20 December 2018].

alike, those convictions must be drawn from the Bible and must take the shape of the gospel [202] [203].

Generating a high level of conviction of preaching the essential doctrines from the pastors, church members are believed to bring strong religious convictions to their public and social lives[204], especially with issues concerning religious controversies.

Although both the male and female respondents showed a high level of conviction towards the essential doctrines of Christianity, the male respondents showed a higher conviction level compared with the female respondents. The statistical test proved that this time, the conviction level toward the preaching of essential doctrines was significantly higher in male respondents compared with the female respondents.

Although an analysis of international census and survey data finds that there is a religious gender gap[205], i.e., women are generally more religious than men by several key measures of religious commitment, this pattern is

not universal[206]. Men who assume the leadership position of ministry are likely to have understood that it is not the leader who is the precursor of Christian leadership, but the eternal truths that God reveals to them[207]—truths that allow the world to make sense to all,

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[202]John Piper, "The Marks of a Spiritual Leader," *Desiring God,* 01 January 1995. n.p. Online: https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-marks-of-a-spiritual-leader [20 December 2018].

[203] Challies, loc. cit.

[204]"Religious Conviction and Intellectual Humility in Public Life," *University of Connecticut Humanities Institute, 2017.* n.p. Online: https://humilityand conviction.uconn.edu/events-2/workshops/religious-conviction-intellectual-humility/# [20 December 2018].

[205]"The Gender Gap in Religion Around the World," *Pew Research Center,* 22 March 2016. n.p. Online: http://www.pewforum.org/2016/03/22/the-gender-gap-in-religion-around-the-world/ [20 December 2018].

[206]Caryle Murphy, "Women generally are more religious than men, but not everywhere," *Fact Tank,* 22 March 2016. n.p. Online: http://www.pewresearch. org/fact-tank/2016/03/22/women-generally-are-more-religious-than-men-but-not-everywhere/ [20 December 2018].

[207]Albert Mohler, "Leading with Conviction," *Table Talk Magazine,* November 2017. n.p. Online:

truths that frame our understanding, and truths that propel men to action. After all, the best way to become a person of conviction is to read the Bible and get the conviction from the very truth of God[208].

It should be noted that for over 20 years of Barna surveys, there is a decline[209] among men's sense of responsibility to share their religious views with others. There is also a decline[210] among men's firm belief about the Bible's accuracy in all the principles it teaches.

Despite the differences in their conviction level scores, respondents in all age groups showed a high level of conviction on the essential doctrines of Christianity. The middle-aged adults still showed the highest level of conviction, while the senior adults showed the lowest. Despite this, the statistical test proved that the conviction levels of the respondents in each age group were not statistically different. These Filipino-American churches in New York enjoy the levels of conviction towards the essential doctrines that define the very calling of the church. It may not be so with the nationwide church.

Adults in the United States were surveyed as to the reasons why they do not talk very often about their faith[211]. It was found out that the main reason is the creation of tension or arguments. The other reason is spiritual ambivalence, i.e., not being religious and not caring about spiritual topics.

A survey[212] conducted among 30 countries showed that belief in God is higher among the elderly, regardless of where they live. Another

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https://tabletalkmagazine.com/article/2017/11/leading-with-conviction/ [20 December 2018].

[208]Scott Colvin, "The Real Thing: Why Conviction Matters," *Bay Area Christian Church Devotional,* 2018. n.p. Online: https://bacc.cc/the-real-thing-why-conviction-matters/ [20 December 2018].

[209]"20 Years of Surveys Show Key Differences in the Faith of America's Men and Women," *Barna Surveys,* 01 August 2011. n.p. Online: https://www.barna.com/ research/20-years-of-surveys-show-key-differences-in-the-faith-of-americas-men-and-women/ [20 December 2018].

[210]Ibid.

[211]"Why People Are Reluctant to Discuss Faith," *Barna Surveys,* 14 August 2018, n.p. Online: https://www.barna.com/research/reasons-for-reluctance/ [20 December 2018].

[212]William Harms, "For Many, Faith in God Rises with Age," *Futurity,* 18 April 2012. n.p. Online: https://www.futurity.org/even-for-atheists-faith-in-god-rises-with-age/ [20 December 2018].

survey conducted in 2010[213] showed that some of the religious differences between younger and older Americans today are not entirely generational but result in part from people's tendency to place greater emphasis on religion as they age.

Overall, young adults are less likely than middle-aged adults to say religion is very important to them in 46 out of 106 countries surveyed over the last decade[214], although in 58 countries, there are no significant differences between younger and older adults in terms of placing importance in religion.

Conclusions

The pastors, ministry leaders, and church members of the five evangelical churches of New York City showed a very high level of priority of preaching towards the essential doctrines of Christianity. These Filipino and Filipino-American churches in New York City evidently exist among the many other churches whose members are reported to have been abandoning the Christian faith[215], and stand among the atheist population in the city[216].

Despite this scenario, these Filipino-American churches have remained to hold a very high level of priority towards the preaching of these doctrines that are essential to their faith. These churches remained faithful. These churches remained strong. These churched remained rooted to the very source of faith and ministry. This is indeed a validation of faith, evangelical renewal, and faithfulness to spiritual truths[217] among the Filipino believers in the city. The status represents the very active movement of God in the present times. With

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[213]"Religion Among the Millennials," *Pew Research Center,* 17 February 2010, n.p. Online: https://www.futurity.org/even-for-atheists-faith-in-god-rises-with-age/ [20 December 2018].

[214]"The Age Gap in Religion Around the World," *Pew Research Center,* 13 June 2018. n.p. Online: http://www.pewforum.org/2018/06/13/the-age-gap-in-religion-around-the-world/ [20 December 2018].

[215]Laurie Goodstein, "Percentage of Protestant Americans Is in Steep Decline, Study Finds," *The New York Times*, 9 October 2012. n.p. Online: http://www. nytimes.com /2012/10/10/ us/study-finds-that-percentage-of-protestant-americans-is-declining.html [12 October 2016].

[216] "Atheist ads to appear in NYC subway stations," *New York Post*, 2009: n. p. Online: http://nypost.com/2009/10/19/atheist-ads-to-appear-in-nyc-subway-stations/ [12 October 2016].

[217]J. Rodman Williams, *Renewal Theology, Vol. 1* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), 27.

a strong and unwavering belief and practice of Christianity in the evangelical churches, the influence of faith can be observed in present-day America.

Although both the male and female members of the Filipino evangelical churches had placed a high level of priority on the preaching of the essential doctrines, the women in the Filipino-American churches in the city had set a significantly higher priority level of preaching the essential doctrines of Christianity than men in these churches. Women in the church have always been exercising priority on religious matters and even when they showed significantly higher scores than the men in the church, their faithfulness may have been so profound to highly influence the men in the church to likewise set an equally high priority on the preaching of the essential doctrines of Christianity.

As the priority of preaching the essential doctrines among pastors, ministry leaders, and church members did not significantly differ among each other, the lifeline of faith in the church can be considered as bundles in different groups of churchgoers and church leadership. As the priority placed by the young adults, middle-aged adults, and senior adults on the essential doctrines of their faith likewise did not significantly differ among each other, the same design of life in the faith is centered among the adults in church, regardless of age.

The doctrines essential to Christianity are important in the sense that what Christians believe in shapes their spiritual life[218]. The way Christians think about God affects the way they relate to God. If Christians believe in the doctrine of Trinity, then it affects their way of life, their practice of faith, and their attitudes toward the creative works of God, the redeeming act of Jesus Christ, and the abiding power of the Holy Spirit in their daily lives.

The high levels of priority of preaching towards the essential doctrines of Christianity are valuable indicators of how the churches live the teaching of Christianity. Churches are viewed as an agency that gives priority to the teaching of essential doctrines in order to develop solid

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[218]Stephen Rees, "Why is Doctrine Important?" *Banner of Truth*, 30 June 2009, n.p. Online: https://banneroftruth.org/us/resources/articles/2009/why-is-doctrine-important/ [12 January 2019].

and sound convictions among Christian church members. Churches can create yearly programs that include a monthly emphasis on essential doctrines, along with other doctrinal and practical emphases, such as tithing, missions, feeding, evangelism, among many others. The teaching of essential doctrines is also incorporated into the church cottage prayer meetings and bible study groups at least once a year to provide church members with a constant refresher of Christian doctrines. An in-depth discussion of the essential doctrines of Christianity among small groups can yield a better understanding and habitude of such doctrines.

Churches in New York City can continue to maintain a high level of priority towards the essential doctrines by constantly reviewing the respective church's agenda and sets of beliefs that align with these doctrines. Pastors and ministry leaders can spend time studying each aspect of the doctrines and examine the different sets of beliefs that church members need to embrace. As there are many views in the different aspects of the essential doctrines, i.e., Trinity, Jesus Christ and salvation, the pastors, and ministry leaders can lead the church members into the most unerring interpretation of these aspects of doctrines.

While there was no significant difference observed in the priority of preaching the essential doctrines of Christianity among members in different adult groupings, i.e., young adults, middle-aged adult, and senior adults, it is still important for the mature members of the church to stand as both the guide and inspiration for the younger adult members. Ultimately, the younger adult members can draw the same inspiration and witness of faith from the mature members of the church. The life of faith, prayer, bible study, evangelism, and worship should be distinguishable and reflective in the life of the church that follows the doctrines that are essential to the very reason why the church was established.

Although inversely yet consistently, the differences in the priority and conviction of beliefs were significant between male and female members of the church. The differences in gender have long been common since the creation and biblical times. It is no wonder that significant differences exist in the church at present. The church members continue to prayerfully pursue the life of faith while bearing in mind the responsibility to both bear one another's burdens and

weaknesses in love and appreciate the differences that exist among the body of Jesus Christ.

As the pastor respondents showed a very high level of conviction of preaching, the teaching of the essential doctrines of Christianity is sure to be established on the sure foundation of faith and ministry[219], conscientiously transferring these foundational truths of faith into the hearts of God's people.

With the sense of conviction that is compatible among ministry leaders and pastors, among ministry leaders and church members, and among adults in all age groups, the Filipino-American churches in New York City are expected to work hand in hand in both upholding the doctrinal truths and living these truths of faith. In this part of the world, the Filipino-American churches are true to their strong beliefs in God. After all, the Philippines has been named the country with the strongest belief in God[220], and the Filipino-Americans' second home—the United States of America—showed the same strong belief.

While the women in the Filipino-American churches in the city had set a significantly higher priority level of preaching the essential doctrines of Christianity than men in these churches, the men have provided a balance by placing a significantly higher conviction towards the preaching the essential doctrines of Christianity than the women in the church. This is a springboard for inspiration as the women show the men the way to a punctilious priority, in the same way as the men show the women the way to a robust conviction.

The level of conviction placed by the Filipino-American evangelical churches in New York City on the preaching of the essential doctrines proved to know no age or age group. With the middle-aged adult taking the lead in placing this level of conviction on the preaching of the essential doctrines, it is evident that the younger age group is taking the strides to build their doctrinal convictions, although it could be

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[219]Albert Mohler, "The Pastor's Conviction," *Crosswalk*, 7 May 2006. n.p. Online: https://www.crosswalk.com/church/pastors-or-leadership/the-pastors-conviction-1395396.html [17 November 2017].

[220]William Harms, "For Many, Faith in God Rises with Age," *Futurity,* 18 April 2012, n.p. Online: https://www.futurity.org/even-for-atheists-faith-in-god-rises-with-age/ [20 December 2018].

understandable that the senior adults may already have been facing the inevitable issues of physical health and diminishing stamina.

As the way Christians think about the Creator and God of the Universe is affected by the way they relate to this Creator and God, the essential doctrines become indispensable in the exercise of faith because these doctrines shape their spiritual lives.[221]

As the study showed that pastors achieved a very high level of conviction toward the essential doctrines, it is recommended that this level of conviction be maintained, more so to enact the continuous strengthening of the personal virtues of the church. The level of conviction that the pastors share and manifest in the church is an exemplar for the new and long-standing members to emulate. For when the pastors abandon their conviction of faith, the church is also tempted to do the same thing[222]. Additionally, as the study showed that the pastors' conviction level is significantly higher than church members, it is recommended that pastoral staffs focus on establishing a sound model of life in adherence to the beliefs of Christianity. Programs and plans coupled with prayer and supplication can be focused on the careful examination and reflection on practices of the essential doctrines in daily life.

Church members can be mindful of the general conviction of the church membership. Church members can be a personal reflection of other members as they show a spiritual mold of the life of faith and practice. Members who are mature and established in the life of faith can manifest this life for everyone to witness and observe. Members who are growing and searching for the truths in Christian faith can well benefit from this life that has flourished in grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

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[221]Stephen Rees, "Why is Doctrine Important?" *Banner of Truth*, 30 June 2009, n.p. Online: https://banneroftruth.org/us/resources/articles/2009/why-is-doctrine-important/ [12 January 2019].

[222]Esau McCauley, "Spiritual Revolutionaries in an Age of Despair," *Christianity Today International*, 14 January 2019, n.p. Online: https://www.christianity today.com/ct/2019/january-web-only/spiritual-revolutionaries-age-of-despair-anna-simeon.html [19 January 2019].

While there was no significant difference observed in both priority and conviction for members in different adult groupings, i.e., young adults, middle-aged adult, and senior adults, it is still important for every member of the church to build one another in faith and in doctrinal example. Middle-aged adults, who are becoming well-established in both their career and spiritual growth, should form a warmer and more ardent bonding with the younger group for both spiritual and devotional growth. In the same aspect, the senior adults can always be sources of spiritual reflections and wisdom through years of experience in the struggles and the victories of the Christian life. Regardless of age or age group, church members should be the consistent examples of the life that abounds in faith, prayer, bible study, evangelism, and service. After all, these aspects of the Christian life are reflections of the very doctrines that Christianity considers fundamental, as well as essential.

The difference in the conviction level towards the preaching of the essential doctrine is inversely, yet consistently, significant with the priority level demonstrated by the church members of these evangelical churches. This time, it is the paramount step that the men in the church should undertake in leading the church to a life of declaration and holding firmly onto these doctrines for the church to grow and be spiritually established. Church members, despite the differences that exist among the body of Jesus Christ, continue to pursue the life of faith, prayer, and service to each other while they bear each other's burdens and weaknesses in love.

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