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The Dynamic Relationship Between Young Spanish Catholics and the Church

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The Dynamic Relationship Between Young Spanish Catholics and the Church

submitted to
Professor Lisa Langdon Koch

by
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For
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Abstract

**Research Question:** How is the commitment of Spaniards to Catholicism changing with younger generations? And why is this relevant given Spain’s deep roots with the religion?

The Catholic Church and Spain have been highly involved with each other for centuries. It is possible that the Church’s controversies and conservative values are distancing young members from pursuing a stronger relationship with their faith. I predicted that more young Spanish Catholics’ commitment to the Church was wavering because of three potential reasons: increased security and education, child sex abuse scandals involving clergymen, and the institution’s outdated attitudes. I conducted a study with nine respondents, all young female Spanish adults with Catholic parents that are involved with the religion. The survey centered on their connection with, criticisms of, and future plans involving Catholicism. The respondents were not any more likely to be disassociated with Catholicism than any other age group even though studies have shown a downward trend in religious association by age, with younger people being less religious. I was able to conclude that Catholicism is on the decline in Spain demographically, but not necessarily with young people. Regardless, the Church retains a substantial amount of cultural and institutional influence in the state.
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Bibliography
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And finally, a huge thank you to my reader, Professor Lisa Langdon Koch, for her patience and guidance throughout this process. I truly could not have done this without her.
Introduction: Road Map to Secularism

I centered my research around finding the answers to two questions. The first question was “how is the commitment of Spaniards to Catholicism changing with younger generations?” which was followed up by “why is this relevant given Spain’s deep roots with the religion?”

Motivation

I became interested in exploring Spaniards’ commitment to Catholicism within younger generations for several reasons. The first reason I chose this inquiry is because although I selected to complete a thesis in International Relations, I wanted to incorporate my Spanish dual major by focusing on a Spanish-speaking country. I chose Spain specifically because I studied abroad during the fall semester of my Junior year in Madrid, Spain and thus felt a personal connection to the country. While living in Madrid, I stayed with a host family who had two daughters, both teenagers at the time, and the topic of religion often came up. My host parents expressed their unwavering commitment to Catholicism and my host mother even makes First Communion dresses and suits for a living. While I never expressly talked to my younger host sister about religion, the elder sister seemed to be doubting her faith.

While deciding on a thesis topic, I remembered her doubts and thought investigating if that were a commonality with people her age would be interesting and informative. My personal connection to this subject was deepened by the fact that I
attended a private Catholic grade school for nine years of my life as well. Not only is this topic something that I am interested in, but I believe it matters more broadly because of the Catholic Church’s heavy influence around the world, especially in countries such as Spain. The Church has caused plenty of destruction but has also served as a source of comfort for millions of people. Regardless of personal opinions on the Church, it will be interesting to uncover if a traditionally Catholic powerhouse country is beginning to uproot its relationship with the institution and the faith.

Background

Spain has a long history with Catholicism and has been heavily influenced by the Catholic Church politically and culturally for centuries. Modern Catholic Spain can be traced back to the marriage between Isabel of Castilla and Fernando of Aragón, which united two territories known as the Corona de Castilla, or Crown of Castilla, and the Corona de Aragón, or Crown of Aragon, within the Iberian Peninsula. The Catholic couple completed the reconquista, or reconquering, of the territory from Muslims, who had been residing there for nearly 800 years, after the conquest of the Kingdom of Granada in 1492. That same year the monarchs decided to expel all Jewish people from the territory and impose the Spanish Inquisition on religious minorities. Isabel and Fernando were avid defenders of the Catholic Church and sought to homogenize their nation to complete their consolidation of power.

Following Isabel and Fernando were several more Catholic monarchs as well as a noteworthy but brief secular and extremely anti-Catholic republic. This republic spiraled into a civil war that lasted from 1936-1939 and ended in an intensely Catholic
dictatorship under Francisco Franco. During his rule, Franco collaborated closely with the Catholic Church, reinstated it as an influential institution in Spain, and did not allow for overt religious diversity. After Franco’s death, the new Spanish government enacted the enduring non-denominational Constitution of 1978. The current Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez has continued trends of secularization and notably took his oath of office without any religious symbols present.

Though the current constitution characterizes the Spanish state as non-denominational, the Church retains a substantial amount of influence within the state. The Church was specifically delegated special privileges in order for the new constitution to not be comparable to the extremely anti-Catholic constitution under the Second Republic. For example, the Catholic Church receives significantly more state funding compared to minority religions to utilize in sectors such as education. Apart from the state, Catholicism is immensely involved in Spanish culture and traditions, because even distant Catholics often continue traditions they grew up with without explicitly acknowledging its roots, such as Christmas. Changing demographics might mean Catholicism does not comprise as much of a percentage of the population, but the religion and the institution are still intrinsically intertwined with the state and the culture.

**Summary of the Theory**

Despite having a secular government, Spain’s history with the Catholic Church has ensured that the majority of the population has Catholic ties. But will the religion’s dominance continue forever? It is highly possible that new generations in Spain are becoming less Catholic. My theory is that more young Spaniards, ranging from late
teenagers to early twenty-year-olds, are becoming disconnected with Catholicism than older generations for several reasons. I predict that young people are becoming distant from Catholicism because of either increased security and education, child sexual abuse and coverups within the Church, the Church’s views becoming increasingly outdated, or a combination of these reasons.

I chose increased security and education after reading a study that found that religious affiliation has decreased over time as medicine has improved and life expectancy rates have increased. As more incomprehensible phenomena become explainable and humans continue to solve issues ourselves, people have less of a need to turn to God for answers. In addition, because my respondents all hailed from a wealthy and developed country, I assumed they would be less reliant on God to provide a source of comfort and explanations. I also assumed that they would have easier access to education and would depend less on God for answers. A study that I found presented some data that demonstrated that people who have achieved a higher level of education are generally less religious than someone with only a high school education, for example.

Secondly, I expected that the child sex abuse cases perpetuated by Catholic clergy members and covered up by elites in the Church might have turned people away from the faith given that it has been a vile pattern for decades. These cases have permeated international news sites and mainstream media, so it is extremely likely that young adults who frequent the internet and pay attention to news related to their own religion would be aware of the abuses. Certain cases have even been immortalized in documentaries and movies such as *Spotlight*, and information about others is publicly accessible via news outlets. It is understandable that one or two bad priests might not be enough to turn
people away from the Church, but this kind of abuse has been widespread and covered up by elites. Therefore I presumed that this abhorrent pattern might have resulted in dissociation to the Church by members of the Church in some capacity.

Lastly, I predicted that as each new generation becomes more liberalized than its senior, more people will disconnect from the faith given that the Catholic Church and its teachings are conservative and “outdated.” I focused on their conservative views on abortion access and LGBTQ+ rights, which are both prominent social issues. I chose these issues because they are extremely polarizing topics and I predicted that my respondents, as young adults, would likely have more liberal opinions than the Church on these issues. I anticipated that the Church’s conservative views might turn some young Spaniards away from the institution, especially if they identified as women or as part of the LGBTQ+ community. This is because it can be hard to justify following certain religious teachings if they directly contradict one’s identity or beliefs, and the Church has always been consistent with their traditionalist opinions on these issues.

**Preview of the Findings**

My findings in relation to my initial explanations are slightly varied. According to existing research, the proportion of Spain’s entire population that identifies as Catholic has decreased over time, which could be related to factors such as increased immigration rather than any of the predictions I made earlier. However, out of the proportion of remaining Spanish Catholics, a relatively low percentage are actually “practicing Catholics.” A “practicing Catholic” might signify, for example, a Catholic that attends church service every week. Despite the decreasing numbers, the Church maintains
considerable institutional influence, especially compared to minority religions. For instance, Catholic religious education in schools is partially funded by the government, whereas other religious congregations have to fund the education themselves. Existing research also shows that young Spaniards are less likely to be connected to their faith in comparison to older generations who lived through the Franco dictatorship. Numbers also show that older generations are significantly more devout than young people, and young people make up a higher percentage of non-religious affiliations.

My small sample of research of young Spaniards found that the majority still consider themselves to be Catholic, but all have varying degrees of devotion. All had received some form of Catholic religious education and most found that that education had a positive impact on their faith. Many respondents also found that the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences had brought them closer to their faith. It is hard to determine right now whether the pandemic will have a lasting effect on their religious devotion, however. While many respondents associated their belief and value system on the teachings of Catholicism, some of them still had negative views about the institution and its outdated views. A couple also responded that they plan to implement certain religious traditions and values in their future households, but did not highlight passing on the religion itself.

While plenty of young Spaniards seem to feel connected with their faith, it is likely the overall trend of Spain becoming less Catholic will progress as the state continues to secularize and the Church remains rooted in its judgements.

Explanation for Case Selection
The primary focus of my research was Spain because it was not only personally relevant but specifically related to the topic I chose. The country has a deep rooted relationship with the Catholic Church and made perfect sense to work with given that I had access to Spanish citizens in the appropriate age range who were available to answer questions about their faith. Apart from Spain and a few global studies, I also included two existing studies about the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on people’s faith within the United States and Poland. Unfortunately the pandemic is still too recent a phenomenon for there to be existing extensive research related to young Spaniards, and so the only Spanish-related information on COVID-19 is covered in my original data.

Road Map

This first chapter has served as an introduction to my thesis in which I briefly described why I chose my research topic, some background information, as well as my theory and findings to support my thesis. The next chapter will go into greater detail about the history of Spain, specifically Spain’s relationship with the Catholic Church. It will cover relevant leadership and events in the time period between Isabel and Fernando’s reign and Pedro Sánchez’s tenure. The third chapter will focus on potential reasons why young Spaniards are becoming disconnected with Catholicism. These potential reasons range from increased education to disdain toward child sex abuse scandals related to Catholic clergymen. The next chapter will elaborate on existing data and research as well as delve into my original research of nine female Spaniards between the ages of seventeen and twenty-one who were all raised in Catholic families. In this chapter I will also analyze how my predictions match up with real answers given for
disconnect to their faith. Finally, I will wrap up with a conclusion chapter summarizing my research and highlighting implications.
Chapter 1: Catholic Roots in Spain

Isabel and Fernando

As someone brought up in the United States educational system, Isabel and Fernando, or “Isabella and Ferdinand,” the first Catholic monarchs of a united Spain, were staples in my curriculum from an early age. At least for Americans, they are probably best known for funding Christopher Columbus’s voyages which resulted in the “discovery” of the New World for Europeans. Columbus’s discoveries resulted in the enrichment of the Spanish monarchy as much as it did in the exploitation of native peoples of the Americas. Regardless, Isabel and Fernando should be recognized as the relevant starting point for the united Spanish territory we know today, as well as for the rekindling of strong ties with the Catholic Church.

Los Reyes Católicos, or the Catholic Kings, cemented the end of their “reconquista” of the Iberian Peninsula from the Muslims and future moriscos in 1492 by conquering the final corona of Granada, and subsequently began their rule of the newly united territory. At the time, the Iberian Peninsula was divided into smaller kingdoms, or coronas, and its population referred to Muslim converts to Christianity as moriscos. Though this period is referred to as a reconquering of Catholic territory, it deserves to be mentioned that Muslims primarily occupied and governed this land for around 800 years and their cultural influence remains today. Nonetheless, coining it a reconquest gave the leaders of the Catholic coronas, who were officially married in 1468, the justification to
take over the territory.\textsuperscript{1} Isabel and Fernando used their support from the Church to justify their rule as well, claiming they had the divine right to be king and queen. The Church supported this religious propaganda, as having another powerful united Catholic country would strengthen their power and international influence as well.

Within the first year of their reign of the recently united territory, Isabel and Fernando imposed Catholicism over this territory in an effort to create a better sense of community, a more cohesive culture, and to consolidate their power.\textsuperscript{2} In accordance with their plan of unification, they issued the Edict of Expulsion on March 31, 1492, which specifically targeted the Jewish population of the nation.\textsuperscript{3} This edict focused on Spanish Jews as it was one of the three main religions in the country that had potential to influence people. The third main religion was Islam, but since most Muslims had been driven out of the country during the \textit{reconquista}, an edict aimed toward expelling the smaller population of remaining Muslims wasn’t introduced until over a hundred years later. However, with the first edict, the monarchy’s intentions were less about disliking Judaism and more about wanting to create a united nation since their territory was made up of several formerly independent \textit{coronas}.

The Catholic monarchs ultimately allowed former expelled Jews to return to Spain under the condition that they converted to Catholicism and then were vetted by the Spanish Inquisition.\textsuperscript{4} But first, they sought to accomplish their goal of religious unity by creating this Inquisition, which could best be described as a powerful organization with

\textsuperscript{1} Feros, \textit{Speaking of Spain}, 1.

\textsuperscript{2} Ibid, 4.

\textsuperscript{3} Beinart, \textit{The Expulsion of the Jews}, 31.

\textsuperscript{4} Ibid, 329-330.
the express intention of turning and then keeping Spain Catholic. Isabel and Fernando were given explicit consent by Pope Sixtus IV in 1478 to create the Inquisition and to appoint a few priests as inquisitors.\(^5\) The first tribunal was established in Sevilla, and in 1481 the first confessions, denunciations, and official trials were heard.\(^6\) Though the Inquisition was established before the expulsion of the Jews, it served as the law of the land for 356 years and helped enormously with the monarchy’s goal of religious unity.\(^7\) The original brutal Inquisitor-General and father confessor to the King and Queen, Tomás de Torquemada, was involved in the creation of the Edict of Expulsion.\(^8\) In a report to the king and queen, Torquemada described the Jewish religion like “una burla,” meaning a joke, and explained the potential damage Jews could have on newly converted Christians, such as trying to convert them to or back to Judaism.\(^9\)

The Spanish Inquisition mainly targeted formerly Jewish converts to ensure that they had actually become devout Catholics.\(^10\) In 356 years they heard hundreds of thousands of cases, and 75% of all executions from the Inquisition happened in the first 50 years of its existence, which shows how committed the first Catholic monarchs were to their cause.\(^11\) During the first two decades of the Inquisition, the Inquisitors followed the Edict of Grace, which meant after the Inquisition set up shop in a new town, residents had a 30 day “grace” period to confess their crimes without being tried or punished.\(^12\) A confessor was also expected to denounce another member of the town, which made

\(^6\) Ibid.
\(^7\) Ibid.
\(^8\) Beinart, *The Expulsion of the Jews*, 34-35.
\(^9\) Ibid.
\(^10\) Bergemann, 38.
\(^11\) Ibid, 49.
\(^12\) Ibid, 42.
people motivated to confess early in order to avoid being denounced by other confessors. Once denounced, it was very hard not to be found guilty. Unfortunately for the confessors, however, their confession could later be used against them if a new charge was brought up. In 1500, the Edict of Grace transformed into the Edict of Faith, in which protection was no longer offered to those who confessed within the first 30 days of the Inquisition's arrival.

Brutal consequences were delegated under both of the Edicts via the Inquisition, the severity of the punishment just depended on the severity of the offense. There were three levels of severity that promulgated different punishments. Offenses such as blasphemy or bigamy fell under penances, whereas major heresies such as Judaizing resulted in reconciliation. Penances and reconciliation entailed punishments such as fines, physical hardships, spiritual requirements, broadcasting shame via bright yellow smocks, imprisonment, exile, lashes, mandatory church attendance, and being sent to a monastery or convent. Relapsed heretics and residents found guilty who refused to repent received the worst of all the punishments, which was being burned at the stake. Those who repented after their sentencing were given the courtesy of being strangled to death before being burned to make their death less painful.

Even if one was tried and ruled innocent, life was made harder, especially financially. Prisoners had to pay for their own incarceration during trial, and one could be

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Ibid.
14 Ibid, 58.
15 Ibid, 42.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid, 45.
18 Ibid, 45-46.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid, 45.
21 Ibid, 46.
barred from a number of things, such as holding certain occupations. However, being ruled innocent was extremely rare anyway, as acquittal was a sign of dishonor for the Inquisitors. Because of this, denunciations of fellow residents were accepted without real evidence or question, and there was no punishment for fabricating a tale of blasphemy or heresy, because Inquisitors were always motivated to punish. Inquisitors would also refuse to inform the accused of their denouncer, which made it even harder for them to defend themselves. If accused, the best option really was just to confess, accept the punishment, and try to remain in extra good graces with the Inquisitors. The atmosphere of fear and pressure to confess and denounce that Isabel and Fernando created via the Inquisition allowed them to consolidate their power religiously, culturally, and politically.

Understanding the origin of a united Catholic Spain and influence of its first monarchs is important in order to grasp why the religion still has such deep roots in the country. Spain’s long history of a cohesive Catholic culture gives a baseline explanation to why the country’s residents are still predominantly Catholic today.

From Isabel and Fernando to the Second Republic

After the deaths of Isabel and Fernando, Spain had many more Catholic monarchs, none of which have rivaled in infamy or importance as the two original Reyes Católicos, but nonetheless kept Spain largely Catholic. After their reign, from 1517 to

22 Ibid, 43.
23 Ibid, 58.
24 Ibid, 56.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid, 52.
1648, several parts of Europe experienced the Protestant Reformation against the Catholic Church. The religious revolution began in Germany, which was relevant to Spaniards since they were being ruled by the Hapsburgs at the time who also ruled Germany, and because Spain was extremely tied to the Church and therefore wanted to defend it. Due to its widespread and dedicated Catholic population, Spain itself did not undergo a big wave of Protestantism and instead was an important fighter in the Counter Reformation, which sought to essentially renew and rebrand the Catholic Church. In turn, Spain remained a Catholic power for many years leading up to its eventual modern transformation to secularism and the separation of church and state.

From the Second Republic to Franco

The Second Republic, which began in 1931 and officially ended in 1939, marked a turning point in the Catholic Church’s influence in Spain. The new Constitution of 1931 under the Republic was the first one in the country’s history to address the separation of the church and state, which was something the Church naturally opposed. Previous constitutions had all made a point to establish Catholicism as the official State religion. The 1931 Constitution and subsequent legislation the Republic made in regards to religion adopted a very obvious anti-Catholic stance. This was primarily because the government wanted to reduce the social influence of the Church given that their goal was to create a secular state, and the Church’s excessive influence over the country was incompatible with that goal.

28 Ibid.
29 Ibid, 277.
30 Ibid.
Three paramount aspects of the new constitution were the distinguished separation of church and state, the recognition of (registered) religious freedom, and the subjection of religious faiths to special laws.\textsuperscript{31} The Catholic Church rejected this new constitution, arguing that it was the state’s obligation to publicly profess the true religion, Catholicism, and inspire political and social structures off of its teachings.\textsuperscript{32} The Republic in response stopped giving aid to any religious groups and dissolved religious institutions, which reduced religion in general to a purely individual and private matter.\textsuperscript{33} This division led to reactions in support and in opposition of the Republic, creating an environment of high tension and hostility.\textsuperscript{34}

The anti-Catholic attitude adopted by the Republic resulted in violence against the church, its clergy, and its buildings.\textsuperscript{35} This included but was not limited to the October 1934 revolution against the entry of the CEDA, a Catholic political party, into the government, which resulted in the death of thirty-seven priests and seminarians.\textsuperscript{36} This violence only increased after a military uprising in 1936, including the burning of churches and convents, and the massacre of priests and nuns.\textsuperscript{37} The military uprising ultimately triggered the start of the Spanish Civil War, which lasted from 1936 to 1939. During the Civil War, 20\% of the nation’s clergy were killed, including 12 out of the 28 official Spanish bishops.\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid, 278.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid, 277.
\textsuperscript{35} Linz, “Church and State in Spain,” 161.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{38} Pastor, “Spanish Catholic Church in Franco Regime,” 278.
In autumn of 1936, the Spanish Catholic hierarchy officially sided with the Nationalists, led by General Francisco Franco, and claimed that the Spanish National war was actually a holy war, in which Christians clashed with the “Godless.” This relationship was partially brought about by the Nationalist movement giving proof of its commitment to the Church before the war ended.\(^{39}\)

In November 1936, Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany officially recognized Franco as Spain’s rightful leader, and Mussolini of Italy sent 49,000 volunteers to aid the Nationalist movement.\(^{41}\) A few months prior, Hitler had paid little attention to Spain and even particularly hated the Catholic Church, but believed that Spain could potentially be rallied in opposition to France as it had in some previous conflicts with its neighbor.\(^{42}\) On the other hand, Mussolini, who had a Mediterranean-centered foreign policy, “carried out the brunt of the effort” between the two allies to help the Nationalists.\(^{43}\) Hitler did send aid in the form of military equipment and supplies, as he wanted Franco to win the war, but not too quickly as it was distracting Europe from Germany’s rearmament and initial expansion.\(^{44}\)

Near the end of the Civil War, Hitler ramped up the aid he sent to Franco as the war was no longer distracting Europe from Germany’s increasing mobilization and expansion.\(^{45}\) In the final days of the Spanish Civil War in 1939, Franco cemented Spain as an ally to the Axis powers by signing the Anti-Comintern Pact along with Germany, Italy,

\(^{40}\) Pastor, “Spanish Catholic Church in Franco Regime,” 276.
\(^{42}\) Ibid, 20.
\(^{43}\) Ibid, 27.
\(^{44}\) Ibid.
\(^{45}\) Ibid, 30.
and Japan. Franco’s victory in the war, as well as the signing of the pact, meant that the Axis powers had gained an ally in Spain that would provide them with key raw materials as well as diplomatic support. Franco also signed a treaty of friendship between Spain and Germany in 1939, agreeing to “neutrality in the event that either was involved in war with a third power and ‘relations of comradeship and the exchange of practical military experiences between the respective armed forces.” Both of these agreements were kept a secret at the time, and despite Franco never officially intervening on the side of the Axis powers in World War II, citing financial issues and opposition from the Spanish Church about being involved with Nazis, he still clearly sympathized with the Axis cause.

On May 20, 1939, Franco attended a service called the *Te Deum*, held at the royal Church of Santa Barbara, to celebrate the official victory of the Nationalists over the Republicans. Franco was surrounded by Catholic symbols during this ceremony, and presented his “sword of victory” to Cardinal Gomá, archbishop of Toledo and primate of the Spanish church, to symbolize the renewed close ties between the Church and State in Spain. The Church looked forward to reinstating its control over education, culture and the regulation of public morality, among other things. Though supported by Italy and Germany during the Civil War, Franco was unable to offer them financial or physical support during World War II, which began the same year as the financially devastating Spanish Civil War, but he still publicly sympathized with their cause. It is my guess that the Church continued to support Franco for many years despite some questionable

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47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid.
52 Ibid.
alliances because he maintained very pro-Catholic and anti-communist attitudes. He also gave the Church a lot of political and social influence over Spanish citizens. Most Catholic supporters of Franco were unbothered because they believed that although fascism was bad, communism was much worse. According to the Vatican, communism was the modern incarnation of ancient evil, and if left unopposed, it would destroy religion and the world itself, but the Catholic Church was capable of countering its influence, which was also a sign of their divine right as the one true church. Communism, as defined by the Church, is very secular and “openly hostile to the Holy Church and God himself.”

The details of the Spanish Civil War and transition from the Second Republic to Franco’s regime are important to know because they provide a rationale for the Church’s close relationship with Franco. This time period tells us that at least for a while, the Church was willing to look past Franco’s alliances with other Fascists and Nazis because it desperately wanted to regain power and influence in Spain. Understanding this period, as well as the relationship between Church and state throughout the rest of the Franco regime, will help us understand the modern relationship between the Spanish state and Catholic Church, and how that now segregated relationship might have influenced the current population’s religious convictions.

First period of Franco

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53 Stone, *Letters to Australia*, 56.
55 Ibid, 129.
The First Period (1939-1958) of Franco’s regime is designated as a period of not only newfound coexistence with the Catholic Church and the Spanish government, but a intertwined relationship of apparent mutual benefit. During the Civil War, the Catholic Church saw the opportunity for re-christianizing Spain under General Franco, and wanted him to win so they could influence and work alongside him.\textsuperscript{56} When \textit{El Caudillo}, or Franco, officially came to power, he restored both the state’s old privileges in religious affairs as well as the Church’s privileges in political ones.\textsuperscript{57} Under Franco, the words “España es una nación Católica,” or “Spain is a Catholic nation,” appeared frequently in newspapers and speeches, and although other religions were technically allowed, they could only be worshiped in private.\textsuperscript{58}

In May 1945, only a few years after taking power, Franco asserted that he was not a dictator, but on that same day nine British, American, and French correspondents visited a labor camp and confirmed reports of prisoners being confined without trial, of hard labor, and of flogging and other forms of physical punishment.\textsuperscript{59} At the time of their visit, the regime was officially imprisoning 179,000 political opponents and 25,000 of them had been sentenced to death.\textsuperscript{60} That same year Franco issued the \textit{Fuero de los Españoles}, which became the Fundamental Law of the regime and “defined both the rights and duties of [free] Spanish citizens.”\textsuperscript{61} Article 6 of the \textit{Fuero} gave the Catholic Church, or the official religion of Spain, official protection, and also reiterated that only private practice of other religions was allowed.\textsuperscript{62}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[56] Pastor, “Spanish Catholic Church in Franco Regime,” 279.
\item[57] Ibid.
\item[58] Ibid.
\item[59] Stone, \textit{Letters to Australia}, 56.
\item[60] Ibid.
\item[61] Pastor, “Spanish Catholic Church in Franco Regime,” 279.
\item[62] Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
Three years later, Franco released an even stricter decree that did not allow the reopening of twenty-eight Protestant places of worship that had existed before the Civil War, even though members would have only worshiped inside of a building.\textsuperscript{63} Then in 1953, the Holy See and the Spanish government agreed on an official Concordat, which cemented the already tight-knit nature of their relationship in writing.\textsuperscript{64} Even before the Concordat came into existence, a provisional convention existed in which the Spanish government agreed not to pass any religious legislation without first receiving approval from the Holy See.\textsuperscript{65} In return, the Pope awarded many prestigious awards to General Franco and often granted special privileges to the “nation that always takes pride in being the faithful daughter of the Church.”\textsuperscript{66} So although the relationship between the Spanish government and the Church had already been thriving, the Concordat helped cement it publicly in writing.

Given the Church’s international standing, the Concordat also significantly helped the unfavorable international reputation of the government post-World War II, given that Franco had previously publicly sympathized with the Nazi cause.\textsuperscript{67} For instance, the Concordat gave Franco the authority to choose Spanish bishops, giving him control over their ideology and loyalty.\textsuperscript{68} It also mandated schools to conform to and implement Catholic principles, but allowed non-Catholic students to opt out of certain Catholic propaganda classes.\textsuperscript{69} The Spanish legal system became even more subject to Catholic

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid, 280.
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid, 281.
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid.
principles, and any decisions that did not align with them could be nullified.\textsuperscript{70} Any and all textbooks and media were censored by the government to ensure no criticism of the church floated around (4).\textsuperscript{71}

As one could expect, tension existed between the Franco regime and the Catholic Church wanting power over the other, and the Church had some concerns about Nazism,\textsuperscript{72} but the two powers generally worked well together during the First Period of the regime given they mutually benefited from their close relationship.

**Second Period of Franco**

Unlike the first period of Franco’s regime, the Church tried to disentangle itself from the state during the second period from 1958 to 1975.\textsuperscript{73} During the Civil War, which to the Church was somewhat of a crusade, the Vatican became excited for the “great religious reawakening happening in Spain” that would help the Church expand its power and defeat the “Godless.”\textsuperscript{74} Years later, Franco’s demanding nature and policies eventually caused the Second Vatican Council to start demanding autonomy from his regime because they now wanted to recognize religious freedom as a human right, among other things, that did not align with Franco’s ideas.\textsuperscript{75} The council released a book titled *Dignitatis humanae* which was essentially their declaration about religious freedom that made demands pertaining to their new specific standards for those freedoms that all pretty clearly were being violated by the Spanish regime at the time.\textsuperscript{76}

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid, 282.
\textsuperscript{71} Linz, “Church and State in Spain,” 162.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid, 163.
\textsuperscript{73} Pastor, “Spanish Catholic Church in Franco Regime,” 283.
\textsuperscript{74} Chamedes, *A Twentieth-Century Crusade*, 181.
\textsuperscript{75} Pastor, “Spanish Catholic Church in Franco Regime,” 283.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid, 284.
The publication of *Digniatis humanae* in 1965 marked the beginning of the end of the traditional church-state relationship in Spain.\(^{77}\) It meant Spain would either need to modify some of its fundamental laws or create more of a rift with the Church, which is why it introduced the *Ley de Libertad Religiosa* in 1967.\(^{78}\) The law granted full religious freedom in Spain and offered broad protection for different religions as well.\(^{79}\) A year later, Pope Paul V requested that Franco give up his power to name Spanish bishops given that he had garnered too much control over the ones previously named by him.\(^{80}\) Franco agreed to relinquish that power if the terms of the relationship between his state and the Church could be re-discussed and renewed.\(^{81}\) The negotiation of their new relationship only worsened tensions between the two bodies and essentially left Spain’s legislation in limbo.\(^{82}\) Before and during these negotiations, more and more Catholic clergy started publicly denying the Catholic character of the Spanish government because the state kept subverting the Concordat by prosecuting enemies of the regime and more liberal priests.\(^{83}\) The Church ultimately proposed that the Concordat could be modified but refused to draft a new one to avoid looking like they were supporting a dictatorship.\(^{84}\)

During the last couple years of Franco’s life, Spain was substantially run by Prime Minister Arias Navarro, who heighten tensions between the regime and the Church by locking up members of the clergy in a special prison for alleged “criminal” activity.\(^{85}\) The increased tension created by Arias Navarro’s decisions led to Cardinal Tarancón

\(^{77}\) Ibid.  
\(^{78}\) Ibid.  
\(^{79}\) Ibid.  
\(^{80}\) Ibid, 285.  
\(^{81}\) Ibid.  
\(^{82}\) Ibid.  
\(^{83}\) Ibid, 286.  
\(^{84}\) Ibid.  
\(^{85}\) Ibid.
preparing a Decree of Excommunication for the prime minister.\textsuperscript{86} Unlike the regime, the Church adapted social changes in the 50s and 60s such as unionization, and many opponents of the regime found support within the Church in Franco’s older years.\textsuperscript{87} Many of Franco’s critics started hosting meetings in religious buildings such as convents, and the Church even began “intervening on behalf of those being tried and sentenced by the government for insurrection.”\textsuperscript{88}

The Church may have sold part of its soul and conscience to regain power alongside Fascist Spain, but they used the second half of Franco’s regime to attempt to make beneficial change. One could refer to the start of their relationship as a “marriage of convenience,” rather than a love match.\textsuperscript{89} After Franco’s death in 1975, Adolfo Suárez González became the first democratically elected Prime Minister of Spain since the anti-Catholic Second Republic. Suárez marked the modern transition to democracy and came to a peaceful agreement with the Church on their new separated relationship. The two entities signed an agreement in which Suárez and the state waived their right to name Spanish Catholic bishops, and the Church waived its right to legal exemption within the Spanish legal system.\textsuperscript{90}

Details of Franco’s regime are important to understand in regards to Spanish Catholicism because of his reputation for human rights violations and being a Nazi sympathizer, among other things, in conjunction with spending the first half of his regime in close contact with the Church. His death not only begins Spain’s modern transition to

\textsuperscript{86} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{87} Linz, “Church and State in Spain,” 169.
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid, 170.
\textsuperscript{89} Pastor, “Spanish Catholic Church in Franco Regime,” 286.
\textsuperscript{90} Ibid.
democracy but also the formation of its modern relationship with the Church. The key takeaway from the Franco regime is that El Caudillo managed to both revitalize the strength of the Catholic Church in Spain as well as create a new divide between the church and state within Spain that we see today.

Post-Franco

The death of El Caudillo in 1975 signaled the transition to democracy even though he chose to be succeeded by a king from the rightful House of Bourbon family of Spain. Franco hand-picked Prince Juan Carlos as his successor and oversaw his education.91 Juan Carlos officially acceded to the throne after the death of Franco, on November 22, 1975.92 While Juan Carlos had “publicly sworn loyalty to the principles of Franco’s Nationalist Movement,” he ultimately peacefully democratized Spain over a three-year period.93 This quick and relatively peaceful democratization was unprecedented considering a dictatorship had never been transformed into a “pluralistic, parliamentary democracy without civil war, revolutionary overthrow, or defeat by a foreign power.”94

However, before Spain’s democratization, Juan Carlos decided to keep Arias Navarro, prime minister during the last years of Franco’s life and a loyal Francoist, as prime minister.95 Juan Carlos’ decision to maintain Arias Navarro as prime minister resulted in demonstrations and terrorist activity that threatened the new government’s

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92 Ibid.
93 Ibid.
94 Ibid.
95 Ibid.
Threatening actions to the government were met with repressive actions to restore law and order, but such a response only worsened the situation and united the liberal opposition. The tense atmosphere in Spain led to Juan Carlos asking for Arias Navarro’s resignation, who officially resigned on July 1, 1976.

Arias Navarro was succeeded by Adolfo Suárez González, who had also served under Franco but produced the rapid democratization of Spain. Suárez and Juan Carlos were able to transition the country to democracy with a joint effort of Suárez manipulating the bureaucracy and Juan Carlos maintaining the loyalty of the armed forces. Some of their rapid reforms included offering a partial amnesty that freed around 400 political prisoners and creating a bicameral legislature elected on universal suffrage. Suárez and Juan Carlos then decided the first official free elections since the Civil War would be held on June 15, 1977. In order to prepare for the elections, the government legalized political parties in February and outlined the rules for electoral competition. The creation of political parties left Suárez with the issue of whether to legalize the Partido Comunista de España (PCE), or Communist Party of Spain, since Francoism had been fervently anti-communist. He legalized the PCE on April 9, 1977, which angered military leaders who were fortunately defused by Juan Carlos.
Apart from the PCE, many political parties formed leading up to the elections but only a few ended up with parliamentary representation and none of that representation produced an absolute majority. A centrist coalition named la Unión de Centro Democrático (UCD), or the Union of the Democratic Center, led by Suárez won 34.6% of the vote, and its biggest opposition, el Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE), or the Spanish Socialist Workers’ Party, received 29.3% of the vote. The parliamentary gains made by secular moderate political parties marked the end of severe polarization that had existed in the country since the Second Republic.

While the new government faced typical issues such as an economic crisis in their early days, they also had the task of drafting a new constitution. Previous Spanish constitutions had failed after being imposed on the population rather than agreed upon collectively, so “it was imperative that the new constitution be based on consensus.” In order to create a consensus, a parliamentary commission was created that involved all of the major political parties. This commission deliberated and produced a document in October 1978 that was subsequently submitted to a popular referendum and approved by 87.8% of voters, and remains in effect today.

Though this constitution was more secular, it was not a threat to the Catholic Church in the way that the Constitution of 1931 under the Second Republic was. The Church had changed during Franco’s reign and was prepared for Spain’s transition to a

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106 Ibid.
107 Ibid.
108 Ibid.
109 Ibid.
110 Ibid.
111 Ibid.
112 Ibid.
113 Linz, “Church and State in Spain,” 171.
The current constitution emphasizes the separation of church and state, including in education, and so the contemporary school textbooks were acceptable to the Church but they were also not religious propaganda. It also “proclaims Spain to be a parliamentary monarchy” that guarantees its citizens equality before the law and though it recognizes the autonomy of individual regions, it also “stresses the indivisibility of the Spanish state.”

Despite this message of national unity, very few Spaniards desire the return of the type of unity under National Catholicism even though most Catholics don’t completely reject the past regime. The Catholic Church is still not completely apolitical in Spain, but there is an unwillingness of large segments of Spanish Catholics to follow the direct guidance of the Church in the political sphere because it no longer holds any authority and thus often remains neutral in regards to political conflict. This phenomenon is supported by the period of peaceful transition to secular democracy by the people after the end of a Catholic-backed regime. Although many Spaniards today support the conservative Christian-democratic People’s Party, many others support secular socialist parties such as the PSOE.

**Exhumation**

The last few years Franco became a major topic of discussion again in Spain as there had been increasing calls to remove him from his exalted burial site. Franco was

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114 Ibid, 169.
115 Ibid, 172.
118 Ibid, 175.
buried at the Valley of the Fallen in El Escorial, which houses over 30,000 people who
died on both sides of the Civil War and was partially built by “political prisoners that
Franco’s regime subjected to forced labor.”119 Though Spain is a democratic country now,
many believe the country never owned up to its fascist past, as there was an “unwritten
‘pact of forgetting’” during the transitional period to democracy.120 There was even an
Amnesty Law that was adopted in 1977 that prevented “any criminal investigation into
the Franco years.”121 Despite these attitudes, one of current Prime Minister Pedro
Sánchez’s central campaign promises was to exhume the late dictator instead of allowing
him to be glorified.122 So in November 2019, the Spanish Supreme Court ruled
unanimously to have him exhumed in an effort to right the wrongs of the former
dictatorship.123 Franco’s government was “notorious for imprisoning, torturing and killing
people who spoke out against his regime,” and his grave had become somewhat of a
shrine for his supporters and people on the far right.124

Naturally Franco’s surviving family and remaining supporters of him were against
his body’s removal, while others simply opposed it because they thought it would
“dredge up pain and trauma” that was never addressed after the war.125 Others pushed for
his removal, including Prime Minister Sánchez, who was also criticized for using this
stance as a campaign tactic,126 arguing that the elaborate burial site allowed for
celebration of the dictator and his fascist regime.127 The buzz from both sides prompted

119 “Franco: Spain Seeks to Transform Monument into Civilian Cemetery.”
120 Ibid.
121 Ibid.
122 Booker, “Spain Moves Dictator Francisco Franco’s Remains.”
123 Ibid.
124 Ibid.
125 Ibid.
126 Rolfe, “Spain Exhumes Dictator Francisco Franco.”
127 Booker, “Spain Moves Dictator Francisco Franco’s Remains.”
the government to ban demonstrations during the exhumation, but some 500 Francoists still attended with Franco-era flags and were heard chanting “Viva España, Viva Franco,” or “Long live Spain, Long live Franco.”128 His grave was guarded by a canopy during the exhumation to prevent these supporters or any media from recording it as well.129 After being exhumed, Franco’s regimes were officially flown to his family cemetery where he was buried next to his late wife.130 As left-wing citizens now are calling for the victims of the regime and Civil War in unidentified graves to be moved in his place, while Sánchez claims that now “when the Valley reopens its doors, those who arrive will find a different place, a tribute to all the victims of hate where those painful memories should never be repeated.”131

Sánchez brought the exhumation to the attention of the Church by publicly stating that Pope Francis actually helped him with the decision to go through with it.132 Sánchez also said he has never met the Pope, but that “relations with the Church are peaceful.”133 The Church as a whole responded to Sánchez’s claims by denying any involvement in his decision making.134 Italian Archbishop and former apostolic nuncio to Spain Renzo Fratini, however, had some opinions about the exhumation. He opposed it given that Franco has been buried there for 40 years and that “he did what he did; God will judge.”135 The Vatican also dismissed Fratini’s statements and affirmed its “respect for the sovereignty of the Spanish state and its legal system,” which is a simple representation of

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128 Ibid.
129 Ibid.
130 Ibid.
131 Ibid.
132 Catholic Philly, “Vatican Denies Involvement in Decision.”
133 Ibid.
134 Ibid.
135 Ibid.
how the relationship between the Church and Spanish state has progressed since the Franco regime.\textsuperscript{136}

More than 100,000 people are still missing from the Civil War and the nationalist-Catholic regime, but progress has been made.\textsuperscript{137} Statues of Franco have been removed, streets named after him renamed, and laws have been passed, including the Historical Memory Law.\textsuperscript{138} The law, passed in 2007, “formally condemned Franco’s regime, recognized victims on both sides of the Civil War and called for the repurposing of the monument to represent all Spaniards.”\textsuperscript{139} This year, in extension to the Historical Memory Law, the Spanish cabinet drafted another bill, in general terms, aimed at redressing victims of the war and of the regime.\textsuperscript{140} Including not being fully intertwined with the Catholic Church anymore, Sánchez assures his people that “the Spain of today is a complete opposite of the one the Franco regime represented.”\textsuperscript{141}

\textbf{Prime Minister Sánchez}

It is also important to expand on current Prime Minister Sánchez and the current situation surrounding politics a bit in order in Spain to fully understand the religious situation. The expansion to a five party system as well as past consistent domination by PSOE and \textit{Partido Popular} (PP), a conservative Christian-democratic party, could reflect on the population’s religious tendencies.

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{136} Ibid.
\bibitem{137} “Franco: Spain Seeks to Transform Monument into Civilian Cemetery.”
\bibitem{138} Ibid.
\bibitem{139} Rolfe, “Spain Exhumes Dictator Francisco Franco.”
\bibitem{140} News Desk, “Spain Drafts Bill.”
\bibitem{141} Booker, “Spain Moves Dictator Francisco Franco’s Remains.”
\end{thebibliography}
Sánchez, the leader of the socialist party PSOE, was officially approved as prime minister in January 2020 by Parliament, after failing to reach a majority of votes in elections held in April and November of 2019. In order to finally receive enough support to officially be elected, he formed a coalition with Pablo Iglesias and his party Unidas Podemos, another socialist but more radical party. PSOE and Unidas Podemos now hold 155 out of 350 seats in Parliament in the country’s first coalition government since the return to democracy after Franco. The coalition’s majority is weak and its survival could depend on ending the dispute surrounding Catalonia, which Sánchez has promised not to grant a binding independence referendum. For clarification, Catalonia is a region in Spain that has its own language and culture, and has been trying to separate itself from Spain for many years with heavy resistance from the Spanish government. Most Spaniards are against the separatist movement particularly because Catalonia is an economic powerhouse, and tensions have risen during recent years.

Apart from the separatist movement, Sanchez’s inability to gain a majority without forming a coalition has continued a trend that began in 2015. In 2015 the country’s two-party system imploded, and now five large political parties exist, making it extremely difficult for one party to garner a clear-cut majority. PSOE and PP have occupied the Prime Minister’s seat on and off since 1982 but now it is hard for either of the former dominant parties to get a clean-cut win since the power has been spread out.

142 Minder, “Pedro Sánchez Will Lead.”
143 Ibid.
144 Ibid.
145 Ibid.
146 Ibid.
147 Ibid.
148 Ibid.
Given the political turmoil surrounding El Escorial, the separatist movement, COVID-19, and more, the rest of Sánchez’s term could be an unpredictable stretch in Spanish politics to look out for. Knowing a sample of current public sentiment surrounding Franco might be also relevant since he once worked so closely and was so publicly supported by the Catholic Church, and could therefore have potentially swayed some Spaniards' own relationship with the faith. The exhumation of Franco demonstrates the resolve of the Spanish government to sever ties with the former dictator who once instilled National Catholicism as well as the divide in public opinion about his life and the state of his remains. Sánchez’s public desire to sever ties and promote accountability with Francoist Spain may not only represent preconceived sentiments of many of his supporters but could also influence others to potentially look upon that era with disdain not only for Franco but also for Catholicism.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter was to provide some background information about Catholicism in Spain in order to better understand how it functions in modern Spanish society and how it may influence the religious affiliations and devotion of its younger constituents. Hopefully my readers learned key contextual information not only about important periods in Spain’s history involving Catholic leaders such as Fernando and Franco, but also how those periods have influenced, and may continue to influence, the modern political environment of Spain. From this chapter I will transition to focus on discovering how young adult Spaniards feel about their potentially waning faith and connection to Catholicism.
Chapter 2: The Influence of Education, Media, and Homophobia

It seems implausible that in a country as deep-rooted in Catholicism as Spain, a generation of young adults could be distancing themselves from their faith. However, there are several different reasons why that is potential reality.

Security and Education

The first reason is that there has been an increase in life security and explanations for mysterious circumstances as society has advanced. As an example, infant mortality rates have decreased due to more advanced medical knowledge and practices, so religion is not as needed to provide security and comfort for people with young children. An increase in more practical explanations for phenomena, learned at institutions such as universities, has allowed people to form factual-based opinions on reality rather than relying on religion for all the answers as well.

Political scientist Ronald Inglehart explains that “for most people, religious faith was more emotional than cognitive. And for most of human history, sheer survival was uncertain.”\(^{149}\) In his opinion, religion offered people the assurance that their fate was in the hands of a higher power during a time where many people lived near starvation and incurable disease.\(^{150}\) Religion provided a sense of comfort for much more prevalent uncertainty and stress.\(^{151}\) On the other hand, as societies and technology advance,

\(^{149}\) Inglehart, “Giving Up on God.”
\(^{150}\) Ibid.
\(^{151}\) Ibid.
people’s survival becomes more secure in relation to starvation, life expectancy, and violence, which allows people to become less dependent on their religious beliefs.\textsuperscript{152} People’s newfound detachment from religion also meant that people were less willing to accept certain outdated constraints of organized religion, such as archaic gender roles and blatant homophobia.\textsuperscript{153}

According to Inglehart, modern societies in general become less religious once they no longer need to uphold gender roles surrounding things like reproduction that have been instilled for centuries. Increased stability surrounding fertility has been a driving factor behind secularization because women no longer needed to focus on having copious amounts of children in order to replace the population like in the days when high infant mortality and low life expectancy were more serious problems.\textsuperscript{154} Lumped in with the need to reproduce often were negative attitudes toward things like divorce, contraception, homosexuality, or any other sex-related behavior that would have prevented or avoided reproduction.\textsuperscript{155} This phenomenon of secularization has been a gradual process that begins when countries, like Spain, achieve high levels of existential security.\textsuperscript{156} So at this point in time, many current young adults in Spain would have grown up with high levels of security that could have made religion, religious values and institutions less important to them.

In addition to higher levels of security, higher levels of education also seem to be a potential factor in decreased dependence on religion. Gallup details the conventional

\textsuperscript{152} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{153} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{154} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{155} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{156} Ibid.
wisdom that people’s level of education has an inverse relationship with their commitment to organized religion: “the higher a person's level of education, the less likely he or she is to be religious.” Results from their 2002 Index Religious Indicators study demonstrate that that is in some ways true but also not entirely true. According to the 2002 study, 88% of people with postgraduate degrees, compared to 97% of people with a high school education or less, believe in God or a universal spirit.\textsuperscript{157} Furthermore, 51% of postgraduate degree holders and 68% of those with a high school education or less believe that religion can answer today’s problems, and the latter group is also more likely to say religion is either “important” or “very important” in their lives.\textsuperscript{158} However, results from other survey questions reveal that more highly educated people are more likely to belong to and attend a congregation, 70% compared to 64% of those with a high school degree or less.\textsuperscript{159} The data also shows that more highly educated people are less likely to trust organized religion but more likely to trust clergy members, and those with minimal education are likely to feel the opposite.\textsuperscript{160} In simple terms, minimally educated people are more likely to “talk the talk” in regards to religion, whereas more highly educated people are just as or even more likely to “walk the walk.”\textsuperscript{161}

Pew Research Forum conducted a similar study in 2017 and came out with similar results. But in addition, the Pew survey found that college graduates are more likely (11%) to describe themselves as atheists or agnostics than those with high school educations or less (4%).\textsuperscript{162} The survey also created a scale of four common measures of

\begin{footnotesize}
157 Mitchell, “In America, Does More Education Equal Less Religion?”
158 Ibid.
159 Ibid.
160 Ibid.
161 Ibid.
\end{footnotesize}
religious observance: worship attendance, frequency of prayer, belief in God and the self-described importance of religion in one’s life.\(^{163}\) Based on this scale, 70% of Christians with higher educational degrees have a high level of religious commitment, compared to 73% of those with some college experience and 71% of those with no college experience.\(^{164}\)

Despite there being inconsistent data about the exact level of religious commitment of those with higher educational experience, increased attendance of higher educational institutions in Spain demonstrates that there could be a possible correlation between increasing education and decreasing religious devotion. In terms of numbers, students enrolled in Spanish universities have totaled above the 1.4 million mark over the past decade.\(^{165}\) As of 2018, 60% of Spaniards aged 25 and over had completed their secondary or tertiary education in comparison with 50% of this age group in 2007.\(^{166}\) Furthermore, as of 2019, Spain had a total of 83 universities, including fourteen in its capital and most populous city Madrid.\(^{167}\) Overall, the proportion of Spaniards that have attained an upper level education has only increased over the years, and could contribute to young Spaniards’ devaluation of religion altogether, Catholicism in particular.

**Sexual Abuse and Coverups**

Another reason young Spaniards could be distancing themselves from Catholicism is because of the sexual abuse scandals caused by clergy members and

\(^{163}\) Ibid.

\(^{164}\) Ibid.

\(^{165}\) Ibid.

\(^{166}\) Ibid.

\(^{167}\) Ibid.
subsequent coverups by elite members within the Church. The details of this widespread problem have traveled worldwide, but details of abuse suffered within Spain specifically are not as easy to come by.

According to Spanish judicial records, judges have issued thirty-three rulings against priests for the abuse of eighty minors within a thirty-year period. Their sentences have ranged from fines to up to twenty-one years imprisonment, and some have also included compensation payments for the victims. The judicial sentences for pedophilia affect under 0.2% of Spain’s 18,000 clergymen, and some of the accessible rulings explain that the victims first reported the abuse to the Church, and upon inaction, turned to the secular courts. While these public cases were decided by Spain’s Criminal Code, which punishes the abuse of minors with imprisonment, it is implied that many cases have been tried by the ecclesiastical courts that apply the Canonical Code, which only applies either the suspension or expulsion of clergy from their clerical duties. Despite to lack of transparency from the ecclesiastical leadership on just how many of these incidents have occurred within Spain, it is public information that between 400 and 500 cases of child abuse within the Church are received per year, making this a widespread Catholic issue.

More cases of abuse within the Spanish Church are slowly being exposed. An El País article from early February this year describes how the news outlet approached ten of the main Catholic orders in Spain about launching investigations into internal cases of

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168 Romero, “How the Spanish Catholic Church Has Been Hiding Abuse Cases.”
169 Ibid.
170 Ibid.
171 Ibid.
172 Ibid.
abuse.\textsuperscript{173} Seven of these orders either agreed or were already in the process of investigating past cases, but the other three have refused to acknowledge any possibility of conducting an investigation.\textsuperscript{174} While these investigations might seem promising, they mainly comprise a review of existing files within the order and don’t reflect the full extent of the abuse.\textsuperscript{175} Their findings from the investigations are lacking specific details such as names of the victims that could help El País and other organizations to identify more victims and their perpetrators.\textsuperscript{176} But despite the lack of detail, the orders’ investigations have helped reveal 126 cases of abuse, ninety-six of which had been concealed, and elevated the total number of victims in Spain to over 500.\textsuperscript{177}

The Spanish Catholic orders also admitted to El País that they never used to report clergymen who had been accused of abuse, and would normally transfer them to a new parish without any commotion or real consequences.\textsuperscript{178} In 2019 the Vatican called a meeting of bishops’ conferences from every continent to focus on improving the protection of minors within Catholic communities and presumably to discuss some of these tactics.\textsuperscript{179} At the minimum, during the meeting Pope Francis ordered each diocese to open offices aimed at assisting victims, but since then, very little effort has been made toward fixing this problem.\textsuperscript{180} Juan Cuatrencasas, the President of a Spanish victims association named Infancia Robada, accuses these new offices of being a “marketing strategy” to clear up the Church’s image, and claims that the offices “say they help

\textsuperscript{173} Domínguez and Núñez, “Child Abuse in the Spanish Catholic Church.”
\textsuperscript{174} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{175} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{176} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{177} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{178} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{179} Agence France-Presse, “Spanish Victims of Sex Abuse Priests Speak Out.”
\textsuperscript{180} Domínguez and Núñez.
victims, but have not yet published any report.”¹⁸¹ Instead, the Church continues to try to silence victims for years like Javier Paz, who was sexually abused by a priest in Salamanca and was forced into silence for nearly a decade.¹⁸²

Another Spanish victim named Miguel Hurtado made his allegations public a few years ago against a former monk he met during his time in a boy scout troop at the Santa Maria de Montserrat Abbey in Barcelona.¹⁸³ The monk, who allegedly fondled Hurtado for a year over twenty years ago, passed away in 2008 and was remembered as being “charismatic.”¹⁸⁴ Hurtado claims he stayed silent for so long because he “was a kid and was too scared,” but as an adult he was able to share his story in Netflix’s 2019 documentary series Examination of Conscience, which centers on survivors of child sex abuse in Spanish Catholic institutions.¹⁸⁵ Hurtado’s account prompted nine others to come out against the same monk, in addition to other allegations against other religious figures in religious schools in the Basque Country, Catalan parishes, and a college in Barcelona.¹⁸⁶ In 2016, before the release of the docuseries, there was a sex abuse scandal in Barcelona within schools run by the Marist Roman Catholic community, which involved forty-three complaints made against twelve different educators.¹⁸⁷

Before this period, most scandals were concentrated in countries such as the United States and Australia, and Hurtado believes that many Spaniards remained silent for so long as a way to deal with the trauma.¹⁸⁸ Professor of criminal law at the Catalonia

¹⁸¹ Ibid.
¹⁸² Ibid.
¹⁸³ Agence France-Presse.
¹⁸⁴ Ibid.
¹⁸⁵ Ibid.
¹⁸⁶ Ibid.
¹⁸⁷ Ibid.
¹⁸⁸ Ibid.
Open University Josep Maria Tamarit believes that there is still a lot hidden in Spain that has not come out, but a continuation of this “chain-reaction” is possible.\(^{189}\) Part of the problem, however, that Tamarit explains, is that many of these allegations have either surpassed the timeframe for initiating legal proceedings or the perpetrator has died before the proceedings began, which is what happened with many of the Barcelona allegations from 2016.\(^{190}\) Tamarit further believes that part of reason the Catholic Church has not initiated criminal investigations themselves after becoming aware of one of these heinous crimes is due to their mindset that all types of sexual acts are sins, and therefore abuse of a minor is no different than consensual sex between two adults.\(^{191}\)

In response to the exposure of more cases, the Spanish Catholic Church created a commission focused on reworking its protocol on abuse and increasing transparency in 2018.\(^{192}\) Apart from the Church, the justice ministry introduced a new bill in late 2018 as well for increased child protection that would increase the time in which child victims could begin legal proceedings, capping the age of initiating the proceedings at thirty rather than eighteen.\(^{193}\) However, *Infancia Robada*, or Stolen Childhood, has pushed for the maximum age to start these proceedings to be when the victim turns fifty years old, but it is unclear whether that would be useful considering many of their abusers could be dead by that time.\(^{194}\)

During a period in which former Pope Benedict XVI was facing criticism over the sexual abuse crisis, he attended World Youth Day (WYD), an event held about every

\(^{189}\) Ibid.  
\(^{190}\) Ibid. \(^{191}\) Ibid. \(^{192}\) Ibid. \(^{193}\) Ibid. \(^{194}\) Ibid.
three years by the Catholic Church in an effort to “energize the throngs of gung ho young Catholics” and prepare them to be future leaders, in 2011 which was held in Madrid.\footnote{Allen, “Pope Ignores His Critics.”} Upon arriving in Madrid and facing 5,000 journalists, the previous Pope gave a speech in which he said, “dear young people, do not be satisfied with anything less than truth and love,” but failed to address the truth about the Church.\footnote{Ibid.} Though surely his arrival for an event meant to be uplifting and shine a positive light on the Church would not have been the best time to address the scandals, it was extremely relevant given the day before his arrival the Vatican had released documents in its possession related to a sex abuse lawsuit in Oregon.\footnote{Ibid.}

On top of criticism about sexual abuse within the Church, there was controversy over the cost of the event, which was about $72 million.\footnote{Ibid.} $72 million is a giant number without even considering Spain was in the middle of a debt crisis and 40% youth unemployment rate at the time.\footnote{Ibid.} Protests broke out in person and even online over the event, as the WYD website was hacked several times.\footnote{Ibid.} Organizers of the event claim that the money spent on the event came from grants and participant fees, but allegedly those were not enough to cover other logistical costs, security, and deeply discounted metro fares for foreign attendees.\footnote{Ibid.} Even if the event hadn’t cost native Spaniards a euro, there were still protests from leftist and secular groups over “an excessive entanglement of church and state” reminiscent of the past.\footnote{Ibid.} It is possible that young people
participating in or paying attention to the event heard and understood the messages conveyed by these different outraged groups.

Though, as aforementioned, the Church has done its fair share attempting to hide the numbers sexual abuse allegations made against its clergymen over the years, the members of the *The Boston Globe*’s “Spotlight” team in 2002 helped expose these abuses. Their work was then immortalized on the silver screen in the critically-acclaimed film *Spotlight*.

*Spotlight* was released in 2015 and ultimately won the Academy Award for Best Picture in 2016 after portraying the true story of how *The Boston Globe*’s “Spotlight” team of reporters uncovered the massive scandal of child molestation and cover-up within their local Catholic Archdiocese.203 *Spotlight* was released in Spain on January 29th, 2016 in 219 out of 284 theaters in Spain.204 Its opening weekend in Spain brought in $729,005 and its total run brought in $4,492,604.205 It is likely that many of these viewers were impressionable young people.

Sarah Larson, journalist for *The New Yorker*, interviewed the original members of “Spotlight:” Walter Robinson, Martin Baron, Michael Rezendes, Sacha Pfieffer, Ben Bradlee, and Matt Carrol in 2015 about the revelations of their articles as well as the film’s. Their first article out of over 600 in a series titled “Church Allowed Abuse by Priest for Years” was released in January 2002 and used copies of the Church’s documents of abuse for research.206 None of the “Spotlight” journalists had any idea what an extensive problem this was before their investigation, and they were meant to focus on

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203 “Spotlight.”
204 “Spotlight (2015) - Financial Information.”
205 Ibid.
206 Larson, “‘Spotlight’ and Its Revelations.”
only one Boston priest. Since this all was before extensive social networks and readily available records on the internet, Robinson believes the Church was much more easily protected because it was harder to connect that these were not isolated events.

From the onset, the team investigated Boston’s own Father John Geoghan’s behavior, who had been accused by as many as eighty-four children. To exacerbate the problem, Cardinal Bernard F. Law of the Boston archdiocese had been accused of knowing about Geoghan’s transgressions and simply reassigning him to a new parish anyway. The court ordered the release of even more documents on the Geoghan case in early 2001, which included thousands of pages of documents, all lacking concern for the effect the abuse might have had on the children. Instead, the documents focused on protecting the reputation of the Church and explicitly referred to the crimes as “sins” that had already been forgiven. Rezendes elaborated on the Church’s secrecy, explaining how “it doesn’t have the reporting requirements of a corporation or a nonprofit. It doesn’t file tax returns. They just don’t have any disclosure requirements at all,” and to top it off, they’re often protected by the First Amendment.

Not unlike Cardinal Law’s strategy, the practice of sending a priest accused of abuse away to treatment centers and then sending them on to new parishes in new cities has been used by the Church for decades. More often than not, the new parishes had been unaware of the allegations, which allowed priests to continue abusing new

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207 Ibid.
208 Ibid.
209 Ibid.
210 Ibid.
211 Ibid.
212 Ibid.
213 Ibid.
214 Ibid.
Priests have consistently targeted young boys more than girls as well, given that they typically have more private access to boys, and because they were considered less likely to tell anyone about any occurrence of sexual assault. They would prey on poor families with single mothers who needed childcare and other help, and would use their trustworthy reputation as a religious figure to spend time with boys alone.

When the “Spotlight” exposé and subsequent movie were released, the reaction from the public, specifically in Boston, was varying. Pfieffer claims that while some people decided to leave the Church, others thought they could change it from within, and most “loved their parish, they loved their pastor, and they sort of said, ‘Oh, that’s terrible,’ and they kept going to Mass.” As for Father Geoghan, he received a prison sentence in 2002 for an assortment of crimes but was murdered in prison in 2003 before he could answer for a plethora of other atrocities. Cardinal Law also resigned in 2002, but instead of being indicted, he was transferred to the Basilica of Saint Mary in Rome, a beloved property of the Vatican, as a reward for his cover-up in an effort to protect the Church’s reputation. Since the release of the first “Spotlight” article nearly two decades ago, many more stories of clerical sexual abuse have been told worldwide, including in works like the Globe’s book Betrayal and the Netflix docuseries Examination of Conscience.

Though the public remained mostly unaware of priestly pedophilia within the Church until 2002, the Vatican has known about this issue since at least the 1950s and has

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215 Ibid.
216 Ibid.
217 Ibid.
218 Ibid.
219 Kilroy, “Victims Dismayed by Sex Abuse Priest’s Killing.”
220 Clites, “The Catholic Church’s Grim History of Ignoring Priestly Pedophilia.”
221 Larson.
consistently silenced victims and other potential whistleblowers.222 The Catholic-run treatment centers I mentioned earlier started popping up after World War II in order to “rehabilitate” priests accused of egregious acts.223 These centers allowed bishops to hide more allegations of sex abuse by referring to the centers as “church-run medical centers” in which the the priests would receive “treatment” and an evaluation without having to disclose their transgressions to independent clinicians.224 Within these centers, bishops used code words like “tickling,” “wrestling,” and “entangled friendship” instead of more appropriate words like “sodomy,” “molestation,” and “pedophilia” in official files to conceal the severity of the crimes.225

In another effort to conceal this spreading problem, the Church started using hush settlements to appease and silence victims.226 These settlements became extremely widespread in the 1980s and the Vatican ultimately had to assign their lawyers to adjust their insurance policies in order to minimize as many additional liabilities as possible.227 A combination of hush settlements, political complacency, and expired statutes of limitations, which is still an important issue in Spain, has prevented most victims from obtaining any real kind of justice.228 On top of that, these settlements have only ever held the Church accountable financially, as no American bishops or cardinals, such as Cardinal Law, have ever been imprisoned for their part in concealing the abuses.229

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222 Clites.
223 Ibid.
224 Ibid.
225 Ibid.
226 Ibid.
227 Ibid.
228 Ibid.
229 Ibid.
After the Boston Globe’s Spotlight team’s exposé was released in 2002, 22% of Catholics expressed their desire to potentially step away from the Church. More reports over the years, including a grand jury report in Pennsylvania that revealed that 1,000 children had suffered abuse by over 300 priests, have increased this percentage to 37% as of 2019. Though that case and the Globe’s bombshell were related to American Catholics, it has expanded into a global issue, including Spain.

The “Spotlight” exposé and ensuing Spotlight film might have been based on abuses within the United States, but they have reached an international audience over the years. Hundreds of thousands of Spaniards saw Spotlight in theaters, and the film has only led to more Spanish cases being brought to light. Many cases like Hurtado’s have now been heard by many Spaniards in the Examination of Conscience docuseries, which was in all likelihood produced in part thanks to the trailblazing efforts of the Globe’s brave “Spotlight” members. Because of the extensive reach of media on platforms such as Netflix, it is also probable that some young Spaniards have consumed a piece or more of media related to this trend of injustice and have reconsidered their relationship with the faith.

**Conservative Views on Abortion**

Another reason younger generations may be distancing themselves from Catholicism is that their views on certain social issues such as abortion and LGBTQ+ rights are presumably becoming more tolerant, whereas the Church maintains extremely conservative views on these issues.

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230 Schnell, “More Americans than Ever Are Leaving the Catholic Church.”
231 Ibid.
The Catechism of the Catholic Church officially states that the Church has always “affirmed the moral evil of every procured abortion. This teaching has not changed and remains unchangeable. Direct abortion, that is to say, abortion willed either as an end or a means, is gravely contrary to the moral law” (No. 2271). Scientific developments over the years have only reaffirmed the Church’s stance on this issue, because they have confirmed that life begins forming at the earliest embryo. The foundation of the Church’s social doctrine is rooted in the principle that “each and every human life has inherent dignity,” which applies across the board to not only abortion but also war, capital punishment, and other issues.

As for Spain, abortion was criminalized and heavily punishable for many years. Abortion was then decriminalized during the secular Second Republic right before Franco’s rise to power. Franco, in partnership with the Catholic Church, rebanned abortion, and poor reproductive rights plagued the nation during his tenure. Post-Franco, the new Spanish government took over ten years to update abortion laws, and in 1985 abortion finally was decriminalized in cases of rape for up to twelve weeks of pregnancy. Former Prime Minister José Luís Rodríguez Zapatero of PSOE ultimately reformed Spanish abortion laws in 2010, which legalized the procedure for any reason up to fourteen weeks of pregnancy.

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232 “Respect for Unborn Human Life.”
233 Ibid.
234 Ibid.
236 Ibid.
237 Ibid, 12.
239 Ibid, 18.
In alignment with the country’s more lenient reproductive rights, as of 2019, 90% of Spaniards believe that abortion is acceptable when the mother’s health is at risk.\textsuperscript{240} If the pregnancy is a result of rape, 82% of Spaniards believe abortion is acceptable, whereas 81% agree it is acceptable when the fetus presents malformations.\textsuperscript{241} Despite being a predominantly Catholic country, even half of Spaniards take the very anti-Catholic position that abortion is acceptable simply if the mother wishes it.\textsuperscript{242}

**Conservative Views on the LGBTQ+ Community**

Another modern issue that young people are generally more tolerant of is the LGBTQ+ community and their rights in general. While many individual Catholic congregations may welcome some LGBTQ+ members into their communities, the official Church policy is not that tolerant.\textsuperscript{243} The Catechism officially states that “homosexual acts” are “intrinsically immoral and contract to the natural law,” and that “homosexual tendencies” are “objectively disordered.”\textsuperscript{244} Though the Church has no official stance regarding transgender individuals, “doctrinal teachings clearly equate birth anatomy with gender.”\textsuperscript{245} These doctrinal teachings shone through when the Vatican’s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith did not permit a transgender man to become an official godfather at a child’s baptism in 2015.\textsuperscript{246}

Some surveys conducted in 2015 by the Pew Research Center found that while support for same-sex marriage has increased across the board over the years, each

\textsuperscript{240} Forte, “Spain: Opinions on When Abortion Acceptable 2019.”
\textsuperscript{241} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{242} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{243} “Stances of Faiths on LGBTQ Issues: Roman Catholic Church.”
\textsuperscript{244} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{245} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{246} Ibid.
generation is more tolerant than the one directly older than it.\textsuperscript{247} Though people born between 1997 and 2015 were not included, this survey shows that 73\% of people born between 1981 and 1996 support same-sex marriage while only 59\% of people born between 1965 and 1980 do.\textsuperscript{248} To add on another generation, only 45\% of people born between 1946 and 1964 support same-sex marriage.\textsuperscript{249} The other survey focused on support for same-sex marriage based on religion, and found that from their sample only 56\% of Catholics supported it, whereas 85\% of people unaffiliated with any religion did.\textsuperscript{250}

More surveys conducted by Pew Research Center in 2019 focused on acceptance of homosexuality depending on different demographics related to specific countries. Generally, wealthier countries (dependent on gross domestic product per capita), including Spain at 89\% acceptance, tend to be more accepting of homosexuality.\textsuperscript{251} Another survey not including Spain found that in many other countries, younger generations are more accepting of homosexuality, including comparable country France, which demonstrates 92\% acceptance from people ages eighteen to twenty-nine.\textsuperscript{252} Going farther, people who see religion as less important in their daily lives are more accepting of homosexuality.\textsuperscript{253} In Spain, 93\% of people who agree “Religion is NOT very important” in their lives accept homosexuality, whereas only 77\% of people who consider religion to be very important accept it.\textsuperscript{254} Lastly, there is also a slight difference in relation

\textsuperscript{247} “Changing Views of Same-Sex Marriage.”
\textsuperscript{248} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{249} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{250} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{251} Poushter and Kent, “Views of Homosexuality Around the World.”
\textsuperscript{252} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{253} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{254} Ibid.
to gender, with 92% of Spanish women and only 86% of Spanish men believing homosexuality should be accepted by society.\textsuperscript{255}

Though gay marriage and adoption by same-sex couples were legalized in Spain in 2005, Spain’s acceptance of homosexuality and LGBTQ+ rights has been a long and arduous process.\textsuperscript{256} For many years sodomy was considered a criminal act, which knowingly made homosexuality illegal.\textsuperscript{257} Sodomy was later decriminalized in 1882, but it wasn’t until the beginning of the Second Republic and the loss of influence of the Church that homosexuality started becoming more accepted in Spain.\textsuperscript{258} Following the Second Republic, however, was the significantly more conservative Franco dictatorship, during which homosexuality was recriminalized under the Vagrancy Act.\textsuperscript{259}

A couple decades later, in 1971, the Law of Dangerousness and Social Rehabilitation reformed homosexuality as a “mental illness rather than a criminal act.”\textsuperscript{260} This meant instead of people solely being jailed for their sexuality, they could also be sent to a correctional camp in an attempt to be “cured’ of their homosexual desires” via psychological and physical torture.\textsuperscript{261} Homosexuality was ultimately decriminalized in 1979, though it was still considered taboo.\textsuperscript{262} The progressive legislation passed in 2005 was met with over 500,000 predominantly Catholic protesters, but apart from them, Spain is now statistically considered to be extremely accepting of homosexuality.\textsuperscript{263}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{255} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{256} Pyrce, “Public Attitudes to Homosexuality in Spain.”
\textsuperscript{257} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{258} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{259} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{260} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{261} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{262} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{263} Ibid.
\end{flushleft}
In addition to the increased liberal legislation and allyship of the LGBTQ+ community, many young people also identify themselves as LGBTQ+. In fact, as of 2018 only 66% of the generation of people born between 1997 and 2015 identified as strictly heterosexual, which is the lowest percentage of any generation.\textsuperscript{264} This percentage is only expected to rise over the years as social media continues to grow and kids have increased access to explore and access different sexualities, lifestyles, and gender expressions.\textsuperscript{265}

These trends of increasing liberalization indicate that some of the Catholic Church’s social doctrines are likely viewed as outdated in Spain among a wide variation of the population.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to explore possible reasons why young people in Spain might be becoming either less devoted to or completely disassociating from Catholicism. This trend could be due to increased access to education and healthcare, disgust toward the numerous child sex abuse cases, liberalizing social views, or another related circumstance. From this chapter I will turn to focus on whether or not young Spaniards are distancing themselves from Catholicism, and if they are, for what reasons and under what circumstances. I will accomplish this objective by testing my arguments with survey data and will find out whether my predictions are relevant.

\textsuperscript{264} Lewis, “Study Says Only Two Thirds of Gen Z Is Straight.”
\textsuperscript{265} Ibid.
Chapter 3: Maintaining a Catholic Spain

The Church in Spanish Politics

The presence of the Catholic Church as a religious hegemon in Spain over the years began to slightly fade after the end of the Franco dictatorship as new leadership came to power and religious minorities began to expand.\textsuperscript{266} The number of Catholics also began to decline, and as of 2020, 67.2\% of the population consider themselves as “Catholic,” and only 20.5\% consider themselves as “practicing Catholic.”\textsuperscript{267} Despite declining numbers, the Church retains a clear majority and there is still a dominating presence of “Banal Catholicism.”\textsuperscript{268} “Banal Catholicism" is the persistence of the Church in contemporary society, such as the existence of Catholic symbols in state buildings, despite the state officially identifying as non-denominational.\textsuperscript{269}

The normalcy at which Catholic traditions and symbols persist in Spanish society help reinforce the religion as a cultural hegemon.\textsuperscript{270} The Church also runs a lot of important social assistance organizations within the state which enables it to maintain a positive social presence within the community.\textsuperscript{271} Though Spain is technically a secular state, the Catholic Church has increased its political involvement since 2004, when there was a terrorist attack in Madrid and when the Parliament of the World’s Religions convened in Barcelona.\textsuperscript{272} They have done this by vocalizing their opinions on public

\textsuperscript{266} Griera, “The Many Shapes of Interreligious Relations in Contemporary Spain,” 318.
\textsuperscript{267} Ibid, 321.
\textsuperscript{268} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{269} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{270} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{271} Ibid, 323.
\textsuperscript{272} Ibid.
moral debates such as abortion, organizing public religious events, and publicly emphasizing the importance of Christianity within the nation’s identity.  

In spite of the Church’s political efforts, current Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez was sworn into office in 2018 and was the first prime minister to do so without any religious symbols present. This includes a Bible and a crucifix, which have been staples of the ceremony in the past. During his swearing-in ceremony, Sánchez promised to uphold the Constitution, which although technically declares the state to be non-denominational, never explicitly mentions a complete separation between the Church and State. The exact words of the Constitution are that “no religious faith shall have a state character” and that “the public authorities shall take into account the religious beliefs of Spanish society and shall consequently maintain appropriate cooperation relations with the Catholic Church and other confessions.” Due to the Church’s deep history within Spain, the faith remains in a position of privilege compared to other religions. For example, a state broadcaster called Corporación de Radio y Televisión (TVE) airs Catholic Mass.  

In addition, Spanish taxpayers can choose to give a certain amount of money to the Catholic Church on their income tax returns, Catholic religious education is partially funded by the state, and many official state holidays are tied back to Catholic traditions. In terms of other religions, the state has had agreements with certain

273 Ibid.  
274 González, “New PM’s Swearing-in Ceremony Prompts Question.”  
275 Ibid.  
276 Ibid.  
277 Ibid.  
278 Ibid.  
279 Ibid.  
280 Ibid.
minority religious federations since 1992, including Jewish and Islamic federations.\textsuperscript{281} The state also allotted €10,644,000,000 to “Recreation, culture and religion” in 2018, which was an uptick from the amount spent in previous years, including over €300,000 more than the year before.\textsuperscript{282} Despite the state’s financial ventures, the number of atheists is growing and the number of Catholics is slowly decreasing throughout the country.\textsuperscript{283}

Regardless of these changing numbers, Catholicism remains the dominant faith throughout Spain and the Church ultimately earns about €11 billion a year from the Spanish state, according to the Europa Laica association.\textsuperscript{284}

Furthermore, the Spanish state and Catholic Church have an individual treaty that gives the Church access to special privileges, including financing via taxes.\textsuperscript{285} Spanish citizens have the option between allocating 0.5239\% of their income to the Catholic Church or to the government’s welfare and culture budget.\textsuperscript{286} The remainder of the Spanish Catholic Church’s budget is satisfied by the state.\textsuperscript{287}

In an effort to equalize the position of citizens of minority religions with Catholic citizens, the Spanish state introduced a law in 1986 titled the Law on Religious Freedom which guaranteed each person religious freedom in public.\textsuperscript{288} On top of increased religious visibility, all primary and secondary schools in Spain have a legal obligation to provide a range of religious education options based on the Catholic, Muslim, Jewish, and Evangelical dogmas.\textsuperscript{289} Alternate education is also legally required for any

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{281} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{282} “UNdata | Record View | Table 3.1 Government Final Consumption Expenditure by Function.” \\
\textsuperscript{283} González. \\
\textsuperscript{284} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{285} De Busser, “Church-state Relations in Spain,” 290. \\
\textsuperscript{286} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{287} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{288} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{289} Ibid.
\end{flushright}
non-religious students. However, while the religious education provided for Catholic students is funded by the state, the minority religious education is funded by those individual communities themselves. Additionally, the Catholic Church has the right to distribute its “historical and artistic heritage” via media such as television and the broadcasting stations are obligated to uphold the highest respect for the Church on air. Other religious communities have gained increased access to distribution as well, but still have a significantly lower amount of broadcasting hours than the Catholic Church.

Homogeneity

The reason for Catholic religious education being prioritized over other religions roots back to Spain’s history of anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim behavior that picked up speed during the reconquista and new delegation of the territory. As I discussed in Chapter 2, former Spanish Catholic monarchs expelled both Jews and Muslims, and because of this, until recently, Spain barely had any Jewish or Muslim population. For many years social prestige in Spain was dependent on actions of antisemitism or on how many Muslims one’s family had killed during the reconquering, sowing deeper roots of Catholic superiority. The state, backed by the Spanish Inquisition, began to issue Blood Purity Laws in the fifteenth century to restrict the rights of Muslim and Jewish converts to Catholicism and allow “pure-blood” Catholics to have the best access to opportunity.

During the following century, the Catholic monarchy continued to issue edicts attempting

290 Ibid.
291 Ibid, 292.
292 Ibid.
293 Ibid.
295 Ibid.
296 Ibid, 188-189.
to diminish the influence of former Muslims’ culture.\textsuperscript{297} These edicts included the ban of Arabic language in books and in daily speech, along with traditional dress, food, and music.\textsuperscript{298}

Expanding on Spain’s history with antisemitism, violence against Jews in the Iberian Peninsula used to swell during Holy Week, when Spaniards would set out to avenge Jesus’s death against people in Jewish communities.\textsuperscript{299} A town in Castile was even named “Castrillo Mata Judíos” or “Camp Kill Jews” up until 2015.\textsuperscript{300} Given the efforts of the Spanish Catholic monarchs to expel not only any person of a different religion but also eradicate their culture, it is no surprise that Hebrew and Arabic literature are not as well represented in Spanish schools today.\textsuperscript{301} Despite all of these efforts, Jewish and Islamic culture have survived in other ways and will presumably continue to grow.

Throughout Spanish history, “Catholicism has been a divisive rather than a cohesive identity”\textsuperscript{302} as evidenced by antisemitic and anti-Muslim actions cited above. This divisiveness ultimately resulted in Spanish Republicans’ creation of the 1931 Constitution which separated church and state.\textsuperscript{303} The Second Republic moved to strengthen a new secular state through actions like removing crucifixes from school rooms and not allowing Holy Week processions to occur in the streets.\textsuperscript{304} The eradication of long-standing Catholic traditions was overshadowed by the ‘hot summer’ of anticlerical violence in 1936 that continued throughout the Civil War.\textsuperscript{305} This violence

\textsuperscript{297} Ibid, 189. 
\textsuperscript{298} Ibid. 
\textsuperscript{299} Ibid, 185. 
\textsuperscript{300} Ibid, 186. 
\textsuperscript{301} Ibid. 
\textsuperscript{302} Vincent, “Religion: The Idea of Catholic Spain,” 123. 
\textsuperscript{303} Ibid, 128. 
\textsuperscript{304} Ibid. 
\textsuperscript{305} Ibid, 130.
included the destruction of churches and symbolic items, and ultimately resulted in the
death of over 6,000 clergy and 300 nuns, who were “seen as responsible for the suffering
of the people and so singled out to bear the sins of the old order.”\(^{306}\) The murders often
included torture and posthumous body mutilation, and these actions as a whole revealed
the hatred the Church had inspired over the years.\(^{307}\)

Spain entered the Franco era after the Second Republic which originally was a
welcome change from a Catholic perspective. However, as I have discussed, the National
Catholicism that grew under Franco created an environment of fear in which different
opinions and practices were seen as heretical and punished.\(^{308}\) Even though the 1960s
signaled an increase in the number of people attending mass and many people considered
themselves to be Catholic, such as 98% of housewives, the National Catholic model
could not be sustained for much longer.\(^{309}\) During the last years of Franco’s life, it became
obvious that Spain’s role in the country would have to change as around 400 priests left
the Church and clerical human rights activists were being secularized.\(^{310}\) The new
Constitution of 1978 was designed around being for ‘all Spaniards’ and guaranteed
freedom of worship and aconfessionality.\(^{311}\)

Though Catholicism has retained cultural prominence since the end of Franco,
religious practice fell rapidly from the 1970s and during the 1980s the highest percentage
of non believers were young people.\(^{312}\) Though the majority of the population remains
Catholic, the percentage has decreased since 2002, when 79.7% of the population

\(^{306}\) Ibid.
\(^{307}\) Ibid.
\(^{308}\) Ibid, 135.
\(^{309}\) Ibid.
\(^{310}\) Ibid, 136-137.
\(^{311}\) Ibid, 138-139.
\(^{312}\) Ibid, 139.
identified with the faith.\footnote{Ibid, 122.} Even then, only 72.9% said that they believed in God, which revealed a level of people who identified more with the institution than the actual faith.\footnote{Ibid.} Out of the 79.7% with children, 94.5% had had them baptized and 90.7% expected them to make their First Communion, which implied a connection with traditions and a desire to continue a Catholic lineage.\footnote{Ibid.} Many Spanish Catholics now also partake in traditionally “un-Catholic” behaviors such as premarital sex and taking birth control.\footnote{Ibid, 139-140.}

Between increased secularization and increased immigration of people with varying religions, Spain’s relationship with Catholicism is expected to continue to change.

The territory that makes up modern Spain has been a relatively homogenous Catholic territory since the culmination of the *reconquista* of and expulsion of religious minorities from that territory.\footnote{De Busser, 283.} Although Spain is now officially a secular state, Catholicism remains an intrinsic feature of Spanish society and continues to play a role in politics.\footnote{Ibid.} The Church’s role, however, is much more subdued compared to the time of monarchies and fascist dictatorships. Since the end of Franco’s rule, the country has slowly become more secular and religiously diverse in part to immigration.\footnote{Ibid, 284.} His death signaled a new era for Spain that included European integration and secularization, specifically entry into the European Union in 1986, rather than National Catholicism.\footnote{Ibid.}

Post-Francoist Spain has shown trends of increasing atheists and religious minorities, and a decreasing number of Catholics.\footnote{Ibid.} Despite the growth in religious
pluralism, however, Catholicism persists as Spain’s dominant religion by a wide margin.\textsuperscript{322} Out of all members of the European Union, Spain has the fifth highest proportion of Catholics within its population and is home to important Catholic events and relics that make it a popular pilgrimage destination.\textsuperscript{323} For example, the \textit{Camino de Santiago} is a popular pilgrimage route that leads to Santiago de Compostela in Galicia, Spain, which houses the burial site of Saint James the Great. As for religious affiliation within different generations, Table 1 shows the religious composition of the Spanish population by age groups in percentages as of 2003.\textsuperscript{324}

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Source: CIS 2003

Table 1.

From Table 1 it is easy to determine that each age group becomes increasingly Catholic from youngest (18-24) to oldest (>65), growing from 66\% to 93\%. The opposite is true for Non-religious/atheist identifiers, as the percentage decreases from youngest at 30\% to oldest at 5\%. The lower level of Catholicism within younger Spaniards and diminishing level of Catholic association in the country as a whole has been theorized to be attributed to factors such as “the increasing acceptance of abortion, divorce and birth control, activities that are supposed to be incompatible with the Vatican precepts.”\textsuperscript{325}

\textsuperscript{322} Ibid, 288.
\textsuperscript{323} Ibid, 289.
\textsuperscript{324} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{325} Ibid.
Figure 1 then delves into the degree of religiousness in Spanish society from these age groups.\textsuperscript{326} As shown by Figure 1, just as older generations in Spain tend to be not only more inclined to affiliate with a religion, but they are also more likely to be more devoted to that religion.\textsuperscript{327} To put it in numbers, 3\% of 18-24 year olds in Spain are ‘Very religious,’ 21\% are ‘Quite religious,’ 45\% are ‘Somewhat religious,’ and 30\% are ‘Non-religious.’ On the opposite side of the spectrum, 16\% of Spaniards over sixty-five years old are ‘Very religious,’ 56\% are ‘Quite religious,’ 22\% are ‘Somewhat religious,’ and 5\% are ‘Non-religious.’

![Figure 1](image)

A ‘very religious’ person might be expected to attend Church service often, for example. As of 2002, only 25\% of Spaniards attended mass weekly even though almost 50\% of respondents’ parents attended mass weekly, confirming the disparity in devoutness

\textsuperscript{326} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{327} Ibid.
between age groups. There are still other religious traditions that remain widely popular in Spain, such as baptism, which 80% of the population agrees they would do or have done for their children. The popularity of Catholic traditions such as baptism can be attributed to the phenomenon of “believing without belonging,” which is a paradox between diminishing church membership and maintaining the importance of religiously-significant traditional events.

**Spanish Catholicism**

Europe as a whole is trending toward a “post-Christian society.” Between the United Kingdom, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Spain, 56-60% of people never attend church service and another 63-66% never pray. A professor of theology and sociology of religion at St. Mary’s University in London named Stephen Bullivant believes that many baptized Europeans never fully absorbed the cultural religious identities of their parents and thus feel disinclined to attend a service and strengthen their faith. He continues by arguing the new default setting for young people is ‘no religion’ rather than Christian or Catholic, and the few who are connected to their faith are not exactly devout. According to Bullivant, this trend will continue and in the near future churches will shrink but anyone still committed to the church at all will be highly committed.

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328 Ibid.
329 Ibid.
330 Ibid, 290.
331 Sherwood, “‘Christianity as Default Is Gone.’”
332 Ibid.
333 Ibid.
334 Ibid.
335 Ibid.
Over the years, the percentage of the Spanish population that considers themselves Catholic dropped significantly. In addition, as of last year 63.1% of the population that remains Catholic almost never attends church service, up from 55.5% of Spanish Catholics who were inactive as of 2011. As for practicing Catholic Spaniards, 13.4% of them attend mass every Sunday in addition to on important holidays as of 2019. Regardless of decreasing church attendance, Madrid alone is still home to over 200 churches that each bear a different saint’s name. Most of these churches’ small attendance consists of the elderly, and to outsiders the Churches seem like monuments rather than bustling places of worship. Some scholars attribute the decreasing religious affiliation in Spain, especially of Catholicism in regards to young people, to the oppressive Franco regime which is known to have dictated religious life and was originally supported by the Catholic Church in light of egregious acts committed by the regime. Certain people who are turned off by Spain’s history might likely associate Catholicism in particular as an institution tied to the backward past of their country.

According to the Ferrer i Guàrdia Foundation’s Secularism in Figures report from 2018, Spain’s population is trending toward secularization. 27% of the population now consider themselves atheists, agnostics, or non-believers. As for young Spaniards, 48.9% of them have turned their back on religion, whereas 88.6% Spanish people ages 65 and up who grew up during the forcefully Catholic Franco dictatorship still believe in

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338 Forte, “Catholicism.”
339 Reese, “Natasha Reese on Rejection of Religion Among Spain’s Youth.”
340 Ibid.
341 Ibid.
342 Ibid.
343 Ibid.
344 Ibid.
The Foundation’s vice president believes this disparity can be equated to young people exchanging “metaphysical formulas for technology,” but it is also possible that young people are far less influenced by the legacy of National Catholicism left by the Franco era.346

To further put these trends into perspective, in 1992, 79.4% of all new marriages in Spain took place in a church, and civil marriages only accounted for 20.6% of new marriages.347 Conversely, 80.2% of new marriages in 2018 were civil and only 19.8% were religious.348 Sociologist and professor Enrique Gil Calvo argues that the growing lack of faith within Spaniards will only increase among new generations and attributes their secularization partly to education and the emancipation of women.349 He believes as future generations are increasingly educated, there will be “consequently less trace of pre-modern religious superstition” and a rise in science that will be incompatible with religion.350 Growing off of Calvo’s points that mirror Ronald Inglehart’s, whose work I mentioned in Chapter 2, historian and anthropologist Maria Lara has also concluded that increased secularization can be attributed to most Spaniards between the ages of 14 and 24 are living with their parents without financial concerns.351 Their feelings of security undermine religion’s consistent reliance on fear and uncertainty throughout history (2).352

A Pew Research Forum investigation calculates the religious composition of each country in 2010 and 2020 as well as predicts the composition for 2030, 2040, and 2050.
The study shows that in 2010, 36,240,000 Christians resided in Spain compared to 36,410,000 in 2020.\textsuperscript{353} Furthermore, the study predicts that despite population growth, the amount of Christians in Spain will decrease to 35,630,000 in 2030, to 34,950,000 in 2040, and finally to 34,100,000 in 2050.\textsuperscript{354} The investigation also predicts that both the Spanish Muslim population as well as number of religiously unaffiliated Spaniards will increase.\textsuperscript{355} There were only 8,740,000 and 10,190,000 religiously unaffiliated Spaniards in the year 2010 and 2020, respectively, and Pew predicts that number will reach 13,850,000 by 2050.\textsuperscript{356} As for Spanish Muslims, their community is expected to grow from 1,610,000 people as of 2020 to 3,940,000 by 2050.\textsuperscript{357} These trends show that the country’s religious composition will continue to change as immigration persists and fewer Spaniards maintain their devotion to faith.

**Religious Education**

Although the Spanish Constitution of 1978 defines that the state has no official religion, the Catholic Church retains the most influence out of any religious organization by far.\textsuperscript{358} The Catholic Church is still mentioned in the Constitution in article 16(3), which states that "the public authorities shall take the beliefs of Spanish society into account and shall in consequence maintain appropriate relationships of cooperation with the Catholic Church and the other religious denominations."\textsuperscript{359} This section about cooperating with the Church was added to set a different tone than the extremely secular

\textsuperscript{353} "Religious Composition by Country, 2010-2050."
\textsuperscript{354} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{355} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{356} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{357} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{358} Martínez-Torrón, “School and Religion in Spain,” 135.
\textsuperscript{359} Ibid, 137.
Constitution of 1931 and appease Catholic authority figures and conservative citizens.\textsuperscript{360}

To expand on constitutional privileges, Article 27 requires that the state organize the educational system as well as guarantee each citizen’s right to education.\textsuperscript{361} However, this does not imply that all educational centers have to be operated by the state, and can instead be run by religious institutions.\textsuperscript{362} Even if a Spanish school is state-run, Article 27 further requires that each parent has the right to request religious instruction according to their religion to be provided for their child as long as the state has an agreement with the specific religion.\textsuperscript{363}

It is also a requirement of the state to not force religious education of a certain religion on a student without permission from a parent or guardian.\textsuperscript{364} For example, public schools in Spain are not allowed to force a Jewish or Muslim student to study about the Catholic faith. However, only minority religions with an agreement with the state are allowed to conduct their education within schools.\textsuperscript{365}

Religious education within the school system can also be a major factor of influence for young people’s religious identities. Within Spain, there are three school types between pre-primary and pre-university level: public schools run by the state, \textit{escuelas concertadas}, which are subsidized private schools most often owned and run by Church institutions, and completely private unsubsidized schools owned privately.\textsuperscript{366} Roughly 1.7 million Spaniards, about 25.5\% of all Spanish students, attend \textit{escuelas concertadas} run by the Catholic Church, and even the ones who attend public schools are

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{360} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{361} Ibid, 138-139. \\
\textsuperscript{362} Ibid, 139. \\
\textsuperscript{363} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{364} Ibid, 140. \\
\textsuperscript{365} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{366} Knauth, “Religion and Education in the View of Spanish Youth,” 22. 
\end{flushright}
surrounded by the influence of the Church in the form of symbols and traditions.\textsuperscript{367} Private Catholic schools are often the most prestigious educational centers, which can lead to many Catholics having an added advantage over other Spaniards early in life.\textsuperscript{368} Many students elect to take Catholic religious education, but the percentage has declined over the years.\textsuperscript{369} Specifically, the percentage of primary school students who elected to take Catholic religious education has lowered from 81\% to 75\%, and for secondary students it has decreased to only 53\%.\textsuperscript{370}

Catholic religious education administered in Spanish schools is designed by the Spanish Conference of Bishops’ Commission for Education and Catechesis, and each school adheres to the same curriculum with similar pre-approved textbooks.\textsuperscript{371} The Commission’s curriculum emphasizes the comprehension of the Bible, as well as Church traditions, liturgy, and rites.\textsuperscript{372} Regardless of religion, based on a study conducted by professor and researcher Gunther Dietz, most Spanish students associate religious beliefs and elements in general with characteristics of Catholicism, such as “Jesus at the Cross” and “Virgin Mary.”\textsuperscript{373} Additionally, other elements such as “the Bible” and “the saints” are seen as synonymous with religion by most students.\textsuperscript{374} Other students have more negative views of religion and equate “God” with words like “lying,” “brainwashing,” and “contradictory being.”\textsuperscript{375}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{367} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{368} Martinez-Torrón, 149. \\
\textsuperscript{369} Knauth, 22. \\
\textsuperscript{370} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{371} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{372} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{373} Ibid, 29. \\
\textsuperscript{374} Ibid, 30. \\
\textsuperscript{375} Ibid, 31.
\end{flushright}
Spanish students generally are either firm believers, occasional believers and practices, or open deniers of religion. The majority of respondents would fall into the “occasional believer” category as they recognize religious traditions or follow religious rites during important milestones like birth, but do not adhere to religious principles on a day to day basis. The level of religious devotion can often be linked back to family or school influence. For example, the majority of students who identified as “practicing believers” attribute their level of devotion to their family, who have fostered a religious environment for them since birth. For those who are less religious or have negative experiences with religion, their attitudes can be partially attributed to doubts about the validity of religious teachings, and explicitly for Catholic students, their attitudes also concern the role of “the church” and “the priests.”

Furthermore, despite varying religions and levels of religious devotions, most respondents are in favor of maintaining religious education within schools, citing the importance of reading the Bible, learning about one’s own religion, and knowing Jesus’s story. To them, the knowledge gained from religious education is simply “important for one’s own life.”

World Youth Day

Another influential religious event aimed at young people is the World Youth Day (WYD). WYD is a global event attended by the Pope held once every three years in the

376 Ibid.
377 Ibid.
378 Ibid, 32.
379 Ibid.
380 Ibid, 36.
381 Ibid, 40.
382 Ibid.
opposite hemisphere and was held in Madrid in 2011. The first event was held in 1986, and was created to gather young Christians to cement the faith in them and “make them carry out their mission in the world.” Each WYD is organized by the three pillars of Christ-Church-Mission and Madrid’s slogan was “planted and built up in Christ, firm in the faith.” All of the activities focused around the topic chosen by the Pope and the entire experience was an opportunity to reflect, pray, and recommit themselves to Christ.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Madrid’s World Youth Day, which was intended to be a time of celebration of Christ, was surrounded by controversy. Apart from the Vatican’s release of documents pertaining to a clerical sex abuse lawsuit the day before the Pope arrived in Madrid, Spain was facing a debt and youth unemployment crisis. The event’s $72 million dollar budget only exacerbated the negative feelings of citizens toward the financial issues of the state. What was intended as a day of solidifying religious devotion in young people turned into public controversy for the Church.

Impact of COVID-19

Not enough time has passed for extensive research to exist on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on people’s religious devotion, but a few articles exist on the possible impacts in two countries with large populations of Christians, the United States

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383 “About WYD.”
384 “WYD Madrid was held in Madrid, Spain from August 16-21, 2011.”
385 Franco Martinez, 205.
386 Ibid, 206.
387 Ibid.
389 Ibid.
and Poland. Many places of worship are now open in the United States after being shut down periodically throughout the year in different states due to lockdown restrictions.\(^{390}\) It seems that those uninterested in religion before the pandemic, about 25% of the U.S. population, were not compelled to turn to faith during a year of great suffering for many.\(^{391}\) As for the religious population of the nation, it seems they have shifted their prayers from trivial topics such as love and money to more serious topics such as the end of the pandemic and the health of loved ones.\(^{392}\)

As for Poland, the suffering and destruction of the pandemic has caused many changed attitudes and an increased reliance on faith.\(^{393}\) The Polish Deputy Prime Minister described Churches “like hospitals for the soul” during times like these in which people feel like they are lacking control.\(^{394}\) Faith and prayer have helped people regain a sense of control and give them hope for the future.\(^{395}\) The convenience and security of modern life, like Inglehart explained, often allows people to ignore any existential thoughts about things such as the fragility of human life, which the pandemic has forced people to face head-on.\(^{396}\) Before the pandemic, Poland was facing somewhat of a crisis of lack of faith and attachment to religious traditions within younger generations.\(^{397}\) It will be interesting to see how such a large-scale health crisis that has caused a heightened fear of death within young people, will have affected their devotion to religion further down the road.\(^{398}\)

\(^{390}\) Mackovich, “Pandemic Tests Faith of Believers, Churches, and Communities.”
\(^{391}\) Ibid.
\(^{392}\) Ibid.
\(^{394}\) Ibid.
\(^{395}\) Ibid.
\(^{396}\) Ibid, 2675.
\(^{397}\) Ibid, 2676.
\(^{398}\) Ibid.
My own data consists of a two-part questionnaire with responses from nine female respondents between the ages of 17 and 21. The first section found that two (22.2%) respondents are 17, five (55.6%) are 20, and 2 (22.2%) are 21. Each respondent was born in Spain, specifically either Madrid or Palma de Mallorca. Each respondent is also a resident of Spain, mainly Madrid, and some answers were recorded in Spanish.

Expanding on demographics, my first question is whether respondents’ parents (one or more) are Catholic. 100% of respondents answered that both parents are Catholic. I followed up by asking “How devoted are your parent(s) to Catholicism?” on a scale of 1 to 10. The exact results are posted in Figure 3 and show that respondents’ parents are slightly varied in their commitment but mostly have high levels of devotion to the religion.
To gain more details on these findings, I asked how often their parent(s) attend church service. Two (22.2%) respondents answered “About once per week,” two (22.2%) answered “About once per month,” and five (55.6%) answered “Rarely (maybe only on holidays).” One (11.1%) respondent had “no answer” to whether they grew up attending church service with their family, but eight (88.9%) respondents grew up attending service with their family. Out of the eight who attended service growing up, two (22.2%) now attend service “About once per week,” three (33.3%) now attend “About once per month,” and four (44.4%) attend “Rarely (maybe only on holidays).” As a whole, respondents grew up in similar but slightly varying environments and now have varying religious habits.

The second part of the questionnaire focuses more on the respondents’ personal beliefs and the reasons behind those beliefs. I started by asking whether the subjects consider themselves to be Catholic. Precise results for this question are shown above in Figure 2, and the results demonstrate a Catholic majority of respondents. The following question is “How strongly do you believe in Catholic teachings?,” to which respondents
answered on a scale of 1 to 10 shown in Figure 4. The results show that most respondents maintain strong beliefs in Catholic teachings.

![How strongly do you believe in Catholic teachings?](image)

Figure 4.

It is interesting to note here that although two respondents do not consider themselves to be Catholic, both answered “five” on the scale between 1 to 10, meaning they still believe in Catholic teachings to some degree.

My next question asks “If you feel disconnected with or have abandoned Catholicism altogether, do you still feel connected to God?” Five (71.4%) respondents answered “Yes” and two chose not to answer. The other two (28.6%) answered “Creo que una fuerza que podría considerarse ‘dios,’ pero no es el Dios de la religión Católica,” which translates to mean they believe there is a force that could be considered “God,” but it is not the God of the Catholic faith. This specific ‘written-in’ answer being chosen twice also signifies that it is most likely some respondents worked together when filling out the survey. The following question asks “If you do feel disconnected to Catholicism now, what is the most important reason why?” Five respondents refrained from answering, while two answered “La iglesia como institución” or the church as an
institution. The final two respondents blamed “some of the church’s public statements concerning homosexuality” for their disconnect.

The next portion of the questionnaire concentrates on the relationship between education and religion. The first question asks about whether their teachers in school growing up talk about Catholic teachings. All nine (100%) respondents answered “Yes.” I then asked whether they learned about Catholic teachings only in religion class or in other classes as well. Seven (77.8%) answered “religion class,” and two (22.2%) answered “other classes.” Four respondents attended “religiously-affiliated private schools” growing up, and two more wrote in “religiously-affiliated” when asked what type of school they attended. Three others attended a “colegio concertado,” which is a private school with public funding, and for two of them, the school is considered “Catholic.” The third respondent’s colegio concertado is Jesuit.

As for whether the subjects currently attend a religiously-affiliated school, seven (77.8%) do and only two (22.2%) do not. Lastly, in relation to education, I asked whether the subjects believe their education had any impact on their religious beliefs or commitment now. Five (55.6%) say their education had a “positive impact,” two (22.2%) say it had a “negative impact,” and two (22.2%) believe it had “no impact” on their religious beliefs or commitment. From these results we can determine that religion is a staple in many types of Spanish schools and years of education within these schools often has an impact on Spaniards’ religious beliefs, whether positive or negative.

Next, I asked the subjects to rate whether their feelings toward the Catholic Church are generally positive, negative, or somewhere in between on a scale of 1 to 10. The results in Figure 5 demonstrate that respondents have generally positive attitudes
toward the Catholic Church. Those respondents who have less positive attitudes than others toward the Church remain neutral rather than negative.

Figure 5.

To gain a better understanding for these answers, I asked “what is one reason why you feel the way you do about the Catholic Church?” As a side note, several subjects have the exact same write-in responses for this question, which again leads me to believe some of them worked in pairs on the survey. Two people answered “A veces genera pensamientos radicales en la gente, pensamientos retrógrados que creo que ya no funcionan en la sociedad actual,” which means that sometimes the religion generates radical thoughts in people that no longer function in today’s society. Similarly, two respondents said that “it is not updated and advanced as the society develops.” Two others feel an “incoherence with Christian values.” On a more positive note, two respondents “siento protegida y querida por Dios,” meaning they feel protected and loved by God, and the last respondent believes that the Church “me aporta tranquilidad y mejora mi día a día” or that it supports her peace of mind and improves her day to day life.
More broadly, I thought it was important to ask if the subjects consider Spain to be a Catholic country, given the country’s lengthy history involving the Church as an institution. The majority responded “Yes,” and exact percentages are posted in Figure 7. Four respondents answered “No,” and two of the four added an explanation. Their reasoning is that “es aconfesional según la Constitución Española, pero creo que la mayoría de españoles son católicos, y debido a nuestra historia aún permanecen costumbres católicas,” meaning that the Spanish Constitution is non-denominational, but they believe that the majority of Spaniards are Catholic and that due to the country’s history, Catholic traditions remain.

![Figure 7](image)

Because the COVID-19 pandemic has taken a huge toll on many people’s lives, I thought it was relevant to ask whether COVID-19 and its widespread effects have affected their religious beliefs at all. Eight (88.9%) respondents agree that the pandemic has affected their religious beliefs, whereas only one (11.1%) does not. I followed that question up with asking whether or not it had made them more or less devout on a scale from 1 to 10. Results are displayed in Figure 8, in which we can conclude that not only
did the pandemic affect certain young people greatly, but it also drew them closer to their faith.

![Bar chart showing the impact of COVID-19 on religious beliefs.](image)

**Figure 8.**

In addition, the Polish study I discussed earlier also found that in relation to COVID-19, women have more often cited a strength in their faith compared to men because they are more likely to place a higher value on family values and care for their loved ones. With or without a pandemic, women around the world participate in religious life and activities such as prayer more often than men. Although this study was performed in Poland, it is relevant to my conclusions because all of my respondents were female.

Lastly, it was important to me to ask about these young Spaniards’ future plans with Catholicism. I started off by asking if they plan on incorporating Catholicism into their home life if they have children. With the option of answering “Yes,” ”No,” or “Maybe,” seven (77.8%) answered “Yes” and two (22.2%) answered “No.” For the ones who answered yes, I inquired about what would be one example they might incorporate Catholicism into their future home life. Two responded with “Values, Sunday service”

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399 Ibid.
400 Ibid.
and two with “Education.” Another two responded with “Bautizarles y llevarles a un colegio católico” or baptizing their children and sending them to a Catholic school. Another solely emphasized sending their child to a Catholic school.

To finish, I asked “What is the most important reason why you do or do not plan to incorporate Catholicism into your home life if you have children?” In different words, five respondents emphasized their desire to include important Christian values into their children’s lives. A different two respondents simply said because it “makes me happy.” The longest answer was given by two separate respondents who, again, likely worked together, and again emphasized Christian values: “Quiero que mis hijos crezcan con buenos valores, y a mi me los enseñaron a través de la religión católica (valores como el respeto, la solidaridad...). Pero quiero que ellos decidan en qué creen. No quiero imponerles una creencia, porque no quiero que les pase como a mí: que acaban siguiendo una religión por rutina y no por verdadera Fe.” What that means is that they want to teach values such as respect and solidarity that were taught to them via the Catholic faith, but they do not want their children to have a religion imposed on them like they were. They want their children to follow a religion out of true faith rather than out of routine and pressure.

**Conclusion**

My research question was intended to find out if, given Spain’s deep roots with Catholicism, young Spaniards’ relationships with the religion are changing. I assumed that they were becoming less religious based on three possible reasons, though this issue is much more extensive than that. Existing literature and data have shown that although
the Catholic Church retains the most influence in Spain out of all religions, Spaniards as a whole are becoming less Catholic and more diverse over the years and will only continue to do so with trends like with increasing immigration and advancing technology. From my data, two young Spaniards who grew up attending Church service with Catholic parents no longer consider themselves to be Catholic. These two did not cite that they never attend Church and even still believe some Catholic teachings, but have no plans to incorporate Catholicism into their home life if they have children. As for those who do plan to incorporate Catholicism into the lives of their children, some responses centered on implementing certain values and continuing traditions rather than the importance of the faith.

My first prediction was that young people in Spain are becoming less religious because they are more secure and becoming increasingly more educated than previous generations. When asked about education, every respondent attended or still attends a religiously affiliated school. While these kids are receiving an education, that education is coming toward them with a religious bias, but in some cases it has had a negative effect on their current religious commitment. Thus, the Catholic Church has a lot of influence over many Spanish kids in school, but a bad experience with that influence can push kids away from the faith. Personally, attending Catholic school for nine years did nothing but push me away from religion, and I can understand how that experience would not be inconceivable. The Church could become further disadvantaged in the realm of education as other religious groups gain more influence and funding over time. The Church could ultimately lose some of their control in the educational realm as religious demographics develop over time.
As for security, all of these respondents have had the privilege of living in an era of advanced medicine in a developed country. Regardless of this relatively high level of stability, some respondents maintained that they feel comforted and protected by God. These feelings have only increased due to the uncertainty surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, which has increased feelings of insecurity, especially medically and financially, across the globe. Most of my respondents claim that the pandemic has strengthened their connection with their faith. Although vaccine distribution has not yet begun in Spain, it is impossible to determine whether the pandemic’s effects on people’s faith will be lasting or if their devotion will regress once vaccinations are administered across the country.

My second prediction was that young Spaniards might be disconnecting from the Church because of the widespread child sex abuse perpetrated by priests and other clergy members over the years. In Chapter 2, I delved into the persistent issue of these scandals and their portrayal in different forms of media such as newspapers, documentaries, and movies like Spotlight. Although one respondent mentioned feeling disconnected from Catholicism because of the Church as an institution, nothing was specifically brought up about the scandals. This does not necessarily mean that this issue has no influence over young Spaniards, but it was not applicable enough to any of my respondents’ individual experiences to be acknowledged. It is possible that it is not as much of a widespread issue within Spain, but I am certain that most young people in Spain are active enough on the internet to at least be aware of the controversies.

My third prediction centered on young people outgrowing the Catholic Church’s outdated views on issues such as LGBTQ+ rights and abortion. When asked about feeling
disconnected with Catholicism and the reasoning for behind those feelings, two respondents cited the Church’s public statements concerning homosexuality. When later asked about feelings toward the Church, several respondents cited incoherence with Christian values, and those values being outdated and underdeveloped as society advances. The Church’s conservative views could ultimately push more young Catholics away from their faith if they refuse to modernize. Nonetheless, I do not expect to the Church to make any substantive changes to its stances, especially regarding matters like homosexuality, about which they have been resolute on. Only time will tell if my expectations will be defied by the decline in membership in Spain prompting the Vatican to make some important changes.

The data presented earlier in this chapter aligns relatively well with my findings. The percentage of my respondents who still identify with Catholicism (77.8%) is higher than Spain’s overall percentage (67.2%), but I drew from a small and not fully representative sample. 100% of my respondents also grew up with Catholic parents, which is not the case for every young Spaniard. It was interesting to find out, however that two of my subjects no longer consider themselves to be Catholic, despite growing up with Catholic parents and with Catholic religious education. Nonetheless, the level of abandonment of religion within my survey respondents (22.2%) is still less than that of all young Spaniards (48.9%). The high level of religious education I found from existing data aligns with my respondents’ experience as well, who all learned Catholic teachings during school hours.

Existing data also shows that while the majority of Spaniards continue to identify with Catholicism, a much smaller percentage are actually “practicing Catholic.” My data
shows that very few of my respondents, despite the majority being Catholic, attend church once a week. The rest only attend about once per month or rarely, which is coherent with lacking mass attendance in Spanish churches. My respondents generally believe strongly in Catholic teachings but tended to emphasize the Church’s values and traditions over connecting with God. They mostly did, however, cite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their closer relationship with their faith. Existing studies focused on the United States and Poland have proven that one of the side effects of the pandemic has been an increase in people relying more heavily on their faith for security, and apparently this side effect has existed for Spaniards as well.

From my data alone it seems that young Spaniards are at a minimum having doubts about the Catholic Church, whether it has something to do with the faith or the institution. In addition to my data, outside studies have demonstrated a change in young adults in relation to religion. This age group is slowly becoming less Catholic and more non-religious, though that doesn’t mean the Church in Spain is going anywhere anytime soon.
Conclusion: Going Forward

Key Takeaways

Chapter 1

As I discussed in Chapter 1, Spain has been a predominantly Catholic territory since the end of the *reconquista* and reign of the first united Spanish Catholic monarchs Isabel and Fernando. The pair ensured the country’s homogeneity by conquering land principally occupied by Muslims, creating the Spanish Inquisition, and forcefully expelling Jewish people from their territory. Subsequent Catholic monarchs may not have employed the Inquisition to such an extent but managed to keep the country relatively homogenous with initiatives such as expelling any remaining Muslims in 1609.

Skipping ahead to the twentieth century, the Second Republic of Spain concentrated on the implementation of secular reforms that generated violent attacks against the Church and murders of clergy members. This violence triggered a civil war between the Republicans and Nationalists that culminated in a dictatorship. Francisco Franco, Spain’s new dictator, worked in close conjunction with the Catholic Church during the first period of his reign and worked to reinstate a culture that prioritized Catholicism.

Today, after being reinstated per Franco’s request, the Spanish monarchy coexists with a secular government, prime minister, and constitution. The current prime minister, Pedro Sánchez, is a member of a secular socialist party and adheres to the current constitution, which was implemented in 1978. The Constitution defines the state as
non-denominational, but still awards the Catholic Church certain privileges over minority religions. These privileges include perks like extra funding and influence in education, and were provided in an attempt to foster a more positive relationship with the Church after the repercussions of the anticlerical Constitution of 1931 under the Second Republic.

Chapter 2

Even though the country has remained majorly Catholic through the implementation of a secular state, I wondered if young Spanish adults were distancing themselves from the religion. I began to consider this possibility after hearing conversations about the faith between my host mother and daughter while studying in Madrid. Because my host sister was doubting her faith, I predicted that other young Spaniards might be doubting themselves as well, and provided three possibilities for why that might be the case.

The first reason was an increase in security and education. I included education because I had read a couple of studies about the possible correlation between higher education and lower levels of religious devotion and figured that my respondents would have had easier access to education growing up in a developed country. As for security, I read a different study that equated decreasing reliance on religion with increased security. Security here means an improvement in concerns like infant mortality and life expectancy due to an improvement in medicine and science, resulting in a reduction of reliance on God for comfort and protection. Similarly to education, I assumed that my respondents would have had relatively easy access to healthcare growing up in a developed country.

The second reason was the publicization of a plethora of sex abuse cases related
to clergymen that were majorly correlated with pedophilia. On top of the cases were the efforts by Church elites to cover up the abuses by moving priests to different congregations and having lawyers contracted by the Church settle with disgruntled families outside of court. These abuses have been displayed in various forms of media that my respondents would have had easy access to. My last reason was that the conservative views, on polarizing issues like abortion and same-sex marriage, of the Church might be incompatible enough with liberalized young adults to push them away from the religion.

Chapter 3

Existing research shows that the overall percentage of Spanish Catholics has declined and is predicted to continue to decline, but why? It is most likely a combination of different factors such as immigration from countries with different religious makeups, extremely Catholic elderly people who lived during the Franco era slowly dying off, and young Spaniards distancing themselves from religion in general. My research found that a greater percentage of young people identify as Catholic than the percentage of the entire Spanish population that does, and fewer of my respondents have abandoned their faith compared to young Spaniards as a whole. The majority of my respondents still believe heavily in Catholic teachings and understand the importance of Catholic values and traditions, as well as passing those on to future generations. However, my sample size was only a small portion of the population, so why does it matter?

Relevance

It matters because it provides a piece of the puzzle. The data shows that the
percentage of Catholics within Spain has decreased significantly during this century, which is significant considering the Church’s continued influence within the state. Percentage-wise, my respondents are more Catholic than Spaniards as a whole, but they showed the ability of thinking critically about the Church, which is important in and of itself. Even some respondents committed to the faith are capable of recognizing the Church’s flaws rather than following it blindly.

My mostly Catholic subjects might be unrepresentative of the young population as a whole, but they are still relevant. If young Spaniards are distancing themselves from the Church, which data unrelated to my research shows, it is also highly possible that they could reconnect with the faith as they age and feel their mortality. They could remember the importance of certain values and take comfort in connecting with God. They also could continue to stray further away from the Church as they age and focus on other matters. Even though my research cannot assure any of these patterns, I believe that my respondents' overwhelming reluctance to accept all aspects of the Church coincides with the state-wide change that has already occurred.

**Implications**

Though the Vatican is used to holding strong numbers within Spain, I am unsure how young people straying away from the Catholic faith will affect this extremely powerful institution. The Church has millions of members in other parts of the world due to factors such as colonization and globalization, so it is doubtful that its leaders are exceedingly concerned. The decreasing association with the Church in Spain also does not necessarily equate a decrease in the influence it holds within the state. It maintains a
lot of funding from taxpayers and the government and has a lot of leverage over religious education within schools. This influence could potentially start to decrease with the increase of immigration, deaths of people in older generations, and religious abandonment by young people, but I doubt we will see any real change anytime soon. Independent of the development, it will be intriguing to watch.
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