

ABSTRACT

SYRIAN CHRISTIAN CHURCHES: SPIRITUAL RENEWAL AND REVIVAL IN CONTEMPORARY SYRIAN CHRISTIAN CHURCHES IN THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, KERALA, INDIA

by

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All over the world, Christians are becoming aware of the need for renewal within the life of the Church. Renewal means Spiritual renewal through which the cross is realized as the power of God for salvation of mankind. Self-giving love for the sake of others must become the way of life for all. The Holy Spirit alone can fill people with this kind of divine love. Every church needs to realize afresh in each generation as to God's presence in the contemporary times and the work of His hands in the lives of the Believers. That is at heart the meaning of renewal. God is calling them to share in his life and in his mission to the world. Today the greatest need of the Syrian Churches in Kerala is a spiritual renewal.

Kerala is the only state in India, apart from the states of Mizoram and Nagaland, where over 18 percent of the population is Christians. The State has always given freedom to Christians to worship and witness to their beliefs. Foreign missionaries also have come and propagated their mission evangelizing the people here.

The most ancient tradition of the Indian Church says that St. Thomas, the Apostle of Jesus Christ came to India in AD 52. St. Thomas itinerated for nearly thirty years in Kerala and proceeded to the East coast of India from Malankara and died a martyrs' death at a place called Mylapore - Chinnamalai in Tamil Nadu.

Syrian Christian Churches continue to be traditionally strong and most influential in almost all the spheres that they undertake. Yet, the spiritual awakening once felt, during the time of the 'Oath of the Bent Cross in 24th January 1653' and then the British Missionaries in the 1800s in the community, got dormant with the passage of time until the time of Sadhu Kochukunju Upadeshi who lived from 1883 to 1945. Those were the times Kerala witnessed great poverty and hunger, but physical hunger was no more felt when spiritual hunger was extinguished with a great feast of God's power during the renewal that happened there. Under the leadership of Sadhu Kochukunju Upadeshi, a great wave of revival swept across Kerala. People began to be renewed by the saving power of Jesus Christ. However, this wave of revival was only felt and experienced by the Mar Thoma Church. No other Syrian Churches experienced this wholly.

After that era of revival, the next generations became de-routed from evangelism to other stances. Soon the spiritual fervor once cherished by the Syrian Christians was stealthily hushed up and extinguished.

Today, the Syrian Churches of Kerala are wealthy indeed but paradoxically poor in the faith that enriched them once and made them who they are. Therefore, the fervor, need to be brought back again, which could influence the revival of the whole of India. The purpose of this research project thus is to identify best practices for spiritual renewal and revival within the Syrian Christian Churches of Kerala, in Thiruvananthapuram District, through a survey that extended for a few months interviewing a few Bishops, Priests, Pastors, and laymen.

SYRIAN CHRISTIAN CHURCHES, KERALA
SPIRITUAL RENEWAL AND REVIVAL IN CONTEMPORARY SYRIAN
CHRISTIAN CHURCHES IN THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, KERALA, INDIA

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by

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CHAPTER 1

NATURE OF PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter provides a backdrop for the proposed project. The goal is to identify best practices for spiritual renewal and revival within the Syrian Christian churches in Thiruvanthapuram District in Kerala, India. This chapter outlines the purpose of the research and process of obtaining the data needed to support it. This chapter also examines the rationale for the research topic including my own personal journey and how it will be beneficial in the future. Included in the overview of the project are the research design, purpose statement, research questions, participants, as well as, how the data is analyzed and contextualized toward a best practices outcome.

Personal Introduction

India, my homeland, is rightly said to be the home of a hundred religions and ten thousands of gods. In the middle of this reality of imbibing different cultures and customs, as a child I have always been taught, about missionaries and their sacrifice for revival, by my mother, whom I always saw on her knees. Therefore, the Christian fervor in me was deeply rooted. Yet, it began when I was eighteen years old. In a youth camp, I professed Jesus as my Savior and LORD. Ever since then, the stories told of missionaries and their sacrificial adherence to the gospel weighed in me a deeper understanding of what it all meant.

Thus, before enrolling to study my Masters in Physics, I took a train journey and saw the whole of India. For days and nights in the train, seeing all the villages and the uttermost unreached tribal areas, my heart was lifted to carry the cause for which I

believe I was born. Therefore, as a missionary student, I went to the North of India, to Agra for my Masters, but had to discontinue my course because of typhoid and overstress. Yet when I opted to do my bachelor's in divinity, on the day before my exams, I saw a vision in which I saw a beautifully magnificent Church dazzling on the outside, but horrifyingly filled with dry bones inside.

From then on, the renewal and revival of India had always been in my prayers and efforts. I knew that my ethnic community of Syrian Christians were a light in Kerala, but 2000 years of history is nullified in the eyes of God, if they were not a factor for revival in the land of India, from age immemorial. I thus became a clergy of Mar Thoma Syrian Church, and served for 20 long years, in which I found in deeper reality that the Church and the community of Syrian Christians, suffered a serious black stain of nominalism and complacency. If ever the dry bones are to come alive, nominalism must be uprooted from the hearts of the people.

For this reason, I received a call to serve beyond the boundaries and thus I resigned from the Church and formed a new movement, where I envisioned the same dream of revival and renewal through unity in Christ across all of India. Thus, in the past ten years, I had been zealous in travelling far and wide, in visiting and planting Churches, recognizing the numerous tribal and marginalized congregations, and helping build leadership from among them to pastor their people in their way and in their language. The vision was precious, and the provision was scarce, yet when the call is steadfast, all I have is the hope to reach the 29 States and 7 Union Territories, and to bring light to every nook and corner.

The interest in Church renewal in the Syrian Christian Churches came back to me, when I rejoined as a clergy of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church, my ancestral Church after ten long years of service to the unreached places in India. Seeing how equipped they are and blessed in resources, unlike any ethnic group in India, made me understand, that their gifts have to be gifted for the Kingdom's glory. So much light can pierce the darkness if the sleeping giant gets a wakeup call!

Statement of the Problem

Towards much of the Hindu, Muslim, and Christian world around them, and even towards many of their own youth, Syrian Christian Churches seem ingrown and out of touch. If that is to change, revival and renewal must come.

The majority of Syrian Christians know what the Scriptures say, but not what they mean in a better light. As a result, many well- educated youth have come to think of the Church merely as a gathering place for family and friends. So naturally they find politics, games, adventures and the like more attractive and appealing. If the Church were more open to these realities while staying firmly faithful to the truths of the Scripture, its effectiveness and influence would greatly increase.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of the research was to identify best practices for spiritual renewal and revival within the Syrian Christian Churches in the Thiruvananthapuram District in Kerala, India.

Research Questions

These were the questions I sought answers to in carrying out the purpose of this project.

1. In the opinion of bishops, priests, and laypeople, what practices would most contribute to spiritual renewal and revival within the Syrian Christian Churches in the Thiruvananthapuram District in Kerala, India?

2. In the opinion of bishops, priests, and laypeople, what obstacles most hinder spiritual renewal and revival within the Syrian Christian Churches in the Thiruvananthapuram District in Kerala, India?

3. Moving forward, what are best practices for spiritual renewal and revival within the Syrian Christian Churches in the Thiruvananthapuram District in Kerala, India?

The Rationale for the Project

All over the world, Christians are becoming aware of the need for renewal within the life of the Church. Renewal means Spiritual renewal through which the cross will be realized as the power of God for salvation of mankind. Self-giving love for the sake of others must become the way of life for all. The Holy Spirit alone can fill people with this kind of divine love. Every Church needs afresh in each generation to ask the question, ‘What is God doing among us today?’ That is at heart the meaning of renewal. God is calling them to share in his life and in his mission to the world. Today the greatest need of the Syrian Churches in Kerala is a spiritual renewal.

In A.D. 52, the Christian Church for the first time was established in the South – West coast of India by St. Thomas, one of the Apostles of Jesus Christ; tradition even says that St. Thomas itinerated for thirty years in Kerala. Though the indigenous Christian Church has a long prestigious history, it did not grow accordingly but remained faithful and even fruitless. it did grow in the biological sense.

Kerala is the only state in India apart from the states of Mizoram and Nagaland where 18 percent of the population is Christian. The State has given always the freedom to the Christians to worship and to witness their beliefs. Foreign missionaries also have come and propagated their mission by evangelizing the people here.

The other religious groups in Kerala have not only tolerated Christians but even respected them. Christ is known in Kerala and even loved by many Hindus. For several of them, Christ and the gospel are the very inspiration of their lives and they follow his teachings and example with more sincerity than many baptized Christians. Hence, the presence of such sincere disciples of Jesus Christ outside Christianity presents the Church with this serious challenge of spiritual renewal.

The need for renewal is pushed to a distant history. It is true that the people take note of the wonder of what happened because of evangelism, yet stay unbothered of it in our times, when something could be done about it. The need for revival is cardinal in the Christian belief, and without a steadfast renewal, without the visitation of the Holy Spirit to revive the dry bones of the already existing Churches, India will not come to the saving knowledge of Jesus. Thus, the purpose of the research is to identify best practices, for spiritual renewal and revival within the Syrian Christian Churches of Kerala, in Trivandrum District (the capital of Kerala State), through a survey that extended for a few months in which a few bishops, priests pastors, and laymen were interviewed.

Definition of Key Terms

Renewal: Becoming new for a wholesome purpose in the light of eternity. When the sleeping state of the Church is awakened in the love of our LORD, there happens to be a continuance of his eternal plan. Therefore, renewal is the understanding human

beings have in the depth of their heart that there needs to be a willful effort to keep striving to align oneself to the LORD's purpose.

Revival: An improvement in the condition or strength of someone or something in such a way that freedom is felt even when everything proves to be dead. It is a belief that beauty is awakening from the ashes, a faith that keeps reckoning us to partake in the resurrection of hope and split open the graves to find ourselves revived for the glory of our LORD despite all our human limitations.

Delimitations

The purpose of the study revolves around the Syrian Christians in Trivandrum. There exists a huge limitation on the availability of written documents resulting in heavy dependence on oral tradition and practices existing among the people. Though the research generally focuses on Syrian Christians, most of the participants of the research were from Malankara Marthoma Syrian Church. The data collected was mainly from different levels of leadership and only less participation from the believers were incorporated.

Review of Relevant Literature

Through the guidance of relevant books and theories, a wider perspective brought more meaning to the research work. Indian Christians of St. Thomas 1908 written by W. J. Richards was referred to bring to conclusion on the History of Syrian Christians. There has been a beautiful decipher of deeming it all in the light of the Indian Scenario, which is extremely relevant, wherein which the literature gives a startling view of India at large and the need for revival to the different million people.

S.D.F. Salmond, *The Writings of Hippoclytus*, was a judicious source of drawing parallels in performing the different initiation theories, before starting the real core understanding of the whole matter. 'Ningalkum Puthukam Prapikkam' (A Malayalam book on Spiritual Renewal of Christians in Kerala) written by myself almost twenty years back and the knowledge of researching the relevant factors that are crucial in leading the Church to its identity in Christ, has been also a real help to create solid undertakings in coming to conclusions.

There has been guidance from prominent Bishops of the Syrian Churches provided guidance; they not only knew the scenario but envisaged and hoped together for a greater revival and outreach coupled with socio economic boom for not just the Syrians but India at large.

Research Methodology

The methodology used for the research was pre-intervention. The research mainly focused on these churches: Syrian Jacobite, Syrian Orthodox, Syrian Marthoma, Syrian Church of South India, and Syrian Evangelicals. Three modes of data collection were used: questionnaire, interviews, and surveys. Three groups of people received three types of methodologies: interviews for the Bishops; questionnaires to the priests; and surveys for lay people. Prior permission was received from the three groups of people much before the tools given to them. Several books, articles, audio and video tapes of revival speakers etc. were used for the research.

Type of Research

The type of research was pre-intervention. The research incorporated three groups of people: Bishops, priests, and lay people. Each group received a separate

method of data collection - interviews for the Bishops, questionnaire for the pastors and priests, and surveys for the lay people and people in different congregations. The laypeople received the surveys by hand as far as possible, but some received it through email or WhatsApp.

Participants

Three categories of people were selected for the research: Bishops, priests, and lay people. Bishops and priests represented the leadership side of the church and lay people represented the rest of the church. These two categories are comprised a holistic representation of the church from all angles.

Instrumentation

The instrumentation used were interviews, questionnaires, and surveys. Semi-structured personal interviews for bishops, the questionnaires of priests incorporated both open ended and closed ended questions. Lay people received surveys, to collect maximum data.

Data Collection

The time used to interview bishops were half an hour for each. It was attempted to meet them in-person as far as possible, in any inconvenience Zoom or Google meet platforms served the purpose for the interview. The questionnaires and surveys were returned according to their convenience within a time span of two weeks. They took the freedom to use any method including postal service/post office.

Data Analysis

The data collected through semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and given surveys, was assessed. To finalise the data analysis, the data was collated into tables and

graphs. The analysis also included content analysis, reoccurring themes, looking for similarities, and organising domains. Summarisation and categorisation were also used as part of the data analysis.

Generalizability

This project mainly focused on Syrian Christian churches in the Thiruvanthapuram District of Kerala, India. Many Churches claimed to be in continuous renewal and revival. Indeed, some local churches were able to maintain their spiritual vitality over sometime, but others could not.

The need for this kind of revival cannot be limited only to Syrian Christian churches in Thiruvananthapuram; many Christian churches around the world need such renewal and revival. I hoped that the result of this study will help other Christian churches around the world to find ‘ways and means’ for revival and renewal.

Project Overview

A brief backdrop of the research is in Chapter 1. The second chapter lays the foundation of renewal and revival on a strong biblical, theological, and missional basis. A general historical narration of different revivals are incorporated in this chapter.

The third chapter highlights the background and context of the people and the place of the research. A detailed explanation of the research method as well as the research tools. are discussed

Chapter 4 includes a data assessment and highlights the detailed information found through the research by the various means of collecting the information.

Chapter 5 provides the overall assessment and suggestions based on the research and further indicating the concluding remarks.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

There is widespread concern across the Christian world about what some would call the renewal of the Church. David Martin and Peter Mullen (3) tell us that “Much of the impetus behind the concern has come from the increasing influence of the Charismatic Movement over Clergy and Laity.” One must certainly question the wisdom of using the term ‘renewal’ or ‘spiritual renewal’ for an agglomeration of activities and changes so various and diffuse. Christian history has not lacked movements for reform, revivals, zealous ministries, innovations in worship, or tensions between formal and informal Church practice. In particular, the history of ‘enthusiasm’ is well documented. It has been argued throughout this Chapter as to what justifies the use of the term renewal and the theological approbation and reasonable presentation through this chapter.

Particularly for Syrian Christians, the need for a spiritual renewal is a must. I wants to raise some important questions like as to what a renewal is meant to be, or as to why there is the relationship between regeneration and renewal. The chapter contemplates as to whether the full propensity of the renewal can be understood from the Bible, or to what extent Theological and Missiological writers, help in the holistic understanding. All these questions further focusing on how to state a theoretical frame

work for renewal in the contemporary era. The questions could easily be multiplied. However, in this chapter we shall only examine the above mentioned questions.

Biblical Foundations

The idea of renewal is certainly appealing, but where an idea has strong biblical roots, care must be taken not to transfer the dignity and sanction of the biblical idea to something which may say less than what the Bible is talking about. ‘Renewal’ or ‘making new’ pervades the whole message of the New Testament particularly and also the Old Testament, which is indeed the Bible. So, let us try to answer the question regarding the Bible’s understanding of renewal.

The Analytical Concordance (Young 1879) brings all the references on ‘renewal’ under three different titles: To renew, to be Renewed and Renewing, both from old and New Testaments and mentioned like this:

To Renew

1. To renew, repair (‘Chadash’ in Hebrew meaning ‘New grain’/ ‘renew’)

I Samuel 11:14. *“Then Samuel said to the people, “Come, let us go to Gilgal and there renew the kingdom.”*

II Chronicles 15:8 *“When Asa heard these words, the prophecy of Azariah the son of Obed, he took courage, and put away the abominable idols from all the land of Judah and Benjamin and from the cities which he had taken in the hill country of Ephraim, and he renewed the altar of the Lord that was in front of the vestibule of the house of the Lord.”*

Job 10:17 KJV *“Thou renewest thy witnesses against me, and increase thy vexation toward me; thou dost bring fresh hosts against me.”*

Psalm 104:30 *“When thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created; and thou renewest the face of the ground.”*

Psalm 51: 10 *“Create in me a clean heart and renew thy spirit within me.”*

2. To change, pass on, renew (‘Chalaph’ in Hebrew/ Aramaic meaning to ‘pass on’/ ‘to change’)

Isaiah 40: 31 *“Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”*

Isaiah 41: 1 *“Listen to me in silence, O Coastlands; let the peoples renew their strength; let them approach, then let them speak; let us to get her draw near for judgement.”*

3. To make new again (‘Anakainōsis’ in Greek meaning ‘complete change for the better’/ ‘makeover of mind’)

Hebrews 6: 6 *“If they shall away since they crucify the Son of God on their own account and hold him upto contempt.”*

To be renewed

1. To renew self, be renewed (Chadash – Hebrew for ‘new grain/ renew’)

Psalm 103:5 *“who satisfies you with good as long as you live so that your youth is renewed like the eagles.”*

2. To change, passion, renew (Chalaph – Hebrew for change)

Job 29:20 *“My glory fresh with me, and my bow was renewed in my hand.”*

3. To make new again (Anakainoo)

II Corinthian 4: 16. *“So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day.”*

Colossians 3:10 *“Put off the old nature with its practices and have put on the new nature, which is being renewed acknowledge after the image of its Creator.”*

4. To be renewed again (ananeoomai)

Ephesians 4:23 *“Be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new nature.”*

Renewing

A making new again (anakainosis) Romans 12: 2 *“Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is good and acceptable and perfect.”*

Titus 3:5 *“God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit”*

Renewal begins with regeneration and hence regeneration need to be comprehended from the Bible as it is. Men by nature, ‘dead through Trespasses and sins’ (Ephesians. 2:1), and their minds have been blinded by the ‘God of this world’ (II

Cor. 4:5). In short, for renewal the initial stage is regeneration or new birth. This is fundamental to the whole process of renewal. Jesus told Nicodemus: ‘Unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God (John 3:3), ‘When, however, God has made him alive (Eph. 2:5: John 5:21) and shone the light of the truth into his heart (2 Cor. 4:6) then the work of the renewal has begun.

Titus 3:5 implies that the renewing work of the Holy Spirit follows as a direct consequence of regeneration, ‘He saved us, not because of deeds done by us, but in virtue of his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit. “It is true that grammatically, the ‘renewal in the Holy Spirit’ could be taken as synonymous with ‘the washing of regeneration.’” Donald Guthrie faces these two possibilities of interpretation and the author reaches his conclusion for the reasons he gives in his Tyndale New Testament Commentary, the Pastoral Epistles as follows: The ‘regeneration’ and the ‘renewing’ may be regarded as distinct operations, or both may be dependent on ‘washing’ and therefore would describe different aspects of one operation. Since regeneration must always precede the process of renewal and since renewal is never described elsewhere as a washing, the former interpretation is to be preferred (Guthrie 206). This truth is well expressed in the Prayer Book collect for Christmas day as ‘*Grant that we being regenerate may daily be renewed by Thy Holy Spirit.*’ This, in other words, is a prayer for renewal based on the assumption of regeneration. Renewal cannot begin until a person has been born again of God’s Spirit. For an understanding of the word - the Greek noun ‘*palingenesia*’ occurs only twice in the New Testament. Matthew 19:28 RSV ‘new world,’ AV ‘regeneration,’ Titus 3.5 ‘regeneration.’

In the passage of Matthew, it is used eschatologically, to refer to the restoration of all things - reminding that renewal of the individual is part of a wider perspective and is used with an individual reference. Elsewhere, various words are used to express - the change which the Holy Spirit effects. '*Gennaō*' (with another, John 3:3, 7) meaning 'to beget' or 'give birth to,' is used in John 1:13; 3:3-8; John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18. In 1 Peter 1:3, 23 the word used, '*Anagennaō*' - 'to beget again' or 'to bring again to birth' is found. These words are used to describe the initial act of renewal. The words '*anakainosis*' (Rom. 12:2; Tit. 3:5) with the verb '*anakainoo*' (2 Cor. 4:16; Col. 3:10) denote a 'making anew' or 'renewing'. The references indicate that the use of these two words is not limited to the initial renewal but extends to the result of the new birth such terms as '*kainektisis*,' a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15), and '*Kainos anthropos*', 'a new man' (Eph. 2:15, 4:24). Twice term '*Synzoopoieo*' is used, 'to make alive with' (Eph. 2:5; Col. 2:13), which hints at a change, not only as dramatic as birth, but as dramatic as resurrection. '*Apokyeo*' (Jas. 1:8) denotes to bear or bring forth. Surveying these terms, it is noticed that they all indicate a drastic and dramatic change which may be likened to birth, rebirth, recreation, or even resurrection. Several of the terms in their context indicate that this change has permanent and far-reaching effects in its subject (1980:1324 and 5).

Biblical Foundation themes

Old Testament presentation. The idea of regeneration is more prominent in the New Testament than in the Old Testament. Many Old Testament passages have the concept of national renewal. This thought is present in the statements concerning the new

covenant and the law being written in the heart or the giving of a new heart (Jer. 24:7; 31:31; 32:38, Ezek.11:19; 36:25-27, and the valley of dry bones passage 37:1-14).

Although the nation is what is in view in these Scriptures, a nation can be renewed only when the individuals within it are changed. Thus, in the very idea of national renewal, the concept of ‘new hearts’ is discovered to be given to individuals. Other passages deal more directly with the individual (Isa. 57:15). In Psalm 51, David’s prayer is expressed in v.10. Considering the serious view of sin and its effects expressed here, this Psalm has more than a hint of the need for personal renewal.

New Testament presentation. These terms ‘regeneration and renewal’ must be considered in the context of man in sin (John 3:6; Eph. 2:1-3, 5). The effects of sin on human nature are considered to be so serious that, without the new birth, the sinner cannot see, let alone enter into, the Kingdom of God (John 3:3:5; 1 Cor. 2:6-16).

The initiative in regeneration is ascribed to God; it is from above and of the Spirit. This divine act is decisive and once for all. Aorists are used in John 1:13, 3:3, 5. The use of perfects indicates that this single, initial act carries with it far-reaching effects, as in I John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18. The abiding results given in these passages are doing righteousness, not committing sin, loving one another, believing that Jesus is the Christ, and overcoming the world. These results indicate that in spiritual matters, man is not altogether passive. The result of such an act is far-reaching; he actively repents, believes in Christ, and henceforth walks in newness of life.

Theological Foundations The greatest need of the Church in India and particularly Syrian Churches today is a spiritual renewal. God is calling us to share his life in his mission to the world. The calling, the Believers have is to reflect and to interpret his

glory. Today Churches do not reflect him and therefore cannot interpret him. Hence, renewal is needed. Once 'spiritual renewal' is defined with any breadth, it becomes renewal of every kind. The twentieth century provides some illustrations of the relevance of renewal to the total life of the Church. Colin Craston writes as follows:

'At least from, Edinburgh 1910, divided Churches have been challenged by the Holy Spirit towards renewal of the Unity of the Church. Talk has been endless, progress extremely slow and limited, but the need to be renewed in unity is generally acknowledged.'

The search for a new theology continues. Traditional theological positions are now under fire from various quarters. The new generation is taking the reality of the demonic much more seriously than the older theologians. Some theologians of Protestant fundamentalism are seeking to move beyond the older theology into something new. Those who belong to the historic Churches of the Protestant reformation desire to move beyond confessionalism. Theologians today are speaking of the need for spirituality. Also, some are yearning for deeper sacramental life within Protestantism, a new spiritual dimension in their religious life that they call charismatic experiences. Finally, many younger theologians as well as some older ones have a growing desire for social relevance.

According to Donald G. Bloesch, there are four kinds of theological groups within Protestantism (1968). First, there is a mention of neo-liberalism, which essentially represents an attempt by theologians to utilize philosophy in order to communicate to the secular man. Another one is secular or radical theology. Their emphasis is on service to the outcasts and needy in the world. Another group is of ecumenical theology. For them,

Jesus Christ is no longer the Saviour of the world but only a shining example of sacrificed love. Finally, a group called conservative or neo-evangelical theologians view the Bible as an authority in and of itself. With all these, the question remains as Dietrich Bonhoeffer states (47) that: *“It is becoming clearer every day that the most urgent problem besetting our Church is this: How can we live the Christian life in the modern world?”* The neo-evangelicals have a new interest in social sanctification, and the theological vitality of this movement may prepare the way for genuine Christian renewal in contemporary times.

Many voices are calling the Church in different directions. Some of these are the voices of false prophets, and a few others come from men illumined by the Spirit of God. Some voices are saying that what is most essential in the Church today is restoration. This is not in itself a bad emphasis, but it depends on what is meant by it. If it means that Christians must return to the ‘old time religion’ or to the confessions of the reformation, then this smacks of archaism and reaction. What the Believers should seek is to turn to Jesus Christ, the living word of God. Concern should not be to recreate a golden age of the past but to spearhead the advance of the kingdom into the future.

Another party is contending that revival is the great need in our time. In so far as revival predicates obedience to the will of God in all areas of life, this is a legitimate emphasis. If revival means simply being caught up in raptures and ecstasy, then there certainly need to be something more. Iain Murray talks of the Pentecostal experience that brings a biblical foundation in even today’s times (Murray). Many of the new conservatives are pointing to the integral relationship of conversion and obedience in all spheres of life. (Smith 2015) in spite of the challenges of mission highlighting that

“dying to sin” as a way of describing the relationship of the believer with sin. On the development of this language of death, Oswald J. argues that this language conveys two aspects — horror and hope. (7). The commitment to Jesus Christ has both a spiritual and an ethical dimension, and the latter must not be minimized. Such a purification from sin reflects the purpose of the Church – where God’s holy fire is the glory of the Church (Duewel). Revival is not just an emotional touch, as Nancy DeMoss and Tim Grissom describe, It is a complete transformation, which can happen in the heart, home, church, and world (DeMoss and Grissom). A. W. Tozer endorses such an experience as personal a measure – where he speaks how any tiny work that God has ever done through him and his ministry dates back to that hour where he was filled with the Spirit. He stresses further, “this is why I plead for the spiritual life of the Body of Christ and the eternal ministries of the Eternal Spirit through God's children—His instruments.” (6). Sustaining such personal revival is important for the Church (Brown, Killpatrick, and Sparks 2015)

Again, voices calling for the reformation of the Church need to be heard. It is observed that what is needed is new forms and structures for Christian mission and service; there is much truth in this contention. The organizations of the local Parish have arguably become outmoded and no longer serve the wider mission of the Church. The local Church should be a lighthouse in a dark world. Yet no lighthouse can arise apart from personal repentance and conversion. What is called for is a purified Church and not simply a reformed Church. Such a culture of the Kingdom when incorporated in the Church becomes the journey of restoration – which ultimately shall lead to renewal and revival. Peter Tsukahira talks of the journey where cultures of the world meet the

Kingdom of God – specifically emphasising how God’s love, law, and grace are all part of this unfolding journey of discovery (9).

It is observed that there are some whose primary concern is for reconciliation. Far from leaving us weak and vulnerable, forgivingness and reconciliation are empowering (Arnold 43). This is another emphasis in secular theology. A time when races, churches, and nations are divided, indeed has a crying need for reconciliation (Katongole and Rice), for the tearing down of the walls which separate men from one another – incredible forgiveness is needed (Pollefeyt). No social reconciliation can happen between man and God. The vertical takes priority over the horizontal. Yet, reconciliation happens when renewal takes place, and human hearts are set right with God. Christian theology, whose theme is God and everything stemming from the creative-work of God, operates with the widest possible notion of coherence. Theology is thus in search of an inclusive vision (Karkkainen).

Finally, many voices are calling the Church today to renewal. Too many people misunderstand their calling to Church renewal. For some people, it is a renewal of social structures rather than a renewal of man. They speak of the promise of the secular city rather than of the new dispensation of the Spirit of the second advent of Jesus Christ. Spiritual renewal can come only by the Holy Spirit; all social gains will be cancelled unless they are grounded in and accompanied by repentance for personal and national sins.

Humans are, by nature, bound to the powers of sin and death, but he becomes free in the moment of decision when the Spirit empowers him to respond to the offer of the Gospel. The paradox of salvation is that, in the act of belief, one is completely

subjected to God and yet wholly free. This informs the relationship between conversion and regeneration. The outline of Christian Theology in all its timeline, shows the story of hope and resilience – something that need to be carried to the future (Clarke). A work that only the Spirit can empower humans to do, through a partnership that is, as John R. van Gelderen notes – ‘a friendship with the Holy Spirit’ (23).

In older Reformed theology, regeneration signified the work of God in the heart of man, whereas conversion or repentance represents the human’s role in the drama of salvation. Conversion has been rightly associated with regeneration, since it entails not only a turning towards God but also an inward cleansing. Christ saves us not only from the guilt and penalty of sin but also from its power. Yet this is important to recognize that regeneration, although beginning in a particular time, has still to be completed. This indeed is the position of the Protestant Reformers, Luther and Calvin Francois Wendel says that “*Calvin includes sanctification under regeneration and thereby regards the latter as a process that extends throughout life*” (242).

The work of renewal and purification is not accomplished all at once, but must continue throughout the life of the Christian. The new birth means that life’s orientation has been changed, not just that hearts have been completely purified. The process of renewal consists in letting the old go and the new come to life. The human nature is so caught up with old habits and patterns of living within the old structures, But commitment to Jesus means dying to these structures. Then, only renewal takes place.

Also, the close connection between renewal and regeneration need to be contemplated. Regeneration means the commencement of the life of God in the Spirit of man, the beginning of that which had not an existence before. Renewal means the

invigoration of that which has been begun; the sustenance of a life already possessed.

Renewal of that person refers to the growth of that plant into a fruit bearing tree in that new soil and climate. It is spiritual growth from infancy to maturity.

Jesus taught the disciples to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." Yes, it is very day by day food. However, Jesus also said, "It is written, man shall not live on bread alone but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4: 4). The bread as the word is that which the Believer must feed upon daily – bringing renewal in Spiritual life.

Missiological Foundations

Renewal accords with a Biblical understanding of God's activity in and through his Church. God is one who makes all things new. The God who calls His children and prepares them for an eternity, is always on the move, working out his purposes. The Church must be always diligent and dynamic through the power of the Holy Spirit to work and shape its mission in his world. As the people of God of old in the wilderness had to move on when the pillar of fire moved, so the Church is to a pilgrim people following where he leads. This 'Living in tents' way of life is not easily accepted by many Christians. Those who find security in inherited and familiar things are more amenable to settle down and guard the heritage. Without any doubt, the Church has the solemn responsibility of guarding 'the faith once delivered to the saints, 'The apostolic tradition, its faith, fellowship, holiness, and worship must be held and handed down. God's people are to carry it with them in their pilgrimage into ever new and uncharted territory as they try to keep up with him.

While renewal is the work of God by his Spirit, he requires his people respond to his mission. They are to be alive to the Holy Spirit, in living touch and open to his call and promptings, and willing to follow, however uncomfortable the way. Definitely, all Syrian Christians must have an openness to the power of the Holy Spirit.

Three words may help us as signposts: attention, vision, and motivation.

Prayerful and thoughtful attention is needed for the situation and changing circumstances in which mission is to be pursued, using all the knowledge and insight that can be laid hold of. At the time of Jesus, the whole world only had 25 million people. During the time of Martin Luther, there were 50 million people; at the time of William Carey in 1835, there were 2 billion people; in 1975, it was 4 billion, and now in 2019, the world's population is 7.8 billion according to the United Nations' estimates. According to Ralph D. Winter, "as of 1982, at least by name, today in this 5 billion people, 30% are Christians" (320). In 2019, if the statistics hopefully remain at least the same without further depreciating, the 70% who are unreached is the responsibility of the renewed Church to reach them with the good news of Jesus Christ. Regarding the individual and mission, the pattern to be followed is discernible in the Bible. The concern leads to involvement, and involvement leads to opposition and victory.

With the attention, the eye of faith looks for vision that the Spirit may give. The underlying attitude of faith recognizes its complete dependence on God, willing for any possibility, whatever the cost to personal comfort or cherished convictions, and believes that the grace and power to respond will be given.

Motivation to do God's work is what the Spirit alone can give. Zeal for mission requires the fellowship of the Holy Spirit as a reality in the Church. The call of Isaiah as

described in Chapter 6 of his prophecy may illustrate these truths. His attention was undoubtedly on the situation in his nation. The throne was vacant on the year that king Uzziah died. After a prosperous reign there was uncertainty. The might of Assyria threatened, but more serious still the people were disobedient to God. In that situation he caught a vision of God in His holiness and saving mercy, secure on his throne. From that vision came that motivation, “here am I, send me.”

Renewal is both a Church experience and a personal experience because unless and until people experience a renewal within them, the whole Church cannot experience renewal. Undoubtedly, God wills the Church to renew, and all the personal renewal of this or that Christian is for the benefit of the Church as a whole and is to be worked out in its fellowship. John Stott talks about conversion and Church, he tells that “Christian duty is to seek the renewal of the Church, not to avoid or abandon it” (177).

Identifying Best Practices: The terms ‘renewal’ or ‘making new’ in the New Testament are especially associated with words like ‘anakainosis,’ ‘anakainoo,’ ‘ananeoomai,’ and the adjective ‘kainos.’ The following references serve as a basis for forming today’s framework:

The washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit (Tit. 3:5). Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind (Rom. 12:2). Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day (2 Cor. 4:16). You have put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator (Col. 3:10). Be renewed in the Spirit of your minds (Eph. 4:23).

a. Renewal is a work of the Holy Spirit. The first of the above verses makes this clear. It is not something that could be done by human effort alone. This is in keeping with the constant teaching of the Bible. To subduing the desires of the flesh, promoting holiness, is the Holy Spirit's work. Christian virtues are referred to as 'the fruit of the Spirit.' Christians are meant to worship God in the Spirit, love the brethren in the Spirit and purify their souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit. Lying behind every exertion of the Christian to work out this salvation is the Holy Spirit's work 'to will and to work for his good pleasure' (Phil. 2:13). 'To will' points to the Spirit's work in creating desire and intension to work out salvation. 'To work' speaks of his work to put this desire into effect, or to translate the Greek work literally, 'energizing' it.

b. Renewal is an inward work. The mind or inward man needs to be renewed. The Holy Scriptures put a great deal of emphasis on this. It was, for example, one of the basic needs of the children of Israel in the wilderness, "oh that they had such a mind as this always, to fear me and to keep all my commandments" (Deut. 5:29). This inward work of the Holy Spirit was surely foretold through prophet Ezekiel when God said, "and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh" (Ezek. 11:19), That is, in place of inward deadness, God intended to give life. So, then, renewal is not just a matter of copying an outward pattern, although it may well include that, but is something far deeper. '*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus*' (Phil. 2:5 AV).'

c. Renewal is a process. The quotations from both Corinthians and Colossians have a present passive to express the work of renewal, implying that it is a present process, that the inward man 'is being renewed.'

A very thrilling aspects of this process is brought out by Paul when he contrasts it with what is happening in the body: *'Though our outer nature is being renewed every day'* (2 Cor. 4:16). This spiritual process, then, is a complete reversal of its bodily counterpart. The story of human bodies begins with the health and vigour of youth, and, from this beginning, our bodies decline to the weakness of old age and ultimately to death. The spiritual history on the other hand is the complete opposite. Instead of having a healthy and vigorous nature, a Christian begins with a nature which is corrupted and wakened by sin. From this unpromising start, the believer is daily renewed by the Holy Spirit, and can look forward to that day when this process will be complete. Because of the certainty of this, the Spirit's work, the apostle is able to say 'we do not lose heart.'

d. Renewal requires active obedience. Although renewal is a work of the Holy Spirit, the subject is always active rather than in a state of passive surrender. This is clear from expressions such as *'Put on the new natures,'* showing that the life of renewal involves active obedience to God's will (A. Murray).

In Ephesians 4:23, renewal is commanded. Colossians 3:10, on the other hand, looks back to the first step in this life of obedience. Indeed, both verses stress God's part and ours in the work of renewal. The apostle makes it quite clear that the 'new man' is not created or produced by humans themselves but, rather, 'created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness' (Eph. 4:24). The same point is made in slightly different words in the parallel reference in the Epistle to the Colossians, where Paul speaks of the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Nevertheless, although this nature is created and renewed by God, Paul insists that it has to be 'put on' just as the old life has to be 'put off.' The heirs of the Protestant

Reformation emphasized salvation by grace in general and sola fide ('by faith alone') in particular. It was key for the church to recover the central biblical truth, that people justified by God, and that this is an act of God's grace, and that faith—apart from works—is the means by which justification through faith is carried out. A related issue is the nature of works or obedience or faithfulness in the Christian life. While evangelicals can generally agree that a person enters into a covenant relationship with God by grace (even solely by grace) apart from works, they often much more disagree over how to interpret the nature of works, or obedience, inside this covenantal relationship. Bradley G. Green shows that in the new covenant, works or obedience will be a God-elicited, real and necessary part of Christian life. In short, 'works' are 'necessary' for salvation, because part of the 'newness' of the new covenant is real, grace-induced and grace-elicited obedience by its true members (17) William Tyndale argues that Christians cannot be saved simply by performing ceremonies or by hearing the Scriptures in Latin, which most could not understand, and that all should have access to the Bible in their own language – an idea that was then both bold and dangerous. Powerful in thought and theological learning, this is a landmark in religious and political thinking (8).

e. Renewal works to a pattern.

The ultimate goal of renewal is the image of God, who created his people. It is the very nature and character of God towards which the Christian is growing. By regeneration, a person has been born into God's family, and as he/she grows up that person is to show more and more of the family likeness. This will entail growing into the likeness of God's holiness. This pattern where Christ becomes the centre of one's life brings a series of discoveries on the beauty of God's will, all seen and felt through human acts where the

‘insanity of obedience’ (Ripken) makes the walk with Christ an experience of continual renewal (Wilkerson).

History of Renewal and Revival in Syrian Christian Churches in Kerala

Renewal is the work of the Holy Spirit that brings about a spiritual awakening of New Testament Christianity in the Church and its related community. Such an awakening may change in a significant way an individual, or a larger group of believers, or move a congregation, or the Churches of a city or district, or the whole body of believers throughout a country or a continent, or indeed the larger body of believers throughout the world. Through this chapter, the author attempted to trace the history of spiritual renewal in the past centuries.

The characteristics of the spiritual renewals of various decades are exactly like that in the Acts of the Apostles, a perennial text book for the work of the Holy Spirit. The Lord told his disciples:

“It is not for you to know the times or seasons which the Father has fixed by His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses, to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:7-8). Thus, was the outpouring of the Spirit predicted and soon fulfilled.

Richard F. Lovelace

mentions the following:

As early as the Montanist movement of the second century, the concept of decline and renewal in the Church appears. The followers of Montanus were convinced that the Christian movement of their time had lost the

spirituality and the supernatural gifts of the first century Church, but their sectarian rigour and their erroneous prophesy of the imminent return of Christ probably helped to polarise the Church toward the assumption that it was immune to decline. (32)

Augustine's treatment of history tended to confirm this position, since it contrasted the stability of the city of God with the cyclical, Sisyphean careers of human empires. Augustine himself, however, was part of an ascetic reformation movement which sought to challenge the post – Constantinian Church to shed its conformity to the world.

Lovelace continues to state that:

In the 12th century, Joachim of Fiore proposed a typology of history which articulated the deep popular longing for spiritual renewal in the Church. The people of God, he said, have experienced the imperfect life of the age of the Father (the Old Testament era), and they have endured less than perfect existence in the age of the Son (the era of Catholic Church). But now they can look forward to the imminent age of the Spirit in which the declining Church will be transformed and revived, the Holy Spirit will be poured out upon her people, and the everlasting gospel will be proclaimed to the ends of the earth. (33)

By the late fourteenth century, popular mystical movements were denouncing indulgences and intimating that the Pope was the AntiChrist and Wycliffe was asserting the supreme authority of Scripture and attacking the cult of saints, relics, pilgrimages, indulgences, and the treasury of merit. A century later, on the eve of the Reformation,

most of these emphases had become common assumptions of Catholic humanists like Erasmus and Thomas More, and yet their criticism did very little to alter abuses in the system.

The spiritual, political, and economic situation in Europe was like a carefully built economic situation lit, but the torch that set it burning was the spiritual crisis of Martin Luther. His struggle led eventually to the rediscovery of the doctrine of justification by faith. What happened in the Reformation was a genuine work of spiritual renewal.

However, by the end of the sixteenth century, Protestants in both the Lutheran and reformed spheres were referring to the 'half-reformation' which had reformed their doctrines but not their lives, and were seeking a new revitalization of the church.

The pre-pietism of Johann Arndt and the early Puritanism which took hold in England, Holland, and America retained the reformation emphasis on justification but added to it a strong emphasis on sanctification and particularly regeneration. These two movements, Puritanism and pietism, were undoubtedly powerful religious awakenings which penetrated the Church extensively.

For a clearer understanding, all the great renewals or revivals or reformations are all put under the common title of General Awakening and divided into five periods in historical order after Luther's reformation until now.

A. The First General Awakening

Most Church historians, however, have preferred to speak only of two major evangelical awakenings after the Reformation. The first of these is usually designated the 'Great Awakening' in its American phase, and the Evangelical revival of continental

pietism under Count Ludwig von Zinzendorf during the same period is often neglected except for its effect on John Wesley. Actually all three of these concurrent renewal movements should be viewed as parts of the major Evangelical revival which can be termed the 'First General Awakening.' Lovelace states as follows.

In beginnings of this awakening can be traced to the decade of the 1720s. A time when the interest of Puritanism had reached a low point both in England and America after decades of steady decline. And when even the pietism of Halle seemed to have the wind out of its sails, in America Christians had been praying since the late 17th century for an effusion of the Holy Spirit on the rising generations of their listless and unconverted children. In 1727 Theodore Frelinghuysen's Dutch Reformed Church in New Jersey seemed to experience a new surge of vitality as the pastor 'fenced the table' in administering communion insisting on evidence that his parishioners had experienced the regenerating power of Godliness and were not merely going through a form in their Church life.

(36)

That same year, in Germany, another phase of the awakening was getting underway. One of the graduates of A.H. Franck's university at Halle, Count Zinzendorf, had established on his estate a community of refugees including Moravians, reformed, and Catholics, and was seeking to forge this heterogeneous group into an instrument for promoting renewal in the Church (Mason) He had given the community the name Herrnhut, "the Lord's watch," after a passage in Isaiah which seemed to sum up the puritans and pietists longing for continual renewal and reformation in the Christian

movement: *“For Zion’s sake I will keep silent and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not keep quiet, until her righteousness goes forth like brightness, and her salvation like a torch that is burning, on your walls, O Jerusalem I have appointed watchmen: all day and all night they will never keep silent. You who remind the Lord, take no rest for yourselves: and give him no rest until He establishes and wakes Jerusalem a praise in the earth”* (Isa. 62:1, 6-7 NASB)

Using the experience of Herrnhut as a paradigm for the whole Church, Zinzendorf soon began to send out of the community missionary teams of two different types, one kind to take the Gospel initially to the tribes outside Christendom who had never heard it, and the other to visit established churches and convey the message of regeneration and renewal. While Herrnhut was expanding and spreading abroad its arms of witness, another awakening was occurring independently in America, in Jonathan Edwards’ Church at Northampton, Massachusetts. When Edwards inherited his grandfather Stoddard’s congregation in 1727, he tells us, they were ‘dry bones’ possessing the form of godliness but denying its power. An outpouring of the Holy Spirit began in 1734 and many young people were touched and renewed through this. This little town that blessed the World, inspires every little town and city and village in the world to re-live the promises that the Spirit has given to each Christian. Looking from Herrnhut to the ends of the earth, the future brims with hope and expectancy. John Wesley’s life-changing encounter with the Moravian missionaries and his visit to Herrnhut, just prior to revival breaking out in England, inspired how William Carey modelled his missionary community in Serampore India, on Herrnhut. (Fountain 8, 9). This rings true even today when, as Kevin Thomas Baggett describes it – the act of winning a city for the LORD is

but winning the World for him. The God who rejoices over one lost sheep – how much more will the joy in Heaven be, when a city comes alive in his Word. Escobar redefines mission—in today’s time of globalization, networks of transnational trade routes, and complex international relations—as the new global mission that is from everywhere to everywhere, giving a renewed emphasis on decentralizing Eurocentric missions and active participation and invitation for missionaries across the globe to reach out to all the uncharted territories, even unto the ends of the earth.

Looking back again to the 1700s, Lovelace continues to mention that: “The distinguishing marks of a work of the spirit of God in 1741 defended the revival because it possessed five marks of genuineness: it exalted Jesus Christ attacked the kingdom of darkness, honoured the scripture promoted sound doctrine and involved in an outpouring of love toward God and man.”(42)

Three different theologies were catalysts in the first general awakening and they were pietistic Lutheranism, Puritan Calvinism, and Wesleyan Arminianism. There was considerable illumination and assurance of the work of the Holy Spirit in transforming head knowledge into heart experience, and sanctification was more emphasised than justification.

B. The Second General Awakening

The infidelity of the French Revolution represented the greatest challenge to Christianity since the time preceding the Emperor Constantine. Christians had endured the threat of the Northern barbarians, the assault of the armies of the crescent, the terror of the hordes from the Steppes, an eastern schism, and a western reformation. Until 1789, the very foundations of the faith had never faced such a threat against believing in the

God revealed in the Scriptures. Voltaire made no idle boast when he said that Christianity would be forgotten within thirty years. (*Voltaire's Prediction, Home, and the Bible Society: Truth or Myth? Further Evidence of Verification*)

Believers from different denominations in Great Britain devoted the first Monday evening of each month to pray for renewal and revival and an extension of Christ's kingdom overseas. J. Edwin Orr mentions as follows:

The second general awakening began in Britain in Late 1791, cresting in power among the Methodists who seemed unafraid of the phenomena of mass awakening. It was also effective among the Baptists and the Congregationalists. Though manifested in quieter forms. It accelerated the evangelical renewal going on among clergy and laity of the Church of England strengthening the hands of Charles Simeon at Cambridge and his Eclectic club and those of William Wilberforce in his Clapham sect, an Evangelical party in the Anglican establishment which soon became dominant in influence.(2)

Phenomenal awakenings also swept through many parts of Wales, Kingdom of Scotland, Kingdom of Ireland, Finland, Sweden Norway, Switzerland, France, the Netherlands, and the German states. The general awakening followed the defeat of Napoleon and raised up scores of effective German evangelists. In Wales, this awakening caused the birth of a new denomination, the Calvinistic Methodist Church of Wales or now called as Welsh Presbyterians. This period of revival in the United Kingdom brought forth the British and Foreign Bible society, the London Missionary Society, the Church

Missionary Society, and a host of auxiliary agencies for evangelism. Revived Americans duplicated the formation of various evangelical societies in Britain.

In America, circuit-riding Baptist and Methodist ministers took the Gospel to the frontier in the great camp meetings beginning in 1800. They were not always well-educated; their theology and practice were often open to question. However, they had the courage and calling to go where the frontier was developing, and they spoke the people's language. Lovelace states:

‘On a very different mission field President Timothy Dwight of Yale, Edward’s grandson confronted an almost informally non-Christian student body and steadily destroyed the arguments of the Enlightenment, including a series of revival harvests through his apologetic mastery. Yale and other colleges began to pump new leadership into the churches and in foreign mission movement.’ (47)

Doubtless, the second general awakening of the 1770s and 1800s, with its antecedents, was the prime factor in the extraordinary burst of missionary enthusiasm and social service, first in Britain, and then in Europe and North America.

C. The Third General Awakening

Orr describes the third general awakening as follows:

‘The third general awakening began in 1830 in Great Britain, Canada, North America, South India, South Africa, Indonesia, Burma and Polynesia. This renewal saw the emergence of outstanding Evangelists such as Asahel Nettleton in New England. Daniel Baker in the South and Charles Finney in the ‘burnt-over’ area of Western New York state. On

the Mission fields, the pioneers encountered three types of response to their outreach and prayer: folk movement of un-indoctrinated people, awakenings of instructed Communities and revivals of believers.’ (22)

The awakening began in Boston and New York and other cities in summer time 1830, and in Rochester, New York during the autumn in Finney’s ministry, and reached its peak in mid-winter 1830 - 31, winning a thousand inquirers at the same time that a hundred thousand others were being enrolled in other parts, from Maine to the borders of Texas. Orr mentions that Bishop Francis Asbury told his Methodist preachers the “we must attend to camp-meetings: they make our harvest time.” The harvest was followed by as much work as that which preceded sowing. The Methodist Episcopal Church thrived in the 1830s and doubled its numbers around 1840. James Caughey, an American evangelist, won many thousands in a series of campaigns in England – including William Booth, who was Instrumental in starting the Salvation Army.

The evangelical ecumenism of those times produced an interesting development. Dublin evangelicals formed a group for the breaking of bread, attracting many who were bewildered by denominationalism. From this gathering came the Christian Brethren, miscalled Plymouth Brethren. John Darby became the leader. Orr tells that:

The 1830s were marked by some extra ordinary revival – awakenings in Polynesia in 1834, a phenomenal movement began in the kingdom of Tonga, described by the Wesleyan missionaries as a baptism from above. In 1837, a similar movement began in the kingdom of Hawaii. In 1822, the missionaries of the Netherland’s missionary society had entered Sulawesi in Indonesia. While revival was moving the

Netherlands, a folk movement of great proportions swept Minahassa, the North-eastern peninsula, making the field Christian within a couple of generations (1975:24)

Mission of help from the Church Missionary Society guided the path to reformation in the Malankara Syrian Church, South India. Abraham Malpan, who was a professor of Syriac in the Old Seminary in 1936, and others desired that changes must take place in the Church according to the light of the Gospel. They decided to work for the changes and this led to the reformation.

Folk movements were prevalent in various parts of India; missionaries flocked to India after 1833 and accelerated the work of evangelism and social reform in the sub-continent. Local revivals were present, among them a striking movement sparked by the ministry of Samuel Hebich. A folk movement of the Karens of Burma to Christ followed the conversion of Kotha through Baptist evangelism. There was a time of revival in Ceylon (Orr 25).

The revivalists of the third awakening continued the drive for social betterment. They achieved the emancipation of slaves, the protection of prisoners, the care of the sick, the improvement of working conditions, the safeguarding of women and children, the extension of popular education, the founding of hospitals, asylums, orphanages, schools, and colleges.

D. The Fourth General awakening

In the autumn of 1857, the first signs of the fourth general awakening came. This awakening had great success in revival, renewal, and evangelism in Canada, an extraordinary movement of men to prayer in New York City which spread from the city

and on throughout the United States and over the world. Churches, halls, and theatres were filled at noon for prayer, and the overflow filled churches of all denominations at night in a truly remarkable turning of a whole nation toward God.

In addition to uncounted multitudes or nominal church members transformed by the power of God, more than a million converts adding to the membership of major denominations. Beyond all else, it was a layman's movement, in which the laymen of all denominations gladly undertook both normal and extraordinary responsibilities in the service of God and humanity.

The phenomena of revivals were reported from Ulster, Northern Ireland, some parts of India, South Africa, and the East and West Indies. This mid-century awakening revived all the existing missionary societies and enabled them to enter other fields. The first permanent missions in Brazil followed the 1858-59 awakening. In the 1870s, D.L. Moody rose to fame as a world evangelist. Out of the 1859 awakening arose the Keswick Movement for the deepening of the spiritual life. The 'student Volunteer Movement' with their watch word—'to evangelize the world in this generation,' under the direction men like John R. Mott—was started out of this awakening. Albert B.. Simpson, a convert of the 1858 revival in Canada, founded the Christian and Missionary Alliance in 1886.

In the decade following the great awakening of 1873 in Kerala, the evangelicals who had sought to reforms the Malankara church were forced out of its fellowship as a result of civil action, losing their church buildings and all that seemed essential for corporate existence. However, the zeal of reforms and power of revival combined to enable these evangelical Syrians to build from almost nothing to the Mar Thoma Syrian Church or Malabar (Cheriyān). In 1888, the Mar Thoma leaders harnessed the power of

the Kerala revival and renewal to form the Mar Thoma Evangelistic Association, a dynamic and the first thoroughly indigenous missionary movement in India. K.K.

Kuruvilla in his book *Revival in Kerala* (48) describes as follows:

“Archdeacon Oommen Mammen of Mavelikkara invited V.D. David from Tamil Nadu and L.M. Wardsworth to visit Kerala in 1892 throughout central Travancore the meetings resulted in a great awakening with its usual accompaniments of confession of sins, with great brokenness and weeping and public witnessing of faith in Christ. David’s greatest meeting was one of 25,000 at Maramon. It was then in 1895 that the Maramon Convention was founded, the Organizer in chief being C.P. Philipose.”

The 1880s witnessed advances in the evangelization of China, as well as a remarkable seven year-revival in Japan, but the years of rapid growth in the island were followed by a decline caused by an onslaught of rationalist theology among national pastors. In terms of social impact, realising greater effects in the industrialized United Kingdom. A society was bult for the prevention of cruelty to children, while Josephine Butler rallied evangelical opinion to abolish the licensing of prostitution in Great Britain.

E. The Fifth General Awakening

This was the most extensive evangelical awakening of all time, renewing and reviving Anglican, Presbyterian, Baptist congregational, Lutheran, Methodist, Mar Thoma, Reformed Churches, and other evangelical bodies throughout Asia, Africa , Latin America, Europe, and North America. This revival took during the period of 1900-1910.

The early twentieth century evangelical awakening was a worldwide movement. Many people think that it did not begin with the Welsh revival of 1904. Rather, its

sources were in the springs of little prayer meetings which seemed to arise spontaneously all over the world, combining into streams of expectation which became a river of blessing in which the Welsh revival became the greatest result.

Meetings for prayer for renewal and revival in several places around the globe greeted the new century. What was remarkable was that missionaries and national believers in obscure places in India, Korea, Africa, and Latin America seemed moved at the same time to pray for this. This renewal was marked by extraordinary praying, faithful preaching, conviction of sin, confession and repentance with lasting conversions and hundreds of enlistments for missionary service. Orr continues to discuss spiritual awakenings, and particularly about Japan, as follows: Not without significance, an awakening began in 1900 in the churches of Japan which had long suffered from a period of retarded growth. It started with an unusually intense evangelism matched by an awakening of Japanese urban masses to the claims of Christ, resulting in such an ingathering that the total membership of the churches almost doubled within the decade.

Meanwhile worldwide prayer meetings were intensifying. Undoubtedly, the farthest-felt happening of the decade was the Welsh revival, which began as a local revival in early 1904, moved the whole Wales by the end of the year, produced the mystic figure of Evan Roberts as leader, and yet filled simultaneously almost every church in the principality. The story of Welsh revival is astounding. It began with a prayer-meeting of less than a score of intercessors; when it burst its bounds the Churches of Wales were crowded for more than two years. A hundred thousand outsiders were converted and added to the Churches, the vast majority remaining true to the end. Drunkenness was immediately cut in half. Crime was so diminished that judges were presented with white

gloves signifying that there were no cases of murder, assault, rape, or robbery. The police became unemployed in many districts.

In Kerala, South India in 1900, Metropolitan Titus Mar Thoma invited the Rev. Thomas Walker to visit him and to speak in evangelistic meetings. Walker's ministry built up an expectancy of renewal in Kerala after 1900. The news of the 1904 revival in Wales accelerated it immensely. In 1905, the Church Missionary Society noted a great spiritual thirst in Kerala, and stated in the *Missionary Review of the World* that 'God was about to breathe into the dry bones new life and power.' A great revival was experienced among the clergy and laity of the Mar Thoma Church. Walker was a speaker at the Maramon convention in the year of revival.

Effects reported in the 1905 revival were deep repentance, joy in the Spirit, and a desire to spread the good news to the unconverted. The awakening that began in Kerala in 1905 lasted until the end of the decade.

The story of the Korean revival of 1907 has to be told and retold. The revival came in three waves: 1903, 1905, and 1907. These awakenings were indigenous, of missionary derivation, and part of a world-wide movement.

Orr describes the following: The Rev. R. A. Hardie (a Canadian Colleges Medical missionary) arrived in 1890 in Korea. He became associated with Southern Methodists in their mission in 1898, at a time when a noticeable turning to Christian profession occurred. In 1903, a group of seven missionaries engaged in a week of study and prayer at Wonsan, including Hardie who had for years been yearning to see Koreans convicted of sin and led to repentance and faith in Jesus. But unmistakable and lasting conversion in view of the great need Dr, Hardie, confessed his faults before the missionary body and

the Korean Church, leading to confessions of failure by other Christians. Soon after, in October 1903, during the visit of Fredrik Franson and his meetings led to the first wave of revival.. (26)

In 1905, the armies of Japan defeated Russia and gained control of Korea. A national indignation affected the Christians and many looked to the Churches to provide an organized resistance.

Many missionaries and Church leaders preached forbearance and forgiveness. Thus, the second wave of revival swept Korea in 1905-1906. Spiritual awakening began in North Korea in 1905, with remarkable meetings in the city of Pyongyang, both central and South Gate Churches crowded out, and seven hundred converts enrolled in two weeks. In 1906, H. A. Johnston brought news of the awakening in Wales and in Kerala, South India to the missionaries and Korean Christians. Half the missionaries were Presbyterian, from the U. S., Australia, and Canada, and were deeply moved by the accounts of revival among the Welsh Presbyterians and the Mar Thoma Christians in Kerala, South India. In South Korea, the awakening that began at Mokpo early in 1906 grew steadily with hundreds of men waiting their turn to testify of sins forgiven, differences reconciled, and power received. Samuel A. Moffatt wrote in *Missionary Review of the World* a report from Pyongyang (556) that “We are having another great movement this year, not only in the North but also in the South.”

The First Epistle of John became the text book for missionaries in their revival work. In 1907, 1500 men gathered in the New Year for a time of Bible study. A strange new spirit entered the meeting and everybody wanted to pray. The effect was beyond description, says Orr: “not confusion, but a vast harmony of sound and Spirit, like the

noise of the surf in an ocean of prayer” (28). As the prayer continued, an intense conviction of sin settled on the meeting, giving way to bitter weeping over their misdeeds. Moffett (20) reports: “nine tenths of the students in Union Christian College in Pyongyang professed conversion in February 1907.” A large number of the converts became evangelists with zeal to other parts of the country. The Modern missionary Crusade publication describes what happened in Korea as follows: The student volunteer movement in 1910 cited evidence of the present day work of the Holy Spirit in Korea, noting the unity and the cooperation which prevailed among Christians; the remarkable numerical growth of the Churches; the wonderful religious awakening of 1907 which affected 50,000 converts; the noteworthy interest in the word of God; the dedication of national Christians to service, including generous Korean Church.

The evangelists raised up by the early twentieth century awakenings became outstanding leaders in Korean Christianity. This nation, moved by revival and renewal, rapidly became the most evangelized part of the Orient. The Korean Church retained its zeal for God while maintaining its loyalty to country. The Korean Church became self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating. The members of the Church became enthusiastic in witnessing and generous in giving. In Korea, a persecuted Church who received her power through the Holy Spirit provided the Spiritual back bone for a nation.

Contemporary Constraints for Renewal in Syrian Churches of Trivandrum with Possible Remedies Mentioned

A. Contemporary Constraints

Syrian Christians are even observed as the privileged minorities in India (S. Thomas) with a history of trade, economic growth, and unique culture deeming them

different. The contemporary constraints for spiritual renewal are identified and listed here. This is the result of a genuine effort made by the author through personal interviews, informal group discussions, and from his own personal experience.

a. Nominalism. Nominalism is one of the first constraints one can identify for renewal. A good number of Contemporary Syrian Christians of Kerala are just holding the form of religion but ‘*denying the power of it*’ (2 Tim. 3:5). Lausanne Occasional Papers 23, Thailand Report- Christian Witness to Nominal Christians states:

“Among Protestants nominal Christians can be defined as follows. A nominal Protestant Christian is one who, within the Protestant tradition, would call himself a Christian or be authentic committee to Christ based on personal faith. Such committee involves a transforming personal relationship with Christ, characterized by such qualities as love, joy, peace, a desire to study the Bible, prayer, Fellowship with other Christians, a determination to witness faithfully, a deep concern for God’s will Heaven to come.” (Lausanne 1980: 5)

From the point of view of a nominal Christian’s relationship to the congregation, the above-mentioned Lausanne Occasional Paper identifies five types of nominal Christians, as follows.

- a. One who attends church regularly and worships devoutly, but who has no vital personal relationship with Jesus as Savior and Lord.
- b. One who attends church regularly but for cultural reasons only.
- c. One who attends church only for major Church festivals (Christmas, Easter, etc.) and ceremonies (weddings, baptisms, funerals).

- d. One who hardly ever attends church but maintains a church relationship for reasons of security, Emotional or family ties, or tradition.
- e. One who has no relationship to any specific church and who never attends but yet considers himself a believer in God (in a Protestant traditional sense).

Lausanne Occasional Paper 23 further notes how nominalism starts from a person's heart. It is a manifestation of the basic rebellion of persons against their Creator. It is also possible to discern a number of factors which has assisted the growth of nominalism. In a philosophical aspect, pluralism with its even handed tolerance of rational alternatives has sapped the enthusiasm for the demands of total commitment. It has become acceptable thinking to say all religions are equally valid paths to God. Sociological factors such as industrialization, with the development of cities and larger towns and the breakdown of traditional communities, have brought rapid changes in people's behavior. We can also see ecclesiastical factors that have encouraged nominalism. In many Churches, the preaching and teaching does not come from an understanding of the Bible as 'God's written word'. R. T. Kendall highlights the merging of the word and Spirit in the human act of Preaching. He speaks as to how 'when it comes to preaching – the work of the Spirit needs to lead the word'. This has been exceedingly stressed by the author, recounting his experiences as a Preacher at Westminster Chapel for 25 years. He talks of the time when the courtesy phrase "thank you for your word" by members of the congregation made him think on the importance of the 'conscience presence of the Spirit' in the Word (Kendall 4). Such an act of the

Spirit through human hearts – where the Word blesses and prepares the Church for the glory of the LORD, partners with the Triune God for his glory, harvest, and the return of our LORD and Savior Jesus Christ (Farias) Such preparedness of the Church through prayer and power of the Spirit observed in the Northeast of India. The Khasi revival from 1906 is noted and the Church ever since grew exponentially in Meghalaya, India. The re-revival in 2006—from the onset of a gathering that took place in April, where around 300,000 believers sat in pouring rain unmoved and praying—was described as the move of Holy Spirit that came ‘in such a powerful way (Backholer). This makes the people saturated with God – an overflowing of the Spirit (Edwards) like a mighty wind, as Mel Tari notes (Tari) or a sense of necessity as Timothy Keller describes (Keller).

b. Materialism.

Materialism is a great hindrance for renewal. The real heart of the matter is that the precise meaning of materialism is found in an outlook, an attitude toward life, which measures the meaning and goals of person’s life in terms of visible and tangible things, and which dogmatically casts aside all values which cannot be resolved into these terms or harnessed to the acquisition of goods. In other words, materialism may exist not only at the level of ideology but may also become a total philosophy of life. The mere availability of material objects is not what generates materialism; rather, it is a basic attitude toward the structures of the universe and toward the nature of human existence that determines this point of view. Our divine Lord had this in mind when he said, *“Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consists not in the abundance of things which he possesses”* (Luke 12:15).

Every Christian can bear in mind that today's materialism has a two-pronged thrust: on the one hand, it encourages and underwrites high forms of temporal aspirations; on the other hand, it tends to make a man a prisoner of his own quest for entertainment, of his own pursuit of spectators, of what gives relevance to life. The most vicious aspect of the tyranny of materialism is its ability to produce merely earth bound aspirations, to produce a climate in which the transcendent and other worldly seems strangely antiquated and dull.

Kerala has experienced much material prosperity in during the past few years, and the relative influence from the influx of money from the Arabian Gulf, Nigeria, and American areas has altered the value system, so much so that a great hankering after comfort and worldly possessions is seen. One of the Pastors commented that, "these days our Mar Thoma Christians cannot clap their hands during their singing hours since their hands are full of money and are afraid to leave it aside."

Lack of effort toward promoting the Church's spiritual growth has always been a stumbling block for mission and evangelism in any Syrian Christian Church.

c. Complacency–lack of spiritual vision and zeal.

The Syrian Christians suffer from complacency. They think like Laodicea Christians: "I am rich and have need of nothing" (Rev. 3:17). Complacency is involuntary. The LORD points out in Revelation 3:18 that their complacency came from the lack of spiritual vision. He says "*I counsel thee to buy of my eye salve to anoint Thine eyes that thou mayest see.*" The Greek word which is translated "blind" in verse 17 includes also the idea of short-sightedness as indicated in 2 Peter 1:9 which says: "He is blind and cannot see afar off." They were short sighted. The lack of vision is the main

cause of complacency. As Proverbs 11:14 states: “*where there is no vision, people perish.*” Our attitudes and feelings are largely determined by the direction in which we look. When looked inside the Church, the spiritual vision is getting dimmed day by day. The zeal of our fathers is now not so much in evidence. Many priests and laymen suffer from spiritual lethargy. Priests, particularly, are losing their influence because they are much more interested in ‘other things’ than in spiritual matters. Day by day, a great deterioration qualitatively goes on in the Church’s ministerial formation. Such a lethargy to pray, act, and think in the will and purpose of the LORD is an urgent indication to turn back to prayer and humility (Ravenhill)—the only way to unlock the power of godly inheritance (Frost)

d. Superstition and alliance with errors.

These are two of the growing common practices among many Syrian Christians. They do hinder them from getting renewed. For example, part of the Christians in Pergamos and Thyatira had associated themselves with customs and practices that were connected with pagan worship, Satan was behind all these, wielding his power through superstitions and moral corruptions to enslave people. Under the pressure of religious persecution and the seduction of licensed lusts, some clever and casually minded leaders in these two Churches devised a new scheme of religious philosophy in order to justify and facilitate their participation in temple festivals. They tried to persuade Christians to think that they could take part in pagan practices without really having their Christian life compromised.

These theories must have had an intellectual appeal because they were called ‘*deep things.*’ However, the Lord says that they were prompted and promoted by Satan

and he calls them '*the deep things of Satan.*' No doubt, Satan could be deep. He fools the simple people with superstitions, and rules over the intellectual with deep sophistications which either deny the existence of God or adulterate the Christian faith with human reasoning.

These religious theories must have had strong points before they could be successfully persuasive. Satan knows when to make concessions and how to bargain with apparent losses on his part in the human eye, but with real gain and advantage in the long run. Today Christians are falling in great numbers before Satan and superstitions for receiving temporal benefits, not knowing or ignoring for what they have in eternal store.

e. Lack of biblical teaching.

“Study to show yourself approved in God’s sight, a workman needs not to be ashamed but rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15), is an important and serious reminder to all the Christians. Feeding on the Word of God through systematic teaching is essential to sustain the new life in spirit. It was the open Bible that showed the way of salvation to the people who were lost in darkness. There was a thirst to hear and to study the Word of God. In groups large and small, people searched the Scriptures to find pearls with which to enrich their lives and to understand the will of God in changing situations. With the change of priorities and values, the earnestness to take time to teach and to study God’s Word has been dampened and this has caused the impoverishment of life.

f. Lack of involvement in society as prophet.

The task of the Old Testament prophet was to keep before Israel the fact that she was falling short of the vision of the Kingdom (the covenant people) God had set for her on Mount Sinai. The prophet’s task was to show Israel how it was doing this by usurping

justice and using war and poverty as a means for keeping the common man under the control of the rich and powerful. This great role is not being played by the Church today. Mar Thoma Church needs prophets amidst her people, which it constantly keeps before its nation and the world. The Church should remain a critic of the economy, education, politics, and social dimensions of its society. She must also remind the world of the danger of injustice, war, poverty, and anything else that minimizes a person. This is important as the change makers of every phase in history – started from Colleges, Campuses, young people, and even children (Baker 2). The young generation cares for the Church, society, community, and the life flowering and budding forth. Chris Ngai emphasizes how the vision for revival needs to be re-birthed from the College Campuses, highlighting:

“We are losing a generation during their college years. Yet, in the midst of this, God is raising up a remnant of students and campus leaders who are desperate for the presence of God, who won't relent until heaven comes to earth, and who will give away their very lives for love! They will turn the tide of a generation by accessing the very heartbeat of heaven.” (102)

g. Indifference.

Indifference is a serious problem with the Syrian Christians and hence hinders renewal. In the book of Revelation 3:15, the Lord Jesus Christ speaks to the Laodicean Church, “*Thou art Lukewarm- neither cold nor hot.*” Lukewarmness is a spiritual condition in which neither the emotion nor the will is affected by conviction. No action or urgency is involved. No stirrings of the heart, no tears, no emotion, no excitement, no compassion or commitment are expressed by the individual. Lukewarmness and

indifference are the same in essence. Whatever may be the shortcomings of liberal theology, it is not guilty of indifference. It seeks after relevance. It speaks for involvement, commitment, and cost.

The real difficulty with the indifference of the Contemporary Syrian Church is the fact that the Church is not 100 percent indifferent. The Church has some concern and involvement, but they are satisfied with it. The real problem is the ease with which we are engaged in the supreme and most urgent task of evangelism. Indifference is often identified with laziness in looking for more and new effective methods and techniques of evangelism while slowness in adapting ourselves to new situations to ensure fruitfulness while opportunities are fleeting away.

In the official reference volume of Asia - South Pacific Congress on Evangelism Christ seeks Asia held in Singapore, Philip Teng comments as follows:

There is a popular concept in the evangelical circle that needs re-examination and re-statement. We often say 'we leave everything to the Lord after we have done our duty – We are not to worry about the results'. This notion is deep rooted, and it has justification, but we must take both sides of the picture into consideration. The weaknesses of our human nature will readily take hold of this idea and make the best use of it, with the result that we no longer aim at success at all costs and easily excuse ourselves. No businessman can have that attitude. He cannot say, 'I open my shop on time and people can come in and buy everything that is here. I have done my duty and I am not worried whether I make money or not.' On the contrary, he feels there is no limit to what he should do to make money. He never rests in satisfaction without making money. Because he is never indifferent to money. (Tape 6, 8-9 November 1968.

Collection 579 Records of the Asia-South Pacific Congress on Evangelism, CN 579. Billy Graham Center Archives.)

The Lord prayed in John 17:4, "*I have finished the work which you gave me to do.*" This is the Lord's good example for us. The beauty of the Cross is that it is there where all questions are answered, it is there where we start and finish our work, it is where we find our purpose. Derek Prince highlights this importance of finding our way back to the Cross by saying: "God has not provided many different solutions for the multitudinous problems of mankind. Instead, He offers us one all-sufficient solution, which is His answer to every problem." The solution is that everyone would make their way to the Cross of Christ (Prince 5)

h. Hypocrisy.

Just like one of the Mar Thoma Bishops commented on that story of the woman who was caught in adultery and was brought before Jesus-where Jesus tells them that whosoever has not sinned, let them throw stones at her and t no one did. However, if the same incident were to be repeated today and Jesus tells the Syrian Christians, they would definitely stand there and throw stones at her. The condition today is that people had lost their prick of conscience. People do not think any more of living a life of sincerity and honesty. Most of them put a front or a veil of vague Christianity. They are losing their true sense of repentance.

i. Orthodoxy without life.

As read in Revelation 3:1-2, the Church in Sardis was thought to be alive, but in reality was dead. The Syrian Church is like this. She is related to Christ, the Living one, but only in name. She is alive in the estimation of man, but dead in the sight of God. In

all probability, she has all kinds of activities, efficient in organization, regular in holding services, and fluent in prayers. Visitors may be impressed with all the outward manifestation, but God is interested with reality beneath the surface. Only the inner life can satisfy him, God is interested in outward activities only when they are tangible pulses of invisible spirituality. The Lord comes to the fig tree for fruit and not for leaves; without doubt the cursed fig tree is a picture of the ostentation of Judaism. Judaism never lacked an outward show, but it missed the importance on what God counts.

j. No challenge for Mission.

The challenge to take the gospel to others must be emphasized. The work of evangelism both within and outside Kerala was carried on with great enthusiasm a generation ago. However, the spirit of lethargy has fallen upon most of the people. Thousands of villages in India have not so far heard the gospel of God's redeeming love in Jesus Christ. These days, the mission of the Church has been defined in two almost exclusive ways. On one hand are those who say that the Church's mission is evangelism and discipleship only; on the other are those who solely advocate social welfare. Due to this division, arguments, debates and discussions waste most of the productive work. Through these, it could be understood how Brian Steensland and Philip Goff through their scholarship introduce a midway where evangelism takes interdisciplinary approach of evangelical social engagement, where gospel proclamation and propagation goes with emphasis on justice, human rights, welfare, and socio-cultural aspects of capacity development.

The link of understanding connecting the pulpit and the pew is weakened by conflicting purposes. This endangers the chain of evangelism necessary to reach the

community with the gospel. When Christians do not identify with the role of the minister, they do not involve themselves in daily witness. Consequently, the truth of the gospel remains within the four walls of the Church or concealed neatly in the minds of the congregation. This isolation of truth segregates spiritual concern to the pulpit and deprives the church of the vitality necessary for growth. Ed Silviso stresses the importance of solid biblical basis and practical outworking to build the force needed for the congregation to move cities for the glory of the LORD. Silviso presents a working model for reaching each city through his own personal battle scars and triumphant victories. Through this dynamic action of biblical outliving and social outpouring, Churches can reach cities for Christ – As to how the Church navigates social issues in a biblical perspective, social identity of a Christian is important (Day). Here William Bain stresses the importance of theology shaping the international order and challenging the dominant forces of a secular world recentering the concepts to how God would define it.

k. Downgrading the importance of proclamation.

Preaching is the proclamation of the Word of God to men by men anointed of God. Yet proclamation is being downgraded even though people are willing to listen. Much of the fault is in the sender and not in the receiver. The problem is to provide sufficient food nutritious enough to meet his/her needs.

A convention of farmers and rangers would never spend time on ‘how to get a cow to come to the barn’ or ‘how to get a cow to eat.’ The program would probably concern itself with improving the feed to take advantage of the appetite that always exists. This is a far cry from what takes place at a conference for ministers. Improve the feed, the congregation will gladly and eagerly listen to the Word of God. The people will

sense in the man of God the Spirit of Jeremiah who spoke for every preacher, 'His word was in mine heart as a burning fire' (Jeremiah 20: 9) The church has little reason to congregate unless it has a strong pulpit personality with a distinctive message to challenge and inspire them to return. Many people with problems attend church earnestly and sincerely seeking answers but are disappointed. The answers are in the Word of God. Many problems remain unresolved because the clergy is so involved in the intricate details of regulating religious machinery and oiling ecclesiastical programs that little time is given to the word.

The New Testament Church was involved in many activities but proclamation always had priority: it was never relegated to a secondary position. Paul told Timothy, '*I was ordained a preacher.*' In the letter to the Romans, Paul made it clear that man cannot hear without a preacher and that faith comes from what he had heard from a preacher. Men will still listen to the message from God. A minister is primarily a preacher. He may be called upon to be a counsellor, administrator, and many other things, but his primary task is that of delivering the Word of God. The work of the Church is to provide the Word. It is the Word that provides strength for the journey. It may be received from a pulpit, a printing press, by the witness of a friend or through a personal devotion. Many forms and different methods may be used, but still the proclamation of the word is what furnishes the necessary strength and energy for Christian living and effective witnessing. The daily life of the preacher as an individual Christian must be an open book that is read by all men. The witness is both in life and lip.

I. Priesthood of believers is neglected.

To neglect the priesthood of all believers is to disregard one of the distinctive tenets of the Christian Church. This concept makes all believers one in Christ. Everyone may have a different work on earth, but each individual stands immediately before the throne of God as a priest with an obligation to minister. Each man is a priest to himself and to others. Christ is the only mediator; therefore, each man must feel an obligation for his own spiritual welfare and for the salvation and encouragement of others. Consequently, clergy and laity do not differ in a spiritual state before God. The only difference is in the office they may hold. A basic orientation of the lay element is essential to adding significance to both the congregation and clergy. Each have a distinct Christian responsibility but strange things have happened to this concept within the Church.

A major dynamic of New Testament Christianity is the priesthood of all believers. Every sincere worshiper has free access to the Lord Jesus Christ. Every Christian has a sacred calling and an obligation to serve in kingdom work. Now, not only does the Church neglect the responsibility of priesthood in the pulpit, the church disregards the reality that each Christian is and should be a priest under God. Every Christian as a priest is to offer sacrifices of obedience and praise unto God. The acceptance of this priestly service is assured through the intercession of the High Priest, Jesus Christ.

m. Previous Patterns.

The Syrian Churches are imprisoned by the patterns of previous generations. In an effort to perpetuate the sameness of doctrine that is called the 'faith of our fathers,' the Church attempts to perpetuate the same programs as well. Although theological change is not necessary, some parts of liturgy, the ritualistic part and aspects of worship must be

changed to meet the needs of contemporary society. A renewal must occur in the form of worship, liturgy, and programs. For many young people, as well as for a few old, the Sunday worship service is becoming monotonous due to the use of the same liturgy every Sunday. This type of stereotyped worship service is keeping many young people away from attending regular Sunday services. Bringing drastic change or introducing new programs are not necessary, but following the simple concepts of the New Testament in contemporary operations would be meaningful and lively for each member.

n. Tradition.

Part of the problem with Mar Thoma Church is being like the church at Sardis that had departed somewhat from the original teachings of the Lord and apostles.

“Remember then what you received and heard: keep that and repent” (Rev. 3: 3). This verse has two possible interpretations. First, the emphasis is placed on the way in which the Christians in Sardis heard and received the message of the gospel, it was preached in the power of the Holy Spirit and its reception produced spiritual vitality. The other interpretation places the emphasis on the original message they received from the apostles and therefore indirectly from the Lord himself. They must remember it. The Lord’s exhortation indicates the possibility that they had some departure from the original message. This departure, either by addition or omission, had greatly to do with the weakening and diminishing of their spiritual vitality. The Church must always guard against adding to as well as subtracting from biblical teachings. Martin Luther protested against highly organized and complicated traditions which blocked the view of fundamental truths of the gospel, resulting in the de-vitalization of the Church. Non-biblical tradition does incalculable damage to the plain gospel. The Syrian Churches

already have a huge accumulation of tradition which has done harm to spiritual vitality. The Word of God judges all tradition and brings back to God's power.

o. Lack of true fellowship and life of prayer.

Revival comes from prayer (Cho and Goodall, 7) Today's church needs an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Early church leaders like Luther, Wesley, Finney, and Moody were filled and refilled with the Holy Spirit. Prayer like theirs was the powerful key to every revival throughout Christian history. Groups of people here and there should meet in regular fellowship and prayer, invoking the Holy Spirit to renew the life of the Church.

Mar Thoma Church members have become more and more self-centered and uninterested in the concept or experience of revival. In the 1840s, prayer was one of the most important experiences that led the Church toward reformation and renewal. Now, busy schedules and laziness combine together to create a lame excuse that people have no time for prayer. Zac Poonen emphasizes the need to radiate God's glory by living as Christ lived on Earth, by the power of the Holy Spirit (2). Deliverance for oneself, for Church, and for community is through prayer alone. Kim Owens is of the view that revival was never meant to come and go, ebb and flow. In fact, it's not God who taps out of revival; it is us. Heaven's desire is a church that's burning with passion, alive with the Spirit, and flowing with the supernatural. What matters for a Church is sustaining the move of the Holy Spirit, - and such sustenance is through a congregation that has found itself in the center of God's will through prayer.

p. Lower view of the Scripture.

These are days when many Syrian Christians, particularly priests, hold a lower value of Scripture. For them, the Bible is not the Word of God but it only contains the Word of God. Inspiration of the whole Bible is under doubt and question. For them, the Bible is a sort of age-long story of man's effort to find God. Thus the Bible is reduced to the level of other books, and is made to appear, not as a divine book but a human book pretending to be divine.

This view must be rejected utterly, and with abhorrence. The Bible is not man's account of his effort to reveal God to man. The Bible is God's own record of his dealings with men, in his unfolding revelation of himself to the human race; it is the revealed will of the creator of man, given to man by the creator himself, for instruction and guidance in the ways of life. The books of the Bible were composed by human authors, with some even unknown. Just how God directed these authors to write is not known either. However, God did direct them, and these books must be exactly what God wanted them to be. The Word emphasizes the work of the Father, Son, and Spirit – this trinitarian missiology is 'reflective' of the mission of the Church as it partners with the Triune God.

q. Fear.

Fear is the last constraint identified as to what will happen if renewal takes place. This fear complex keeps or shuts many Mar Thoma believers from receiving this experience of spiritual renewal. Those Christians are primarily afraid to face the consequences or results of renewal. They are the kind of people who meet for fellowship and prayer meetings, do desire a renewal experience, but all with their hearts half opened. They restrict the work of the Holy Spirit through the human element of fear. Fear should fear the Word of God. Edward T. Welch investigates the roots of fear in the human soul

and the ramifications of living in the grips of anxiety, worry, and dread, and concludes that the way out is only through soaking oneself in the Word of God () – this is important for renewal.

B. Possible Remedies

Though the ultimate remedy lies in the work of the Holy Spirit, some possible remedies are mentioned here. Any strategy for reaching nominal Protestants must start with the earnest prayer that God's people will themselves be blessed and become a blessing. If the Church is the main cause of nominalism, then she must seek forgiveness. If the Church is the main means of reaching nominal Christians, then she must be equipped and empowered by the Holy Spirit for the task. Prayer for the Church should not only be that she should be better in talking, but she should be more Christ-like in her living.

The Church that is described in Acts 2 was one to which new members were added daily. It was also a Church which was marked by a confidence in, and experience of, God at work, a sense of awe, close fellowship, sacrificial sharing, a constant readiness to praise God, and an attitude toward those outside its membership which gave rise to much good will in return.

The Lord Jesus Christ has set the pattern. Christians are called to imitate him. He came from the presence of his father to live alongside men and women. He so deeply longed to save. Today, the Church must develop patterns or organizations that both gather their members together into the presence of their heavenly Father, and also release them to be the salt of the earth.

Worship will therefore be a high priority. Worship need to be scriptural in principle and truly indigenous and understandable in its expression, worship that nurtures joyous participants rather than admiring spectators. God must be allowed to make his presence felt. Such a vision to process change in Christian worship is important as argued by George Guiver where he cautions that, “Christian worship will always tend to reflect its time and today is no exception. In the wake of the Enlightenment and the age of Romanticism which followed it, there has now followed the age of Shopping. Even the financial collapse of 2008 is responded to in terms of our ability to shop. In the Church, personal preferences on worship abound, from traditionalists turning the altar back to the wall, to progressives seeking life in a spree of creativity.” (3) When the culture of Kerala is understood with the tradition of Syriac chanting and sacraments, understanding how the uniqueness of tradition is in itself a platform for greater evangelization is imperative. Such a trend is observed in the revival at Skye, an island in Scotland. The importance of liturgy and unique cultural heritage is stressed by Steve Taylor who introduces the unique way of how the Highlanders’ music and arts brought the land to the saving knowledge of Jesus (146).

The ministry of the word will be equally important both in terms of balanced scriptural preaching and of imaginative teaching through groups and private reading. The word that is ministered must be seen as a word to be obeyed in daily living. Everyday lifestyle must be a simple one, consonant with the demands of the gospel.

In the Church, prayer must be in the center, with a great recognition that all plans and programs must be discussed by waiting upon God. Prayer must be redirected for the communities, church leaders, fellow members, for the community in which we live, for

the growth of the Kingdom of God, peace throughout the world, and for victory in the constant spiritual warfare in which Christians are involved. Such centrality to truth – where prayer recenters theology to its purpose, is key.

About materialism, some time ago the general belief stated that the deeper the poverty, the greater the spirituality. Now the pendulum has swung to the other side. Radio, television, magazines, and pulpits are filled with prosperity messages. Today, most people believe that extremes of material blessings are wrong and people must come to an awareness that God balances the life of his children with times of prosperity as well as adversity. No man of God in Scripture was otherwise. However, in all situations they learned to be content and praising the almighty. In Philippians 4:12, 13, Paul said *“I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learnt both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”* Money is a part of our daily living, but what is in need is a right attitude toward it. J. Tyler discusses widely on materialism and cautions Christians against it.

The need of the hour is to go back to the study of the Word of God, and to grasp the message of the gospel of the grace of God seeking and saving the sinner in redeeming love. Booklets have to be published containing lessons for Bible Study and people have to be urged to meet in groups for study and to delve into the depths of the Word of God. Life of the individual and of the community must conform to the will of God as revealed in the Word of God.

To be released from the previous patterns, several steps could prove helpful. Christians need a fresh awareness that the ministry is a spiritual enterprise and that its

accomplishments must come primarily through spiritual means. The word of the LORD to Zerubbabel through the prophet Zechariah is applicable to today's kingdom tasks as well, "*Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts*" (Zech. 4:6).

The Church needs to be aware of the peril that she may be paralyzed into inaction by the sheer weight of forces ranged against her. The statistical trends for the day are not encouraging for, evidently, growth in world population is greatest in those areas where the Christian witness, so far as one can see, is the weakest. There should be a renewed spirit of discernment, no less than a spirit of dedication by the Church, renewal which takes realistic account of the alien and paganizing forces ranged against her, and which at every level and front threaten to penetrate her own thinking.

If the Church has to be a prophet in the community, it has to proclaim to that community a lifestyle that expose the inadequacies of the present way of life and holds open to people the promise of a far better way of life, where radical theology is needed. (Moody). Every individual Christian must come to a personal confrontation with Jesus Christ and accept him as the Lord and Savior. Fellowship meetings have to be organized for all age groups in different ways and different days. As far as local congregations are concerned, they should be divided into smaller areas and must meet together for intimate fellowship, to share their testimonies, personal or family experiences. Prayer nights have to be organized and a day of fasting and prayer would be vital once a month or once a week. Also, it would be encouraging if believers can come together for dawn prayer time.

Research Design Literature

What the research has been is a profound measure of weighing the different fronts of understanding and perceiving the different ways in which revival or the Spiritual thirst

can be made to be reborn in today's times. Tim Sensing says "The project could implement an ethnographic analysis of the congregation in order to provide a descriptive narrative account of the church. Since the possible research problems available for study are countless, then the implementations, interventions, or strategies are likewise countless" (61). Sensing continues "Projects are not designed just to understand phenomena but to provide the minister an opportunity to impart pastoral leadership that implements change" (63). Michael Quinn Patton states "There is no recipe or formula in making methods decisions" (12).

Chapter 2 has thus a fascinating account of streamlining all the issues in the lines of biblical, theological, and missiological foundations and then pruning the knowledge to befit the understanding to throw light upon the history and the present scenarios of the Syrian Christian Churches in Kerala, India.

Summary of Literature

The entire Chapter looks further on how to move ahead. We have understood the widespread concern across the Christian world about what some would call the renewal of the Church. Accordingly thus, Martin and Mullen tell us that "Much of the impetus behind the concern has come from the increasing influence of the Charismatic Movement over Clergy and Laity" (3). One must certainly thus question the wisdom of using the term renewal or spiritual renewal for an agglomeration of activities and changes so various and diffuse. Therefore in carefully diffusing the terminologies, the basis in the biblical, theological, and missiological foundations are emphasised. Taking the wider perspective of what revival and renewal is, the history of Church revivals and renewals that occurred in the vast global Church were studied. The Global Church on being

revived here and there has helped the growth of the Church all elsewhere. Thus, it is understood that the renewal of the Christians anywhere is but a collective responsibility and an eternal sanction in which the Believers are meant to go forward. There also is a distinct calculation as to where the Churches in these contemporary times has been held in clutches of nominalism and complacency, which became an easy route for silence and quite satisfaction came to grip the people. It is understood by all these that the Churches of Syrian Christians in Kerala have stayed faithful for more than two thousand year, but have borne little fruit. The prayer and purpose thus aim for a renewal and revival that will put the whole of India in the blazing love of Christ.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter considers the three research questions with brief descriptions. Also, an analysis of the methods utilized to choose the participants and conduct the research. After a detailed narrative of the nature and purpose of the project, the research questions and description of the instrumentation used to address them. Further explaining the ethnic context along with the specific parameters used to choose the participants for the research. in this chapter. The moral reflections which aided in the research while dealing with the participants are addressed in this chapter.

The instrumentation section provides an overview of the various tools used to conduct the study. In addition, this chapter encompasses the data collection section, which establishes the various processes upheld in collecting the data. The data analysis section provides insight into the data analysis methods I adopted to examine the collected data.

On interviewing people in different congregations amongst multiple aspects and principles which they believe have formed their spirituality, care was taken to build an atmosphere of tolerance and hopefulness. Therefore, the chapter explores the ardent ways through which a conclusion has been drawn through the faculties that ensured the field for the background study.

Nature and Purpose of the Project

The purpose of the research was to identify best practices for spiritual renewal and revival within the Syrian Christian Churches in the Thiruvananthapuram District in Kerala, India

Research Questions

Research Question #1: In the opinion of bishops, priests, and laypeople, what practices would most contribute to spiritual renewal and revival within the Syrian Christian Churches in the Thiruvananthapuram District in Kerala, India?

The preparation for renewal and revival is the prayer that perceives the unseen and the empowerment of the Spirit in the most improbable situations, to stay receptive to the breath of life. “If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land” (2 Chron. 7: 14). The healing that comes through prayer and preparation is that which leads the Church and the people in it, ready for the wonders that await them.

This study therefore covers the ambit of how the learning of revival in the churches through the Scriptures can highlight the pursuit of the revival that Churches envisage.

In the survey (Appendix B), Questions 1 to 5 deal with getting to know the interviewee. Questions 6 to 9 address in different shades the scriptural backing that the interviewees are aware of and that which they are building their hope in. Therefore, these sets of questions directly address the inherent inhibitions of the persons taking the interview. These inhibitions are relevant when learning about the preparedness of the congregation to revival.

Research Question #2: In the opinion of bishops, priests, and laypeople, what obstacles most hinder spiritual renewal and revival within the Syrian Christian Churches in the Thiruvananthapuram District in Kerala, India?

Revival in the land of Kerala came forth by the initiative and preparedness Abraham Malpan. Palakunnathu (പാലകുന്നത്തു അബ്രഹാം മാൽപ്പാൻ). Also known as the Martin Luther of the East, he was the key figure in the establishment of Mar Thoma Syrian Church. His daring act of translating the liturgy which was in Syriac to Malayalam, the mother tongue of the people of Kerala, brought a breakthrough of revival and reformation to the ancient Orthodox rites that the Syrian Christians of Kerala followed for centuries.

On 6 September 1836, a group of 12 senior clergy formed strategies, under the leadership of Abraham Malpan, to initiate reformation. They issued a circular describing what they considered the wrong teachings, and a statement listing twenty-four evil practices which the Church had picked up due to its association with other churches and religions. They sent the same as a petition to governmental authorities; which all started from an order to investigate the reforms that could be made by the metropolitan (Kanisseril and Kallumpram 28).

At the time of Purification, the church experienced a number of reforms. A few of them are as follows:

1. Translated and revised the liturgy, thus removing the unscriptural practices.
2. Abolished prayers for the dead, invocation of saints, and veneration of sacraments.
3. Abolished auricular confession.

4. Introduced the practice of giving Holy Communion to the people in both kinds.
5. Emphasized the reading and study of the Bible, family-worship, and evangelistic work.
6. Removed pictures and drawings and statues from the churches and places of worship.
7. Insisted on a good moral standard of conduct for the laity and simple living for the clergy with high morale.

On Monday, 29 August 1836 (Malayalam Era (Kollavarsham) 1012 Chingam 15), the closing day of the fifteen-day lent, Abraham Malpan celebrated the Holy Qurbana Service in Malayalam directly translating from the Syriac Text at his home parish in Maramon. Clergy who supported him also followed it in various other parishes.

The remembrance of this revival sent an electric wave of life to all the Christians in Kerala, through all the years.

The next widespread revival took place around 1925, in the time of famous revival Christian Leaders Sadhu Kochukunju Upadeshi and poets like K. V Simon (Maha Kavi – Great Poet title was given to him). They were the source of many missionary movements over Kerala as well as the South of India.

The key practices that have led to revival in the Syrian Christian Churches in Kerala, other churches in Kerala, India, and South Asia are of great relevance. Therefore, while doing the questionnaire.

Questions 10 to 15 in Appendix B deal with the implications of what the present Church Leaders of the Syrian Christian Churches in Thiruvananthapuram, think of revival, and how the learning of the past can lead them to a hopeful future.

Research Question #3: Moving forward, what are best practices for spiritual renewal and revival within the Syrian Christian Churches in the Thiruvananthapuram District in Kerala, India?

The contemporary lifestyle of the Christians has taken the congregation to a standstill of not reasoning with their conscience the state in which they are. As Christian Leaders, or influencers from the churches who have a whole lot to contribute to the society, their empowerment is a matter of great importance. Once the churches gather the strength to resist the temptation to stay asleep, the Spirit can awaken them to a whole new meaning and purpose to fulfil in these times.

With the present Government in India in power since 2014, the trends are concerning the churches of India. Kerala have approximately 30% Syrian Christians who constitute 3 percent to 4 percent of the overall Christians in India. Therefore, the onset of revival and spiritual empowerment in this land, can enhance the strength of other churches in the whole nation, and abroad.

The freedom of Christians in India will probably be restricted and threatened in the near future. The anti-conversion laws in different States are crippling the churches in North India, but the privilege of being Christian for centuries have been a solid ground of defense for the Syrian Christians. They are one group of people whom, if God revives, can take the light to all corners of India with the laws in favor of them, wealth to sustain them, and influence to even change the laws.

Therefore, there is a hope that the Syrian Christian Churches of Kerala, keeps the zeal that keeps making the Believers endeavor to something daring and hopeful. *“The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have*

divine power to demolish strongholds.” (2 Cor. 10: 4) The hurdles have to be jumped and prayer has to be wielded to demolish strongholds for the mighty power of the LORD to breathe and raise the churches back to life, before the wave of persecution hits. Only then, can the Churches of India stay strong in Christ, even when their rights are taken or their dreams are crushed.

In the survey given in Appendix B through questions 16 to 20, different perspectives were assessed to build the knowledge of where the Church can strengthen their shaking walls.

Ministry Context

The Syrian Christian Churches in Thiruvananthapuram were selected because of their dynamic connection with the culture of Kerala and politics of the State along with direct contact with the politics of the country. This study also took into consideration religious and demographic factors, as Thiruvananthapuram has long standing relevance and history to its location in the tip of the Indian peninsula, bordering itself with the culture of the State of Tamil Nadu.

Having been a South Travancore Missionary of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church from 1994 to 1999, I have had the privilege to know first-hand the ministry needs of the District of Thiruvananthapuram. Also, I have come across the dire needs for all sorts of development in Thiruvananthapuram as well as the other districts of the State, even as the other States of India are considered.

Hope is heralding in anything that can be done in this place. The presence of London Missionary Society (LMS), Church Missionary Society (CMS), and other missionary movements, the Syrian Christian Churches in Thiruvananthapuram have had

the greatest exposure with the Church of South India and other Church movements. The origin of the Thiruvananthapuram Church dates back to the arrival of the Rev. John Cox, the first LMS missionary in Thiruvananthapuram, in 1838; the Mateer Memorial Church (MM Church), situated in the heart of the city of Thiruvananthapuram, is one of the oldest of its kind in South India and established by him. Yet, when it comes to the Syrian Christians who are of the same CSI Church (Church of South India), they distance themselves from the MM Church in Thiruvananthapuram. This distinction, because of ethnicity, is one of the case studies of the obstacles that Syrian Christians face irrespective of denomination, and needs to curb so as to awaken themselves to join hands with all God's people and empower the nation for Jesus.

Referred to by Mahatma Gandhi as the "Evergreen city of India," the city is characterized by its undulating terrain of low coastal hills and busy commercial alleys. With almost 9,500,000 inhabitants as per the 2011 census, it is one of the largest and most populous cities in Kerala. Because of the influence of the Tamil culture and language and huge labor force that comes from all across India to this place, the demographics of the District is such that care has to be taken for these people along with the natives. The present rule of the Communist party (as of 2019) and the Legislative Assembly of the State being in Thiruvananthapuram, make it the most politically vibrant and promising district of the State.

With Thiruvananthapuram being the capital of the State of Kerala, it has many colleges, universities, and educational institutions which make it a major hub for students and youths.

. This study puts a specific emphasis on the Syrian Christian Churches, who are one of the most affluent and influential communities. Being situated in a key area, they have a duty to exert a positive influence and reach out. A revival and renewal in these churches, can build the community and the society fruitfully.

Participants

Criteria for Selection

. It was a careful choice to interview the people. A lot of prayer and discussion with various Church officials, went into the decision to carry out this research and interview. The consideration of the Ministers was after overall understanding of the congregation, their setbacks, and spiritual growth index. There was a choice of male laity members, female laity members, members of the church who do charity, business, and other endeavors. Again, interviewees are members of the congregation involved in different Christian ministries—youth, children and so on.

Description of Participants

The participants were male laity, female laity, priests, pastors, vicars, and missionaries from the Syrian Christian Churches in Thiruvananthapuram. It is observed that their level of involvement in the congregation and the society to further understand the conclusion to which the reality was matched, was comprehended. All the participants were born Christian and more than five generations in the faith. They all were educated and involved in Christian ministry.

Instrumentation

This project was an evaluative study in the descriptive mode utilizing a very brief, research-designed questionnaire for criteria-based sample selection. A semi-structured

interview to solicit the pastoral evaluations that formed the basis of the study was carried out. Questions determine the subjects' understanding of and the revival's impact on the Church's mission and nature.

The initial survey included a minimal number of questions, used primarily to generate the subject sample for further study (Appendix A). These questions determined the Church size, relevant information on pastoral tenure, and perceptions from the clergy as well as laity, involved in the different frontiers of the ministry. The participants received a survey to be returned by post or internet emails.

There was a semi-structured interview for the respondents who matched the selection criteria (Appendix B). This study is concerned with a Church's receptivity to renewal and revival, which they have studied, but may not have experienced in their time. The response of the people was recorded. The interview was very valuable for gaining an understanding of leadership approaches that dealt with excesses and aberrations while embracing revival in such a way as to maintain the Church's mission.

Personal conversation got the most out of simple people, especially because the participants consisted of homemakers and workers with simple jobs.

Expert Review

I was able to meet the Most Rev. Dr. Thomas Mar Themotheous, Metropolitan Bishop of the Syrian Jacobite Church, Kottayam Dioceses, several times. This helped to formulate the semi structure interviews which I performed later with the other Bishops. The discussion my dissertation coach with Dr. Milton Lowe helped to bring more clarity to the nature and purpose of the project and to formulate the research questions which helped me design the questionnaire for pastors and believers in a more meaningful way.

Rev. Dr. Abraham Philip, a professor at the Mar Thoma theological seminary, guided me to effectively survey the believers.

Reliability and Validity of Project Design

The project design characterized the precedence of the Church and relate it to the interviewee's comprehension of where it is leading the congregation. Therefore, the validity of the research design lay in the simplicity of creating a platform for open conversation, even as the talk led to the considered points. The busy pastors, priests, Church leaders or professionals answered the questionnaire by submitting the answers written by hand, whenever their time permitted. It becomes reliable because of the ardent work done in the selection process, in selecting only those whom we know could contribute to this research.

Thus, the Secretary and I first spoke with Church officials, and then headed to the people after knowing their free time.

The research questions addressed the receptivity of the congregation to the preparedness they had for a revival. Therefore, the direct conversation regarding the same as outlined in the questionnaire (Appendixes A and B), aligned the facts and truths to enhance the comprehension of the conclusion.

Data Collection

The research methodology included the precision of gathering the different perspectives of the people in congregations. Interview participants by mail which explained the intent of the research and sought their permission to be interviewed. The Secretary followed up the correspondence by setting dates convenient to them. Three businessmen found it difficult to respond, and hence apologized by phone asking them to

be excused as they were travelling. One of the priests in our list, expressed discontent, therefore he was not contacted further. Altogether, forty-eight members responded, out of fifty-six people we tried reaching. Some participants had no time for personal interviews, and therefore they were happy to converse with me over the phone. I interviewed others by Skype.

This research began by having an overview of the history of the Church of the ethnic community, the Syrian Christian Churches of Thiruvananthapuram. In such a scenario the Churches are identified, and the interaction it poses with the community and society is understood. Research participants were limited to only those whom I personally knew and knew that they had a keen interest in the topic. Once I jotted the people's names in my personal notepad, they were contacted. The preliminary interaction with the participants were quantitative in that their responses were scaled and taken into consideration. The preliminary exercise is stated in Appendix A. Once the responses have been made clear, the Secretary contacted them for further interview, deciding a favorable time and place. This was followed by the semi-structured secondary questionnaire (Appendix B), which is qualitative. The reality on discussing the questions together is anticipated, while taking a clear note of the interviewees' behavioral patterns, gestures, respect, and feelings. Although the interviews used everyday language, the processes of research made a clear distinction in incorporating accepted language available in research literature (Cresswell 145). The interviewer and interviewee had nothing hypothetical to discuss, as the concept of revival was clearly known to the community. The preintervention survey was very equipping to the congregation who found useful methods to understand the importance of revival and prepare the Church to

receive the unction of the Holy Spirit to such a renewal. Accordingly, we deployed a wide range of interconnected interpretive practices hoping always to get a better understanding of the subject matter at hand.

Data Analysis

Collection of the data through semi-structured interviews, questionnaires and given surveys, were assessed. To finalise the data analysis, the researcher put the data in tables and graphs. The analysis also included content analysis, reoccurring themes, looking for similarities, and organising domains. Summarisation and categorisation are also used as part of the data analysis.

CHAPTER 4

EVIDENCE FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

The purpose of this chapter is to explore beliefs and challenges for Christians and Christian leaders for revival and renewal in Syrian Christian Churches in Thiruvananthapuram. This chapter, therefore, presents the findings of qualitative and quantitative data collected from 5 Bishops, 25 Priests/Pastors, and 35 lay people – to posit an analysis to what they believe and perceive of the past, present, and future of the renewal in the Syrian Christian Churches in Thiruvananthapuram. The interviewed leaders were Bishops overseeing different denominations in Kerala. The rest of the data collection from pastors, evangelists, organization leaders, office-bearers of the church, women leaders and lay leaders, came from surveys sent as hard and soft copies. Albeit the people that were reached consisted mainly of men, no limitation existed in including woman leaders for the findings. The believers interviewed included men and women, young and old. All the data came from those stationed and leading in the State of Kerala, and having a clear knowledge of the impact of revival from the past and having a vision for revival in India through the Syrian Christian Churches of Kerala. Data collection and the respective interviews took five weeks.

I began with oral communication with each participant, following which, the researcher asked for their consent to participate in the data collection process for this specific thesis while disclosing the intention and vision of this project. Further, having received their consent, the researcher visited the 5 Bishops on the date and time fixed with each individual, and the rest of those who took part in the survey (25 Priests/Pastors

and 35 Lay people). They gave back their views to the researcher at their convenience within a month. The researcher also made sure that the participants had privacy as they shared their opinions with the researcher. The surveys collected were stored safely and subjected to non-disclosure. This chapter analyzes the collected information to determine and answer the research questions raised by the researcher.

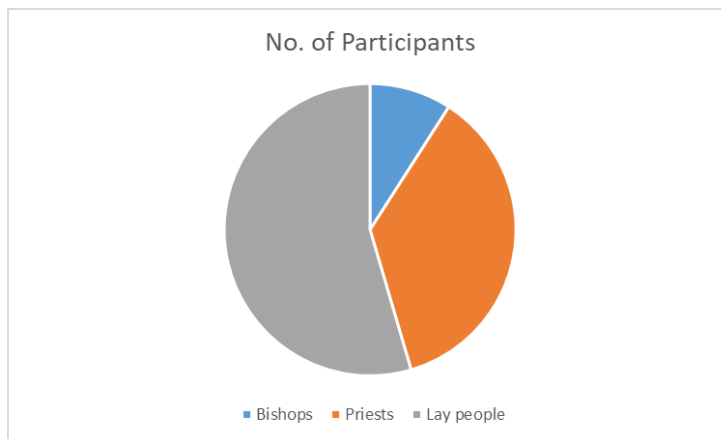
The purpose of this chapter is to evaluate the consensus of the people in comprehending the need for a revival and to frame a strategic response which will be a guiding force for the future studies that await a Christian spiritual revival in India, through Kerala Syrian Christian Churches.

Participants

The researcher reached out to over sixty five people including Bishops, Priests, Pastors, Ministers, Women Leaders, and Lay people, from different denominations and cultural heritages within Kerala and with a distinct knowledge of the Syrian Christian congregation in Thiruvananthapuram. Only 25 leaders and 30 believers responded. I prepared closed-ended questions, yet in the questionnaires, analysis was carried out in specific with regard to – the awareness, participation and preparation. The interviews and surveys involved three thematic comprehensions. Awareness was the scholarship available to the public with regard to the renewal and revival of the Syrian Christian Church of Kerala that happened in the past. Participation meant the praxis of the awareness that could evolve to the preparedness for a strategic intervention in the communities in Kerala and India for strengthening already existing Christian institutions. Preparation in this analysis meant an active preparation which was the accumulation of awareness and participation, alongside the commitment to prayer for the future. The

findings were interesting; they showed a clear picture of Syrian Christian Churches as a potential community which needs a reawakening call.

Interviews	No. of people who participated
Bishops	5
Priests/ Pastors	20
Lay leaders	30
Women	15



Research Question #1: Description of Evidence

In the opinion of bishops, priests, and laypeople, what practices would most contribute to spiritual renewal and revival within the Syrian Christian Churches in the Thiruvananthapuram District in Kerala, India?

In understanding what practices contribute to spiritual renewal and revival within the Syrian Christian Churches, the answers differed on many fronts amongst the participants. Yet, after careful analysis, the findings dealt with five distinct points.

A student of 19 years boldly observed “We students believe in revival. We have studied about the history of revival in Sunday Schools – but I believe it can happen again.” Such positive affirmation of the role a Sunday School plays an important role. In Thiruvananthapuram, since all the Syrian Christian Churches analyzed have Sunday Schools and every young person has a Bible at home, this was a key observation. The social inclusion of all religions in Kerala has been instrumental in making Schools, Colleges, and movements amongst the youth a plausible platform for evangelism and social work. The pattern of devotion is traced from the ancestral trust, rather than personal conviction, yet the fact that the students identify themselves as Syrian Christian and other Christian, as noted by another participant, is concerning. Such demarcation amongst the young minds have been damaging. This observation was reaffirmed by a Church leader and a teacher, portraying the fault lines in Churches that have not taught the young generation the value of universality of human rights and need for radical social cohesion. The aspect of need for more participation in Church activities irrespective of gender or age or social standing is key for renewal and revival. Church leaders raised questions about how there needs to be practices of more inclusion where men and women; old and young, rich and poor need to be equally involved with the Church and Church ministry. “I see a revival in the future” wrote a retired Priest, whose words of faith sums up the hope the older generation has. The challenge deals with how the young comprehend it.

A lady involved with the prayer ministry emphasized the need for a prayer life and Bible knowledge in ways of quizzing and creative methods, as the essential tool for strategy. How this can be facilitated through local groups or cell groups can be analyzed.

A Bishop stressed how such groups can bring synergy amongst different denomination, strengthen the bond of believers, and promote healthy dialogue. Moreover, such platforms serve as grounds for mentorship, through which the young generation can grow and be inspired.

A Bishop also stressed the importance of liturgy, an integral part of the ancestral church and culture of Syrian Christians in Kerala. The concern revolved around how to make the practice accessible and easily comprehensible to the youth.

Research Question #2: Description of Evidence

In the opinion of bishops, priests, and laypeople, what obstacles most hinder spiritual renewal and revival within the Syrian Christian Churches in the Thiruvananthapuram District in Kerala, India?

Once again, the analysis concluded with four intrinsic hindrances that challenge and obstructs the free flow of ideas, knowledge, or faith practices.

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines materialism as follows: “A doctrine that the only or the highest value or objectives lie in material well-being and in the furtherance of material progress,” and “a preoccupation with or stress upon material rather than intellectual or spiritual things.” This was reiterated by a Church leader who stressed the pros and cons of the factors involved in the influx of materialism. According to him, the economic prosperity of the community has to be displayed to attract more to the ‘value’ of the faith, but if the focus derails social inclusion of other people or neglect of basic values of sharing and caring, ‘it’s a dangerous path’ he emphasized.

Inaccessibility to the Church, because of the digital divide, has robbed the people of the safety of the guidance and comfort of Church. Many elderly people have complained about the inability to open smartphones and access prayers. Moreover, some Priests confess how their economic inability to procure cameras and equipment for live television has brought so much discontent and instability to the Churches, where there have been instances where people have left the faith, attempted suicides, and have fallen victim to depression and anxiety. This and many other factors, led to the next observation on the sense of emptiness in people or the rise in anxiety. Congregation members have personally confessed this to the priests, who have noted it.

The final hindrance for renewal and revival in the Syrian Christian Churches is the increased generation gap, and how leaders are not able to individually reach out to the congregations. The purity of the Gospel can be reinstalled through good fellowships; this needs to nurture generations.

Research Question #3: Description of Evidence

Moving forward, what are best practices for spiritual renewal and revival within the Syrian Christian Churches in the Thiruvananthapuram District in Kerala, India?

Throughout the data collection, it the strategic specificity to the capital of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram was observed. The best practices therefore, in the Churches and amongst the believers in this geographic and cultural space, are important. The fact that Thiruvananthapuram was the political base of Kerala has in itself brought the belief that the Churches and congregation need to be better prepared in dialogue, in awareness, in facilitating interpersonal skills, and in bringing expertise. The majority of the lay leaders

observed the need for a prayer life. One Pastor wrote “My mother Church is hugely influential – and hence, I believe it has the power to impact even political structures, in these changing times for India. For this, I believe the LORD’s people need to pray.”

Prayer is preparedness as spoken by a Bishop.

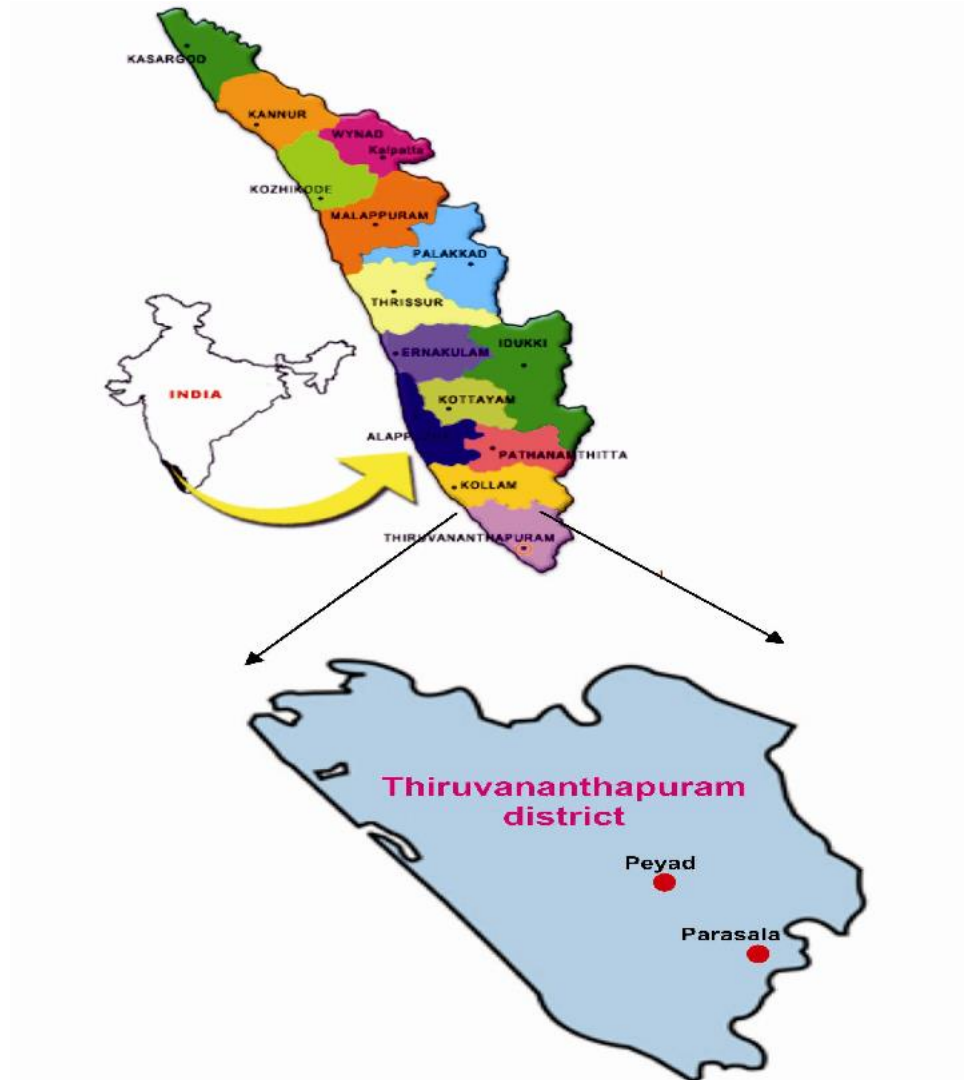


Fig. 4.1 Map (Source - www.researchgate.net)

Summary of Major Findings

Through the research there are least three major findings through the analysis of data collected. These three points reveal the situation of the Syrian Christian Churches in Thiruvananthapuram and their potential for a revival in the near future. The data analysis also shows the awareness, preparedness, and participation of Christian leaders and believers and the needed recommendation for the restoration of the Indian Churches by the empowerment of the Syrian Christian Community in Kerala.

The research revealed that questions were self-explanatory and simple – and the pattern was kept consistent for the Bishops, Priests, and Laypeople – to comprehend the overarching simple themes and how to reinforce them.

Top three major findings are noted here below:

1. The Need for Prayer
2. The Need for the involvement of Youth
3. The importance of Liturgy

CHAPTER 5

LEARNING REPORT FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

In recognizing the context in which Syrian Christian Churches are in the nation of India, alongside new challenges presented by the ruling Government that noticeably has advanced the curbing of the rights of Christians – the part that these Churches can play in much of the Hindu, Muslim, and Christian World around them, is important. For a radical witness, revival and renewal must come. Therefore, in this chapter the findings of the previous chapter are comprehended and analyzed, thus achieving the purpose of this thesis.

The beginning of this thesis asked the question of what keeps the Syrian Churches of Thiruvananthapuram from reaching out more effectively to Hindus, Muslims, and various other groups of people. The purpose of taking Thiruvananthapuram as a case-study, was to inform best practices to the rest of the Churches in Kerala, India, and the world – ethnic communities that have the potential to reflect the love of Jesus in unique and powerful ways. Syrian Christian Churches of Kerala are focused on this thesis, because of the huge dynamic networks it has established through diasporas in different parts of the world for long years and generations. A change in the spiritual outlook of the Syrian Cristian Churches in Kerala, therefore will bring ripple effects to an innumerable number of people.

The majority of Syrian Christians know what the Scriptures say but not what they mean. As a result, many have come to think of the Church merely as a gathering place for

family and friends. So naturally, even the young generation finds politics, games, adventures, and the like more attractive and appealing. If the Church were more open to these realities while staying firmly faithful to the truths of Scripture, its effectiveness and influence would greatly increase.

The purpose of this research was to identify best practices for spiritual renewal and revival within the Syrian Christian Churches in the Thiruvananthapuram District in Kerala, India. Thus, the questions raised to carrying out the purpose of this project were as follows:

First, in the opinion of bishops, priests, and laypeople, what practices would most contribute to spiritual renewal and revival within the Syrian Christian Churches in the Thiruvananthapuram District in Kerala, India?

Second, in the opinion of bishops, priests, and laypeople, what obstacles most hinder spiritual renewal and revival within the Syrian Christian Churches in the Thiruvananthapuram District in Kerala, India?

Finally, moving forward, what are best practices for spiritual renewal and revival within the Syrian Christian Churches in the Thiruvananthapuram District in Kerala, India?

Major Findings

Throughout, the thesis have had diverse engagement on the historical and present contemplation of revival and the experience of radical evangelism—building a prophetic imagination as Bruggeman suggests—to the future preparedness of revival. Through careful analytical comprehension, this study dealt with the concept of spiritual awakening by delving into the dual complimentary concepts of renewal and revival. These were

particularly chosen and kept to impart separate theoretical knowledge to the practicality of spiritual awakening—renewal stresses the normative behavioral change in the individualistic approach to imbibe the work of the Spirit in ‘renewing’ ones’ self, whereas revival brings collective worship and preparedness to the calling of the LORD Jesus by being receptive to the Spirit’s formative force in the Church. Chapter 4 briefly discussed how the people responded to the prophetic imagination in the Church, both individually and collectively, giving emphasis to three distinct spheres that could accelerate the body of Believers, especially in Syrian Christian Churches, to a spiritual awakening that is renewal and revival.

First Finding: The Need for Prayer

I believe that prayer is that which lacks in my community. For all the interviews with the Church leaders, or the surveys with the laity, I found the critical neglect to the concept of prayer. There were references to the need for new activities, new social welfare schemes, new projects—but the aspect of renewal that calls for individualistic preparedness was overlooked. The need for Churches to focus on prayer and the clear theological basis of Biblical preaching is needed now more than ever. Jesus Christ rebuked Laodicean Christians because, although they were materially wealthy, they were desperately poor in the things of God (Rev. 3:17-18). Materialism blinds us to our own spiritual poverty. Kerala with its high development, professionalism, and literacy, made it distinct from the other states of India, brought with it a lot more responsibility. The Churches in Kerala, as the first to be established with a notable Christian community from time immemorial, have this responsibility.

Kendell's scholarship stresses how 'the work of the Spirit needs to lead the word' (4). Such an act of the Spirit, through us, blesses and prepares the Church, for the glory of the LORD partners with the Triune God for his glory, harvest, and the return of our LORD and Savior Jesus Christ (Farias). This makes the people saturated with God—an overflowing of the Spirit (Edwards) like a mighty wind, as Tari notes (). All these scholarships stress the work of the Spirit through prayer and dedication that keep hearts receptive to the moving of the Spirit.

1 John 5: 14 notes the 'confidence' in this preparedness. "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us." The way the LORD guards our petitions and moves us in his Spirit is for the ultimate union of the Church with Jesus. Therefore, prayer is a privilege for the children of God. Prayer that brings confidence brings courage too. "But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you;" Matthew 5: 44 speaks of the courage to do beyond what is expected—to walk the extra mile. Prayer equips the Christian believers for these acts of imitating Christ. He forgave those who persecuted him (Luke 23: 34) and lived to love his enemies. I stress this here, because with the renewal and revival of the Church, I pray that the Church will prepare through prayer to face with confidence the changing times that is restricting their practice and propagation of faith.

Second Finding: The Need for involvement of Youth

In pastoral ministry spanning more than thirty-five years, I have observed that revival starts with the young people coming forward with the burden to live and die for Christ (Phil. 1: 21).

Data analysis revealed that most of the clergy and the bishops who were interviewed stressed the need for involvement of the youth in Church activities. This is so because the Church is instrumental in society and social work which in turn brings more of Christian values to the culture of India. Such a prominence of values in the youth are something that will influence the other communities for evangelism, renewal, and revival. Syrian Christian Churches in Thiruvananthapuram are important because of the huge influx of student population as well as well professional opportunities that attract youth from all across the State as well as the nation to the capital of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram.

Hard-learned lessons in perseverance and faithfulness are imbibed by the young generation through examples of the older generations, thus helping bring about a platform for discourse and helpful conversations that will nurture and mentor the youths. The Church in its mission to build a safe space for the youth will therefore help in individualistic wholesome development of young men and women for the LORD.

As discussed earlier in the thesis, the change makers of every phase in history are youth who are reckless in believing in concepts, ideologies, and faith. In the Christian faith, renewal mostly starts from college campuses, young people, and even children (Baker 2). The young generation who cares for the Church, society, community, and the life flowering and budding forth, step to the unknown bringing micro and macro changes. Ngai portrays how the vision for revival needs to be re-birthed from college campuses – “We are losing a generation during their college years. Yet, in the middle of this, God is building up a remnant of students and campus leaders who are desperate for the presence of God, who won't relent until God's will be done in earth as it is in heaven, and who will

give away their very lives for the love of Christ! They will turn the tide of a generation by accessing the very heartbeat of heaven” (Ngai 102) This remnant brings prophetic imagination as Bruggeman points out.

1 Timothy 4: 12, “Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity,” comes as a direct instruction on the ‘renewal’ aspect that is needed for the young generation to have a receptive heart for the LORD’s channeling of power in the communities, societies, and families. One Bishop I interviewed specifically spoke of this verse in great emphasis. I find that the first finding ties in with the second; a generation is nurtured through the prayers of the generations before them. When youth come to the Church and get involved in seeing their parents in prayer, they will pray too. Psalm 119:9 speak of another dimension – the Word of God: “How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word.” Prayer and soaking the soul in the Word build character, build specificity to the purpose of the Church, and become the driving forces for evangelism and social welfare. The involvement of the youth in the Churches cannot be guaranteed unless the Spirit convicts them to do so, and for the Holy Spirit to move, preparedness needs to be ever-present. The involvement of youth is important in the context of India, where the growth of the Church and even its sustenance is dependent on the devotion of the remnant—where the preparedness of the remnant must even be to the extent of freely giving our whole existence as a living sacrifice (Rom. 12:1-2), transforming every word, thought, and deed.

1 Peter 5:5-9 says:

“Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.”

Apostle Peter’s emphasis on humility is also important, since the involvement of youth should not be to show the power of Church, but that each member is living according to the will of God; young or old, will be exalted high by the power of the Spirit, so that God will be glorified and people who see and know the Churches will be inspired to choose Jesus.

Third Finding: Importance of Liturgy

The seven Syriac holy sacraments have been the vital part of the worship for centuries. It is more of chanting than of reading, having a rhythm and music of oriental inclination. This is memorized by all Syrian Christian families, and children as young as ten years old learn at least ninety to a hundred pages of the liturgical order – now also in the mother tongue Malayalam, because of the 1836 revival. The revival in 1836 witnessed the birth of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church, therefore the history, present and future of

liturgy, is sacred in the ethnic community of Syrian Christians. In Thiruvananthapuram, these liturgical orders have been a source of fascination to the larger Christian community, and the other religions. There were clergy who expressed through the surveys how such fascination of the liturgy, if used wisely to communicate scriptural truths will, in itself, create an anointing which can lead to renewal and revival.

Throughout the survey and interviews, the emphasis on and the prominence of the liturgy was observed. The sacraments in Malayalam and Syriac, which are followed by the Mar Thoma Church and that too in all other Syrian Christian Churches, make this ethnicity unique in keeping its oriental culture in India. The liturgy is deep in the Scriptures, with specificities on theology, missiology, and prayer; yet, the involvement of liturgy seeping into the hearts of the believers to effect renewal and revival is not strong enough. This is mostly because of the usage that has become more of a ritual in the Churches, rather than a matter of study, prayers and concepts to grapple with.

If liturgy is of such importance, the prominence of worship needs to be comprehended. Worship will therefore be a high priority and worship needs to be scriptural in principle and truly indigenous and understandable in its expression, as is in the Syrian Christian culture. Worship needs to encompass the vision to process change as argued by Guiver, where he cautions:

“Christian worship will always tend to reflect its time and today is no exception. In the wake of the Enlightenment and the age of Romanticism which followed it, there has now followed the age of Shopping. Even the financial collapse of 2008 is responded to in terms of our ability to shop. In the Church, personal

preferences on worship abound, from traditionalists turning the altar back to the wall, to progressives seeking life in a spree of creativity.” (Guiver 3)

When the culture of Kerala is understood with the tradition of the Syriac chanting and sacraments, understanding how the uniqueness of tradition in itself is a platform for greater evangelization becomes imperative. Such a trend was observed in the revival at Skye, the island in Scotland. The importance of liturgy and unique cultural heritages is stressed by Taylor when he introduces the unique way by which the Highlanders’ music and arts brought the land to the saving knowledge of Jesus. (146). This is important because the integration of Western culture in the worship of Churches have decreased the prominence of the Syriac tones and expressions. Such integration needs to be a bridge for cultural exchange where the Church needs to be encouraged to showcase their unique worship ways to the outer world, even as they take insights of worship into the Churches. This is how the Syrian Christian Churches can bring best practices to the world.

Habakkuk 3: 17-18 speaks of the innermost exaltation despite the direst needs of the human that naturally could make him/her desolate. Worship is the offering that the LORD is pleased with, and the forefathers of the Church in Syrian Christian Churches used the liturgy as a method to keep worship alive at all times on the lips of believers. “Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God” (Ps. 42:1). Worship is but the recognition of his holiness—worthy of all praise, and it prepares us for the joy of heaven—the type of joy that never depends on circumstances but focuses on the triune God alone. This is worship of the LORD Jesus, who is King. Liturgy needs to pour out

our heart “to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen” (1 Tim. 1: 17).

Ministry Implications of the Findings

The findings from this research reveal the status of the Mar Thoma Churches in Thiruvananthapuram, in its preparedness for a spiritual awakening. The research also revealed the latent struggles of the Church preventing believers from reaching out for the evangelism in India. I highlighted a few of the findings needed to bring the church into a mode of preparedness where the reality of revival can come forth. Three key findings that could help implement renewal - lead to the betterment of the church in the future. The leadership of the church needs to assess the proposed findings and look seriously to provide hope for the Church in its pursuit for evangelism in India.

Limitations of the Study

Though several restrictions prevailed during the COVID-19 pandemic period, I tried to explore the best possible results. The findings of the research apply to the Thiruvananthapuram district alone. The Church leaders whom I interviewed were very positive and supportive throughout. Even amidst the pandemic restrictions, they wanted to know the best possible ways to involve the Church to the next level of preparedness spiritually as well as socially—knowing that the times are getting tougher in India, with the present ruling Government.

Laity were cooperative too. Women participants expressed greater enthusiasm – which I understood, considering how the Churches are strengthened and sustained by the prayers of mostly women. A couple of people did in fact back off from the survey.

Unexpected Observations

The most unexpected was the enthusiasm of the children in wanting to do the survey. This was fascinating, since I was contacted by a few lay members and even priests, communicating how while doing the survey, their children or nieces/nephews expressed interest in the research. The enthusiasm of the children gives me hope.

Recommendations

What are the recommendations such as changes in practice, future areas of research, etc.? How can your research be used in the future?

Having considered all those findings, at least four important strategies emerge to follow and practice to strengthen the body of Christ even when there are latent challenges which steal the joy and purpose of the journey in the believers.

1 - Leaders need to be empowered to communicate hope through Jesus Christ. There needs to be passionate intervention by leadership—through prayer and belief in the Word of God—so that hearts of stone are changed to hearts of flesh. “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh” (Ezek. 36:26).

2 – Prepare the Church to be ready for adversity. The Syrian Christian Churches have never got anything wrong, but times are changing. Leaders and laity have to be trained and equipped in prayer to build faith, beyond anything else.

3 – More emphasis and effort need to be given for outreach programs, where the youth will have a sense of purpose and are involved to understand the part they can play in capacity-building in communities.

4 – Women are well involved in Syrian Christian Churches, but it would be informed best practices for the Churches around, if the women in Syrian Christian Churches can involve themselves in empowering vulnerable women across the community and State. The knowledge of the LORD and evangelism takes place more when ladies join hands in prayer and build families and communities up.

Postscript

The whole process of writing this thesis and research was a form of worship for me. It made me think and rethink about the vision that drove me to the ministry of Church. All that have prompted me throughout my life was the vision where the dry bones in beautifully constructed Churches come back to life again. For this vision, I have set apart my life, following the call the LORD gave. My return to the Mar Thoma Syrian Church was also to see the revival in my ancestral Church and the revival to give Jesus to India. This research work therefore was a re-dedication of my life for God's calling to my life.

APPENDIX A

An Initial Viewpoint of Renewal

The renewal and revival that happened in the past in Syrian Christian Churches, and the impact it had and still has on the Churches is huge. The hope, for such a revival to blow again on the Syrian Christian Churches, is also great. I was personally prompted to ask you about your take on the Scriptures, and how it has invoked in you the passion for a revival in your congregation. I am now working on a Doctor of Ministry project designed to study laities’/ clergies’ perceptions. It will be on how the renewal, or revival, they pray for, will influence the health of their Churches in the near future, equipping them to a whole new reality. Your participation in this study would be very greatly appreciated and I truly pray this will also advance the cause of Christ.

In His Service,.....

Rev. Samuel Thomas Varghese

Name:

Phone number:

E-mail address:

Church name:

Your position in the Church:

If you’re a Clergy, the time when you were in charge of the Church:

If you’re a laity, the position you hold:

Your observation on the average weekend worship attendance at the main service(s):

Below are five statements that may describe your observations of your Church's experience of the renewal or revival that you are hopeful of. PLEASE ANSWER EACH QUESTION.

4 – Strongly Agree; 3 – Agree; 2 – Disagree; 1 – Strongly disagree;

1. My Church knows about the renewal movements that have happened in the Syrian Christian Churches.
2. The youth in my Church are involved in Church activities.
3. My Church hopes for a revival and is prayerfully preparing themselves for it.
4. My Church is ready to positively impact the community through their missionary movements.
5. My Church is keen to collaborate with other Churches to accelerate spiritual growth.

APPENDIX B**Semi-Structured Interview Protocol**

Primary Questions

1. What is your name?
2. What is your denominational affiliation?
3. How long have you been a member of this denomination?
4. Have you ever changed your denomination? If so, why?
5. Do you engage in Church activities? If yes, how?

Sl No.	Type	How?	Comment
1.	Church Leader/ Elder/ Vicar/ Minister		
2.	Sunday School Teacher		
3.	Youth Wing Director or youth activities leader		
4.	Women's wing		
5.	Official initiatives		
6.	Secretary		

7.	Cell Prayer Co-ordinator		
8.	Children's ministry		

6. What does the concept of 'renewal' or 'revival' mean to you personally?
7. What is your understanding of the mission of your church/congregation?
8. Do you intend to influence others in your congregation through your understanding of the Word?
 1. Yes
 2. No
 3. I don't know.
9. Do you remember the time when the Syrian Christian Churches of Kerala had an experience of revival? If so, do you hope for such an experience in the near future?
10. Do you observe the youths of the Church diverted from the indigenous patterns of the community?
 1. Yes
 2. No
 3. I don't know.
 4. I don't want to know.
11. If 'Yes,' what do you think can bring them back to the purity of the Gospel?

12. How can you impact a spiritual renewal in your Church and Society?
13. What was God's purpose for the renewal, and did you and your Church fulfil that purpose?
14. What are the greatest benefits and challenges of renewal/revival you are anticipating?
15. Do you think that you will discontinue any ministries as a result of the renewal or would you form any new ministries because of the renewal?
16. Have you had a spiritual burn-out in which you felt your passions for renewal were not reciprocated by the congregation or your friends? How did you revive yourself?
17. What do you expect from your Church leader? If you're the Church Leader, what do you expect from your superiors?
18. What obstacles do you think are preventing revival/ renewal?
19. What makes you hopeful for your Church?

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER TO BISHOPS

Syrian Christian Churches: Spiritual Renewal and Revival in Contemporary

Syrian Christian Churches in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, India

You are invited to be in a research study being done by Rev. Samuel Thomas Varghese, a doctoral student from Asbury Theological Seminary. You are invited because of your experience and involvement in the ministry and your role in the leadership of the church for many years.

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to give me time for an interview which may take about 30 minutes. The interview is in-person or over an online platform, according to your convenience. No potential risk or any monetary involvement in the research is involved. One hundred percent confidentiality is assured, and no personal information will be used in the research. The data collected will be kept safe, and then destroyed after three years from the approval of the thesis.

If something makes you feel uncomfortable in any way while you are in the study, please tell *Samuel Thomas Varghese*, who can be reached at sam.varghese@asburyseminary.edu. You can refuse to respond to any or all of the questions, and you will be able to withdraw from the process at any time during the research. If you have any questions about the research study, please contact Rev. Samuel Thomas Varghese at sam.varghese@asburyseminary.edu

Signing this paper means that you have read this or had it read to you and that you want to be in the study. If you do not want to be in the study, do not sign the paper. Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be upset if you do not sign this paper or change your mind later. You agree that you have been told about this study, why it is being done, and what to do.

Signature of Person Agreeing to be in the Study

Date Signed

APPENDIX D

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER TO PRIESTS

Syrian Christian Churches: Spiritual Renewal and Revival in Contemporary

Syrian Christian Churches in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, India

You are invited to be in a research study being done by Rev. Samuel Thomas Varghese, a doctoral student from Asbury Theological Seminary. You are invited because of your experience and involvement in Church ministry for many years.

If you agree to be in the study, you will receive a questionnaire to fill up. It will take approximately 30 minutes to fill it up. No potential risk or any monetary involvement in the research is there. One hundred percent confidentiality is assured, and no personal information will be used in the research. The data collected will be kept safe and destroyed after three years from the approval of the thesis.

If something makes you feel uncomfortable in any way while you are in the study, please tell *Samuel Thomas Varghese*, who can be reached at sam.varghese@asburyseminary.edu. You can refuse to respond to any or all of the questions, and you will be able to withdraw from the process at any time during the research. If you have any questions about the research study, please contact Samuel Thomas Varghese at sam.varghese@asburyseminary.edu.

Signing this paper means that you have read this or had it read to you and that you want to be in the study. If you do not want to be in the study, do not sign the paper. Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be upset if you do not sign this

paper or change your mind later. You agree that you have been told about this study, why it is being done, and what to do.

Signature of Person Agreeing to be in the Study

Date Signed

APPENDIX E

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER TO LAYPEOPLE

Syrian Christian Churches: Spiritual Renewal and Revival in Contemporary

Syrian Christian Churches in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, India

You are invited to be in a research study being done by Rev. Samuel Thomas Varghese, a doctoral student from Asbury Theological Seminary. You are invited because of your membership and participation in the church.

If you agree to be in the study, you will receive a survey to participate in by filling it up and returning it to me within two weeks of its receipt. It will take approximately 30 minutes to fill it up. There is no potential risk or any monetary involvement in the research. One hundred percent confidentiality is assured, and no personal information will be used in the research. The data collected will be kept safe and then destroyed after three years from the approval of the thesis.

If something makes you feel uncomfortable in any way while you are in the study, please tell Samuel Thomas Varghese, who can be reached at sam.varghese@asburyseminary.edu. You can refuse to respond to any or all of the questions, and you will be able to withdraw from the process at any time during the research. If you have any questions about the research study, please contact Samuel Thomas Varghese at sam.varghese@asburyseminary.edu.

Signing this paper means that you have read this or had it read to you and that you want to be in the study. If you do not want to be in the study, do not sign the paper. Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be upset if you do not sign this paper or change your mind later. You agree that you have been told about this study, why it is being done, and what to do.

Signature of Person Agreeing to be in the Study

Date Signed

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