Elections provide the people with opportunity to influence the political process, and also help, directly or indirectly, to determine who will hold government power. Apart from giving an opportunity to citizens to participate in choosing their representatives, elections are also important instruments for political education, informing the people about national problems and placing before citizens various alternatives of policies. Elections are also a guarantee for enjoying other rights like civil, economic, social, cultural, educational, etc. Elections, therefore, are a vital part of any democratic process by which people exercise their political choice and their rights as citizens.

In almost all countries in the world, there is indirect or representative democracy. In all democratic countries, adult citizens irrespective of property, education, race, religion, gender or other differences, have been given the right to vote which is popularly known as universal adult franchise or
universal suffrage. It may be mentioned here that while even in many developed countries universal adult franchise developed in steps; in India, it was introduced right in the beginning of independent rule. Article 326 of the original (unamended) constitution provides for universal adult franchise in India. Thus, in India, every citizen irrespective of caste, creed, religion, sex, place of birth, social or economic status, etc has an equal right to vote.

In a democracy, the right to vote is not only a mechanism for the functioning of governmental institutions but also an instrument for achieving socio-economic justice through people’s participation, accountable and responsible government and mobilization of citizens’ participation in the political process. Elections are also a visible manifestation of public interest. The reason to vote in favour of a candidate or party, therefore, is determined by both the individuals’ own reasons and perceptions as also by his/her being part of a collectivity or group. There are many factors which influence and shape the voting behaviour of the electorate. Some are short term while others are long term. Short term influences are specific
to a particular election and therefore do not determine the voting patterns in general. But long term influences have long term endurances and will not be changed in each election. Such long term factors include age, sex, education, inhabitation (rural or urban), caste, community, religion etc. India, unlike the West, is a primordial society having great impact and influence for such factors like caste, community and religion in deciding the voting behaviour of the electorate.

Analysis of electoral politics in Kerala shall, definitely, be a unique experience as there is an even division of Kerala society into four powerful communities – Christians, Muslims, Ezhavas and Nairs. Any study of the politics of the state, since independence, will entail an objective evaluation of the role played by these communities in the society in general and political system in particular. We have had thirteen assembly elections and fourteen Lok Sabha polls so far, whether held simultaneously or separately. This chapter, while giving a brief account of the historical background of the involvement of the Catholic Church in the elections between 1947-1991, makes a comprehensive analysis of the role played by the Church in
the electoral politics of the state from 1991 to 2004.

The Church in Kerala, owing to its antiquity and numerical strength, presents many features which have no parallels in other parts of the country. It has a well-knit organizational set up which no other community in the state can claim. The pyramidal structure of the Church has also proved equally effective in shaping the hierarchy into an almost unbeatable interest group in the state\(^1\). Due to its peculiar organizational set up, the church hierarchy finds it easier to command effectively their personnel and resources whenever called for. Among the Christian communities the Catholics and among the Catholics the Syrian community forms the most powerful and wields splendid political influence in Kerala politics.

Right from the starting of democratic process in Kerala, the Christian community in general and Catholics in particular have been supporting ‘Right’ political parties particularly the Congress and from 1964 onwards the Kerala Congress too. In all the elections from 1957 to 2004, the general advice of the Church to its folks was to vote for those parties which supported democracy, freedom and minority rights. A perusal of the
wordings of pastoral letters and Church circulars which were issued to give guidelines to the believers particularly on the eve of elections would reveal that they were clear words of advice for voting in favour of right-wing political parties. It is true that during some elections certain Latin Catholic prelates asked their faithful to vote in favour of Left Democratic Parties (LDF) and also in the 1980 assembly elections some of the individual bishops of Syrian Catholic Community personally supported candidates belonging to L.D.F\(^2\). The relation between the Church and Communist party turned non-antagonistic though not cordial in 1990’s and it continued to be so till the LDF government assumed power in the state in May, 2006, after a landslide victory. With the introduction of Self-Financing Colleges Act, 2006, the relation between the Church and government became strained and it still continues so despite the efforts made by leaders like P J Joseph, leader of Kerala Congress (J), a partner of LDF Government, to create some rapport between the two. But the relation between the two further worsened when the government took steps to revise Kerala Educational Acts and Rules (KEAR) as well as school text books. It is alleged that KEAR revision was aimed at
entrusting school administration to local bodies and aided school appointments to Public Service Commission. As far as text book revision is concerned, Church alleges, it was done with a clandestine objective, that is, to inject atheism and materialism in young minds.

The Catholic Church, since independence, has been supporting Indian National Congress and various fractions of Kerala Congress in almost all elections to the Lok sabha and State Legislative Assembly, except for a few occasions when some prelates adopted ‘candidate-specific’ approach which sometimes went in favour of the left parties. After independence, the first democratically elected government of Travancore was that of Pattom A. Thanupillai. In order to win the favour of the Ezhavas and Christians, the two politically powerful communities of the state, besides his own (Nairs), Pattom constituted his cabinet with C. Kesavan and T.M. Varghese, an Ezhava and a Christian respectively, as ministers. The other communities, particularly the Syrian Catholics, were quite disappointed as they expected a prominent place in the newly constituted government, which came after the dictatorial
rule of C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer. The Church was also not happy with the land reform bill of Pattom. In October, 1948, in a meeting of the Congress Committee, the majority of the members being Catholics, registered non-confidence in the chief minister. Pattom immediately resigned and the ministry fell.

Realizing the dominance of Christians in the Congress Party, Pattom left Congress and formed a new party, Indian Socialist Party (I.S.P). The domination of the Congress by the Christians was so conspicuous that it was even branded as the ‘party of the Christians’.

After Pattom, T.K. Narayana Pillai, became the chief minister of Travancore and when Travancore-Cochin was constituted in 1949 he became its first chief minister. He took all cares not to provoke communal interest groups particularly the Church. But on some Devaswom Board issues, Mannathu Padmanabhan, the NSS leader, and R. Sankar, the SNDP leader, turned against the Congress and the government. They together formed an organisation, Hindu Maha Mandalam, to protect the interests of the Hindus. The dismissal of 14 Congress members of the Legislative Assembly,
who extended their support to the Hindu Maha Mandalam once again vindicated the appellation ‘Christian’ to the Congress.

The relation between the Church and Narayana Pillai government went on cordial till the government initiated some reforms in the education sector. The days of the Narayana Pillai government were counted when the Church turned against its ‘Private Secondary School (PSS)’ scheme introduced by Panampilly Govinda Menon, the then minister for education. The Church totally rejected Panampilly’s proposal and considered it as equivalent to nationalization of education. The controversy over the PSS Scheme together with charges of corruption against certain ministers, led to the resignation of the Narayana Pillai ministry.

The general elections of 1952 did not give Congress the majority to form a government of its own. The Congress, with the support of Tamil Nadu Travancore Congress (TNCT) and some independents and dissidents (socialists) formed a ministry under the chief ministership of A.J. John. John’s Ministry died an early death, owing to the rivalries between the TNCT and the Congress. In the next elections in
1954, no party was in a position to form ministry single-handedly. In order to keep the Communists out of power, the Congress supported PSP to form the government and Pattam A. Thanupillai became the chief minister. Pattom could not proceed further as Congress was not happy with some of his policies and in 1955 the TNTC with the support of the Congress successfully moved a vote of no-confidence against the ministry. It was almost sure that the fate of the Ministry formed by Panampilly Govinda Menon would not be different from the previous one as he himself had alienated the Catholic Community through his educational reforms. Mannath Padmanabhan also did not support Menon as he was not unconditionally favouring the N.S.S.\textsuperscript{10}

Meanwhile the reorganisation of the state on linguistic basis came for discussion. Both the Christians and Nairs demanded ‘Akhanda Kerala’ (undivided Kerala), according to which not only Malabar and Kasargode, but also Neelagiri should be added to Travancore-Cochin, as against ‘Aikya Kerala’ (United Kerala) movement led by the Communists. When the central government rejected the ‘Akhanda Kerala’
proposal, both the Syrian and Nair leaders turned against Menon for his failure to press the matter with the central government. Finally, Panampilly was forced to resign, when six of the Congress M.L.As left the party in protest\textsuperscript{11}.

Even after the formation of Kerala State in 1956, the Church did not change its political preferences. The Christian community in general and the Church in particular continued their support to Congress. But it was embarrassing for the Church that the Communist party along with five independents captured majority of seats in the legislature and formed ministry under the chief ministership of EMS Namboodiripad, on April 5, 1957.

The education and land reform bills of EMS government became controversial and the prominent communities of the state, the Christians and the Nairs, turned against the government. The subsequent ‘liberation struggle’ sponsored by the Catholic Church and supported by the N.S.S. threatened the very existence of the EMS government. Finally the central government dismissed the Kerala Government under Article 356. After six months’ President’s rule, the state went through
a mid term poll on February 1, 1960. The Democratic Front 12alliance had all the blessings of the Church and it captured 93 seats out of total 126. Pattom Thanu Pillai (PSP) became the chief minister on February 22, 1960. But the Church was not happy with some of the policies of Pattom and the central leadership of the Congress party ‘elevated’ him to the position of Governor of Punjab.

R. Sankar was appointed as the next chief minister of Kerala on September 26, 1962. The Sankar ministry was voted out of power in September 10, 1964, when a group of 15 MLAs, under the leadership of K.M. George, joined the Opposition, when the latter brought in the House a vote of no-confidence against the ministry. Thus a new political party, the Kerala Congress, was born in Kerala on October 9, 1964. Meanwhile the Communist Party of India (CPI) also split into two-Communist Party of India (CPI) and Communist party of India (Marxists) (CPI (M)).

The split in the two major parties of Kerala- the Congress and the Communist Party of India- had its impact in the next general elections held to the Legislative Assembly of Kerala.
In the 1965 Assembly elections no party had a clear majority to form government and the Assembly was dissolved by the President of India on March 24, 1965. The next general elections to the Assembly and Lok Sabha were held simultaneously, in 1967. Six left parties, under the leadership of the CPI (M), on the basis of a Common Minimum Programme, formed a United Front to contest elections. Muslim League also joined the front. It was almost clear that there was very little chance for the Congress and Kerala Congress for success. The Church, though not happy with the division of rightist voters between Congress and Kerala Congress, had no option but to support both. Meanwhile some Church leaders made some attempts to bring both Congresses together, but all such attempts failed. While sympathy of some of the Syrian Catholic bishops was with the Kerala Congress, the Bishop of Trivandrum openly took sides with the Congress\textsuperscript{13}. The United Front won a landslide victory with a total of 117 seats leaving only 9 seats for the Congress and 5 for the Kerala Congress\textsuperscript{14}. The CPI (M) – led ministry headed by EMS Nambooripad was sworn in on March 6, 1967. The allegations of corruption against some of his ministerial
colleagues forced Nambooripad to resign on November 1, 1969. Subsequently C. Achutha Menon (CPI), the then member of Rajya Sabha, formed a new ministry on the same day.

The Catholic Church supported Achutha Menon’s ministry for two reasons – (a) to prevent the hardcore CPI (M) from assuming power (b) Kerala Congress was a partner in the ministry. The Achuta Menon ministry resigned on August 3, 1970 and the state went under the spell of president’s rule. In the following Assembly elections in 1970 and the Lok Sabha elections in 1971, the Christians and the Church supported the CPI- led front. The CPI- led front won a majority in the House and subsequently C. Achutha Menon formed his second Ministry on October 4, 1970.

It is true that the Catholic Church supported the CPI- led Government during its early days. But when the Government set out to reform college education, under the influence of progressive elements like the Youth Congress as well as the Kerala Students Union (K.S.U (I)), by unifying fees in government and private colleges and also to control the appointments of staff and admission of students in them, the
Church turned against the government. Meanwhile in June, 1975 emergency was declared in India and some of the individual prelates criticized the emergency. In spite of differences that existed among some bishops, the hierarchy and the laity in general, supported the Congress at the centre and United Front in the state in the elections of 1977. This was out of the realization that Congress party was the only option for a stable government at the centre and for protecting minority rights at the state level. The CPI (M), in order to woo Christians in its favour, assured the voters that the government expected to be formed in 1977 would be entirely different from the governments of 1957 and 1967 and that it would protect and foster minority rights17.

As has been stated earlier, the Church hierarchy, except the Bishop of Thrissur, took a stand favorable to the ruling front. Thrissur Bishop, Mar Joseph Kundukulam, had strong opposition to the Congress – sponsored move in 1972 to control educational institutions of the Church and called upon his flocks to pray for the formation of such governments at the Centre and in the State which would respect the freedom of conscience
of the people. Church-sponsored slogans were raised through wall-posters in the Thrissur diocese against the Congress and one of them reads as “vote against Congress to save the holy Church and religious heads”, reflected the strong feelings against the Congress.

In order to conciliate the outraged hierarchy and to get the support of the Christian community, the Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, met Church dignitaries from the cardinal to the ordinary bishops, while on her two-day long election campaign in the state, in the first week of March 1977. She even had a conclave with the Church dignitaries consisting of Cardinal Joseph Parekkattil, Archbishop Joseph Kelanthara, Bishop Joseph Kundukulam and Bishop Mathew Pothanamuzhi. The prime minister took special interest in taking a snap with Bishop Kundukulam.

The visit of the prime minister created great impact that the CPI (M) owned daily, the Desabhimani, published an article in which EMS accused the Catholic bishops of leading the flocks to the Congress camp. The Deepika, the official mouthpiece of the Catholics, replied EMS, through its editorial
that the conclave had really scared him because of its likely electoral impact\textsuperscript{21}. Elections to the State Assembly and the Lok Sabha were held on March 19, 1977. The election results showed that the support of the Catholic Church helped the Congress and the ruling front in the state. In the assembly elections, the ruling front got the majority of the seats and to the Lok Sabha, the front won in all the seats in the state\textsuperscript{22}.

The opposition of the Church to the Congress in the Thrissur District had its impact. P. P. George, who strongly pleaded for and supported fee unification in private colleges in 1972, was defeated in the Chalakkudi assembly constituency. In Thrissur assembly constituency, P.A. Antony (Congress) was defeated. Another notable feature of the election results is that the Kerala Congress, which contested in 22 seats, won in 20 assembly seats. In Kerala, the ruling front ministry led by K. Karunakaran was sworn in on March 25, 1977. But Karunakaran resigned within a month due to the adverse verdict of the Kerala High Court in the ‘Rajan Case’. Subsequently A.K. Antony, a Syrian Catholic, was sworn in on April 27\textsuperscript{th}, 1977, as the next chief minister. He tendered his resignation
on 27th October, 1978 in protest against the stand adopted by the Congress in the Chikkamagalur election. P.K. Vasudevan Nair (CPI) was sworn in as the next chief minister on 29th October, 1978. His ministry too resigned on 7 October 1979 to create a favourable atmosphere for the formation of a left democratic front in Kerala. C. H. Muhammad Koya (Muslim League) was sworn in as the fourth chief minister of the same State Assembly on 12th October 1979, but he could continue in office only for a short period and his ministry resigned on 1st December, 1979 and the assembly was dissolved.

In the 1977 assembly and Lok Sabha elections, the direct intervention of the Church in electoral politics was conspicuous and evident. On the eve of the elections, the Bishop of Palai convened a secret meeting at the Bishop’s House on March 12, 1977, to discuss an article headlined “Factionalism may spell Mani’s ruin”, came in the Indian Express daily. The meeting was attended by a number of clerical and lay leaders, besides the city police commissioner of Kochi, Joseph Thomas. The matter was brought before the High Court through an election petition filed by P.J. Antony, a voter in the Palai
constituency, alleging that the Bishop exhorted the participants to work for the success of K.M. Mani, the then finance minister in the Achutha Menon ministry and the police commissioner spoke for the success of Mani. Moreover, it was alleged that, the finance minister, granted Rs. 25 lakhs to the Deepika through improper ways after the declaration of the elections 25.

The High Court of Kerala came to the conclusion that the finance minister had used official machinery for his election campaign, which was a violation of the Representation of People’s Act, Section 123 (7). The court also held that the Catholic Church had great influence on the faithful which was used in favour of Mani. The interference of the three P’s (press, police and priest) in the election campaign was very much-evident 26. Later the Supreme Court nullified the decision of the High Court on an appeal petition filed by K.M. Mani.

The Catholic Church hierarchy was not happy with the political developments in the state. In fact the Church was uncomfortable for want of uniformity in political approach and also some individual bishops vehemently pleaded for the success of some LDF candidates. A meeting of Kerala Catholic
Bishop’s Council (KCBC) was held at Ernakulam on September 25, 1979, presided over by Arch Bishop Benedict Mar Gregorious, cautioned the Christian leaders who tried to make alliance with atheists. A meeting of Catholic Bishops Conference of India (CBCI), held at Ranchi in October 1979, also gave a somewhat similar clarion call to the faithful. The meeting exhorted the faithful to vote according to “Christian conscience”, irrespective of party considerations, giving emphasis to the defenders of constitutional rights like freedom of conscience, freedom of thought, freedom of religion and educational rights.

In spite of the guidelines issued by both CBCI and KCBC, some bishops personally favoured the Kerala Congress (M) candidates. Bishop Sebastian Vayalil of Palai and Bishop Kuriakose Kunnassery of Kottayam supported K C (M) in their respective dioceses, while the Central Travancore bishops followed a neutral policy. Archbishop Benedict Mar Gregorious and bishops in the Malabar region supported the UDF candidates. Therefore, it is evident that the Christian voters were confused as to whom they should vote for, the
LDF or the UDF. However, the support of the Deepika to the KC (M) ultimately benefited the LDF\textsuperscript{29}.

The sixth Lok Sabha polls were held on January 3 and 6, 1980. The UDF won 8 seats while the LDF got 12. The Christian votes were divided between the UDF and LDF, a reflection of the stand taken by different bishops in their respective diocesan jurisdictions. In the elections Kerala Congress (M) got two parliamentary seats-Moovattupuzha and Kottayam from LDF. The Kerala Congress (M) leadership gave Moovattupuzha to George J. Mathew, sitting M.P., despite his reluctance to contest. Though a majority of one lakh votes was expected, he was defeated by about four thousand votes because of the failure of Marxists to garner support for him\textsuperscript{30}. The defeat of K.M Chandy, the president of Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC), in the Kottayam constituency, was a severe blow to the Congress (I).

Meanwhile elections to the state assembly were declared to be held on January 21, 1980. The same political alliance continued in the assembly elections also. With all precautions for not letting history to be repeated, the Catholic bishops met
at Kottayam on December 6, 1979 and exhorted the faithful to vote for the theists\textsuperscript{31}. Still then some of the bishops individually supported KC (M) in their episcopal jurisdiction. Bishop Sebastian Vayalil of Palai openly supported K M Mani and even warned congressmen against misusing his name for canvassing votes, misinterpreting the exhortation of CBCI, for their candidate M.M. Jacob\textsuperscript{32}. With an aim of canvassing votes for Mani, the bishop even exhorted the faithful to exercise their franchise diligently, taking into account the candidate’s efficiency and ability to render service to the society and politics in Kerala\textsuperscript{33}.

The election results show that the Catholic dominated areas like Ernakulum, Kottayam and Idukki, and southern districts in the state like Alappuzha, Kollam and Thiruvananthapuram favoured the LDF. In the District of Kottayam, a Catholic citadel, with the exception of Poonjar and Ettumanoor, the Church supported the LDF\textsuperscript{34}. In Kaduthuruthy constituency, E.J. Lukose KC (J) (District President, Kottayam) was defeated by O. Lukose (KC (M)), whereas in Palai, K.M. Mani, retained the seat by a margin of
4000 votes against M.M Jacob. In Moovattupuzha Joseph Varkey won the seat by defeating Johny Nelloor KC (M)\textsuperscript{35}.

The Nayanar Ministry resigned on October 20, 1981, when Kerala Congress (M) crossed over to the UDF camp withdrawing its support to the government. Subsequently K. Karunakaran was sworn in as chief minister on December 28, 1981. The Karunakaran ministry survived only by the casting vote of the speaker, A.C. Jose. The ministry resigned on 17 March 1982. A mid-term assembly election became inevitable and election was declared to be held on 19 March 1982.

Unlike in the previous elections, the Church stood unanimously behind the UDF. The archbishop, in a statement, exhorted the faithful to exercise their franchise for a front, which would protect the common interest of the country, guarantee peaceful life and protect religious freedom\textsuperscript{36}. In the Angamaly assembly constituency, a stronghold of Christian community, on May 16, 1982, a local parish priest gave a five-point direction to the faithful regarding elections during his Sunday sermon\textsuperscript{37}. 
The election results showed that many UDF candidates won the election with only a thin majority. The UDF got only 14 seats’ majority in the assembly mainly because there was no electoral understanding between the two factions of the Kerala Congress and the Congress (I). The Kerala Congress (M) lost eleven seats out of seventeen allotted, while the Kerala Congress (J) got eight out of twelve seats assigned. The directions of the Angamali parish priest had its impact on the faithful. The CPI (M) candidate, A.P. Kurien, was defeated by M.V. Mani of the Kerala Congress (M).

The tragic assassination of the Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, on October 31, 1984, led the state to an uproar of another Lok Sabha polls, three weeks before the scheduled date. The President of India on 20 November 1984 issued notification for the Lok Sabha elections. Elections to the Lok Sabha from the 20 constituencies in Kerala were slated for 24 December 1984. The state witnessed hectic political activities regarding allocation of seats among the coalition partners. In UDF, the majority of seats (16 seats) were kept by the Congress. The Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) was given two and
both factions of the Kerala Congress were given one each. To surmount the negligent attitude of Congress, and to strengthen the bargaining capacity, both factions of Kerala Congress – KC (M) and KC (J) - decided to merge on November 22, 1984. The merger of both raised much expectation among the Church hierarchy as well as the pro-Christian daily, Deepika\textsuperscript{41}.

In the elections, the Catholic Church generally supported the UDF candidates in almost all constituencies. Archbishop Antony Padiyara in an article titled “Exercising franchise is the civic duty of citizens”, exhorted the faithful to vote according to their conscience and asked them to choose intelligently those parties which represented candidates who were prepared to protect democracy, secularism and minority rights\textsuperscript{42}. The Church, apart from giving general support to UDF, maintained her own preferences in the selection of candidates. Archbishop Joseph Kelenthara of Varappuzha supported Xavier Arackal in Ernakulam parliamentary constituency, whereas the State Congress leadership preferred K.V. Thomas. The archbishop held the view that since the constituency was dominated by Latin Catholics, the Church
must have a say in the selection of the candidate in the constituency. Later under the pressure of the Congress High Command and the State chief minister, K. Karunakaran, Arackal agreed to withdraw his candidature.

Election to the Lok Sabha seats in the state was held on December 24, 1984. The election result shows that in Kerala, the UDF won in seventeen seats, leaving only three to the LDF. While analyzing the election results, one would understand that there were two major causes for the landslide victory of UDF in Kerala. First, a favourable atmosphere had been created for the Congress because of the sympathetic wave due to the assassination of Mrs. Indira Gandhi and the coming of Rajiv Gandhi as her successor with a clean image. Secondly, Congress took every effort to string together all the communal forces, including the National Democratic Party (NDP) representing considerable sections of Nairs, the Socialist Republican Party (SRP) representing the powerful Ezhava Community, the Muslim League (ML) representing Muslims, and even the organizations of the fishermen and artisans, in addition to the support of the Christian community that the UDF already had.
The ninth election to the state assembly was held on March 23, 1987. The election results show that the voters were fed up with the group fights and factionalism in the UDF. The visit of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, three times during elections for participating in campaigns in every nook and corner of the state and the full-fledged support of the Deepika daily did not help the UDF. The voters in general and the Christian voters in particular did not show any leniency to the in-fighting and group rivalries in the Congress and between two factions of the Kerala Congress. As a result both Kerala Congresses - KC (M) and KC (J) - were defeated in thirteen constituencies. In Ettumanoor George Joseph Podipara, an independent, won the seat by pushing back the Kerala Congress (J) candidate, K.J. Mathai. In Kanjirappally constituency Thomas Kallampally (KC (J)) was swept back to the third place by K.J. Thomas CPI (M).

The Latin community had its own grudge against the Congress. The Congress government did not give any serious attention towards the fish workers’ struggle in 1984, which really alienated the community from the party and the
government. The bitterness of the Latin Catholics against the Congress and its allies was reflected in the elections. The community, irrespective of party affiliation, had a strong affinity to candidates who belonged to the community. It was evident in constituencies like Kundara and Mararikkulam, where both the winners belonged to the Latin Catholic community\textsuperscript{46}.

After the declaration of election results, a five-member ministry headed by E.K. Nayanar was sworn in on March 26, 1987. After one week, on April 2, the ministry was expanded by including fourteen more ministers. Two years after the assumption of power by LDF in the state, elections to the Lok Sabha were declared to be held in November, 1989. The Church, not at all happy with the LDF government’s educational policies, was waiting for an opportunity to wreak vengeance through the ballot box\textsuperscript{47}.

Meanwhile, a group of progressive bishops and leaders of the laity led by Bishop Paulose Mar Paulose, Dr. M.M. Thomas and other 25 eminent personalities met at Thiruvalla on October 27, 1989 and issued a joint statement giving some guidelines to the Christian voters. They also criticized the
Catholic Church for leading the flocks to the Congress camp in the name of Christian morality and faith. They exhorted the Christian voters to vote for the Left Front in the ensuing elections.  

There were reports regarding the crossing of Kerala Congress (J) over to LDF, severing its relations with UDF. All such hopes and dreams of P.J. Joseph were dashed to the ground when EMS Namboodiripad, General Secretary of CPI (M), in one of his articles published in Desabhimani, asked P.J. Joseph to give up all his connections with the Catholic Church as a pre-condition for his party’s entering into the LDF. P.J. Joseph, in one of his election campaigns, rejected the demand of EMS Namboodiripad.

The Christians in general and the Catholic Church in particular extended full support to the Congress in the 1989 Lok Sabha elections. On the eve of elections the CBCI issued certain guidelines to the Christian voters. The Deepika, reiterating its firm support to the UDF, published a number of articles and editorials supporting UDF campaigns.

The election results show that the support of Christians
and the Catholic Church to the UDF and the Congress was total and the UDF got seventeen seats out of the total twenty contested. All Christian candidates fielded in the elections by the Congress got elected. P.J. Joseph, the Kerala Congress (J) leader who contested from Moovattupuzha Constituency, was pushed to the third place, while it was won by the Kerala Congress (M) candidate, P.C. Thomas.

The Catholic Church was not at all happy with the way the non-Congress governments were functioning at the national level. Moreover, the two non-Congress governments at the centre caused insecurity among the minorities, which forced them to think for a stable, favourable government. At the state level, the Church was very much embarrassed by the educational policies of the LDF government, which were aimed at controlling the managements of the Church-owned educational institutions as well as curtailing their minority rights. So the Christian community in the state desired for a change of government both at the centre and in the state level.

Meanwhile elections to the Lok Sabha and the state assembly were scheduled to be held on May 23rd, 1991. But
due to the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi at Sriperumpathoor on May 21, polling to the Lok Sabha was postponed to June 12, 1991.

As in the previous elections, the Catholic community and the Church supported the UDF. There was a general feeling among the people of the state that the Latin hierarchy was supporting the LDF. But clarifying the stand of Latin Church, Bishop Soosa Pakiam (Latin diocese, Trivandrum), in one of his pastoral letters, called upon the faithful to vote according to their conscience\textsuperscript{53}. Later on, a leading daily in Kerala reported that the views of the bishop on issues like the Mandal Commission Report, were similar to those held by the LDF and the exhortation of the bishop was depicted as an indirect way of asking the faithful to vote in favour of LDF candidates\textsuperscript{54}. Conversely, the bishop held that this was part of a deliberate attempt by some political parties to mislead the flock and turn votes in their favour. The All Kerala Latin Catholic Association, the laity organization of the Latin Catholics, though being a partner of the ‘Backward Classes Reservation Front’, favoured the Congress and its allies\textsuperscript{55}. 
While analyzing the election results of 1991, one can easily understand that the Christian community in general supported the UDF. In fact, the traditional support of the Christian community to UDF continued in this election also. In the Lok Sabha polls, the Congress fielded candidates in sixteen constituencies and got elected in thirteen. Prominent congress candidates from the Christian community like P.J. Kurien, K.V.Thomas, A. Charles and Palai K.M. Mathew, retained their seats with comfortable majority. The sitting M.P., P.C. Thomas (Kerala Congress (M)) retained his Moovattupuzha seat. In Alappuzha parliamentary constituency, T.J. Angelose (CPI (M)) belonging to Latin Catholic community, defeated Vakkam Purushothaman, a prominent leader of the Congress.

In the assembly elections too, the Christian community extended full support to the UDF, in almost all constituencies. Most of the Christian candidates contested under the panel of UDF, got elected. At the same time the Church did not show any mercy to Kerala Congress (J) which crossed over to the LDF camp after the 1989 Lok Sabha elections. Out of the 10
seats contested by Kerala Congress (J), which were allotted to it by the LDF, the party could win only in one seat (Dr. K.C. Joseph, Kuttanad) with 3.01 percent of total votes polled in the state.

Thus, as the Church wished and expected, the Congress formed governments at the centre and in the state. At the centre P.V. Narasimha Rao was sworn in as the prime minister along with a fifty-four member ministry on June 21, 1991, and in Kerala, K. Karunakaran became the chief minister along with a six-member team on June 24, 1991.

Elections to the tenth Lok Sabha and eleventh Kerala State Assembly were declared to be held on April 27, 1996. The ensuing elections were very crucial for the central government as well as the state government in many respects, besides getting mandate for governing the country and the state for next five years. The Narasimha Rao government at the centre had started globalization and liberalization in its economic policies, which forced the country to open out its economy to the world outside making necessary changes in its industrial and labour policies.
At the state level, the A.K. Antony government had decided to ban arrack as a first stage leading to complete prohibition of liquor in the state. The decision of the UDF government (to ban arrack) was according to the recommendations of the A.P. Udayabhanu Commission for the introduction of prohibition in stages (phased prohibition). A.K. Antony, the Chief Minister of Kerala, himself declared that the coming election to the assembly would be a ‘referendum’ on his government’s “bold decision to ban arrack” and expressed his commitment for a total ban of foreign liquors as part of the avowed policy of phased prohibition.

During the 1996 elections, communal bifurcation could be seen in an unprecedented way along with political segmentation of communities, which was getting momentum. Among the four powerful communities, Nair Service Society (N.S.S) and its political wing, National Democratic Party (NDP), turned against the UDF and vowed to defeat it at any cost. There are three reasons for the NSS turning against the UDF. First, the entering of Kerala police personnel in Mannam Samadhi without the permission of NSS leadership, for which,
the chief minister, A.K. Antony, did not apologize. Secondly, the stand taken by the government in the assembly on the ‘creamy layer’ issue when it came up for discussion and, thirdly, the negligent approach shown by the UDF towards NDP\textsuperscript{58}. The Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP), on the other hand, extended full support to the UDF\textsuperscript{59}.

The Church had her own grievances against the reservation policy of the central government. Her demand to include the Dalit Christians in the Scheduled Caste list had not so far been evoked a positive response from the central government. The Church’s displeasure, in this regard, against the central government and the Congress was reflected in the circulars and guidelines issued to the flocks on the eve of the elections. But the overall support of the Catholic Church was for the UDF in the state and the Congress at the centre.

The week-long meeting of the CBCI held at spirituality centre, Manganam, Kottayam, chaired by Archbishop Mar Joseph Powathil, expressed the regret and displeasure of Catholic bishops against the central government for not including Dalit Christians in the Scheduled Caste list. The
meeting also pointed out that changing of faith did not make any change in one’s social condition and backwardness and denying of basic rights on the basis one’s faith was violation of human rights. However, the meeting welcomed the decision of the Kerala government to ban arrack from April onwards and also appreciated the chief minister for taking such a bold decision.

The meeting also gave its flocks the following poll-eve guidelines.

Vote for those parties and candidates: a) who stand for and protect secularism and cultural and religious diversity b) who value human life and dignity and protect environment c) who give preference to the poor and those who are below the poverty line, women, children and the handicapped.

The Catholic Bishop’s Council of India’s appeal to elect candidates and parties which protect class interests of deprived sections and uphold human values, was interpreted by each political party to claim the CBCI’s support for itself. The state secretary of CPI (M), E.K. Nayanar, said that the poll-eve guidelines of the CBCI, including the fight against corruption,
were aimed at the ruling party at the centre\textsuperscript{63}. Veteran CPI (M) leader EMS Namboodiripad, who had framed the current LDF slogan, on the eve of elections, “To a madhouse or to an anti-communal, secular Kerala”, opined that guidelines of the CBCI were in consonance with LDF ideology. He further said that “it was the duty of the masses of all communities and religions not to indulge in communal politicking but support the LDF to safe-guard their class interests and uphold human values\textsuperscript{64}. He also did not forget to compliment the bishops “who had taken a principled stand” during the run up to the elections. His compliment was aimed at garnering support for the LDF among the laity, usually swayed by the poll-eve edicts of local parish priests\textsuperscript{65}. This time any such directive will look odd in the background of CBCI’s appeal. This, the LDF found as an easy way to blunt the Antony appeal over the masses on the basis of arrack ban and his clean image.

When left leaders distorted the guidelines of CBCI as an exhortation to vote in favour of LDF candidates, the Church, the traditional supporter of UDF and the Congress, was forced to issue a disclaimer. The Chairman of Catholic Bishop’s
Council of India, Archbishop Mar Joseph Powathil, held a press conference to issue the disclaimer. He said, “The poll-eve guidelines for the coming general elections were neither in favour nor against any political party but issued from a moral point of view only. His Excellency further clarified that the guidelines were not against the ruling party either: “It just happened that a particular party is in power at the centre. The CBCI is not against globalization or liberalization but opposed to the rejection of human values in the process. Defence of life and human dignity is our motto.”

In order to get full support of the Church as well as Dalit Christians and other backward classes, the central Congress leadership assured the CBCI that Dalit Christians would be included in the Scheduled Caste list and given reservation, if Congress was voted to power.

Though the CBCI appeared to have taken a neutral stand during 1996 elections, not supporting in public either the UDF or LDF, the unflinching support of the Church was in favour of the UDF and the Congress. It was clear from the pastoral letters and circulars issued by some Catholic prelates, on the
eve of polls, in their respective diocesan jurisdictions. Kollam Bishop, Joseph G. Fernandez, exhorted his flocks to strengthen the hands of the state government in its drive for liquor prohibition. In a pastoral letter sent to all the parishes under his jurisdiction to be read out on 21\textsuperscript{st} April, amidst Holy Mass, the bishop said that the decision of the Kerala government to ban arrack had brought cheers to millions of families in the state\textsuperscript{69}. Indirectly attacking the LDF, His Excellency cautioned the folks to be vigilant against those forces which were trying to sabotage liquor ban efforts\textsuperscript{70}. Reiterating the solid support of the Church to the Congress at the Centre and UDF in the state the Syro-Malabar Archbishop, Mar Antony Padiyara, in one of his poll-eve circulars, asked the Catholic community to strengthen the hands of those who had taken steps to ban arrack as a first step in the phased prohibition leading to complete prohibition of liquors in the state in the coming elections to the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assembly. The archbishop also appreciated the UDF government in general and the chief minister, A. K. Antony, in particular for their bold decision to ban arrack\textsuperscript{71}. 
Meanwhile, Thrissur Archbishop, Mar Joseph Kundukulam, offered full support to K. Karunakaran, the Congress leader and Union cabinet minister, if he was willing to contest from Thrissur constituency. He further said that he would not only support the candidature of K. Karunakaran, but also recommend it, if demanded. He clarified that Karunakaran had not done anything wrong against either him or his community. But on the contrary, he and his community had received many favours from him.

Malayala Manorama and Deepika, two leading Malayalam dailies in Kerala, the conventional supporters of the Congress and the UDF, extended full support to both, in this election also. Malayala Manorama in one of its editorials appreciated the Congress for its magnificent election manifesto. In its editorial titled “Congress Manifesto with the strength of gains”, it appreciated the Congress government at the centre and UDF government in the state for their efforts to bring about economic development in the country. The same daily in another editorial headlined “Stability and development are inter-linked”, urged the people of Kerala to vote for the
Congress at the centre and the UDF in the state for ‘stability and development’. The paper concluded the editorial saying that only the Congress can provide a strong and stable government in the country. The elections held on April 27, to the Lok Sabha and the state legislative assembly, recorded 71.15 percent of votes.

The election results show that in the legislative assembly elections the LDF under the leadership of CPI (M) bagged 80 seats out of 140 and the UDF under the leadership of the Congress could secure only 60 seats including one independent. In the Lok Sabha polls both the UDF and LDF secured 10 seats each, thus, maintained the status-quo.

The Christians, who were supposed to respond heavily to the official Church call to vote for the UDF on account of Antony’s clean record in power and his arrack ban decision, plunged for the LDF in many districts. The high success rate of Kerala Congress (J), a minor partner of the LDF, in Kottayam and Idukki districts, was one sign of this. Another was the virtual gift of a couple of seats to the LDF due to the mutual annihilation engaged by the two pro-Church Kerala Congress
factions belonging to the UDF\textsuperscript{76}. The poor Latin Catholic voters, in spite of the Church hierarchy’s poll-eve exhortation in favour of UDF, particularly in Trivandrum and Kollam districts, contributed substantially to the decisive pro-LDF swing in the state’s deep South\textsuperscript{77}. K. Karunakaran, the Congress stalwart, who contested from the Thrissur parliamentary constituency, had to surrender to the highly respected CPI veteran, V.V. Raghavan despite Thrissur Bishop Kundukulam’s active support for him.

Communal fragmentation in no small measure also took place in the Muslim community just like in the Christian community. Anti-Congress attitude which began among Muslims particularly after 1992 continued during 1996 elections also. The grudge against the Congress in general and its central leadership in particular for its failure to protect Babri-Masjid, rampant among the rank and file of the Muslim community and continued throughout the decade that followed, has also contributed considerably to the election debacle of the Congress in 1996. The sharp fall in the number of seats of the Indian Union Muslim League from 18 to 12 vindicates this fact\textsuperscript{78}. 
Other factors which contributed to the election disaster of UDF included a comparatively higher percentage of polling for Bharatiya Janata Party, infighting in the Congress and rivalries between different fractions of Kerala Congress and open defiance of NSS towards UDF in general and chief minister A.K. Antony in particular. The BJP which gave some of its votes to the UDF in the last elections appeared not to have done it this time. If the BJP polled only 4.76 percent of the total votes in the 1991 Assembly elections, it polled 5.89 percent this time. For the Lok Sabha, the BJP candidates polled 6.16 percent as against a mere 4.62 last time. Interestingly, wherever the BJP polled below par in the state, the LDF seemed to benefit this time – especially for the Lok Sabha – as both K. Karunakaran and A. Charles, two defeated congress candidates might testify. Infighting in the congress was the main cause for the defeat of many congress candidates. In one of his statements, after the declaration of election results, K. Karunakaran said that “stabbing from the front by his own partymen” was the main cause for his defeat in the Thrissur Lok Sabha constituency.
Another important aspect of the election that went against theories based exclusively on caste and communal equations was the almost determined approach by the voters to eliminate the scandal-hit and controversial politicians in the fray. They voted out not only Karunakaran and his son, Muraleedharan, but their most celebrated lackeys as well: T.H.Mustaffa and P.P. George. M.V. Raghavan was a Karunakaran loyalist. Former excise minister M.R. Reghuchandrabal and former union minister Krishnakumar also lost in the fray. It is doubtless that in spite of all the odds that worked against the UDF and the Congress like worse infighting and group rivalries, anti-incumbency factor, open revenge declared by the powerful NSS, it was nothing but the solid support of the Church hierarchy that helped Congress and the UDF to escape from a humiliating set back that otherwise would have occurred.

Putting an end to the one and half years of political instability and horse trading, elections to the 12th Lok Sabha were declared to be held in four phases beginning from February 16, 1998. The polls, covering all the states and Union
Territories would be held on February 16, 22 and 28 and March 7th. Later the election dates were rescheduled so as to begin the counting on March 2nd. In Kerala the date for polls was scheduled for February 28, 1998.

The two prominent minority communities of Kerala, the Christians and the Muslims, by and large, stood solidly behind the Congress and the UDF in the elections of 1998. It was from the strong conviction that Congress was the only alternative to the BJP at the centre and the alienation of both communities from the latter (BJP) became complete when it brought out its election manifesto reiterating its commitment to Hindutva, construction of Ram Temple in Ayodhya, total ban on cow slaughter, abrogation of Article 370 and a common civil code. The manifesto further stated that the BJP will explore all consensual, legal and constitutional means to facilitate the construction of a Ram Temple at Ayodhya. The rise of V.S. Achuthanandan, the unyielding communist, to the power centre in the CPI (M) state unit put an end to all the hopes of Muslim League and the Indian National League (INL) for a likely understanding with the LDF. A section of the CPI
(M) had strong resentment against Achuthanandan’s hard-line policies towards minorities particularly the Muslims and Muslim League and, they firmly believed that this would affect the electoral prospects of the party in a number of constituencies especially in the North Kerala’s Muslim belt. The developments in the CPI (M) must have made the UDF happy because they were worried about the estrangement of the minorities, especially the Muslims.

Barring few exceptions, the Church by and large, supported the UDF in general and the Congress in particular in the 1998 Lok Sabha elections. The past one and a half years of political uncertainty had very much worried the Church. So the Church exhorted her flocks to vote for a stable and strong government at the centre. In one of its poll-eve guidelines the Archdiocese of Thrissur urged the believers to vote for those who stood for justice, belief in God, secularism, rights of minorities and democratic and moral values. Pastoral Council meeting of Thrissur Archdiocese, presided over by the Archbishop, Mar Jacob Thoomkuzhi, adopted a resolution which exhorted the believers to vote only those parties and
groups which were capable of forming a stable government at the centre. Alluring its followers to exercise their franchise in a “free and fearless manner”, the resolution expressed concern over the recent “increased incidents of violence and well planned attacks spearheaded by religious fundamentalists and upper-class nobility against minority communities”. The resolution also condemned threats to the rights of minorities and the principles of secularism.

While the Church was united in opposing BJP and its allies in Kerala, it was divided, except the Syrian Catholics, over the approach to be taken towards LDF and UDF. The Marthoma Church, for instance, did not spell out its approach openly to its flocks but rather gave only general guidelines. The Supreme head of the Mar Thoma Church, Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan, in one of his exhortations, urged his believers to exercise their franchise in the ensuing polls for those who stood for peace and justice. The Metropolitan further said that Marthoma Church should be proud of the fact that great personalities like the late C.P. Mathew, Dr. M.M. Thomas, Mr. Thampan Thomas, Justice K.T. Thomas and Prof.
P. J. Kurien, all belonged to the Church.\textsuperscript{90}

The CSI South Kerala Diocese Socio-political Board decided to support the political party which could protect minority communities, preserve secularism and offer a stable government, in the ensuing Lok Sabha elections.\textsuperscript{91} But there was a sharp division among its members over the support to be extended to the LDF or the UDF. A section of members of the board reportedly argued that the Church should openly support the Congress and the UDF whereas another group stood for a friendly relation with the LDF government in view of the Communist party’s changing approach towards demands of the Church.\textsuperscript{92}

At the local level, the parish priests were actively involved in electoral politics, besides the general guidelines issued by the upper Church hierarchy. The prayer of a Church vicar during the Sunday Mass in a Catholic church near Thodupuzha went like: “save us Lord in this election from those politicians who had slain our young missionaries in the North”\textsuperscript{93}. Of course, the prayer was for the defeat of the BJP and its allies and the success of the Congress candidates. It was also not
uncommon that some Church denominations were blatantly campaigning for the LDF. For instance while campaigning for Dr. Ninan Koshy, a CPI (M)-backed independent in Mavelikkara constituency against P.J. Kurien of Congress, Fr. K.V. Paulose, an Orthodox Syrian Christian priest, claimed that, “only the Left can protect secularism”

The Church of the East Bishop, Dr. Paulose Mar Paulose, has called upon Christian Churches in India to shun the despicable forces that make the life of people miserable. He made a contemptuous attack on the Congress and BJP governments that ruled alternatively at the centre for their policies of liberalization and globalization. By attacking the ills of globalization and liberalization, the bishop was indirectly asking the churchmen to vote for CPI (M) and other left parties. Criticizing the Churches which were the customary supporters of the Congress, the Bishop said, “Some churches have a tendency to keep themselves close to the corridors of power”

The election results showed that there was a solid communal consolidation, mainly among Muslims, and to a lesser extent among Christians also, all in favour of the UDF.
In all the constituencies of central and southern Kerala, barring a few where the Christians had considerable influence, the Congress candidates got through. There was a clear consolidation of Catholic votes in Ernakulam, Moovattupuzha and Idukki in favour of the UDF candidates. The Catholic support coupled with the visit of Mrs. Sonia Gandhi would have helped P.C. Chacko to ward off a stiff challenge from his Kerala Congress (Joseph) rival, Francis George, in Idukki, and George Eden (Congress (I)) to wrest the Ernakulam seat from the CPI (M) backed independent, Sebastian Paul. Other prominent Christian winners of Congress, Prof. P.J. Kurien from Mavelikkara and A.C. Jose from Mukundapuram, had the wholehearted support of the Church. The pro-UDF attitude of the Church came to the help of K. Karunakaran and V.M.Sudheeran, two prominent candidates of the Congress, in Thiruvananthapuram and Aleppy respectively. The Christian consolidation in favour of Congress was obvious from the fact that out of the nine winners under Congress symbol, five belonged to the Christian Community. However, the Christian votes remained fragmented in Mavelikkara, Idukki and
Kottayam. In some constituencies caste and communal factors were overshadowed by the clean image of the candidates. The success of Suresh Kurup and V.V.Raghavan in Kottayam and Thrissur constituencies respectively substantiates this fact.

After one and a half years of political instability at the centre, the country went to a mid-term poll for the thirteenth Lok Sabha to be held on September 11, 1999. While NSS and SNDP went ahead with ‘candidate-specific approach’ and in some cases an ‘equi-distance policy’ between the UDF and LDF, the Church, on the whole, went in support of the UDF in general and Congress in particular.

As usual, this time also, the Church issued only broad guidelines to its flocks. But reading between the lines, any average person can very well understand that the clarion call of the top Church hierarchy was to vote for the UDF and the Congress. The Syro-Malabar Archbishop, Mar Varkey Vithayathil, exhorted the faithful to vote for persons and parties which respected the rights of every citizen to choose his own religion according to his conviction. He advised his folks to vote only for those candidates who held moral values high and
respected all religions and who stood for peace, justice and the uplift of the poor and downtrodden. He reminded the flocks that stability of the government and its ability to uphold human values and rights should be weighed while casting one’s vote.\(^98\)

The poll-eve exhortation of some of the Latin Catholic hierarchies to choose candidates for their personal qualities was differently interpreted by both the camps.\(^99\) While the UDF camp was gloating over the fact that Latin Catholic votes would be polled heavily in its favour, the LDF was drawing solace that its secular stand would help it, especially in view of the attacks on Christian minorities in the northern parts of the country.\(^100\)

In Kerala, elections held on September 11\(^{th}\), 1999, recorded 69.8% of votes.\(^101\) The results were declared only on October 6. The election results showed that both the UDF and LDF maintained status-quo in the state by winning 11 and 9 seats respectively.

A combination of factors such as consolidation of minority votes in favour of the Congress, anti-incumbency sentiments, intra-party problems in the CPI(M) and its uneasy relationship
with some of the LDF partners have led to the failure of LDF to improve its 1998 toll of seats. The clearly discernible minority consolidation across the state could be attributed mainly to the ascension of Sonia Gandhi to the leadership of the Congress combined with a series of largely attended public meetings addressed by her across the state. The BJP’s communal agenda, which could only help the minority communities to view the BJP-led government at the Centre with suspicion, has also contributed this consolidation. The failure of the BJP to open its account in Kerala is to be viewed in this context. Of course, BJP’s tallest leader, O. Rajagopal, who contested from Trivandrum constituency could gather the highest percentage of votes (20.93\%) ever gained by a candidate fielded by the party but he was pushed to the third place giving way to the UDF candidate to capture the seat.

In almost all the constituencies where the Christians were numerically strong, the UDF candidates got through. In Ernakulam constituency the Congress candidate George Eden won the seat by a comfortable margin of 1,11,305 votes against LDF-backed independent candidate, Mani Vithayathil. In
Moovattupuzha constituency P.C. Thomas (Kerala Congress –M) won by a margin of 76,424 votes as against his own previous margin of 1.13 lakhs. In Thrissur constituency A C Jose (Congress) defeated V.V Raghavan (CPI) by a margin of 11,632 votes.

Though Christians, the habitual supporters of the Congress and UDF in general, stood solidly behind the Congress, the LDF, particularly the CPI (M), could make some inroads into the pro-UDF Muslim areas in northern Kerala. Five out of nine seats that the LDF got were from Malabar which is indicative of this fact. In fact, it won all the seats in the north except the UDF strongholds of Kozhikode, Manjeri and Ponnani.

Elections to the 12th Kerala Legislative Assembly were declared to be held on May 10, 2001. All sections of the society, especially the prominent minority communities, were aggrieved and had been waiting for an opportunity to wreak vengeance on the LDF government in general and CPI (M) in particular. This election was inimitable in many respects. All the major communities in the state, such as Nair, Ezhava, Christian and
Muslim, turned against the government for one or other reason. What was more stunning and noteworthy of this election was communal consolidation in an unparalleled scale in favour of the UDF and unconcealed interference of the Church in electoral politics.

The N.S.S hierarchy, which amassed all its forces in favour the LDF in 1996 Assembly and Lok Sabha polls, exhorted its followers to adopt ‘candidate-focused’ approach rather than the political formations represented by these persons\textsuperscript{102}. It was apparently an anti-LDF stand and the benefit of which went in favour of UDF. Expressing frustration over the policies of LDF, P.K Narayana Panicker said, “Whoever comes to power follows a policy of appeasement of vote banks”\textsuperscript{103}. His statement had a special significance because the NSS had fully backed the LDF and vehemently opposed the UDF in 1996 elections. Meanwhile the SNDP took an open stand in support of UDF and was firm to defeat the LDF candidates. It issued a number of circulars as well as vocal directions to its members to work for the defeat of LDF candidates and thereby demonstrate the strength and unity of the Yogam.\textsuperscript{104}
In this election the Church, especially the Catholic Church, directly interfered with the electoral politics, which, of course, was a clear deviation from its traditional policy of ‘no-direct’ interference in politics. This includes, besides other things, direct intervention in the selection of candidates and demanding some seats for its nominees. While going through various reports, it is understood that the hierarchy, by and large, appeared discontented with the list of candidates announced by the Congress for the coming assembly elections. As part of direct meddling with electoral politics the Church leadership of various dioceses, with substantial degree of hope, requested the Congress leadership, both at the district and state level, to consider only members from the Catholic community as candidates in constituencies where they had a strong presence. The bishops of Thrissur and Kollam were comparatively vociferous in this connection and their campaign to realize such a goal had found celebrity in the media.

In Thrissur an informal political committee headed by the diocesan vicar-general, Msgr. Joseph Kakkaserry, was constituted by the Bishop’s House to pursue the matter. In
Kollam district, the Kollam and Punalur bishops had strongly chased the matter with the Congress leadership. The Kollam Bishop, Dr. Joseph G. Fernandez, and the diocesan unit of the Kerala Latin Catholic Association (KLCA), of which he was the patron, had campaigned for a Congress candidate from the Latin Catholic community at the Kundara constituency. A delegation from the Bishop’s House, led by a priest, had even met the senior congress leader, K. Karunakaran, in this connection.107

Similarly, the Bishop of Punalur, Dr. Mathias Kappil, and the diocesan unit of the KLCA of which he was the patron, had written to the All India Congress Committee (AICC) general secretary, Mr. Ghulam Nabi Azad; the Kollam District Congress Committee (DCC) president, Mr. K.C. Rajan and the Senior Congress Leader, Mr. Vayalar Ravi, calling upon the party to field a member from the Latin Catholic community as Congress candidate at Punalur. The Punalur Bishop had even attached the bio-data of two prominent congress leaders from the Latin Catholic community along with these letters.108 The bishop houses at Punalur and Kollam expressed discontent
over the UDF list of candidates for the 12 constituencies in the district saying that it did not contain even a Christian, leave alone a Catholic\textsuperscript{109}.

The Varappuzha Archdiocese unit of KLCA took the decision to field at least two candidates in the assembly polls\textsuperscript{110}. Addressing a news conference president of the KLCA diocesan unit, Felix J. Pulloodan, said that the candidates would be fielded in Cherthala and Ernakulam in protest against the UDF’s failure to accommodate the Church nominees in the candidates’ list\textsuperscript{111}.

He also claimed that the decision to this effect was taken by the KLCA political high power committee attended by Varappuzha Archbishop, Dr. Daniel Acharuparambil. Mr. Felix further said that if the KLCA’s demand for a total of 11 seats from the UDF was not met, it would field independent candidates in the constituencies of Kovalam, Thiruvananathapuram-West, Kundara, Chavara, Mararikulam, Alappuzha, Aroor, Palluruthi, Mattanchery and Paravoor\textsuperscript{112}.

Vehemently opposing the liquor policies of LDF
government and prescribing a code of conduct for the future representatives of the people, the Thiruvanathapuram Bishop, Dr. M. Susaipakiam, issued a poll-eve pastoral letter to be read out in churches under his jurisdiction. In it the bishop unambiguously urged his flocks to vote against those who aided the liquor trade and ran the campaigns using the funds of liquor barons. Throwing light to different hooch tragedies in the state, the bishop said that the thriving ‘abkari-excise-police-politician’ nexus was the main cause for the hooch tragedies in the state. He also said that it was the duty of all fair-minded people to reject the candidates who solicited votes by providing liquor.

As a code of conduct for the elected representatives, the bishop said that the elected representatives should not oppose the religion and faith. The representatives should have the ability to study bills presented on the floor of the House (legislature) and also raise their opinions about it. He further said that these representatives should have an idea about the needs and rights of the people whom they represented. The bishop also exhorted the faithful to elect those candidates who
cooperated with the community and its organizations which augur well with Christian ideals, irrespective of their caste and religious considerations. In another pastoral letter drafted by the same bishop to be read out in churches under his authority on May 6, he made a contemptuous attack on the LDF government for its liquor policies. The bishop, who was also the chairman of the Anti-Liquor Commission of Kerala Catholic Bishops Council, in the pastoral letter, urged the faithful to defeat those candidates who supported the liquor trade and received favours from abkaries irrespective of their political affiliations. The pastoral letter made a ruthless attack on LDF stand which advocated a policy of “encouraging abstinence without ban.” It considered the government’s stand ineffective and its decision to hand over “toddy shops to workers’ cooperatives” full of doubts and ambiguities. “It (the LDF) said that the new policy has been aimed at giving good liquor. But when liquor itself is poison, how can it be called good?” the bishop asked.

The Church which had enthusiastically supported the UDF decision to ban arrack in 1996 , however, was not fully happy
with the front this time, for it did not clearly spell out further effective measures to curb liquor consumption. However, it welcomed the proclamation in the UDF manifesto that a stage-by-stage prohibition of liquors would be its future target\textsuperscript{118}.

Syrian Catholics, traditional supporters of the UDF and Congress, extended their unequivocal support to it in this election also. The major Archbishop of Syro-Malabar Church and the Bishop of Ernakulam-Angamaly diocese, Mar Varkey Cardinal Vithayathil, urged his flocks to vote for those candidates and parties who strove to safeguard the secular credentials of democracy and ensured equal freedom to all religious sects\textsuperscript{119}. Indirectly attacking the LDF the Cardinal exhorted his believers to use the right to vote with utmost care and responsibility to ward off the evils of alcoholism, violence, corruption and nepotism among other evils that have made inroads into the society\textsuperscript{120}. The exhortation of the cardinal was interpreted as an indirect of way of asking the flocks to vote for the UDF and Congress. Meanwhile the Kerala Catholic Federation, a confederation of Kerala Catholic Congress, Kerala Latin Catholic Association and Malankara Catholic
Association, urged the Christian community to vote for the candidates who were God fearing and protectors of democratic values\textsuperscript{121}. Explicitly targeting the LDF and its liquor policies, the Federation General Secretary, Felix J. Pulloodan, appealed to the community to defeat the political fronts which had failed to check the inflow of spurious liquor into the state.

Elections to the 12\textsuperscript{th} Kerala State Legislative Assembly held on May 10, 2001, recorded 73 percent of votes\textsuperscript{122}. Compared to the 1996 assembly polls, a growth of 2 percent was recorded. The election results showed that the UDF won 99 seats and the LDF 40 including one independent leaving one for a congress dissident. The UDF got 49.05 percent while LDF got only 43.70 of the total votes polled\textsuperscript{123}. Strengthening of the bi-polar system in the state again resulted in the failure of the BJP to open its ‘account’ in Kerala.

The election results show that out of the 14 districts, only in four districts- Kannur, Kozhikode, Palakkad and Kasargod- could the LDF make some impact. In the remaining ten districts the UDF could gain an obvious ascendancy. The most important significance of this election was that there was a
communal consolidation in an exceptional manner in favour of the UDF and the Congress. Apart from influential minority communities like the Christians and Muslims, the Ezhavas and Nairs to a large extent, stood behind the Congress and the UDF during the run up to the election.

Minority mobilization in an extraordinary way was the most conspicuous feature of this election. While going through the district-wise election results, one would find that in most of the districts in the southern and central parts of Kerala where the Christians have a substantial presence, almost all the UDF candidates got through. The remarkable victory of the UDF in districts like Ernakulam, Idukki, Kottayam, Alappuzha, Thrissur, Pathanamthitta and Kollam is indicative of this trend. The failure of Kerala Congress (J) to retain its existing seats and the defeat of its unquestioned leader, P.J. Joseph, at Thodupuzha to P.T. Thomas (Congress) bear witness to this Christian consolidation in favour of the UDF. In fact, the Church showed no sympathy towards anyone belonging to the LDF, even though he was a Christian.

The Christian consolidation reached its zenith in districts
like Kottayam, Ernakulam and Idukki. In Kottayam and Idduki districts, all the UDF winners belonged to the Christian community. In Ernakulam District, the UDF won all the thirteen seats leaving only one for the LDF and, among the winners, seven belonged to the Christian community. Referring to the election debacle of the LDF and CPI (M) a national daily commented, “The CPI (M) has never been able to consolidate its strength in Kerala because unlike West Bengal, the CPI (M) cannot win Kerala with party votes. The reasons lie in the unique demography and social character of the state”\(^\text{124}\). The paper continues, “Kerala’s social history defies any consolidation along class lines. Politics here is dictated by well-entrenched religious and caste interests. Marxists, for various reasons, have never been able to engage in a constructive dialogue with the power structures that represent the Christians and Muslims in the state. The two communities which constitute more than 40% of the state’s population have always preferred to represent their political interests through the Muslim League and the various factions of the Kerala Congress and the Congress\(^\text{125}\).
Regarding the tragic defeat of the LDF in the assembly polls and the communal consolidation in favour of the UDF, another national daily commented: “Going by the election results, it is clear that the two-thirds majority would not have materialized unless the UDF had secured the backing of all social and political factors. There are clear indications that communities, which were traditionally believed to be left-oriented, had shifted their preferences this time. The daily continued, “The Assembly election had seen a confluence of communal interests reminiscent of the Liberation Struggle days. Almost all communal outfits in the state, save the Nair Service Society (NSS), had come out in support of the UDF during the run-up to the election. Although the calls issued by these organizations themselves may not have ignited the grounds well against the LDF, they did contribute in no small measure to the wave against the ruling alliance”. The paper concluded saying that “If at all a consolidation of anti-LDF votes has taken place; it is mainly because of the arrogant style of functioning adopted by the CPI M), which has not hesitated to manipulate the rule of law for partisan ends. It was the party’s
attitude towards ‘Nadapuram clashes’ that alienated a section of the Muslim community which had been traditionally supporting the LDF”127.

Meanwhile elections to the Lok Sabha were declared to be held on 11th May 2004. Five years of BJP-led NDA rule at the Centre created mixed reaction among the minority communities. While the Gujarat riots and the BJP’s open support to Narendra Modi’s Government in Gujarat alienated the Muslims from the BJP and NDA allies. The other major section of minorities in Kerala, the Christians, gave up its old aversion to BJP-led NDA. Meanwhile the BJP also made some efforts to mitigate its hard line communal stance and projected itself as a secular national party to woo the minorities in its favour. Of course, the liberal outlook of its national leader, A B Vajpayee, coupled with his consensus approach would also have contributed to the party’s new appearance. The omission of the Congress to adhere fully to Nehruvian secularism and its national leader’s soft approach to Hindutva had drifted the minorities away from the Congress.
In Kerala the UDF completed three years of its five-year term under the chief ministership of A.K. Antony. The three years of Antony’s rule turned everything upside down and the communal equations that existed three years before turned just the opposite. Within these three years all major communities in the state turned against the UDF and its leader, A.K. Antony. The most remarkable development of this period was the Syrian Catholics, the most dominant and influential section of Catholics who extended customary support to the Congress and the UDF, wafting away leaving the Congress alone to go whichever way it wished. The Church, especially the Syrian Catholic Church found the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and BJP more amenable to its interests rather than getting allied with its traditional enemy, the Communists. Meanwhile other Catholic sections, particularly the Latin Catholics, turned towards the LDF as, for them, it was more tolerable than the NDA.

Being a fervent supporter of the UDF and the Congress, the Church was very much disillusioned and uncomfortable over the infightings in the Congress and the poor governance
of Antony’s Government. In one of the poll-eve guidelines to his believers, the head of the Syro-Malabar Church, Cardinal Mar Varkey Vithayathil, frankly admitted that he was disillusioned with the infightings in the Congress and did not hesitate to shower praise on the BJP-led NDA government at the centre for promoting the ‘true Indian Culture’\(^\text{128}\). Explaining how painful were the bickering in the Congress for the Church, the Cardinal said, “Top on the list of reasons that disillusion a voter is the infighting in the Congress. It has gone beyond all limits. Groupism exists in every party. But it has crossed the usual limits in the Congress. It won’t be appreciated by anyone who sympathized with that party”.\(^\text{129}\)

Criticizing the so called secular parties playing communal cards, the Cardinal said, “every party plays the communal cards which I don’t approve”. Referring to the poor running of the UDF government, the Cardinal said, “No government gives satisfaction to the voter and all politicians are selfish”. But exercising one’s franchise is a serious responsibility or else the new government won’t truly reflect the wish of a majority, the Cardinal reminded his folks. Like Syro-Malabar, the
Malankara Catholic Church also eschewed their traditional aversion towards BJP and NDA. The cordial relations that the Archbishop, Cyril Mar Baselios, maintained with BJP leadership, especially O. Rajagopal, the BJP candidate in Thiruvananthapuram constituency, caught political attention\textsuperscript{130}.

It was obvious that the Cardinal’s line of thinking was not shared by some of the prelates of his hierarchy. Mar Joseph Powathil of Changanacherry, did not seem to have endorsed the stand taken by the Major Archbishop, Mar Varkey Vithayathil. Indirectly expressing his reluctance to have any association with either NDA or BJP, in one of the poll-eve circulars, to be read out in between Sunday mass in churches under his jurisdiction, the archbishop called upon his flocks “to vote in favour of candidates who stand by secularism and who can protect the interests of the poor and the minorities in the country”. He suggested certain parameters to his congregate for the selection of candidate while casting one’s vote. They include, besides other things, the candidate’s faith in democratic values and principles, moral outlook, policies conducive to communal harmony and protection of minority rights. He also
reminded members of the community that while selecting a candidate for voting the attitude of political parties, under whose banner the candidates contest, should be taken into account\textsuperscript{131}.

Along with the Syro-Malabar Church, Malankara Catholic Church and some prelates of the Orthodox Church adopted a soft line towards the BJP. Another prominent section of Catholics, the Latins, hesitating to ally with either BJP or NDA, turned their heads towards the left parties. It indicates that, by refusing to have any connection with the left parties especially the CPI (M), upper caste sections of the Catholic community still maintained their traditional animosity towards the hammer-sickle. Referring to a media report indicating Syrian Catholics supporting BJP, a Latin Catholic priest made the following observation: “We have our own apprehensions about the BJP. Reports of minority torturing still trickle in from North India. There is also growing resentment against the UDF government’s policies. But we have to take a decision keeping national interest in mind”\textsuperscript{132}.
Thus, it was obvious that out of helplessness a section of Catholics were turning their heads towards left parties. Of course, for the traditional supporters of the Congress, the Left parties were not the best option but the only option in the new emerging fragmented political scenario. The evaluation made by a Latin Catholic priest bear witness to this fact, “We are worried about the growth of BJP. We are equally worried about the weakening of Congress. And if the Congress succumbs to its own internal problems, then the Church will have no option other than seeking the left support to survive in a saffronised environment”\textsuperscript{133}.

Severely criticizing the communal agenda and ill-effects of globalization and liberalization of the BJP–led government at the centre and the infightings and poor governance of the UDF government in the state, Bishop Soosapakiam, the Latin Catholic Bishop of Thiruvananthapuram, issued a pastoral letter to be read out in between the Sunday Mass in churches under his jurisdiction\textsuperscript{134}. The pastoral letter which contested the ‘India shining’ claims of the BJP, pointed out that the benefits of unbridled globalization helped only a minuscule section of the
population that comprised the 10 percent rich and also a few among the middle classes. The Bishop, while criticizing the communal agenda of BJP, said that “he was at a loss to understand how the forces that stood by communal carnage like what was witnessed in Gujarat can condemn international terrorism”\textsuperscript{135}. The bishop also came heavily on the UDF government in the state for its inefficiency and group wars. The pastoral letter reads: “Despite good leaders, group wars and washing of dirty linen in public had taken precedence over good governance”. The pastoral letter also criticized the UDF government for its failure to adhere to poll promises of bringing prohibition stage by stage. It exhorted the flocks to vote those candidates who could alleviate the sufferings of the Latin Community without considering the candidate’s caste or religion.

Moving on the same streak of Bishop Soosapakiam, the Latin Catholic Archbishop, Daniel Acharuparambil, urged his flocks to use the vote to elect candidates who upheld the secular democratic system of the country. He exhorted the faithful to support those parties which ensured religious freedom and
communal harmony. He ruled out some media reports that the Church supported Congress candidates in Ernakulam constituency. Making the cleavage more clear between the Latin Catholic Church and the ‘Savarna’ Syro-Malabar Church and other Syrian Churches over their approach to BJP, the archbishop said, “the party (BJP) needed to go a long way to win the confidence of Christians and other minorities”. The bishop continued: “In the BJP, we get the picture of a communal party. The party seems to have a long term agenda of suffronisation of India. This will undermine the fundamental tenets of the Indian Constitution”.

Realizing the leaning of the Church, particularly the Syro-Malabar and other Syrian Churches, towards BJP, the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, in one of the poll-eve meetings in the state said, “Religious minorities have become targets of deliberative violence. Their institutions are under siege. Textbooks are being rewritten. There is also a mischievous effort to give education a communal flavour”.

The attitude of some of the print media also underwent change during this election. The largest circulated Malayalam
newspaper, Malayala Manorama, as ever before, was tilted towards the congress-led alliance. But all other Malayalam dailies including the Deepika and popular T.V. channels noticeably joined the anti-UDF propaganda. They were either reflecting the public mood on the eve of the Lok Sabha elections or consciously taking an editorial policy in support of the LDF. The Deepika, managed by the Catholic church, for the first time, also gave up its open pro-Congress approach that it had maintained in all the previous elections to the Lok Sabha and the assembly. It was reflective of the changed temper of the hierarchy. While ‘Chandrika’ supported the UDF, ‘Janmabhoomi’ campaigned for BJP. Mathrubhumi and Kerala Kaumudi, the other two leading dailies in Malayalam; were all for the LDF. The SNDP which had extended all its support in favour of the UDF and Congress in the last assembly elections turned, by and large, in favour of the LDF this time. The NSS, which adopted an ‘equi-distance’ policy towards both the LDF and UDF with a clear tilting towards the UDF in the last Assembly elections, appeared to be unsympathetic towards Congress and the UDF this time.
The polling which was held on May 11, 2004 in Kerala, recorded 71.41 per cent of votes. The election results show that the UDF lost all the seats it contested except Ponnani, where the Muslim League candidate E. Ahamed won the seat. The Congress that fielded 17 candidates drew a blank for the first time in the history of Lok Sabha polls in the state. Prominent losers of the Congress included Ramesh Chennithala (All India Congress Committee General Secretary), Benny Behanan (Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee General Secretary), V.M. Sudheeran, Mullappally Ramachandran, K. Muraleedharan and Padmaja Venugopal (son and daughter of the veteran Congress leader K. Karunakaran) and Anto Antony, president of district (Kottayam) Congress committee.

The LDF victory, which is unique in the history of Kerala, cut across all caste and community equations. It shows that a sizable section of the Muslims and Christians who stood with the UDF clearly moved over to the LDF. The results also are indicative of the fact that even a national party like Congress, with a long history of over hundred years, heavily depended on caste and communal forces for electoral support. Another
indication of the result is that while the Muslims are still not ready to ally with the BJP-led NDA, the minority Syrian Christians who were disheartened with the Congress and the UDF preferred the NDA to LDF wherever the former fielded a likely/prospective winner. The emergence of BJP candidate, O. Rajagopal, to the first position in the Thiruvananthapuram North Assembly segment where Syrian Christians have a sizable presence and NDA candidate P.C. Thomas’s remarkable victory in Kanjirappally, Pala and Poonjar segments of Moovattupuzha Constituency are testimony to the preference of Syrian Christians for the NDA and BJP.

Listing the main causes for the defeat of the UDF and Congress in the 2004’s Lok Sabha elections, The New Indian Express, a leading national daily, in one of its articles titled “A lesson well taught” made the following observations: “If ever there was a revulsion vote in Kerala, it was in the 2004 Lok Sabha election. Revulsion at a well-heeled and self-serving family’s outrageous political blackmail, revulsion at a weak-kneed and self-absorbed leader of an elected government who succumbed to the blackmail, revulsion
at the puny turncoat congress politicos who paraded their hiccups daily on prime time T.V. and in print, mistaking the cynical laughter of their audience for approbation, finally and painfully, there was revulsion at also the ruling front as a whole for their squandering of an unambiguous electoral mandate for good governance”. The paper continued: “The rickety coalition of caste- community interests that had coasted the UDF to power only three years ago cracked and crashed as never before. Many Muslim Leaguers did not vote the way the League leaders proposed. In Manjeri, they voted a Communist of all people to victory144.

Right from the beginning, the Church has been consistently supporting the Congress at the centre and the Congress-led UDF in the state, after its formation in 1980’s. The Christians in general and Catholics in particular did not show much enthusiasm in the 1957 elections and the coming of Communists to power was a bitter pill for the Church to swallow. But in the 1960 elections, the Church was determined to defeat the Communists campaigned vigorously for the success of the Congress. When a group broke away from
Congress and formed a separate party, Kerala Congress, the Church lent its support to both. When the Church shifted her allegiance from Congress to Kerala Congress the Church-owned daily, The Deepika and, to some extent Malayala Manorama, began canvassing votes for the new party. The Deepika even exhorted Christians to disown Congressmen and support Kerala Congress. Soon the Church realized that dividing Christian votes between Congress and Kerala Congress would only help the Communists and it made some effort to unite both. But when all hustles were found in vain, the Church hierarchy left the Kerala Congress leaving it to move on its own and supported the Congress. However, some Catholic prelates continued to give their unabated support for the Kerala Congress. The CPI-led rule in 1970’s changed the attitude of Christians and the Church towards CPI. Between CPI and CPI (M) the former was a lesser evil for the Church. The Church’s support to the ruling front was total in the 1977 Assembly and Lok Sabha polls. In all the elections from 1980 to 2004, the Church stood sturdily behind the Congress and UDF.
In the 1991 Assembly and Lok Sabha polls, all the Christian candidates including new comers belonging to the UDF, particularly the Congress, were voted to power. In the 1996 Lok Sabha and Assembly polls, the Church generally supported the UDF and its leader A.K. Antony. In the 1998 and 1999 Lok Sabha polls the Church, by and large, supported the UDF and the Congress and exhorted its flocks to vote for a stable government at the Centre. In 2001 assembly elections communal consolidation, particularly minority consolidation, in favour of the UDF and Congress was complete. Another notable feature of the election was the uninhibited interference of the Church in electoral politics. In the 2004 Lok Sabha polls the Church, for the first time, took an open anti-Congress stance. In fact, the Church was totally disillusioned with the bickering in the Congress and the poor performance of the UDF government. It was openly expressed by the top hierarchy of the Church in the poll-eve exhortations to their flocks.

The attitude of the Catholic Church towards the CPI (M) remained rigid till 2004. In the 2004 Lok Sabha polls the Christians in general and the Church in particular became
disheartened by the infightings in the Congress and the unbecoming functioning of the UDF government. While a section of the Church went after the LDF the other sections, the Syrian Catholics, traditionally hostile to ‘hammer-sickle’, were forced to move to the BJP-led NDA. Certain policies of the LDF government (which assumed power in May, 2006) particularly in the educational field like the introduction of Kerala Self-financing Colleges Act, the revision of Kerala Educational Acts and Rules (KEAR) and school text books, etc., provoked the Church, which created a situation reminiscent of 1959. Many massive protest meetings preceded by huge processions, led by top Church hierarchy, have been conducted in different parts of the state. Some prelates even exhorted a second ‘Liberation Struggle’ (Vimochana Samaram) against the LDF government. In short, the political preference of the Catholic Church, mostly the Syrian Catholics, has been for the right wing political parties which, it believes, would help it enjoy the full educational and minority rights guaranteed by the constitution.
Reference

1. Dr. Cyriac Thomas, The Church and Politics in Kerala, (unpublished thesis), University of Kerala, Trivandrum.

2. In 1980, Kerala Congress (M) was in the LDF.

3. Syrian Christians were in the forefront in fighting against C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer, Dewan of Travancore.


5. Jeevadhara, op. cit. p. 127

6. Ibid.

7. The scheme envisaged direct payment of teachers by the government and regulations in admitting students, collecting fees, etc.


9. Jeevadhara, op. cit. p. 129

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. The Democratic Front consisted of the Congress, the PSP and the Muslim League.


14. Ibid. p. 158


16. The CPI-led Front consisted of the CPI, Muslim League, RSP and the PSP.

17. The Deepika, February 15, 1977

19. The Indian Express, March 5, 1977
20. Y. Mary Dase, Role of catholic Church and Kerala Politics, op.cit. p.183
21. The Deepika, March 13, 1977
24. Ibid.
25. The Malayala Manorama, December 22, 1977
26. Ibid.
27. Statement issued by the Catholic bishops at a meeting presided over by His Excellency Mar Gregorious held at the Ernakulam Bishop’s House on September 25, 1979. The Statement says: “The Catholic community has to act cautiously when facing an election. It need not be said that parties which are against Divine faith and religious life coming into power will have far-reaching and serious consequences. Members of community have to take care of that believers in God and democracy do not break up into different groups and, then weaken strength. In the context of today’s crisis situation, they should take care not to align with groups helping or supporting atheists power overtly or covertly. On this occasion when the voter’s list is being prepared one should see that their names are included in the voter’s list before the last date. The faithful also advised to make use of their franchise keeping in mind the welfare of the nation”.
29. Y. Mary Dase,op.cit. p.190
31. The Deepika, December 7, 1979
32. M. M Jacob, the KPCC Secretary, was the rival candidate of K. M Mani in
Palai Assembly constituency.

33. The Desabhimani, January 18, 1980

34. In Poonjar Assembly seat P. C. George K. C. (J) Candidate, defeated V. J. Joseph of the KC (M) and in Ettumanoor, George Joseph Podipara, an independent, won the seat defeating Vaikom Viswan (Marxist)

35. Moovattupuzha constituency forms part of two dioceses, Palai and Kothamangalam. Kothamangalam diocese campaigned against K. C. (M) candidate, hence Kottamangalam seat was won by T. M Jacob the K. C. (J), by defeating M. V. Mani, the K. C. (M).

36. The Malayala Manorama, May 17, 1982

37. i. vote for parties which accept minority rights
   ii. do not vote for atheists
   iii. do not vote for parties which create anarchism
   iv. vote for parties which ensure law and order
   v. everybody should exercise his franchise. (The Kerala Kaumudi-May 17, 1982)


39. A. P. Kurien had been continuously representing the constituency since 1967


41. The Deepika, November 23, 1984

42. Ibid.

43. The Kerala Times, Nov. 29, 1984


45. Kerala Congress (M) candidates were defeated in five constituencies and Kerala Congress (J) lost eight constituencies including Ettumanoor and Kanjirappally.

46. Mercykutty was elected from Kundara and T. J. Angelos got elected from
Mararikulam.


49. The Desabhimani, November 3, 1989

50. The CBCI exhorted its faithful to vote for those parties which protected the right of freedom of religion, freedom of conscience, freedom of speech and freedom of association. The Indian Express, Nov. 1, 1989


54. The Kerala Kaumudi, May 11, 1991


57. Indian Express, April 12, 1996

58. Indian Express, April 4, 1996

59. The SNDP appreciated the UDF for its liquor policy, saying that it is in harmony with the ideals of Sree Narayana Guru. It also appreciated the Reservation Policy of UDF. The Malayala Manorama, April 16, 1996

60. The Malayala Manorama, March 23, 1996

61. Ibid.

62. Ibid.

63. The Indian Express, April 4, 1996

64. Ibid.

65. Ibid.
This was very much evident in Kaduthuruthy constituency where the official UDF candidate was P. M. Mathew and P. C. Thomas, the UDF rival, was contested with the knowledge and blessings of another faction of the Kerala Congress, Kerala Congress (M). This made the success of LDF candidate Mons Joseph easier and it was his maiden victory.
88. Ibid.
89. The Hindu, February 23, 1998
90. Ibid.
91. The Indian Express, February 24, 1998
92. The Indian Express, February 21, 1998
93. The Indian Express, February 27, 1998
94. Ibid.
95. The Hindu, February 2, 1998
96. They are P. J. Kurien, P. C. Chacko, George Eden, P. C. Thomas and A. C. Jose.
97. The New Indian Express, September 3, 1999
98. Ibid.
99. The Hindu, September 5, 1999
100. Ibid.
101. The New Indian Express, September 12, 1999
102. The Hindu, April 23, 2001
103. Ibid.
104. The New Indian Express, May 9, 2001
105. The Hindu, April 6, 2001
106. Ibid.
107. Ibid.
108. Ibid.
109. Ibid.
110. The New Indian Express, April 7, 2001
111. Ibid.
112. Ibid.
113. The Hindu, April 29, 2001
114. Ibid.
115. Ibid.
116. The New Indian Express, May 4, 2001
117. Ibid.
118. Ibid.
119. The New Indian Express, May 8, 2001
120. Ibid.
121. The New Indian Express, May 9, 2001
122. The New Indian Express, May 14, 2001
123. Ibid.
124. The New Indian Express, May 16, 2001
125. Ibid.
126. The Hindu, May 14, 2001
127. Ibid.
128. The New Indian Express, April 28, 2004
129. Ibid.
130. The New Indian Express, May 8, 2004
131. The New Indian Express, May 10, 2004
132. The New Indian Express, May 8, 2004
133. Ibid.
134. The New Indian Express, May 3, 2004
135. Ibid.
136. The New Indian Express, May 6, 2004
137. Ibid
138. Ibid
139. The New Indian Express, April 29, 2004
140. The New Indian Express, April 5, 2004
141. The New Indian Express, April 3, 2004
142. The New Indian Express, May 12, 2004
143. The New Indian Express, May 14, 2004
144. Ibid.