

A difficult friendship: religiosity, ideology, and vote in Spain

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Between 2004 and 2008, Spanish politics witnessed an unusual level of confrontation between the Catholic Church and the Socialist government of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero. The reformist agenda of the Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE) implied substantive changes that openly questioned basic elements of the moral system defended by the Church. The confrontation was also characterized by its intensity and for the large number of conflicts involved: the civil rights of sexual minorities such as marriage and the adoption of children, the value of religion in the educational curriculum, bioethics, women's' rights, or the recovery of historical memory. And occasionally, anti-terrorist, regional, and economic policies should also be added to that remarkable repertoire of confrontation. All of these was viewed by the leadership of the Spanish Church as the direct consequence of the laity of the government, which “clashes with the most fundamental values of our culture, leaves without roots institutions as fundamental as that of marriage and family, dilutes the foundations of moral life, of justice, and of solidarity, and places Christians in a strange and hostile world” (*Conferencia Episcopal* 2006). If the PSOE could count on the general support of the leftist parties in the *Congreso de los Diputados*, the Church had as allies the conservative Popular Party (PP), numerous conservative organizations, and all of the conservative media, who displayed a virulent opposition strategy in Parliament, the courts, and the street (Calvo 2009).

What was the impact of these conflicts in the vote in the general elections held in March of 2008? And to the extent that they did, was this impact something new or was it the continuation of something that had already been happening for a while? This paper attempts to answer these questions. Its interest is both empirical and theoretical. Empirically, our paper tries to fill a glaring hole in published works about the voting factors in the latest elections. Their authors pay attention to the extensive mobilization of the Church and to their alliance with the strategy of confrontation (the so-called “*crispación*”) carried out by the PP. To our knowledge, however, none of them has examined the specific impact of the religious factor in the electoral fortune of the

principal parties.¹ To the contrary, our research strategy centers in the impact of the religious factor on the vote since the mid-1980s. We have built for it a longitudinal panel based on a pooled dataset from four post-electoral surveys that allows us to see the impact of religious and moral questions across time. And we also compare these results with those obtained from a more systematic analysis of the post-electoral survey carried out by the *Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas* (CIS) after the 2008 elections.²

Theoretically, the findings in this paper challenge the dominant interpretation of the relationship between religiosity and the vote in Western democracies. Comparative studies on electoral behavior do not pay much attention to the religious factor, particularly in Europe. For many, processes of modernization and secularization have made the religious cleavage vanish. Where religious identities and sentiments would once have had relevance in influencing citizens' votes, now issue voting would predominate. There would be only two exceptions to this rule. The first would be the existence of Christian-Democratic parties; the second, the surging of extreme social conflicts of which one or several institutionalized Churches were an active part. Given these circumstances, electoral studies should take into account the presence of a religious cleavage. In the opposite case, the religious factor would be perfectly dispensable and nothing would justify it the inclusion of a variable dealing with religiosity in multivariable models of electoral behavior.

In this paper we will attempt to demonstrate that these assumptions are wrong. The religious factor can also affect voters through mechanisms other than the presence of confessional parties or violent confrontation among religious groups. As occurs with social class, religiosity is a dimension political elites can mold, reinforce, or deactivate in order to channel the electoral preferences of religious groups. Religiosity and moral conceptions articulate the value system to which voters can turn as a shortcut for their

¹ For example, the analyses undertaken by Santamaría and Criado (2008) and Maravall (2008) include variables relative to ideology, leadership, the assessment of some selected policies and some socio-demographics, but not variables of religious nature.

² There are the surveys 2.750 and 2.752 (CIS study numbers) of February and April of 2008.

electoral decision. Differences in beliefs and religious practices can have significant effects on ideological identities, which is one of the most relevant explanatory factors in Western democracies. And for many citizens incapable of applying the left-right schema, religiosity can become an alternative heuristic simplifying mechanism for the complexities of political life. In all of these cases, the religiosity of voters is tied to the electoral fortune of the political parties through religious voting. In this paper we will argue that the activation of religious conflicts by Church and party elites allows voters to turn to their religious and moral beliefs in order to make their electoral decision. Social and political elites are thus responsible for the strength or weakness of religious voting. Relatively independent of the outcomes in the secularization process, religiosity continues to play a relevant role in political behavior; it appears as a domain of identification to which voters can easily turn even when they have ceased actively practicing their religion.

The paper is divided in four sections. The following one engages with the idea of religious voting and introduces our main hypotheses: namely, the influence of religiosity on voting in the 2008 general elections is shaped by institutional and political factors. Such an influence, however, is not mediated by changes in religiosity at the societal level. The second section focuses on our data set and empirical design. The third discusses the results, and the last section concludes.

Religious vote and religious conflicts

The lessening of the religious cleavage should not necessarily lead to the conclusion that religiosity is irrelevant to explain voting. The dominant conception of electoral behavior claims that this lessening would be justified because of the growing diminishment of social differences with respect to religious themes. That diminishment would be immediately reflected in a parallel weakening of political identities: as clearly defined religious groups do not exist, it would not be expected that religiosity influences the electoral decisions of the citizenry. That in turn would entail that political parties, especially confessional and religious ones, would have to virtually eliminate religious themes from their platforms. This chain of circumstances finally explains why those themes have ceased to be a reason for confrontation in the political arena.

This process, however, seems somewhat deterministic: it predicts some improbable general effects for all countries and with identical relevance for all parties. Above all, it has no analytical coverage of the mechanisms through which religiosity continues having considerable effects on the vote. Political elites could possibly have an impact in what we would call the religious vote by means of mobilization strategies that attempt to benefit their parties. As such, the religious vote would be weak by the measure that confessional party leaders as well as secular ones cease incorporating religious conflicts into the political agenda. But, on the other hand, religious themes can actively intervene in the vote to the extent that elites perceive the benefits of appealing to the religious identities of their voters (Kotler-Berkowitz 2002; Knutsen 2004). It is, thus, useful to distinguish between, firstly, *spaces of competition*, the electoral market in which electoral confrontations between parties based on social cleavages take place, and, secondly, *domains of identification*, where the religious vote is centered. In those domains, party leaders develop short-term strategies in which religious, together with other relevant criteria (ideology for example), are employed to attract voters (Sani and Sartori 1983: 330 ss; Kitschelt 2007: 531-532). The combination of the religious with the ideological dimension facilitates the processes by which citizens identify themselves with a party, or feel close to that party, or become that party's regular voters, or support its public policies related to religious issues. And even though political parties usually confront one another in a lesser number of competitive spaces, citizens have recourse to multiple dimensions of identification, among which is religion, a relevant area for many of them.

A religious voter is one who turns to his or her religious beliefs (or the absence of these beliefs) as an important criterion for voting. In a similar way to the class voting, the religious voting implies a systematic relationship between religiosity or belonging to a religious group and voting (Evans 2000: 40). The religious voting is based in the intersection between the strategies of the of social elites in the Catholic world, whether they are ecclesiastical or secular, and the political and social context in which voters' decisions are formed. Two types of religious voter are considered: those who vote for conservative parties in so far as they see them as guarantors of determined religious and moral principles that they wish to achieve, and also those who vote for left-wing parties

precisely because they promote a secular vision of institutions and public policies. Non-religious voters, on the other hand, would be those who simply let go of their religious and moral values at the moment of voting.

As in most European countries, the transformation of the religious map in Spain has modified the traditional relationships between religiosity and the vote. This leads to two distinct questions. The first refers to the concept of religiosity and to the empirical indicators used to measure its presence. The second demands the separation of the secularization process from political and partisan uses of religion. In relation to the first point, the tendency in studies about electoral behavior has been to operationalize religiosity in the behavioral terms of attending religious services (Feldkircher 1998). The argument is a simple one, especially in the case of Catholicism. Religious dogmas contain participative rules of obligation. Participation has its cost. People who meet the most demanding obligations of religion can be considered to have more solid religious sentiments and also a greater disposition to assimilate the moral and political vision of the Church (Linz 1993: 16; Esmer and Petterson 2007).

However, secularization processes have modified the significance of religiosity. As a consequence, traditional indicators can be inadequate in calibrating the weight of social divisions regarding religion. Spanish society, for example, in line with the majority of Europeans, is not any more divided between those who do and do not practice religion: only 15 percent of Spaniards regularly attend religious services (CIS 2009). Society, however, is clearly divided on themes about which the Church asserts a clear moral and political authority: abortion, same-sex adoption, religious education, sexual and civic education, or euthanasia. These divisions are also religious divisions: they gain force from the acceptance or rejection of Church positions. As a result, we have to combine different empirical indicators, so that habitual religious practice is accompanied, for example, by other indicators related to moral questions that are socially divisive.

In the second place, the impact of religiosity is mediated by important political factors that reinforce or weaken the weight of religious voting, which might emerge with some autonomy from the intensity of religious beliefs among voters. In other

words, religious voting can be important even when large sectors of the population feel indifferent to religion. On one side, active participation of ecclesiastical hierarchies in the process of political formation can consolidate the identity of non-religious people as new anti-clerical voters; on the other side, voters can come to identify themselves with religious values and beliefs that remain latent, that do not emerge in public protest, but that can be recovered in accordance with the evolution of the political debate. It is therefore necessary to pay attention to the configuration of the party system and to the strategies of political elites. As Maria Oscarsson (2005: 105) has emphasized, religious voting “must be seen as the result of an interaction between groups in the society on the one hand and the political parties and other significant political actors in the other. (...) To analyse variations in the relationship between social characteristics of the voter and party choice without considering what happens in the party system is to study (...) [religious voting] without politics”.

In Spain, the case of the transformation of *Alianza Popular* (AP) into the *Partido Popular* (PP) in 1989 is instructive. During the 1980s, the perception of AP as an extremist party, with scant democratic credentials and in any case fundamentally conservative brought as sizeable number of Catholics to vote for the PSOE. As a consequence, religiosity emerged as a weak factor. The greater competitive capacity of the PP after its transformation, however, allowed those Catholic voters to overcome the obstacles that stopped them from voting for the PP (allegedly, their “natural” party). In this fashion, by the mid-1990s religious voting recovered notably, tied precisely to a clarification of the religious profiles of the major Spanish parties (Montero, Calvo and Martinez 2008; Calvo and Montero 2002). There were also moments, as has been pointed out by Mariano Torcal and Lucia Medina (2007: 278), of learning by voters, which led to a later shift and consolidation of anchoring elements; among them naturally the religious ones.

Decisions by political elites are also important. Political parties can alter the decisions of voters through the strategic use of electoral supply, ideological discourses, or public policy proposals. Let us imagine, for example, a government mainly formed of practicing Catholics, that continuously takes morally conservative positions, that repeatedly expresses its affinity with the Catholic Church, and that applies religious

policies extremely favorable to the Church: all of that can result in groups of voters developing a new consciousness of their religious identity, one they eventually can apply when deciding which party to support. The opposite can also be true. In both cases, that process will be facilitated if it also coincides with religious conflicts. The launching by the Zapatero's governments of a political agenda organized around the recognition of new civil rights, citizenship, personal autonomy, a (moderate) gain in the separation between Church and state, and more recently the new abortion law renewed the conflict between the Catholic Church, the PP, and the left-wing parties. With the activation of the partisan conflict around these moral and religious themes, voters could recover, "remember" as it was, their religious identities, which could reinforce their voting decision. The hypothesis that we defend in this paper points to the relevance of religious voting in the general elections of 2008 as a consequence of the activation of religious themes by political and ecclesiastical elites. As Martin Elff has recently argued, "changes in the electoral relevance of social cleavages—insofar as they have actually occurred—are unlikely to be (...) consequences of an irreversible, large-scale, long-term process of social change (...), [but] contingent political choices of parties about which social groups to appeal to. This seems to be bad news for social science, as it reduces the prospects for any long-term predictions. Alternatively, if political factors play a major role in (...) patterns of electoral behavior, this could very well be considered to be good news for political science".

Data and variables

To what extent have these events influenced the voting decisions of Spaniards during the recent 2008 elections? In the preceding section we have put forth our main hypothesis for answering that question. In the two sections we will confirm them empirically. And in order to do that we must first of all present the data and the variables that we have used.

The data

In this paper we have worked with surveys from the data bank of the *Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas* (CIS). With these surveys, our strategy has been two-fold. On the one hand, and to understand the temporal evolution of religious voting, we have

created a cross-section panel that covers the elections of 1986, 2000, 2004, and 2008 through the combination of postelectoral surveys in a pooled dataset (Wooldridge 2002). Regrettably, we have not been able to include the surveys corresponding to the elections of 1989, 1993, and 1996 because respondents were not asked about their religious practices; more particularly they were not asked about the frequency with which they attended mass and religious services, which is our principal independent variable. On the other hand, we have in addition analyzed the electoral behavior of the Spaniards in March of 2008 by the two waves of a CIS post-election panel survey.³

The building of a cross-section longitudinal panel assumes the fulfillment of a basic requirement: the variables introduced in the dataset be present in every survey and must be, furthermore, harmonized. It is not an easy requirement to meet. Treating in our case such a long period of time (which covers no less than 20 years), substantial variations were to be expected in the design of the questionnaires, or at least significant changes in the wording of the key questions. But unfortunately it has not happened that way with the variables in which we are interested: all of these variables are similar after having occasionally adjusted for some small differences in style that can exist among the same variables for the distinct post-electoral polls. So that, once having selected the essential variables for our empirical analysis, we have proceeded to merge the distinct databases and create new variables for each one of the four surveys included in the pooled dataset. As we will soon point out, the interaction of these variables with that of attendance at religious services proves essential to understand the longitudinal evolution of the effects of religiosity on the vote.

Together with this longitudinal analysis, we have studied in detail the case of the 2008 elections by means of the cross-section survey realized by the CIS. We have used the two waves of the panel survey, pre-electoral and post-electoral, insofar as some of the selected variables (such as the socio-demographic characteristics of the interviewees or the valuations about political leaders) were included in the survey carried out before

³ The post-electoral surveys used for the building of the cross-section panel have been the undertaken by the CIS in 1986 (survey 1.542, $N = 8.286$), 2000 (2.382 y 2384, $N = 5.283$) and 2008 (2.750 y 2.757, $N = 6.086$), as well as the one carried out by TNS/Demoscopia en 2004 ($N = 2.929$).

the elections, while others (like the opinions about public policy or their own electoral behavior) were in fact carried out afterwards. But we have limited ourselves only to the something more than six thousand cases who responded to the pre- and post-electoral waves, discarding the many more thousands of interviewees who answered in the pre-electoral wave, since we are not interested in an analysis of the possible changes in their opinions and attitudes between the two moments. In any case, and not being subject now to the demanding requirements of the equivalence of the selected variables, we can turn now to a greater number of variables in order to examine the influence of religiosity in the electoral behavior of Spaniards, focusing on a more ample number of factors related with their social, political or economic context. Among these variables we will include one of moral content that measures the opinions of the respondents about the citizens' rights agenda developed by the Socialist government, and more specifically about the possibility of adoption by homosexual couples.

Methods and variables

We have used logit models given the nature of our two dependent variables (the longitudinal and the cross-sectional). Both take the value of 1 when respondents have voted for the PSOE or the PP, respectively, and 0 when they have voted for any other party in the opposite ideological direction. Therefore, at the time of explaining the PSOE vote, voters of Izquierda Unida (IU), which generally lean more towards the left, have not been included in the 0 value of the variable; and the nationalist voters and those of other small parties with conservative tendencies have also been excluded from the models for the PP.⁴

Religiosity is our principal explanatory variable (by itself and also in connection with ideology); for the most specific case of the 2008 elections we have also used the

⁴ This specification of the dependent variable aims to avoid that the vote for PSOE and PP is blurred by those political parties that compete in the same ideological side. It is true that there are still some small nationalist and regionalist parties that enter in the analysis and compete in the same ideological positions with PSOE and PP. However, their numbers in the sample used are rather small. For this reason, we believe that their effect in the estimation of the vote for the socialists and the conservatives must be negligible in any case. Concretely, for all the years analyzed in the longitudinal analysis the percentage is 16 per cent.

respondent's views about the rights of adoption for homosexual couples, which were an essential part of the PSOE platform. We have used nested models, in other words models in which individual variables are added in a sequential manner to verify their individual effect and, also, their effect on the significance of the remaining variables (Long and Freese 2006). In nested models samples remain constant. Our final basic models contain the independent variables that are presented now:

1. *Longitudinal analysis, 1986-2008*

Equation 1: (Y(PSOE Vote) f(Attendance1, Attendance2, Attendance3, Attendance4, Attendance5, Attendance6, Ideology, PresidentialPopularity, Year1986, Year2000, Year2004, Year2008, control variables).

Equation 2: Y (Voto PP) f(Attendance1, Attendance2, Attendance3, Attendance4, Attendance5, Attendance6, Ideology, PresidentialPopularity, Year1986, Year2000, Year2004, Year2008, control variables).

Religiosity. This is our principal independent variable. In line with an already established tradition, we have used attendance at mass and participation in religious services as the standard indicator of the religiosity of the respondent (Jagodzinski and Dobbeleare 1995; Michelat 1997; Feldkircher 1998). We have created dichotomous or fictitious variables for each one of the categories of mass attendance using those who never attend mass as a reference category, a large group that assures the statistical efficiency of the models (Hardy 1993: 10); it also is a group substantively interesting in relation to the dependent variables, as much in the probability of voting for the PSOE as in voting for the PP. Furthermore, the changes in the level of religiosity of the respondent always indicate a greater religious commitment with respect to those who never go to church.

Ideology. It is obviously a fundamental political control in any study of electoral behavior, and especially in Spain, where the ideological self-positioning of the citizens has been considered the best way of predicting the vote (Sani and Montero 1986, Gunther and Montero 2001; Torcal and Medina 2002). In this paper we hope to also

unravel the always complex relationship between the religiosity and ideology (Montero, Calvo and Martinez 2008). As John Bartle (1998: 501-502) has rightly pointed out, not all of the explanatory variables have the same role in the causal chain. Because ideology occurs causally later than most of the independent variables included in conventional regression models, it very often *robes* much of their effects on the vote. This has been documented to take place, for instance, in the case of class voting, where ideology assumes a great deal of the direct effect of social class on party choice; class, however, exerts an indirect, yet powerful still, effect on voting (Evans 1999; García de Polavieja 2001). Failing to acknowledge the distinction between direct and indirect effects can give way to misleading interpretations of the results. Particularly in those cases where religious identities are strongly correlated with ideological positions, the effect of ideology can lead us to believe that religiosity is not influential, when in reality it is so. Our nested models allow us to carefully analyze the existence of those indirect effects of ideology on the religiosity of the polled, and, consequently, their voting decision.

Evaluation of the president of the government. We have used the evaluation of the president of the government in the period 1986-2008. We depart from the conclusions of numerous prior studies that have pointed out to the importance of the personality of political leaders in voting decisions (Gunther and Montero 2001); Costa Lobo, 2006; Rico, 2007, 2009 and in this book). The direct relationship between positive evaluation of candidates and the probability of voting for their parties has been emphasized, especially in the case of the catch-all parties. We find ourselves before a variable whose object obviously changes over time, as different people have held the office of prime minister. The interpretation of the influence of this control variable has to be consequent with this variation (for example, the expectation is that the negative valuation of conservative president José María Aznar increases the probabilities of voting for the PSOE in 2004; in the same way, the positive valuation of Zapatero will contribute to the electoral support for this party in 2008).

We have also included four *control variables*. They are the gender of the interviewee, his or her highest level of education and his or her occupational status. The last two, as with the religiosity variable, have been introduced in the form of

dichotomous variables, given their categorical nature.⁵ And lastly the size of the municipality in which the respondent lives has been introduced continuously.

2. *Analysis of cross-section, 2008*

Equation 3: $Y(\text{PSOE Vote}) = f(\text{Attendance1}, \text{Attendance2}, \text{Attendance3}, \text{Attendance4}, \text{Attendance5}, \text{Attendance6}, \text{Ideology}, \text{PresidentialPopularity}, \text{GovernmentManagementValuation}, \text{EconomyValuation}, \text{HomosexualRights}, \text{control variables})$.

Equation 4: $Y(\text{PP Vote}) = f(\text{Attendance1}, \text{Attendance2}, \text{Attendance3}, \text{Attendance4}, \text{Attendance5}, \text{Attendance6}, \text{Ideology}, \text{PresidentialPopularity}, \text{GovernmentManagementValuation}, \text{EconomyValuation}, \text{HomosexualRights}, \text{control variables})$.

In this case, and beyond the variables included in the longitudinal analysis corresponding to the 2008 elections, we have introduced the following:

Assessments of the performance of government. Since the already classic small book by V. O. Key (1966) on the responsible electorate, the studies of electoral behavior based on models of accountability about government have become very popular, as much in comparative perspective (Przeworski, Stokes and Manin 1999) as in the Spanish case (Maravall and Sánchez Cuenca 2007). We have used an ordinal variable with five categories that collect the opinions of respondents about the performance of government during the legislative period from very bad to very good, in the ascendant sense.

Assessments of the economic situation. The assessment of the economic situation of the country also appears as one of the key factors in citizens' voting decision (Kinder and Kiewiet 1981). Although more complex relationships between the economic situation

⁵ It has not been possible to include the income variable in the longitudinal study because it was not included in all the post-electoral studies used. We consider that the educational level of the respondent can be taken as a good approximation of his or her level of income.

and the vote have been discussed (Stokes 1996; Maravall and Przeworski 1998), here we center on the more familiar economic vote. In particular, we will employ a variable that collects the assessments about the economic situation at the time of elections. The variable has five categories, and, like with assessments of government, goes from very negative to very positive.

Opinions on the right of adoption for homosexual couples. As we have already said, the Socialist government developed an intense program of civil rights recognition. The right of adoption of children by homosexual couples was discussed intensely during the passing of the reform of the Civil Code that legalized homosexual marriages; both supporters and detractors continued debating it with similar vehemence during the electoral campaign. For that reason, together with religiosity, we have decided to include the opinions about the aforementioned issue in a scale that goes from 1, very unfavorable, to 10, very favorable. This combination allows for a verification of the impact of moral questions (as novel as they are relevant) on the vote, and at the same time limits the potential problems derived from a deficient measurement of citizens' religiosity through their attendance at religious services (Calvo, Montero and Martinez 2008).

3. Predicted probabilities of voting for the PSOE and the PP

Finally, and for facilitating the interpretation of the principal results, we have calculated the probabilities of the PSOE and PP vote. For that we have introduced changes in our principal independent variables (religiosity and ideology), and as much for the longitudinal analysis as for the cross-section. We have profiled ideal types of voters selecting the average values or modalities of the sample used in the final models of logistical regression. In the longitudinal analysis, our ideal type of voter is a woman with a centrist ideology (position 5), an average evaluation of the president of the government (value 5), primary studies, not unemployed, from 46 to 65 years old, and living in a municipality of medium size (less than 50,000 people). In the case of the analysis of the cross-section for the 2008 elections, it is also a woman who, besides sharing the above-stated characteristics, declares a regular evaluation on the

performance of the government and the economic situation, and stands in strong opposition (value 10) to adoption by homosexual couples.

The growing relevance of the religious vote

In Table 1 we present the results of the longitudinal analysis of the impact of religiosity on the PSOE and PP vote in the general elections of the past two decades. The table presents the nested models with which we hope to understand as much the *direct* effects of religiosity on the vote as the *indirect* effects of ideology; thus model 1 excludes the ideology variable, while this variable is included in model 2.⁶ The glaring differences between the coefficients of both models confirm the importance of the indirect effects. For both parties, the impact of religiosity is considerably greater when ideology is not present, and is of lesser impact, even though it continues being relevant, when it is included and therefore absorbs a substantial part of the religiosity effect. These effects have greater magnitude in the case of the PSOE. More specifically, in the model without ideology, whatever shift toward more frequent church attendance with respect to the reference category reduces to a significant degree the probability of voting for the PSOE. The inclusion of ideology in model 2, however, makes it so that the negative impact of religiosity is concentrated among those who most often go to church: every Sunday, almost every Sunday or even several times a week. Stated in another fashion, ideology allows socialist voters with moderate religious positions to maintain their support for the PSOE, as they feel closer to the party ideologically, even though in religious and moral issues they find themselves more distant to it. In the case of the PP, ideology also moderates the weight of the religious factor among its voters; but it is clear that their religious profile is more defined than that of the socialists. The PSOE seems to have been more successful, if limited, in developing a catch-all strategy with respect to the religious factor.

[Table 1]

⁶The different models we present in this section for each party have been estimated using the same voter samples, which is why it is possible to compare the results of the models with and without ideology.

The remaining variables included in Table 1 confirm our expectations. The most conservative ideological positions increase the probability of voting for the PP and decrease the probability of voting for the PSOE; positive evaluations of the president of the government produce the opposite effect;⁷ being a woman raises the probability of voting for the socialists and reduces the probability of voting for the PP; more education increases the probability of voting for the PP and reduces the PSOE vote; the effect of occupational status clearly points to a class-based vote, insofar as all their categories except that of the unemployed reduce the probability of voting for the PSOE. The PP gains the support of the other occupational categories, except for that of students, and the size of the municipality points to the difficulties the PP has in winning the urban vote of the big cities. For its part, age, although different for each party, lacks significant effects.

The results of the variables built for the electoral years merit separate mention. In 2000 (and with respect to the 1986 elections, which is the reference category), the probability of voting for the PSOE was reduced considerably, while the probability of voting for the conservatives increased; these were the elections in which the PP won the absolute majority. In the elections of 2004 and 2008, on the other hand, the probability of voting for both parties increased, reflecting the greatest concentration of voting carried out by both parties during the past decade (and with respect to the elections of the 80s).

How has religiosity evolved over the past 20 years? We just confirmed that ideology absorbs an important part of the effects of religiosity on the vote, and that the PSOE and the PP demonstrated interesting differences with respect to these effects. To what degree have these effects been changing over time? In accordance with the predictions made by the defenders of the decline of social cleavages, and among them the religious, or of those who take secularization to its ultimate consequences, the effects of religion on the vote should keep diminishing until they vanish completely. In

⁷ It has to be mentioned that, for the greater part of the period considered, the president of the government pertains to the PSOE: Felipe González in 1986 and Zapatero in 2004 and 2008, except in 2000, when Aznar was in office.

the Spanish case, has it really been this way? One strategy for answering this question consists in the interactions in the ideological models of Table 1 between the variable of religious practice and the variables related to the year of election. The results are put together in Table 2; for considerations of space, we have shown only the most relevant results. It is true that the real effect of the interactions is always difficult to interpret without recurring to simulations based on the calculations of probabilities. The difficulty lays in the fact that, together with the effect of interaction itself, the principle effects of each one of the variables that constitute interaction should be taken into account. As Thomas Brambor, William Clark and Matt Golder (2006) have shown, these secondary effects are not always taken into account, a serious error found in many interpretations of interactions. In our case, we have tried to facilitate the interpretation of the high number of interactions included in Table 2 (and to do it, furthermore, correctly) through simulations of voting probability for the PSOE and the PP of an ideal type of voter for each one of the interactions, discounting the principal effect of attendance at mass and of the year of the elections.⁸

[Table 2]

Figures 1 and 2 demonstrate the predicted probabilities of voting for the PSOE and the PP to the extent that the frequency of mass attendance by our ideal voter type increases. The first remarkable result is that religiosity has gained importance as a voting factor in the successive electoral years, and for both parties. In general terms, this finding plainly confirms on the individual level the activation strategies of religious questions developed by political leaders for more than a decade. If in the 1980s the religious factor, being important, seems to be becoming less relevant, it is evident that the ever more intense electoral competition between the PSOE and the PP since the beginning of the 1990s has favored the politicization of religious questions. The resulting conflicts have confronted both parties, have mobilized many social actors and

⁸ Earlier we described the characteristics of our ideal voter; she is a woman with a centrist ideology (position 5), an average evaluation of the president of the government (value 5), primary studies, not unemployed, from 46 to 65 years old, and who lives in a municipality of medium size (less than 50,000 people).

have nurtured a substantial part of electoral competition. And the issues around which these strategies have revolved include questions as relevant as homosexual marriages, the right of adoption for same-sex couples, the place of religion in the educational curriculum, civic education, stem-cell research, or new abortion-right regulations.

[Figures 1 and 2]

How have voters' religious profiles evolved? During the 1980s, the tendency pointed toward a growing similarity between them, at least with respect to religiosity. But the greater importance of religious and moral questions in voting decisions has inverted to a certain degree this tendency. Figures 1 and 2 demonstrate that socialist voters have been inclining more and more toward lay positions, while the conservatives have been becoming more and more religious and therefore more orthodox in moral questions. The competition between the major parties for voters placed at both extremes of the religiosity scale has been accompanied by distinctive political messages in moral and religious matters. Again, the difference is clear with respect to the past; if up until the mid-1980s both parties made efforts to avoid electoral confrontation based on these issues, now the issues seem to have become the preferred territory for the parties' respective electoral strategies. Therefore, the PSOE has been reinforcing their electoral support among those who never or almost never attend mass; in both categories, the voting probability of our ideal type is greater than 50 percent. And the PP, above all since 2000, has won the majority support of the voters who go to church every Sunday or several times a week. This data confirms the intense polarization of the partisan competition with respect to religious and moral issues.

The case of the 2008 elections

The March 2008 elections offer us an excellent opportunity to corroborate in a specific case the strength acquired by religious voting. Given the political polarization among parties, we can effectively assume that electoral competition is structured in a large extent about religious and moral issue, or around those that were considered more relevant. During the electoral campaign, nevertheless, religious and moral issues were relatively absent. The expansive strategies of major parties toward the ideological

center, where then median voter is, forced them to moderate their stands on questions that until then had been being bitterly confronted in Parliament. In fact, the electoral campaign was fundamentally dedicated to the anti-terrorists and economic policies. The manifestos issued by the two major parties barely paid attention to moral and religious questions. The PSOE platform contained some references to the laity or the separation of Church and state, and promised an eventual revision of abortion and religious liberty laws. The platform of the PP announced the suppression of the civic education, and continued its habit of casting aside conflicting questions of religious and moral natures; they tried in this way to avoid the mobilization of their more conservative voters and the alienation of the more centrist ones.

In spite of this, religiosity had a specific impact on the decisions of 2008 voters. Similar to Table 1, Table 3 examines the importance of the direct and indirect effects (also through ideology) of religiosity on the vote. But it also attempts to understand what impact a moral question such as adoption of children by homosexual couples had on the vote for the PSOE and the PP. Again, the comparison between models 1 and 2 for both parties shows that the indirect effects of ideology on the influence of religiosity on the vote were relevant. And contrary opinions about the newly recognized rights of homosexual couples reduced the probability of voting for the socialist party and increased the probability of voting for the conservative party. Even though these themes were kept apart during the electoral campaign, the success of these strategies, developed by both parties to reinforce their attractiveness to ideologically proximate electorates, seems clear. It should also be underlined that in this case ideology has an effect much greater than opinions on moral questions in voting, perhaps because of the strong influence of the first on the second.⁹ For the PP, a change from the extreme left-wing position to the extreme right-wing in the ideological continuum increases the probability of voting for the party by 97 percent; but the same change from very favorable to very unfavorable with respect to the evaluation of the rights of homosexual couples only increases the probability by 28 percent. For the PSOE, the voting probabilities are also different, but somewhat less so: 86 percent when faced with similar shifts in ideological

⁹ The correlation between both is $r = 0,34$ at $p < 0,000$.

positions, and 18 percent when faced with changes in the evaluation of the rights of same-sex couples.

[Table 3]

The empirical analysis of the 2008 elections allows us also to confirm the impact of three variables included only in the cross-sectional analysis: namely, assessments of the performance of government, opinions about the economic situation, and income of the respondents. The three variables influence in the expected way the probabilities of voting for the PSOE and the PP. At the same time, positive evaluations about government performance raise the probability of voting for the PSOE and reduce the probability of voting for the PP, and the assessment of the general economic situation does not influence the vote (probably because government performance absorbs all the effects of this variable). But individual incomes do influence the vote: the higher the income, the greater the inclination to vote for the PP and the lesser the inclination to vote for the PSOE.¹⁰

Our final question refers to the combined effects of religiosity and ideology on the 2008 elections. To what extent did the ideological position of the voters contribute to an increase (or reduction) in the probability of voting for the PSOE (or the PP)? It can be expected that the debates about these moral questions have played a heightened role. To confirm that, in Table 3 we have introduced an interaction between the variable of religious practice and the ideological self-placement of respondents in the final voting models for the PSOE and the PP. The most-often substituted coefficients are included in Table 4. But, to facilitate their interpretation, we have also recurred to the calculation of the voting simulations of our ideal type of voter.¹¹

¹⁰ The rest of the variables have a similar effect for the longitudinal access already remarked on.

¹¹ The characteristics now are those of being a woman with a centrist ideology (position 5), an average evaluation of the president of the government (value 5), primary studies, who is not unemployed, from 46 to 65 years old, who lives in a municipality of medium size (less than 50,000 people), declares a regular evaluation on government performance and the economic situation, and stands in strong opposition (value 10) to adoption by homosexual couples.

[Table 4]

The results demonstrate that the combined effects of ideology and religiosity are weak, as much in the probability of voting for the PSOE as in voting for the PP. They also show that these effects seem more important in the case of voting for the socialists. In fact, as Figure 3 shows, the PSOE manifests an interesting change in the effect of religiosity along the ideological scale. In the positions on the left of the ideological continuum (1-4), ideology compensates for the negative effect of religiosity, to the extent that even those leftist voters with a high frequency of mass attendance are those with the greater probability of voting for the PSOE. This compensatory effect of ideology disappears from the centrist positions on the scale to those of the right. For these centrist and conservative voters, ideology and religiosity move in the same direction, reducing the already slight probabilities of voting for the socialists. It is remarkable that the inflection point of ideology on religiosity is found precisely in the centrist-left positions of the scale, exactly where voters place the PSOE. The case of the PP is quite different, as Figure 4 shows. In line with the regression analysis of the earlier Table 4, we do not find any effect of ideology on religiosity: both move in the same direction. The religious profile of voters for both parties is not only different; in addition, ideology seems to play a distinct role in the religious voting for PSOE and PP.

[Figures 3 and 4]

Conclusions

Without a doubt, the relationship between religiosity, ideology, and electoral behavior is a complex one. In all Western democracies, secularization has affected in a decisive manner many public expressions of religion, and the transformation of value systems seems to be irreversibly widening the distance between the positions of the Catholic Church on moral issues and the preferences of citizens. On the other side, ecclesiastical elites are adapting their mobilization strategies to better defend their preferences in a changing and sometimes hostile environment. For the Spanish case, the alliance between the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the PP between the 2004 and 2008 elections has been more strongly reinforced than at any other time in the past three decades of the

new Spanish democracy. Furthermore, the Church, via well-organized and even better publicized protests, has gained street presence and has been able to win the support of the conservative media.

We believe we have demonstrated that it is this concatenation of political factors that explains the recent vitality of religious voting in Spain. Religiosity does not equally have a similar effect for all voters not for all parties. As we have seen, ideology *robes* the religiosity effect (or, perhaps better said, its lack of it) relative to the PSOE. In the case of the PP, nonetheless, the greatest difference between religious or ideological identities allows religiosity to enjoy a greater degree of autonomy at the time of explaining the vote for the conservative party. In whatever case, and in global terms, we argue that religious voting will be maintained as an important element in the explanation of electoral behavior in Spain to the extent that elites, political as well as ecclesiastical, find incentives to activate a domain of identification that had remained passive until well into the 1990s. By their very nature, the social and political dimensions of religiosity are changeable, as are their ability to take on new forms or their malleability to cement various coalitions. New conflicts about abortion, euthanasia, or education are nothing more than expressions of the divisions that have always been behind religious conflict in Western democracies. It is evident that religiosity faces a clear process of “privatization”, but it is also true that the positions of the Church with respect to themes important to citizens can continue being a crucial factor for understanding the formation of ideological and political identities in Spain.

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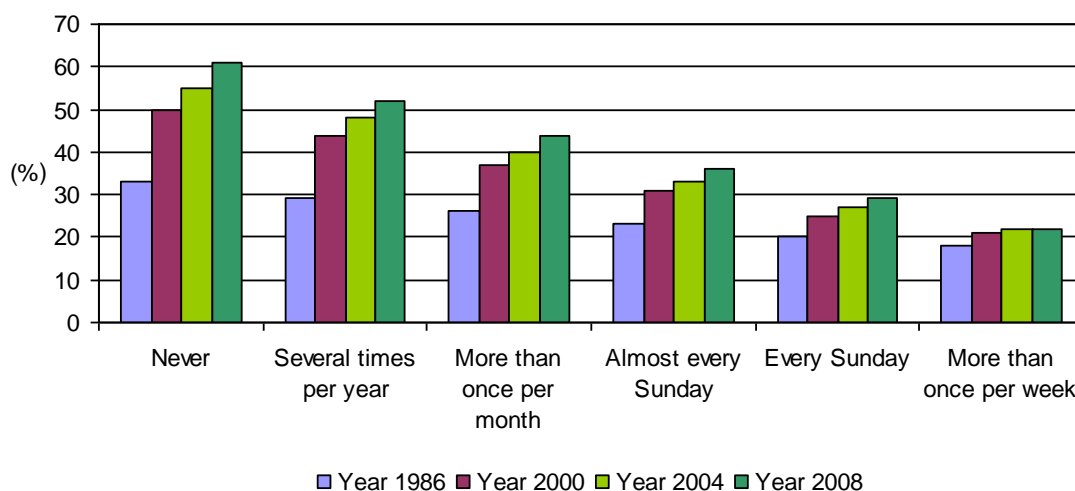
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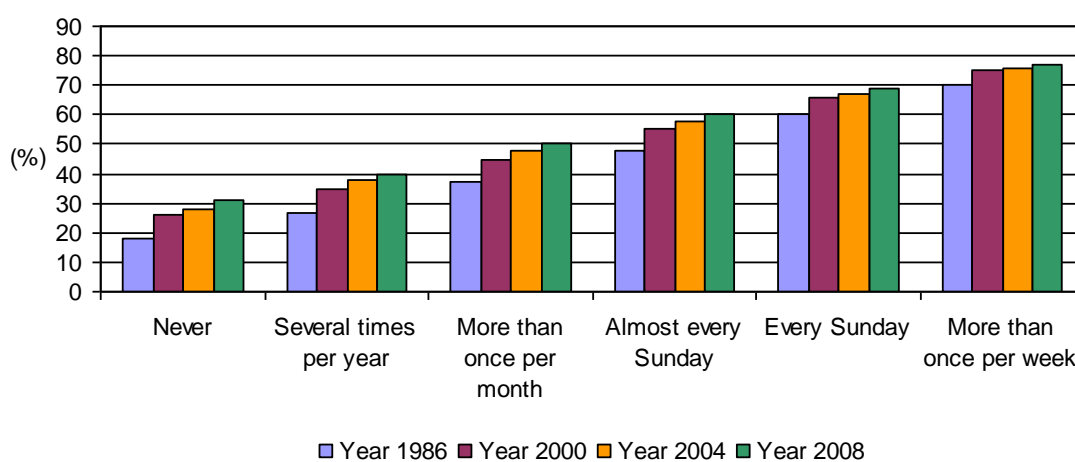
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Figure 1. Changes in the probability of voting for PSOE as levels of church attendance increase, 1986-2008



Sources: Poselectoral surveys undertaken by the Spanish Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (CIS) in 1986, 2000 y 2008, and by TNS/Demoscopia in 2004.

Figure 2. Changes in the probability of voting for PP as levels of church attendance increase, 1986-2008



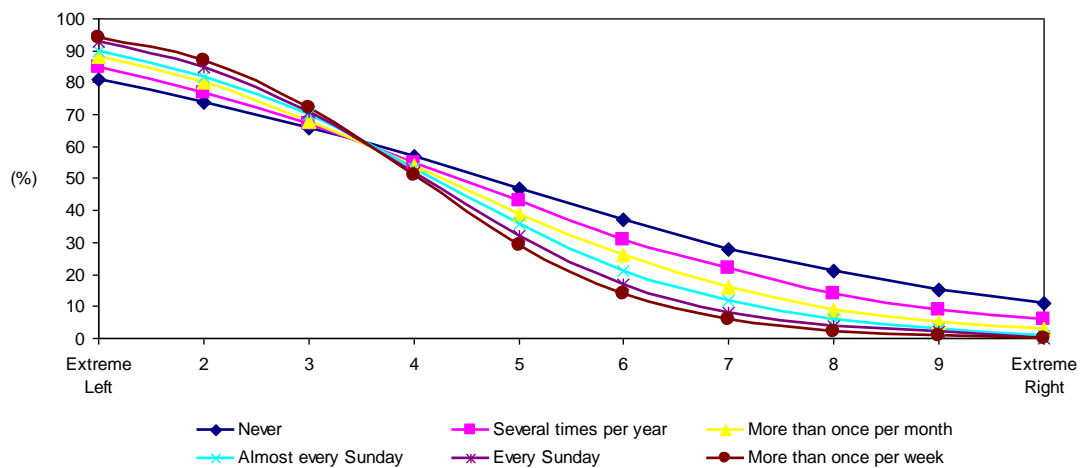
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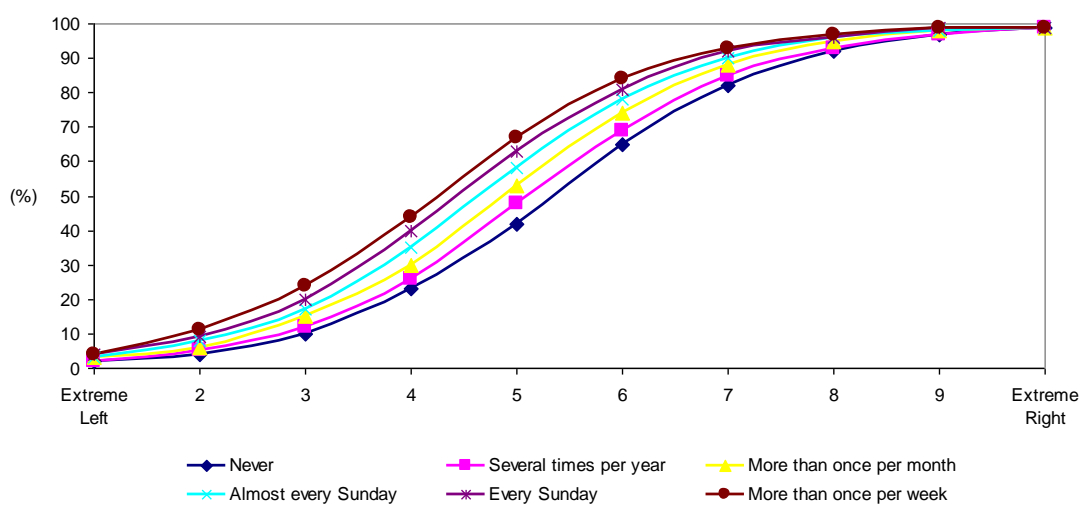
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Figure 3. Changes in the probability of voting for PSOE according to ideology and church attendance



Sources: See Figure 1.

Figure 4. Changes in the probability of voting for PSOE according to ideology and church attendance



Sources: See Figure 1.

Table 1. Logistic regressions to explain PSOE and PP vote, Spanish general elections, 1986-2008^a

Variables ^b	PSOE vote		PP vote	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
	Without ideology	With ideology	Without ideology	With ideology
<i>Church Attendance (RC: Never)</i>				
Several times per year	-0,310***	0,170**	1,121***	0,724***
More than once per month	-0,782***	-0,073	1,717***	1,011***
Almost every Sunday	-1,169***	-0,363***	2,188***	1,465***
Every Sunday	-1,561***	-0,567***	2,706***	1,705***
More than once per week	-2,233***	-0,774***	3,324***	1,628***
<i>Ideology</i>		-0,898***		1,433***
<i>PM's evaluation</i>	0,196***	0,238***	-0,095***	-0,066***
<i>Sex (women)</i>	0,253***	0,248***	-0,326***	-0,385***
<i>Education (RC: Without primary education)</i>				
Primary education	-0,612***	-0,595***	0,597***	0,517***
Professional education	-0,837***	-0,889***	0,671***	0,633***
Higher education	-0,859***	-0,813***	0,825***	0,660***
University degree	-1,271***	-1,409***	1,070***	1,057***
<i>Occupational status (RC: Unemployed)</i>				
Working	-0,357***	-0,261***	0,464***	0,383***
Retired	-0,339***	-0,313**	0,457***	0,429**
Student	-0,393***	-0,337**	0,356**	0,182
House work	-0,332***	-0,255**	0,464***	0,479***
<i>Age (RC: between 18-30)</i>				
31-45	-0,103*	-0,047	0,076	0,131
46-65	-0,130*	-0,047	0,031	0,030
More than 65	-0,076	0,110	-0,015	-0,184
<i>Size of municipality</i>	0,013	0,004	-0,029**	-0,032*
<i>Elections (RC: 1986)</i>				
2000	-0,478***	-0,178**	1,058***	1,625***
2004	0,640***	0,928***	0,081	0,309**

2008	0,517***	0,763***	0,222***	0,600***
Constant	0,004	3,163***	-2,300***	-9,200***
	(N)	(11.159)	(11.159)	(9.775)
	χ^2	1466	2279	1557
	Prob.	0,000	0,000	0,000
	Pseudo R2	0,132	0,348	0,166
	Log likelihood	-6714	-5043	-5407

^a Models have been estimated using robust standard errors. Levels of significance are the following: *** $p < 0,01$; ** $p < 0,05$; * $p < 0,10$.

Sources: Poselectoral surveys undertaken by the Spanish Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (CIS) in 1986, 2000 y 2008, and by TNS/Demoscopia in 2004.

Table 2. Logistic regressions to explain PSOE and PP vote, Spanish general elections, 1986-2008: interactions between church attendance and general election^a

Variables ^b	PSOE vote	PP vote
<i>Church Attendance (RC: Never)</i>		
Several times per year	0,341***	0,482**
More than once per month	0,174	0,815***
Almost every Sunday	-0,135	1,500***
Every Sunday	-0,402***	1,715***
More than once per week	-0,245	0,588
<i>Elections (RC: 1986)</i>		
2000	1,223***	1,129*
2004	1,261***	0,158
2008	1,268***	0,279
<i>Interactions</i>		
Several times per year *2000	-1,330***	0,545
Several times per year *2004	-0,431**	0,372
Several times per year *2008	-0,578	0,526
More than once per month *2000	-1,644***	0,693
More than once per month *2004	-0,237	-0,031
More than once per month *2008	-0,622	0,397
Almost every Sunday *2000	-1,554***	0,436
Almost every Sunday *2004	-0,632**	-0,061
Almost every Sunday *2008	-0,487	0,020
Every Sunday *2000	-1,568***	0,411
Every Sunday *2004	-0,211	0,005
Every Sunday *2008	-0,427	0,094
More than once per week *2000	-1,843***	1,529*
More than once per week *2004	-1,330*	1,684*
More than once per week *2008	-1,035*	1,438
Constant	3,008***	-9,133***

(N)	(11.159)	(9.775)
χ^2	2293	1914
<i>Prob.</i>	0,000	0,000
<i>Pseudo R2</i>	0,350	0,553
<i>Log likelihood</i>	-5028	-2898

^a Models have been estimated using robust standard errors. Levels of significance are the following:
 *** $p < 0,01$; ** $p < 0,05$; * $p < 0,10$.

^b Models also include the following variables: ideology, Primer Minister's evaluation, sex, education, occupation, and size of municipality.

Sources: See Table 1.

Table 3. Logistic Regressions to explain PSOE and PP vote, 2008 Spanish general election ^a

Variables	PSOE vote			PP vote		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	Without ideology	With ideology	With moral question	Without ideology	With ideology	With moral question
<i>Church Attendance (RC: Never)</i>						
Several times per year	-0,683	-0,672	-0,586	1,192**	1,549**	1,479**
More than once per month	-1,116**	-0,897	-0,786	1,668***	1,713**	1,600**
Almost every Sunday	-1,229**	-1,014*	-0,856	2,038***	2,164***	2,006***
Every Sunday	-1,396***	-1,088*	-0,941	2,109***	2,073***	1,914**
More than once per week	-2,364***	-1,494**	-1,363*	3,443***	2,667***	2,536***
<i>Ideology</i>		-0,605***	-0,585***		0,956***	0,933***
<i>Moral question: Attitudes towards gay adoption</i>			-0,076***			0,112***
<i>PM's evaluation</i>	0,475***	0,376***	0,367***	-0,481***	-0,365***	-0,354***
<i>Evaluation of government performance</i>	1,098***	0,917***	0,887***	-1,211***	-0,994***	-0,961***
<i>Evaluation of economic situation</i>	-0,042	-0,038	-0,037	0,021	0,042	0,035
<i>Sex (women)</i>	0,056	-0,052	-0,140	-0,254*	-0,136	-0,005
<i>Education (RC: Without primary education)</i>						
Primary education	-0,381	-0,183	-0,229	0,309	0,010	0,074
Professional education	-0,437	-0,268	-0,348	0,200	-0,015	0,095
Higher Education	-0,374	-0,161	-0,226	0,084	-0,293	-0,230
University Degree	-0,647*	-0,617*	-0,722**	0,274	0,071	0,212
<i>Occupational status (RC: Unemployed)</i>						
Working	-0,425*	-0,324	-0,322	0,561**	0,443	0,435
Retired	-0,353	-0,220	-0,220	0,494	0,281	0,268
Student	0,104	0,242	0,237	-0,026	-0,287	-0,267
House work	-0,363	-0,238	-0,247	0,738**	0,636*	0,651*
<i>Age (RC: between 18-30)</i>						
31-45	0,091	0,032	0,032	-0,181	-0,095	-0,085

46-65	0,144	-0,047	0,011	-0,444*	-0,172	-0,263
More than 65	-0,287	-0,380	-0,241	0,001	0,196	0,018
<i>Income</i>	-0,128***	-0,140***	-0,154***	0,105**	0,117**	0,131**
<i>Size of municipality</i>	-0,015	-0,012	-0,018	0,015	0,009	0,018
Constant	-3,417***	0,521	1,081	3,403***	-2,887***	-3,719***
	(N)	(2.063)	(2.063)	(1.933)	(1.933)	(1.933)
	χ^2	466,1	490,2	426,0	456,3	447,4
	<i>Prob,</i>	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000
	<i>Pseudo R2</i>	0,400	0,460	0,443	0,561	0,569
	<i>Log likelihood</i>	-849	-764	-709	-559	-548

^a Models have been estimated using robust standard errors. Levels of significance are the following: *** $p < 0,01$; ** $p < 0,05$; * $p < 0,10$.

Sources: See Table 1.

Table 4. Logistic regressions to explain PSOE and PP vote, Spanish general elections, 1986-2008: interactions between church attendance and ideology^a

Variables ^b	PSOE vote	PP vote
<i>Church Attendance (RC: Never)</i>		
Several times per year	0,398	1,372
More than once per month	1,786	-0,875
Almost every Sunday	0,873	3,030
Every Sunday	0,901	2,313
More than once per week	6,841*	-2,392
<i>Ideology</i>	-0,268	0,884**
<i>Interactions</i>		
Several times per year * Ideology	-0,211	0,011
More than once per month * Ideology	-0,538	0,466
Almost every Sunday * Ideology	-0,369	-0,211
Every Sunday * Ideology	-0,393	-0,081
More than once per week * Ideology	-1,522**	0,884
Constant	-0,559	-3,282
	(N)	(1.933)
	χ^2	452,3
	Prob.	0,000
	Pseudo R2	0,573
	Log likelihood	-543

^a Models have been estimated using robust standard errors. Levels of significance are the following: *** $p < 0,01$; ** $p < 0,05$; * $p < 0,10$.

^b Models also include the following variables: ideology, Primer Minister's evaluation, sex, education, occupation and size of municipality.

Sources: See Table 1.