Less Religion and More Human Rights in Spain?

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Abstract Spanish Catholicism—the main denomination in this country—has developed in the last decades towards a more open-minded and tolerant attitude, embracing the program of human rights as part of its own identity and mission. However its social and cultural influence has greatly declined as a result of steady process of secularization. In this new context, many youth sectors feel disengaged and even in contrast with Catholic establishment. That situation has nourished a sort of 'cultural divorce' that could be reflected in the perception of human rights. The main issue concerns not so much the traditional chart of 'human rights', but what can be considered 'new' or 'special' rights, which have been subjected to strong criticism and opposition from most Catholic sectors. Empirical data from several surveys confirm that divorce between what could be assumed as the extremes of a 'dual culture of human rights': one more liberal and individual; the other more Christian and communitarian, in its roots. This point is still more evident when samples of Spanish youths are analyzed.

Spanish society has undergone a deep and rapid transformation during the last 40 years. The pace of change has probably been accelerated in the last two decades as a result of generational, political and educational factors. Among the other aspects of this change, the religious dimension has been deeply affected. If institutional aspects are considered, it is not exaggerating to say that the Catholic Church is no longer in a position of social, political and cultural dominance. At best, it has become a 'qualified minority' with some weight, but marginal in many aspects when its former privileged status is remembered. In any case, the 'religious sphere' has moved backwards in the social imagination to the point of losing much of its relevance both at the personal and at the social level.

This is not the place to describe and study the causes and factors involved in the particular case of Spanish secularization[1]; however the specific dynamics that have

[1] Some general explanation can be found in Martin (2005); empirical figures can be found at: Oviedo and Canteras (2010).

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driven this process surely explain a good deal of the complex relationships between religion, human rights and youth subcultures.

The present short presentation will deal with the issues of religion and human rights in Spain from two approaches: one trying to describe the context in which both cultural aspects interact; and the second through an analysis of some sets of data to ascertain the current tendencies especially regarding youth samples in the area of both religion and human rights.

Context and Church Positions

Any attempt to deal with the Catholic Church in Spain—still the dominant Christian denomination—has to account for the acute changes this institution has undergone in the last few decades. Historical work has been done showing the different stages of that process, the main influences, and the consequences that have impacted the present state of things (Callahan 2000; de Cardedal 2010). Some theses deserve special attention. The first one concerns the view of a 'deep divorce between church and society". This thesis has been exposed and analyzed by the eminent theologian Olegario González de Cardedal, an exceptional witness of the period under examination. Some unease arises from the findings of his fine and accurate analysis: "The Church has been a decisive factor in the national life in these [past] decades, however it was unable to explain sufficiently its performance nor has it interpreted its development" (de Cardedal 2010, p. 16). Among these failures, the author explicitly includes the misunderstanding of the modern processes of social differentiation, and the excess of identification between civil society and the Church. From these features, a related criticism emerges: "desertion regarding the cultural milieu" (ibid, pp. 103, 175). Summing up the diagnosis, the denounced 'divorce' gives place to divergences in the way Church and civil society value and judge issues concerning human and social rights, and their application to several spheres of public and private life.

A second thesis to consider follows an historical development from the nineteenth century on, tracing scenarios of constant confrontation or 'culture wars' between more liberal and leftist political positions, on the one hand, and Catholic and traditionalist positions, on the other hand. From these tensions there emerges a thesis similar to the former one: the Spanish Catholic Church has been unable to adapt in a satisfactory way to the process of modernization. The analysis provided by Callahan (2000, pp. 117, 148, 273, 411, 440) reveals a sort of continued *failure*: the attempts to adapt to the new context appear as characterized by a lack of realism; there is a considerable ideological delay; confrontation has often been the default and imperfect strategy; and the abundance of organizational and practical limits have jeopardized the ecclesial institution. The monopolistic status enjoyed by the Spanish Church for most of its existence has not contributed to a more efficient performance and provision of its services in a new context, marked by pluralism and pragmatism.

A negative image of the institutional Church arises from the described diagnoses, and provides one of the many explanations concerning the process of secularization. Trying to apply a more 'charitable hermeneutic', the religious crisis in Spain—as in most European countries—follows structural and cultural patterns beyond the particular institutional traits and behaviors of the respective national Churches. This phenomenon happens everywhere, but at a different pace and with different levels of intensity, depending more on external factors than on internal ones, since the religious structure in Western Europe is similar in different countries, even if historical events configure specific paths of religious decline. Probably it may be stated that the Spanish Church has been unable—as in many other countries—to deal in a more realistic and pragmatic way with the ongoing crisis, and has felt displaced and overtaken by the course of the events, in the political, cultural, and social fields. In some sense it can be said that this institution was not trained or ready to cope with this kind of situation, in which entire sectors of the population, particularly the young, were feeling alienated from Christian faith and tradition, and still more from the Catholic Church. Indeed this institution has been frequently seen as a stronghold of dated ideas, obsolete moral rules, and out of touch with modernity.

There are reasons to think that in the Spanish context the Catholic culture and the culture of human rights have grown completely separated and in tacit contrast. From an historical point of view, one of the central modern rights—religious liberty—has been strongly resisted for most of the nineteenth and twentieth century, justifying those who hold that religious freedom is closely linked to democratic freedoms and a liberal state (Grim 2014; De la Cueva 2009). Democracy in Spain was fully achieved in 1978, with the new Constitution, after the end of a long-lasting dictatorial regime. As many analysts point out, a big sector of the Catholic Church was strongly supportive of that transition, even to the point of becoming one of the forces decidedly engaged in the process of democratization. For some analysts this was a golden time for the Church, feeling completely identified with the historical forces pressing for a change in Spanish political structure and for an upgrading of its cultural framework. As a result, the culture of human rights—of that time—was fully integrated into the ecclesial identity. For the Spanish Bishops in 1977, "the evangelical message is consubstantial with a defense of human rights" (Comin 1977). However this 'honeymoon' did not last very long, and ended in divorce as soon as Church officials became aware of their loss of political and social influence. Secularization trends took a stronger hand; and new 'rights' arose in contrast with traditional moral views regarding issues of family and life, thus nourishing a long standing conflict.

At the present moment the relationship between Church positions and human rights in Spain is complex and requires a more nuanced analysis. Following a pattern already observed in other contexts—in Vatican policy since the times of John Paul II—all the 'traditional' human rights become patrimony of the Catholic message and the so called "Catholic social teaching", but at the same time the Church's opposition has grown to what can be called 'new' or 'special' individual rights. This means a set that could include 'rights' as diverse as: euthanasia, abortion, assisted fertilization, same-sex marriage and family life based on it, divorce, and some educational trends. At this moment the Catholic Church can be considered as one of the

most committed institutions in the defense of human rights; and at the same time the Church has become one of the fiercest opponents to the broadening of this fixed catalogue of rights to include more discussed civil liberties.

Catholic authorities claim that their position is not against human rights, but comes out of a substantive understanding of them and their subjects. This view reflects the official Catholic standard—not just some Spanish partisan position—which could lead to a 'double model' or a state of 'two cultures on civil rights': the first one would follow in the footsteps of a more liberal tradition, whose focus is on individual rights; while the other would be linked to a more Christian tradition, which looks for an alternative understanding of rights that are better formulated in communitarian terms and in terms of the right to life. The topic of 'human rights' clearly belongs to the liberal and Enlightenment tradition, and reflects a rather individual orientation. The second model can be seen as a correction, even as it claims that the essential roots of human rights are found in the Judeo-Christian tradition, and that therefore, it would be wrong to cut ties with their original foundation. In these conditions it is more appropriate to talk about a contrast between two models of human rights, rather than positions 'for and against' them. The suggested analysis converges with that of Charles Taylor (2007) regarding the process of secularization: Beyond any theory that claims secular thought is a fulfillment of human ideals, arrived at after suppressing religious and traditional hindrances, in actuality secular models appear as just alternative and competing views on human and social fulfillment.

In any case, a realistic view of the present situation reminds one of the steady loss of cultural influence that Catholic authorities suffer in the realm of public opinion, and even more so on the younger generations. This observation will become more apparent when the empirical data are analyzed. Such a state of things suggests that the Catholic culture concerning 'alternative rights' represents a specific niche in the Spanish population. As such it appears as well organized, even able to mobilize its affinity with public expressions of protest and vindication, but with limited reach in the practical field of legislation and in relation to the major media opinion makers. One issue that deserves further study is how related are the process of secularization and the growing demand for new rights, understood as an intensification of demands for personal freedom and emancipation from every sort of tutelage. If a correlation could be found, it is likely that it will show the persistence of the characteristic "Enlightenment pattern".

Dealing with Religious Pluralism

Regarding the rights of religious minorities, the official position of the Catholic Church is one of respect and religious freedom. This is evident for the Spanish Catholic Church as well, which follows the official standard. However, Catholic opinion sometimes resents the lack of reciprocity that this tolerance entails, especially regarding Islamic expressions; and the respective perception of 'weakness'

that this policy could trigger in some other religious groups, unable to understand the strength of tolerance.

An interesting issue that helps to illustrate the levels of religious tolerance in Spain is that—in contrast with other European countries—Spanish culture and media have refrained from endorsing campaigns against the use of 'chador'; limitations on the building of mosques or minarets or restrictions on ethnic or idiosyncratic religious expressions. As far as the journalistic record shows, such 'culture wars' have not been fought in Spanish society. Spanish Catholic authorities usually avoid expressing opinions or concerns regarding other religions or Christian confessions. In an exceptional way, sometimes representatives of the Catholic Church have shown concerns about demographic unbalances and the very affirmative attitude that Islamic populations entertain.

The attempt to look for data, public opinions, or indicators of internal culture regarding how religious minorities in Spain assume or tolerate religious pluralism has been unfruitful. The data given by European Surveys (ESV, ESS)—that will be shown below—provide only a very scarce number of cases, too small to render any analysis significant[2]. Only in a conjectural way can anything be stated and then only in a very general way. The first is the apparent lack of incidents of intolerance arising from these instances. In other words, religious minorities in Spain broadly accept and assume a situation of religious pluralism, which can only benefit them being in a condition of minority. The second perception concerns the presence of radical elements, especially in an Islamic milieu, which move in a different direction. This has been the rare case, frequently isolated and overruled by the standard representatives of these religious organizations.

Looking at the data in the 2008 wave of the European Values Study, some figures might become relevant. The item of religious affiliation can be crossed with the one about religious exclusivism. This last item measures in a Likert-like scale of four levels from more exclusivism to refusal of religious truth ("only one true religion"; "only one true religion but others contain some truths too"; "no true religion, all contain some basic truths"; "none of the religions offer any truths", 1–4). The outcomes show that while Catholics and other Christians give an average of 2.2 points, Muslims lean more towards exclusivism, with 1.6 points.

Empirical Data on Religion and Rights

Some sets of published data might help to better clarify the development of ideas and attitudes concerning religious faith and practice, and values related to rights, in an extensive sense. Our analysis resorts fundamentally to three sources: the studies periodically done by the *Fundación Santa María* (SM) on a broad sample of youths, published as extensive reports for the past three decades. This is a private Spanish Catholic foundation, not linked to the Church's official agencies, i.e. those under

[2] In the EVS, 2008, Muslim population was just 1.5 % of a sample of 1500 cases (21 cases).

Table 1 Evolution of tolerance regarding following issues (*SM Surveys*)

	1984	1989	1994	1999	2005	2010
Abortion[a]	4.54	4.48	4.61	4.91	5.29	4.97
Divorce[a]	6.36	6.09	6.18	6.44	7.05	6.54
Euthanasia[a]	4.12	4.80	5.05	5.57	6.06	5.51
Light drugs consumption[a]	2.52	2.62	2.37	2.89	3.27	3.09
Weekly mass attendance			17%	12.1%	5%	9.1%

[a] Levels of tolerance are measured in a scale from 1 to 10, on the question: *Do you justify?*

the Bishops' Conference[3]. The second set of data is provided by *Injuve* surveys, a public agency depending on the Spanish Ministry of Work and Social Affairs. It published reports in 2001 and 2008 with questions regarding values and distinct sorts of rights. The third set is offered by two standard European Surveys: the *European Social Survey* (ESS) and the *European Values Study* (EVS). Both publish periodical reports online with free access to their databases concerning Spain and most European countries; these data include religious indicators and social values.

a) In their successive waves, the SM funded surveys provide important data concerning religious indicators and opinions of tolerance regarding several rights, perceived as an extension of the taken for granted set of classical human rights. The samples are big enough and representative; the 1999 wave—for instance—yielded 3853 cases of respondents between 15–24 years old (Elzo et al. 2005, p. 103; González-Anleo 2010). The former table provides a longitudinal vision on the development of opinions about justification of some practices than many see or vindicate as 'rights', and religious practice (Table 1).

A first analysis of these data offers a disconcerting panorama: until 2005, the pattern is clearly of a growing tolerance regarding 'new rights', as those four here described, and declining religious attendance. However in the 2010 wave the tendency seems to become inverted: a significant loss of support for these rights and an increase of religious attendance. These figures give rise to several possible interpretations. One could be related to a new social and cultural background marked by financial crisis and loss of confidence in more secular-progressive ideas. An alternative could see these results as just a provisional or conjuncture-linked phase in a long-term process of cultural adjustment regarding moral values. In any case, the basic pattern persists: the 'alternative rights' and indicators of religiosity appear as inversely correlated.

Data about institutional confidence in the Catholic Church in the 2005 sample of young people are quite revealing. Spanish youths are very disaffected about that Church, which becomes the less trusted institution among a sample of 14. It is strik-

[3] Indeed the publication of those reports have given rise to tensions between Church officials and the team of sociologists doing the research and providing their analysis of the data.

Table 2 Differences between 2001 and 2008 census

Opinions	2001	2008
Acceptance of homosexual tendency	81.5%	81.3%
Drug consumption should be penalized	36.7	50.3
Only hard drugs should be penalized	30.5	32.7
Drugs should be never penalized	30.2	13.8
Only the woman concerned should decide about abortion	61.2	55.2
Society should establish certain restrictions on abortion	21.1	23.3
Against abortion whatever the circumstances	14.5	16.3

ing that 30.7% of the 1999 sample have no trust at all in the Church; the second least trusted institution is the army, with 21.9% not trusting it at all.

b) The two *Injuve* reports give some further useful indications[4]. Their surveys reflect the opinions of young people (15–29 years; 2008 $N=1442$). In the 2001 wave, item 14b asks about values worthy of personal sacrifices; on a scale of 0–10, 'Human Rights' gets 9.14 points; this is the second most appreciated value in the ranking, after 'Peace' which receives the highest support (9.48) among a list of 12 items. 'Freedom of expression' is high in the ranking too, with 9.04 (fourth position). This data confirm the idea that human rights belong to the dominant culture, both of adults and young people in nowadays Spain, as happens in most Western countries.

A table can be composed comparing identical items between the surveys of 2001 and 2008, and hence able to provide some longitudinal perspective (Table 2):

Here emerges a pattern of light decline regarding some of what may be called 'new rights'. This trend does not affect homosexual tolerance, which keeps the same high levels through this time. However it clearly applies to drugs consumption and abortion rights. Furthermore the 2008 wave offers interesting data concerning religion, which is "very" or "quite" important for 26.5% of the sample. Not being an item in the 2001 wave, it's impossible to compare. However taking into account the figures in a SM survey in 2000, where the same question gets a result of 33% (González-Anleo et al. 2004, p. 28), this 2008 Injuve figure unveils a trend of sharp religious decline.

The following table is quite indicative about trends in the *Injuve* 2008 sample regarding 'new rights' (Table 3):

The figures in this table are revealing of different levels of agreement with different rights in this set. Homosexual marriage comes first in support; it is followed closely by euthanasia as a right of the incurably ill person concerned. The rejection of the death penalty reveals a significant sensitivity to respect for human life. The overall impression is that youths in Spain over the last few years have become more supportive of these new rights, and that an overwhelming majority—about three-fourths—approve an extension of rights beyond the traditional lists.

[4] Open access at http://www.injuve.es/observatorio/demografia-e-informacion-general/informe-juventud-en-espana-2008; accessed 20.05.2013.

Table 3 Value orientation (N = 1442)

Are you in favour or against?	In favour (%)	Against (%)	Not know (%)	No answer (%)
Marriage between persons of the same sex	76.4	15.7	6.7	1.3
Squatting	37.2	55.2	5.9	1.7
The genetic selection of embryos for therapeutic purposes	55.8	18.0	23.4	2.8
Assisting a person with an incurable disease to die when he/she asks for such help	74.5	14.1	10.6	0.8
Applying the death penalty to persons who have committed very serious crimes	34.5	57.8	7.1	0.6
Religious education in schools	50.9	33.4	12.6	3.1

c) The European surveys provide standardized data from more than 20 countries in different waves. In this case the data reflect opinions of populations of all the ages: To isolate the youngest cohort would not give a very accurate outcome, since the size of the entire sample is not big enough (always about 1500 cases). The following table gives figures regarding three characteristic indicators of religiosity in Spain, from two sets of data: the *European Values Study* (EVS) and the *European Social Survey* (ESS). The pattern of decline is quite apparent, at least concerning attendance at religious services and self-assessment as a 'religious person'. This pattern is less clear when levels of personal prayer are taken into account (Table 4).

The next table gathers data on four successive waves of the *European Values Study* showing levels of tolerance of homosexuality, abortion, divorce, euthanasia, and consumption of soft drugs. The pattern arising in this case goes in the opposite direction to the one observed in the former table: from 1981 to 2008, levels of tolerance always increase and even double the initial estimates. The case of tolerance of soft drugs is more complex and reveals a low level of tolerance in contrast with other 'rights' (Table 5).

The most simple and parsimonious interpretation of the former data, taking the last two tables together, is that the decline of religious indicators corresponds with an increase of levels of tolerance for 'new individual rights'.

Some other figures may be helpful, as for instance the opinions about immigrants. The 2008 wave offers a couple of items: "Immigrants undermine the country's cultural life" (Q78B); and "Immigrants will become a threat to society" (Q78E), which get respectively 6.08 and 5.36 points in a scale of 1–10; these data reflect an uneasy atmosphere with foreigners from poorer areas looking for opportunities in Spain during the economic boom.

Table 4 Averages of attendance at religious services at least weekly; daily prayer; and average of "how important is God/how religious are you?" (1–10) for Spanish waves of EVS and ESS.

Year	Worship (%)	Prayer (%)	Religiosity (1–10)
1981 EVS	40.1		6.32
1990 EVS	30.2	25.5	6.12
1995−7 EVS	25.4		
1999–2000 EVS	25.5	22.1	5.97
2002 ESS	21.2	21.7	4.46
2004 ESS	19.0	18.9	4.43
2006 ESS	18.3	24.5	4.58
2008 ESS	16.2	19.6	4.51
2008 EVS	18.5	25.6	5.8
2010 ESS	14.4	20.9	4.43

Table 5 Attitudes about controversial issues in Spain in 4 EVS waves (from 1 to 10)\

Year	Homosex	Abortion	Divorce	Euthanasia	Soft drugs
1981	2.9	2.9	4.8	3.2	2.2
1990	3.6	4.3	5.5	4.0	1.7
1999–2000	5.51	4.34	6.10	4.73	2.16
2008	6.01	4.80	6.88	6.49	2.51

Table 6 Correlations between "Weekly church attendance and values" (EVS 2008 $p \leq 0.0001$)

Item	R
Abortion	0.401
Homosexuality	0.329
Divorce	0.336
Euthanasia	0.399
Soft drugs	0.313
Cheating on taxes	0.127
Taking bribes	0.066

The data set provided by EVS allows for further analysis that can throw some more light on this apparently simple pattern. Looking at the last table of correlations (for the 2008 wave) a similar tendency becomes perceptible, since the main indicator of institutional religiosity—level of weekly attendance at religious services—correlates negatively with a list of 'new rights' taken into account. Two further items have been included as controls, to show the contrasts between religiously inspired treatment of the 'new rights', and some issues regarding public ethics (Table 6).

However, in the case of the two aforementioned items concerning attitudes toward immigrants, the correlation coefficients with levels of religious attendance are

very low (R = 0.069; R = 0.073). These data can be further completed. The 1999–2000 EVS wave included an item on "How much respect is there for individual human rights nowadays (in our country)?" In a scale of 4 levels, it got 2.24 points—on the average. The interesting thing, again, is that this figure does not correlate with the indicator of religious practice (R = 0.082). Summing up these outcomes, it can be stated that levels of religiosity are not related—positively or negatively—to general perception of human rights, and neither are they related to perceptions on the levels of acceptance of immigrants. As a first conclusion—and in a more nuanced way—it can be stated that religiosity does not have any weight in regard to general human rights, while it does have a definite impact regarding a set of new individual rights that could be perceived as being in harsh contrast with one's own religious and moral values.

Conclusion

The data offered here allow for some further conclusions concerning life-styles and discrimination topics. A first statement concerns the broad culture of human rights in Spain: it is something widely accepted and there are no symptoms about any reversal of this universal trend. Catholics peacefully assume this same state of things without hesitation.

However, since the prevalent religious denomination in Spain is Catholicism, the former data reveal that this denomination encourages a nuanced or differentiated understanding of personal rights, in tune with the theoretical framework stated above: In Spain there coexist two or more models of rights, following distinctive traditions. In our case these models correspond to the secular and individual one; and to the Catholic, communitarian and life-focused one, respectively. Obviously more sub-cultures of human rights would emerge if other ethnic-religious groups were considered, such as Muslims, Hindus, or other minorities. This principle would apply to other sub-cultures inhabiting the youth universe, as is the case for groups more engaged in soft-drug liberalization. In this sense, the data thus far provided allows us to distinguish between a limited set of new rights that are becoming part of the collective catalogue of rights, and other minority rights that have not attained a similar wide acceptance, such as the consumption of soft drugs. This point indicates that catalogs of rights are—even in most advanced societies—subjected to some boundaries and cannot become paramount as covering every imaginable behavior.

Issues of discrimination are unavoidable in every society, even those more developed and tolerant. Cases of perceived or real discrimination for race, gender, sexual orientation, and age can be found in research engines and scientific papers describing the Spanish society. The growth of immigration from poorer countries and the perception of an increase of certain crimes—robbery, smuggling, and burglary—trigger attitudes of distrust and suspicion towards newcomers. However, a scientific study shows rather low levels of self-perceived discrimination due to race, education or gender (Gil-González et al. 2013). Furthermore, Spanish society still

does not know the presence or visibility of parties or organizations whose aim is to limit the arrival or influence of incoming minorities, as are found in many other European countries. These data do not exactly point to a mature culture of tolerance and respect for minorities; they are just an indicator pointing in that sense.

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