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CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS AMONG CHINESE POPULATION IN PENINSULAR MALAYSIA AND THEIR UNDERSTANDING ON TRINITY DOCTRINE

Abstract:

Data from the Population and Housing Census of Malaysia (Census 2010) found that 9.2 per cent of Christianity is based on religious affiliation. Christianity accounts for only 11.1 per cent of the Chinese population. The Christians are heterogeneous by denominations and it was observed that Catholicism and Protestantism are two major denominations of Christianity in Malaysia. The Trinity doctrine in general has been practiced in almost all of the Christian churches. This article focuses on Chinese Christians in the Peninsular Malaysia particularly in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur. This study aims to explore the Christian denominations among the Chinese Christians in both places as well as to identify their understanding of the Trinity doctrine. There are many different church groups. Roman Catholic Church is the oldest church denomination which began with the Portuguese arrival in the early 16th century. Meanwhile, the Anglican Diocese of West Malaysia, Lutheran Church of Malaysia, Methodist Church of Malaysia, Chinese Annual Conference and Trinity Annual Conference, and Presbyterian Church of Malaysia are some of the Protestant churches registered under the Council of Churches of Malaysia. Their headquarters are located in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur. Chinese members can be found in all of the churches. The Chinese Christians are further divided into Chinese-speaking congregation and English-speaking congregation. Qualitative content analysis is used for analysis of records and census data reports related to the issue being studied. Questionnaire-based survey is also conducted in this study. The preliminary study found that the Trinity doctrine remained as central Christian belief with different level of understandings identified among the Chinese Christian members. Finding of this study is crucial to discover how Chinese Christians in Malaysia are involved in describing their understanding of the Trinity belief in the Malaysian context as a multi-religious country.

Keywords:

Chinese Christians, denominations, doctrine of Trinity,

Introduction

Since Chinese community form the majority group of the non-Muslim population in Malaysia, therefore their membership is prominent in Christian churches (Roxborough, 1992). Specifically, in Peninsular Malaysia, Chinese Christians are divided into two groups who are Chinese-speaking congregation and English-speaking congregation. It is common for major churches in cities to have both English and Chinese medium. In many places, the Sunday services of the Chinese medium churches are generally conducted in Mandarin (Tan, 2000 & Lee, 2004). Meanwhile, English medium are provided for Chinese members who are English-educated. The English-congregation is usually multi-ethnic and generally Chinese becomes the majority group as compared to Indian in the membership (Tan, 2000). Thus, many churches provide their missionary services in various languages such as English, Mandarin, Tamil and Malay. For instance, Damansara Utama Methodist Church in Petaling Jaya, Selangor offers all the four languages in Sunday services (The Methodist Church in Malaysia, n.d.).

Furthermore, the Trinity doctrine in general has been practiced at almost all major Christian churches in Malaysia, including the Chinese Christian churches. With reference to our preliminary study, this paper attempts to address the understanding of Trinity doctrine among Chinese Christians.

Denominations of Chinese Christians in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur

According to Mc Grath (2011), since the reformation era (1500 - 1750 AD) Christianity has developed in the form of a number of streams, usually referred to as 'denominations'. Beginning with the largest denomination, Catholicism, often referred to as 'Roman Catholicism' in works of theology. In the 16th century, Protestant came as a result of the European Reformation. As the hope of reforming the Roman church faded, the "protestants" were forced to separate from Roman Catholicism. The German reformation which gave rise to the Lutheranism, the Swiss Reformation which gave birth to the Reformed Churches, often referred to as 'Calvinism'. The English reformation, which gave rise to the distinctive form of Christianity often known as Anglicanism and Presbyterian churches in Scotland (Mc Grath, 2011).

Catholicism

In the context of Catholicism missionary among Chinese community, Ismail (2000) stated that The College General of the East Seminary was built with the aim to train Catholic cadres in the Malay Peninsula (Peninsular Malaysia). A total of 20 Chinese students from Mainland China were brought into the college to be trained as a priest. They preached Christianity to the Chinese community in Malaya. Selangor was one of

the potential states to spread Christianity likewise the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur.

Accordingly, Kuala Lumpur from its early years until today becomes the centre of Christian missionaries from various denominations, particularly Catholic. The Catholic authorities chose Bukit Nanas in Kuala Lumpur as the centre of their activities with the establishment of St. John Church in 1883 (Ismail, 2000 & St. John's Cathedral, n.d.).

Herald Malaysia Online - Malaysian Dioceses Directory (n.d.) stated that the Catholic Church administration in Malaysia is divided into Archdiocese and Diocese. Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur governed some states including Selangor and Kuala Lumpur. Based on the latest figures of the Catholic Church, the estimated Catholics population in the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur in 2015 is 185,617 out of total population of 11,872,200.

Based on the data from Malaysian Dioceses Directory (n.d.), the total number of Catholic¹ churches in Selangor is 32 from 3 administrative districts². While it shows a total of 21 churches in Kuala Lumpur³. The total quantity is 53. Each church provides services in native speaker of the members. For instance, Church of Holy Rosary in Tun Sambathan Road is one of the earliest Chinese churches built in Kuala Lumpur. It provides services in Chinese and English language (Herald Malaysia Online – Malaysian Dioceses Directory, n.d.).

Protestant

Regarding the Christianity growth in Malaya, particularly in Asia, the movement spread to grow with the establishment of London Missionary Society (LMS) in 1795 which is based on the teachings of the Bible; "Go to all nations throughout the world and make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit" (Matius 28:19). Starting from a small number of LMS it has successfully sent out a total of 7,752 missionary in 1969 and the number increased to 8,000 in 1970 (Ghazali, 2004).

Today, based on the membership of the Council of Churches of Malaysia, there were 18 major Protestant churches registered under this council. In Peninsular Malaysia, there are some major churches which have Chinese members and their headquarters are located at Selangor and Kuala Lumpur. They are Chinese Anglican Diocese of West Malaysia, Lutheran Church in Malaysia, Methodist Church in Malaysia - Chinese Annual Conference and Trinity Annual Conference, and Presbyterian Church in Malaysia (Council of Churches of Malaysia, 2003).

¹ The number includes the number of parish, church, chapel, and mass centre.

² Selangor is divided into districts of Klang Selangor, Ulu Selangor and Petaling.

³ The Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur is divided into three regions, namely Central District, Northern District and Southern District.

The Anglican Diocese of West Malaysia

According to Northcott (1992) and The Anglican Diocese of West Malaysia (n.d.), the development of the Anglican Church began in Penang Island, starting from the establishment of the British East India Company in 1786. In 1971, the Diocese of West Malaysia was incorporated by an Act of the Malaysian Parliament.

In Kuala Lumpur, Chinese Christian missionaries began in the 1920s. The Yuh San Chinese Mission School was established in 1921 and became the Christian movement centre. The school teachers are mostly Christian Chinese from Mainland China. Many of them are teachers cum evangelists and some of them have been appointed as pastors after several years (Ng, 1989). The missionary activities were later moved to the Church of St. Mary, Jalan Raja Kuala Lumpur. Ng (1989) also stated that by the end of 1950, Chinese congregation at the Church of St. Mary has grown rapidly and are ready to build his own parish for the congregation. In 1959, the parish was established known as All Saints' Church in Jalan Cheras, Kuala Lumpur.

Meanwhile the Chinese Christian activity in Selangor state was converged in Petaling Jaya. According to research carried out by Ong (1983) and Ng (1989), it was in the early 50s that some of the Chinese congregation members left Kuala Lumpur St. Mary Church and moved to Petaling Jaya. The moving request was made to the Parochial Church Council of St. Mary's Church (PCC) for another church set up in Petaling Jaya. Eventually, on 19 November 1960 a new church building known as the Church of St. Paul and a priest's house was ordained once approved by the authorities of Petaling Jaya (Ong, 1983 & Ng, 1989).

As observed by Ng (1989), although the Church of St. Paul was well expanding, the Chinese congregation was declining in number. They were mostly bilingual Chinese who prefer to have English-speaking Chinese members. Similarly, majority of their younger generation came from an English educated background. This resulted to minimum understanding of their mother tongue language hence making them more inclined to join churches with English-spoken congregation. Most of the Chinese congregation members who resided in Petaling Jaya since then visited the All Saints Church in Jalan Cheras for their religious activities.

It can be concluded that the Chinese Anglican churches in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor have gone through a phase of slow growth at the beginning. However, with continued efforts the churches eventually managed to be located in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor.

Concerning the number of Anglican Church, there are 25 Anglican Churches in Selangor and 13 Anglican Churches in Kuala Lumpur. The total number of church for the two places stood at 38. Similar to the Catholic Church, the Anglican churches also serve worship rituals in different languages namely English, Chinese, Tamil, Malay, Ibanic and Nepali language (The Anglican Diocese of West Malaysia, n.d.). Hence,

the Anglican churches in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor were found to be churches with multi-racial congregations. The establishment of such churches with Chinese congregations using English and Chinese languages as their spoken language indicates that the congregation members are always active and participative in attending religious activities held by their church.

Lutheran Church in Malaysia

A study by Chang (1992) stated that the missionary movement by the Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore among the Chinese community took place as early as 1950s. This movement began with the entry of Chinese missionaries from Mainland China after the Communists took over China in 1949.

On August 3, 1963, the Lutheran Church in Malaya for the Chinese Christians was officially established. In 1967, the church was converted to Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore following the withdrawal of Singapore from the Malaysian Federal Government. Meanwhile, the government policy has restricted any entrance of foreign missionaries to serve in the church. Towards complying with the policy, beginning from 1965 to 1974 a total of 15 local pastors were appointed and all affairs were later taken over by local residents. In 1993, there was an agreement to set up Lutheran church for Malaysia and Singapore. Eventually, the Lutheran Church in Singapore was officially established on October 30, 1997 (Chang, 1992 & Lutheran Church in Malaysia, n.d.).

Chang (1992) stated that the Lutheran Church went through a process of transformation whereby they began their movement in villages and later expanded their mission in big cities. Hence, various efforts were made to achieve mission and vision of the church. Subsequently in 2006, the Lutheran Church received its approval from the local authorities to build their new headquarters in Petaling Jaya, Selangor. It was responsible to organize Chinese-speaking congregation in Kuala Lumpur to reach out the business community.

Data shows there were 16 Lutheran Church congregations in Selangor while there were only 6 congregations for the Lutheran Church in Kuala Lumpur. This brings a total number of 22 churches. As compared to the Catholic Church and the Anglican Church, the Lutheran Church is fewer in number. The difference of amount is because the Lutheran Church in Malaysia is devoted to the Chinese community alone (Lutheran Church in Malaysia, n.d.).

Methodist Church in Malaysia

The South India Conference held in Hyderabad in 1884 was the start of Methodist Church missionary activities in Malaya. The Methodist mission expanded in a number

of aspects such as language and geographical aspects. The mission was covered in English, Tamil, Chinese and Malay languages. They also travelled around the Peninsular Malaysia and further moved to Sabah and Sarawak. The Methodist Church in Malaysia was established on December 4, 1976 (Tung & Ng, 1996; The Methodist Church in Malaysia, n.d. & World Council of Churches, n.d.).

According to Tung & Ng (1996), the formation of the Methodist Church in Malaysia involved membership from Chinese Annual Conference (Mandarin), Tamil Annual Conference (Tamil), Trinity Annual Conference (English), Sarawak Chinese Annual Conference (Chinese) and Sarawak Iban Annual Conference (Ibanic). There were also two other conferences namely Sabah Provisional Annual Conference (Chinese) and Sengoi Mission Conference (Pahang indigenous community). Both conferences were established to meet the needs of society in terms of language and cultural aspects (World Council of Churches, n.d.).

In 1936, the Chinese Annual Conference (CAC) was formed with its members meant only for the Chinese community (Tung & Ng, 1996). The CAC is a church devoted for Chinese community speaking in their mother tongue dialects. To date, the number of Chinese church membership is about 20,730 people with a total of 114 pastors in charge. The CAC headquarter is located in Lorong Hang Jebat, Kuala Lumpur (Council of Churches of Malaysia, n.d.).

Meanwhile, the Trinity Annual Conference (TRAC) uses English as its language medium in the Methodist Church in Malaysia with multi-racial members including the Chinese ethnic. The TRAC was formed in 1968 and was divided into "regions" consisting of churches in particular area (TRAC of the Methodist Church in Malaysia, n.d.). Total membership for the English medium church amounted to 122,776 members with 26 pastors and its headquarter is located in Petaling Jaya, Selangor (Council of Churches of Malaysia, n.d.).

With reference to the data on the website of Methodist Church in Malaysia (n.d.), the CAC and TRAC Methodist Church in Selangor amounted to as much as 45 and 9 churches respectively. The numbers show significant difference between conferences of both churches likewise in Kuala Lumpur. According to data shown in the website, the CAC Methodist Church show higher number of churches which is 16, as compared to the TRAC Methodist Church with only 6 churches. The significant difference in number might occur due to gap of establishment period for 32 years between the Chinese Annual Conference and Trinity Annual Conference.

Presbyterian Church in Malaysia

The existence of Presbyterian Church in Malaysia can be traced back in the 19th century. During that period, many Chinese have emigrated from South China to Singapore to settle for a better life. The Chinese migrants mostly came from Teochew

and Hokkien districts. In 1872, the Presbyterian Church of England has sent its first evangelist, Reverend John Angus Bethune Cook to Singapore and he subsequently carried out his missionary activities in the Presbyterian Church. The Church of the Holy Light was built in 1886 and it was the first set up of Presbyterian Church (Roxborough, 1992b; Presbyterian Church in Malaysia, n.d. & Holy Light Church (English), n.d.).

In January 1901, the Singapore Presbyterian Synod was established. Synod has been a member of the Church of Christ in China, which is a Chinese Christian church in 1948. In 1965, Singapore was separated from Malaysia and became an independent sovereign state. Then, the Synod once again changed its name to Singapore Presbyterian Churches in 1968. On 1 January 1975, the Presbyterian Church in Malaysia was formally established. Starting from that date, the early Synods have officially become the Presbyterian Church in Malaysia and the Presbyterian Church in Singapore (Roxborough, 1992b Presbyterian Church in Malaysia, n.d.).

According to Roxborough (1992b) Chinese membership in the Presbyterian Church was divided into two groups namely English-speaking members and Chinese speaking members. It was generally observed that the English-speaking members are more receptive and open to any changes while the Chinese-speaking members are still bound to traditions of their origin. An example of English medium Presbyterian Church is St. Andrew International Presbyterian Church located in Jalan Raja Chulan, Kuala Lumpur. It is one of the oldest Presbyterian church that was built in 1918. The church membership consists of visitors from the United States, Britain, Commonwealth countries and also from Germany, Japan, Korea and others (Roxborough, 1992b & Presbyterian Church in Malaysia, n.d.).

Data from website of Presbyterian Church in Malaysia (n.d.) shows the total number of Presbyterian Church in Selangor which is 15 churches. While it shows a lower number of Presbyterian Church in Kuala Lumpur which is 8 churches. Both totals amounted to 23 churches and the number is relatively small as compared to the Catholic Church, the Anglican Church and the Methodist Church. This is because the development of Presbyterian churches at its initial stage were given more focus in southern part of Peninsular Malaysia namely Johor.

As a summary, colonization in Malaya was the starting point of Christian foothold in the country. The growth of Christian belief among Chinese Christians generally took place at the beginning of the 19th century due to Chinese migration from South Mainland China to Malaya, especially the Christian missionaries and Chinese community who converted to Christianity. Moreover, the British government policy during that time was also an opportunity for the Christian missionaries to mobilize their missionary activities in Malaya. Missionary activities carried out by the Catholic and the Anglican Church are more focused in major cities such as Kuala Lumpur and Selangor. The Methodist Church rests in the northern part of Malaya whereas the

Presbyterian Church operates in the south. The Lutheran Church also focuses its missionary activities in major cities, especially among the Chinese community.

Preliminary Study on Understanding the Trinity

This preliminary study is an overview for the researcher on understanding of Chinese Christians from various denominations on Trinity basic concepts in Peninsular Malaysia.

In terms of belief in doctrine of Trinity, the three statements of belief recognised and used as authoritative by large numbers of Christian churches are the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed and the Creed of Athanasius⁴. The importance and prominence of the Creeds is reflected in the official declarations of the churches. For instance, in Malaysia regarding for the doctrine of Trinity in Methodist Church, it states in 'The Doctrinal Statements and the General Rules' - The Articles of Religion of the Methodist Church, Article I. - of Faith in the Holy Trinity:

"There is but one living an true God, everlasting, without body or parts, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the maker and preserver of all things, visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there are three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity - the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost" (The Book of Discipline of The Methodist Church in Malaysia, 2004).

As well as in Catholic Church, Catechism of the Catholic Church pronounced as follows:

"We firmly believe and confess without reservation that there is only one true God...the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; three persons indeed, but one essence, substance or nature entirely simple" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, n.d).

Thus, Christians remain in reconciling their belief in three divine Persons, the Trinity of Persons which they perceived in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit was a Trinity which had existed from eternity within the being of God.

Methodology

A survey was administered to Chinese Christians. The study group was comprised of 35 respondents and seventeen (50%) of them were male and seventeen (50%) were female. It was noted that the distribution of respondents according to gender was

⁴ The Apostles' Creed is inspired by the apostolic message. Its title was first found around 390 C.E. by which time the legend of its joint composition by the twelve apostles was already current. Meanwhile, the Nicene Creed was drawn up at the Council of Nicaea (325 C.E.) to resolve a controversy concerning the problem of the deity of Jesus. Creed of Athanasius which dates back from the fourth century. The creed was attributed to St. Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria. It was not written by Athanasius but was probably composed in southern France during the 5th century.

equal. With regard to denominations and congregations, twenty (58.8%) of the respondents were Catholics. Fourteen of them (41.2%) were Protestants. Out of the 34 respondents, twenty seven (79.4%) of them were English-speaking congregation and only seven (20.6%) were Chinese-speaking congregation.

Regarding the age, most of the respondents were in the age group between 20 to 30 years with a frequency of eighteen (53%). This was followed by thirteen (38.2%) in the age group of 31 to 50. Only three or (8.8%) were above 51 years old. Most of the respondents live in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur as their permanent residence. Twenty seven (79.4%) of them came from Selangor. Meanwhile seven respondents (20.6%) live in Kuala Lumpur.

In terms of Bible versions used by the respondents were also looked into. More than half of them were Catholic, thus the statistic showed that nineteen (55.9%) of them used the New Jerusalem Bible. The statistic also showed that seven (20.6%) of them used the King James Version/New King James Version. Three respondents used the New International Version & English Standard Version respectively (8.8%) for each version. Only one respondent (2.9%) used the Chinese Union Version. Similarly, one respondent (2.9%) used the Al Kitab version.

Procedure and Measures

Participants were recruited using purposive sampling within Selangor and Kuala Lumpur. The instrument is composed of statements by which the participants were asked to response based on their understanding of Trinity. Their answers are indicated using the following scales: (1) Strongly Agree, (2) Agree, (3) Uncertain, (4) Disagree, and (5) Strongly Disagree. The questionnaire consisted of 9 items to answer the following research question - What is the understanding level of Chinese Christians in Peninsular Malaysia on their Trinity doctrine?

Items from the questionnaire were modified by the researcher from a number of theological surveys. The validation process was done based on experts' judgement in the theology field. Reliability of the 9-item scale on the Trinity Doctrine subject has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.707.

Results and Discussions

The analysis was based on several key concepts in the Trinity doctrine such as the God's attributes⁵, God is One, One God as three distinct Persons⁶, operational

⁵ God has many perfect attributes. Hence God has incommunicable attributes which are characteristics belonging only to God (Coppedge, 2007 & Grudem, 1994).

⁶ God according to Christian understanding is unique. God is understood as One God, co-existing in three distinct Persons of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Theological debates and controversies on the nature of Trinity during

function of Trinity⁷ and terminology aspect⁸. For ease of discussion, the scores were categorised into three-point scale, they were “Strongly Agree and Agree” (SA/A), “Uncertain” (U) and “Disagree and Strongly Disagree” (D/SD).

Table 1: Understanding of the Trinity Doctrine

No	Items	SA/A	U	D/SD
		<u>n</u> (%)	<u>n</u> (%)	<u>n</u> (%)
1.	The word “Trinity”, which is the theological word of Christian used to refer to the Godhead is not found in the Bible.	30 (88.2)	3 (8.8)	1 (2.9)
2.	Each of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are eternal, all-powerful, all-knowing, all-present.	34 (100)	0 (0)	0 (0)
3.	The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are three separate Gods.	3 (8.8)	0 (0)	31 (91.2)
4.	The Trinity is like God wearing three different sets of clothes according to the job he is doing at the time.	28 (82.4)	0 (0)	6 (17.6)
5.	The Father, the Son and the Spirit are equally ‘God’.	33 (97.1)	0 (0)	1 (2.9)
6.	The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are the three parts of God.	29 (88.2)	0 (8.8)	5 (2.9)

the first few centuries of the Christian era have led to one phrase taken as orthodox by the church - one substance in three persons (Grudem, 1994; Walters, 2002; Letham, 2004; Coppedge, 2007; Night 2008 & McGrath, 2011).

⁷ The early church fathers also considered the functional equality and unity within the Godhead. The prominent early theologians such as Augustine (354-430 AD), Athanasius (293-373 AD), Basil (329-379 AD) described the functional equality of Trinity and argued that their operations could not be separated. If there is no indication of separation between the operations of one and the operations of the other, it is difficult to see how one could be eternally and functionally subordinated to the other (Kärkkäinen, 2007 & Hedberg 2011).

⁸ Terminology aspect - the Trinity is not found in the Bible. However, the Bible teaches the Trinitarian concept of one God existing as three persons (Wainwright, 1962; Vander Pol, 2001 & Warfield, n.d.).

7.	There is one God, but he changes between the different forms, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – like water, steam and ice.	26 (76.4)	3 (8.8)	5 (14.7)
8.	When we believe on the word of God, there are three Persons in One God.	11 (32.3)	21 (61.8)	2 (5.9)
9.	The doctrine of the Trinity is taught in the Bible.	32 (94.1)	2 (5.9)	0 (0)

As shown in Table 1 above, item 1 refers to “The word Trinity which is the theological word of Christian used to refer to the Godhead is not found in the Bible”. Thirty (88.2%) respondents responded correctly with Strong Agree/Agree. Three respondents (8.8%) answered Uncertain. Only one respondent (2.9%) answered incorrectly. Thus, respondents showed their good understanding on the terminology aspect.

For item 2, “Each of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are eternal, all-powerful, all-knowing, all-present”. The correct response is Strongly Agree/Agree. Response for this item was the highest of all the nine items since there were 34 respondents (100%) who answered the second item correctly. Hence, the result indicated the respondents’ excellent understanding on God’s attributes.

With reference to item 3 which is an incorrect statement, “The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are three separate Gods”, there were 31 subjects who (91.2%) responded Strongly Disagree/Disagree. Only 3 (8.8%) respondents answered Strongly Agree/Agree. The finding shows their good understanding on the One God concept.

As for item 4, “The Trinity is like God wearing three different sets of clothes according to the job he is doing at the time” was to observe if the respondents understood the concept of operational functions of God. This item is presented in negative statement and it is an incorrect statement. Only 6 respondents (17.6%) answered this question correctly. While 28 (82.4%) responded to this item incorrectly. It can be noted that the respondents still lack understanding on this concept.

For item 5, “The Father, the Son and the Spirit are equally ‘God’”. The respondents displayed good understanding of this principle as 33 (97.1%) answered “Strongly Agree and Agree”. Only one respondent (2.9%) answered this item incorrectly. With regard to negative statement on item 6 “The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are the three parts of God” was designed to determine the principle of One God as three distinct Persons. It was found that a total of 29 respondents (88.2%) incorrectly answered

Strongly Agree/Agree. Only 5 respondents (2.95%) answered this item correctly. The finding indicated that most of the respondents still lack understanding on this principle.

For item 7, “There is one God, but he changes between different forms, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—like water, steam and ice”. The correct response was Strongly Disagree/Disagree. Only five respondents (14.7%) answered this item correctly. There were 3 respondents (8.8%) answered Uncertain. While there were 26 respondents (76.4%) who answered this item incorrectly. Since most of the respondents gave the wrong response, this finding shows that the respondents did not understand this concept and showed their response through illustration and analogy in describing Trinity.

With response to item 8 “When we believe on the word of God, there are three Persons in One God”, only 11 (32.3%) of the total respondents answered this item correctly with Strongly Agree/Agree. The finding shows that most respondents were unsure on the principle of One God as three distinct Persons. There were only 2 (5.9%) who incorrectly responded, but it was unusual to find that there were 21 respondents (61.8%) who were Uncertain for this item.

Finally for item 9, “The doctrine of the Trinity is taught in the Bible”. A majority of 32 respondents (94.1%) showed conviction in their response by answering Strongly Agree/Agree with the statement. The respondents showed their good understanding of this concept. Only two (5.9%) of them answered Uncertain.

Conclusion

The Trinity doctrine is important and it is a fundamental part of the Christian theology. However, difficulty in understanding the complexities of the Trinity concept has long been identified for ages. Respondents from various denominations showed their high level of understanding on the One God concept but were struggling in understanding the concept of One God as three distinct Persons. The complexity of the later concept has always become the major issue in Trinity, which is how to explain that the three divine entities is One God. Thus, the respondents used illustrations and analogies to explain the principle. The respondents were also ambiguous on the concept of equality in matters of operational function between God the Father, Son of God and the Holy Spirit.

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