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**ENCYCLOPEDIA OF RELIGIOUS GROUPS IN
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN:
RELIGION IN ECUADOR**

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Religion in Ecuador

Country Summary

Ecuador is located on the Pacific Coast of South America, between Peru to the south and Colombia to the north. This small Andean nation has an area of 109,483 square miles and a population of 14.6 million (July 2009), of which 66 percent is urban and 34 percent is rural. The country also includes the famous Galápagos Islands in the Pacific Ocean, about 600 miles west of the mainland. It is one of only two countries (with Chile) in South America that do not have a border with Brazil. Ecuador is divided into 24 provinces, each with its own administrative capital. The nation's highest peak, Mount Chimborazo (an active volcano) at 20,565 feet above sea level, is completely covered by glaciers,

San Francisco de Quito, most often called simply Quito, is the nation's capital and its second-largest city, with approximately 1.5 million inhabitants in 2005. It is located at 9,350 feet in a high mountain valley on the foothills of the Pichincha volcano (15,696 feet), and is surrounded by yet higher mountains. The central square of Quito is located about 15 miles south of the Equator, where a monument and museum mark the Equator's general location (called, "the middle of the world"); Ecuador means "equator" in Spanish.

Santiago de Guayaquil, the largest city (population 1,985,379 in 2001) and the nation's main port, is located on the western bank of the Guayas River, which flows into the Pacific Ocean at the Gulf of Guayaquil. Because of its location, Guayaquil is the center of Ecuador's fishing and manufacturing industries.

Ecuador's population is very diverse, comprising many races and ethnic groups. In general, Ecuadorans trace their origins to four sources: Amerindians, Europeans, Africans and Asians. Mestizos (mixed Amerindian and Spanish ancestry) are by far the largest of Ecuador's ethnic groups, constituting over 65 percent of the current population. In second place are the Amerindians, who are approximately 25 percent of the population. The whites are mainly *criollos*, who are descendants of Spanish colonists, and are about seven percent of the population. In addition, there were waves of immigration from the Middle East, Italy, Germany, France and other European countries. The Afro-Ecuadoran community, descendants of African slaves and freedmen, includes Negros, mulattos and *zambos*, and it constitutes most of the remaining three percent of the population. Also, there is a small community of African immigrants in Quito.



Since the early 1900s, Ecuador has experienced increased immigration from the Middle East, Asia (especially China and Japan), North America and Europe. Today, Ecuador has about 95,000 U.S. expatriates and 30,000 European Union expatriates.

There is a diverse community of Middle Easterners that number in the tens of thousands, mostly of Lebanese, Syrian or Palestinian origin. Many are prominent in commerce and industry, and are concentrated in the coastal cities of Guayaquil, Quevedo and Machala; most are Eastern Orthodox Christians. The Arab-Ecuadoran community has created many cultural organizations to honor and celebrate their heritage, although most of those born in Ecuador do not speak Arabic. They are well assimilated into the local culture and are referred to commonly as "turcos" since the early Middle Eastern migrants arrived with passports issued by the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the 20th century.

There are an estimated 225,000 English speakers and 112,000 German speakers in Ecuador of which the majority reside in Quito, mainly descendants of immigrants who arrived in the late 1800s. There are also small communities of Italians, Jews, Armenians, French and Greeks. The Jewish community, which numbers less than 500, is mostly of German or Italian descent.

Most of the descendants of European immigrants strive for the preservation of their heritage. Consequently, some groups even have their own schools – German schools in Guayaquil and Quito; Liceo La Condamine in Quito (French); Alberto Einstein School in Quito (Jewish); and the British School in Quito – cultural and social organizations, churches and country clubs. They have made important contributions to the social, political and economical development of the country. Most of the families of European heritage belong to the Ecuadoran upper-class and own many of the largest companies in the country.

Also, there is a small East Asian-Ecuadoran community, estimated at 25,000; it mainly consists of those of Japanese and Chinese descent whose ancestors arrived as miners, farm laborers or fishermen in the late 1800s.

Until the end of the 19th century, the Ecuadoran population was concentrated in the central highlands (the Andes Mountains run through the center of the country and surround the central highlands, known as the Sierra region), due to the prevalence of malaria and yellow fever in the coastal region, but today's population is distributed about equally between the highlands and the coastal lowlands. Migration toward cities – particularly larger cities – in all regions has increased the urban population to about 55 percent of the national population. The majority of Ecuador's small but vibrant upper- to middle-class population segment is distributed between the capital, Quito, and Guayaquil, each home to 1.5-2.0 million inhabitants.

The Oriente region, composed of Amazonian lowlands to the east of the Andes and covering about half the country's total land area, includes some of the headwaters of the Amazon River and remains sparsely populated. It contains only about three percent of the population, many of whom are unassimilated Amerindians who maintain a wary distance from the more recent arrivals: *mestizo* and white settlers. This region is home to nine tribes of indigenous peoples who survive mainly as hunters and gatherers: the Quichua, Shuar, Achuar, Waorani, Siona, Secoya, Shiwiar, Záparo and Cofan. These groups are all represented politically by the **Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadoran Amazon (CONFENIAE)**. By contrast, the Colorado Indians (about 2,300 in 2000) inhabit the northwestern jungle area west of Quito, around Santo Domingo de los Colorados, in the Pacific lowlands.

Occasional visits by outsiders to the Oriente region, seeking gold, land, trade and converts, occurred during and after the Spanish colonial period. These early contacts between Europeans and the indigenous people were disastrous because new diseases were introduced that decimated the tribal population. Later, the Amazon rubber boom in the 19th and early 20th centuries brought

increased contact with Europeans, causing measles, malaria and tuberculosis epidemics that further reduced the native population.

Recent settlers in the Amazonian lowlands are the result of a small wave of immigration (mainly *mestizo* migrants from the central highlands) that began in the 1960s, when government-sponsored multinational corporations began to exploit petroleum reserves in the region. The boom in the petroleum industry led to mushrooming towns as well as to substantial deforestation, pollution of wetlands and lakes, and the further decline of the indigenous population.

Ecuador is a medium-income country, where about 38 percent of the people live below the poverty line. Traditionally an agriculture-based economy that relied on cocoa and later banana production for export, the discovery, production and export of petroleum during the second-half of the 20th century provided an economic boost that mainly benefited the oligarchy. Today, the economy is mainly based on petroleum production for domestic and foreign markets, manufacturing primarily for the domestic market, and agricultural production for domestic consumption and export. Ecuador is still the world's largest exporter of bananas (about \$1.2 billion in 2006) and a major exporter of shrimp (\$588 million in 2006). Exports of nontraditional products such as flowers (\$436 million in 2006, a threefold increase in 10 years) and canned fish (\$575 million in 2006) have grown in recent years.

Organized illegal narcotics and guerrilla operations in neighboring Colombia penetrate across Ecuador's shared border, which thousands of Colombians also cross to escape the violence in their homeland. Ecuador is a significant transit location for cocaine smuggling that originates in Colombia and Peru, with over half of the U.S.-bound cocaine passing through Ecuadoran coastal waters. Ecuador is an importer of precursor chemicals used in the production of illicit narcotics and an attractive location for laundering drug-money, because of the dollarization of the economy and weak anti-money laundering legislation. Ecuador's economic performance has been more stable since it adopted the U.S. dollar as its national currency in 2000.

Current Religious Situation

The nation's Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the government generally respected this right in practice. The government, at all levels, seeks to protect this right in full and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. The only limits imposed by the government are "those proscribed by law to protect and respect the diversity, plurality, security and rights of others." The Constitution prohibits discrimination based on religion.

The Catholic Episcopal Conference estimates that 85 percent of the population is Roman Catholic, with 35 percent of Catholics actively practicing. Although no scientific survey has been undertaken, the Episcopal Conference estimates that attendance at Mass increased slightly during the 2000s. Some ethnolinguistic groups, particularly indigenous people who live in the mountains, follow a syncretistic form of Catholicism that combines animistic Amerindian beliefs and practices with orthodox Catholic doctrine. Catholic saints often are venerated in ways similar to indigenous deities.

Religious affiliation in Ecuador in 2000 was estimated to be the following: Roman Catholic, 85 percent; Protestant, 12 percent; other religions, 1 percent; and none/no response, 2 percent. The latter category includes atheists and agnostics, but there are no reliable statistics for these specific groups.

While Protestant conversions traditionally have been more numerous among the lower classes, growing numbers of the middle class and professionals are converting to Protestantism or Marginal Christian groups. There has been success finding new converts in different regions,

particularly among indigenous people in the Andean provinces of Chimborazo, Bolívar, Cotopaxi, Imbabura and Pichincha, especially among persons who practice syncretistic religions, as well as among the marginalized sectors of society, especially in urban areas.

Historical Overview of Social, Political and Religious Development

Evidence of human cultures exists in Ecuador from ca. 3500 BCE. Many ancient civilizations were created and developed throughout Ecuador, such as the Valdivia Culture and Machalilla Culture on the coast, the Quitus (near present-day Quito) and the Cañari (near present-day Cuenca). Each civilization developed its own distinctive architecture, pottery and religious characteristics. After years of fiery resistance by the Cayambes and other tribes, as demonstrated by the battle of Yahuarcocha (“Blood Lake”) where thousands of warriors were killed and thrown into the lake, the region succumbed to the expansion of the Incas and was loosely assimilated into the Inca Empire in 1453. The most prominent of the conquered tribes were the Quichua (or Quechua) whose center was located at Quito.

When the Spanish conquistadors arrived from the north, the Inca Empire was ruled by Huayna Capac, who had two sons: Atahualpa was in charge of the northern parts of the empire seated at Quito, and Huascar administered the southern area from the Inca capital of Cusco. At the time of Huayna Capac's death in 1525, the Inca Empire was divided between the two brothers. In 1530, Atahualpa and his warriors defeated Huascar and conquered the entire empire.

In 1531, the Spanish conquistadors arrived under the leadership of Francisco Pizarro to find an Inca empire torn by strife and civil war. In subsequent years, the Spanish colonists became the new elite in the Andean region, with their centers of power in the vice-royalties of Lima and New Granada. Warfare and disease decimated the indigenous population during the first decades of Spanish rule, when the native people were forced into the *encomienda* labor system of the Spanish landlords. In 1563, Quito became the seat of an *audiencia royal* (administrative district) of Spain and part of the Viceroyalty of Lima, and in 1717 it became part of the Viceroyalty of Nueva Granada, which included Colombia and Venezuela (Panama was a province of Colombia at that time).

After nearly 300 years of Spanish colonization, Quito was still a small city of only 10,000 inhabitants. It was there, on August 10, 1809 (now, a national holiday), that the first call for independence from Spain was made in Latin America (“Primer Grito de la Independencia”), under the leadership of the city's *criollos* such as Carlos Montúfar, Eugenio Espejo and Bishop Cuero y Caicedo. Quito's nickname, *Luz de América* (“Light of America”), comes from the idea that this first attempt produced the inspiration for the rest of Spanish America. Quito is also known as *La Cara de Dios* (“The Face of God”) for its beauty.

On 9 October 1820, Guayaquil became the first city in Ecuador to gain its independence from Spain. On 24 May 1822, the rest of Ecuador gained its independence after Field Marshal **Antonio José de Sucre** defeated the Spaniard Royalist forces at the Battle of Pichincha, near Quito. Following the battle, Ecuador joined Liberator Simón Bolívar's Republic of Gran Colombia (modern-day Colombia and Venezuela), but withdrew from Gran Colombia and became an independent nation in 1830.

The 19th century was marked by instability in Ecuador, with a rapid succession of rulers. Between 1833 and 1908, the nation had 19 presidents. The opposing political parties were the Conservatives (or Clericals) and the Liberals. The first president was the Venezuelan-born **Juan José Flores** (1830-1834, 1839-1843, 1843-1845), who was ultimately deposed, followed by many authoritarian leaders. The Conservative **Gabriel García Moreno** (1861-1865) unified the

country in the 1860s with the support of the Roman Catholic Church. In the late 19th century, world demand for cocoa (chocolate) tied the economy to commodity exports and led to migrations of people from the highlands to the agricultural frontier on the Pacific Coast.

The country continued under the leadership of an oligarchy of large landowners. Their stranglehold on the country prevented land reform, and their ineptitude led to the loss of parcels of the country to their neighbors. Present-day Ecuador represents approximately 20 percent of the country's original territory at the time of independence from Spain.

The Liberal Revolution of 1895 led by **José Eloy Alfaro Delgado** (president during 1895-1901, 1906-1911) reduced the power of the Catholic clergy and the Conservative land owners of the highlands, and revoked the Concordat with the Vatican. He is credited with the separation of Church and State in Ecuador and for implementing many political and civil rights, such as freedom of speech and the legalization of civil marriage and divorce. His accomplishments also included finishing the construction of the first railroad between Guayaquil and Quito and the establishment of the nation's first public schools.

The **Ecuadoran Radical Liberal Party** (PLRE, *Partido Liberal Radical Ecuatoriano*) is the oldest existing political party in Ecuador. The PLRE emerged out of divisions between moderate and radical liberals within the Liberal Party of Ecuador. As in many Latin American countries, Ecuador experienced a great deal of conflict, often violent, between the Liberal and Conservative parties. Eloy Alfaro Delgado brought the Liberal Party to power during the revolution of 1895, which adopted a policy of secularization in church matters. The PLRE was officially founded in 1925, and during the next 50 years several of its members served as presidents of Ecuador. The PLRE was in power from 1895 to 1911, from 1921 to 1952, and from 1960 to 1970. Each time it was overthrown by military coups.

The Liberals retained power until the military "Julian Revolution" of 1925, which gave ultimate political freedom to Ecuadorans without political interference from the Catholic hierarchy. The 1930s and 1940s were marked by instability and the emergence of populist politicians, such as five-time **President José María Velasco Ibarra** who served as president from 1934-1935, 1944-1947, 1952-1956, 1960-1961 and 1968-1972 (as dictator). However, he only served one of those terms (1952-1956) without being ousted by the army.

Control over territory in the Amazon River basin led to a long-lasting dispute between Ecuador and Peru. In 1941, amid fast-growing tensions between the two countries, war broke out. Peru claimed that Ecuador's military presence in Peruvian-claimed territory was an invasion; Ecuador, for its part, claimed that Peru had invaded Ecuador. In July 1941, troops were mobilized in both countries. During the course of the war, Peru gained control over part of the disputed territory and some parts of the provinces of El Oro and Loja, and demanded that the Ecuadoran government give up its territorial claims. The Peruvian Navy blockaded the port of Guayaquil, which almost cut off all supplies to the Ecuadoran troops. After a few weeks of war and under pressure by the U.S. Government and several Latin American nations, all fighting came to a halt. Ecuador and Peru reached an accord, called the **Río Protocol** (signed on 29 January 1942), that favored hemispheric unity against the Axis Powers in World War II. Peru, as a result of its victory over Ecuador, was awarded the disputed territory.

Recession and popular unrest led to a return to populist politics and domestic military interventions during the 1960s, while multinational companies developed oil resources in the Ecuadoran Amazon basin, much to the detriment of the Amerindian population and to the environment. In 1972, the construction of the Andean petroleum pipeline was completed, which transports oil from the east side of the Andes to the west coast, thereby making Ecuador the

second-largest oil exporter in South America, after Venezuela. The pipeline in southern Ecuador did nothing, however, to resolve tensions between Ecuador and Peru.

In 1972, a "revolutionary and nationalist" military junta overthrew the government of Dictator Velasco Ibarra (1968-1972). The *coup d'état* was led by **Gen. Guillermo Rodríguez** and was executed by Navy Commander Jorge Queirolo. The new president exiled **Velasco Ibarra** to Argentina and served as head of the Supreme Government Council (ruled from January 1972 to August 1979) until 1976 when he was removed by another military coup. The new military junta was led by **Admiral Alfredo Poveda**, who was declared chairman of the Supreme Government Council; there were two other council members as well, Gen. Guillermo Durán Arcentales and Gen. Luis Leoro Franco. After the country stabilized socially and economically, this Supreme Government Council proceeded to hold democratic elections and stepped down to hand over the reigns of government to the newly-elected president.

Elections were held in April 1979, under a new Constitution that instituted democratic rule. **Jaime Roldós Aguilera** (1979-1981) was elected president after receiving over one million votes, the most in Ecuadoran history. He took office in August as the first constitutionally-elected president after nearly a decade of civilian and military dictatorships; however, the nation's stability was challenged by both its own armed forces and U.S. foreign policy. In 1980, **Roldós Aguilera** founded the *Partido Pueblo, Cambio y Democracia* (People, Change and Democracy Party) after withdrawing from the *Concentración de Fuerzas Populares* (Popular Forces Concentration) and governed until May 1981, when he died along with his wife and Minister of Defense Marco Subia Martínez after their Air Force plane crashed in heavy rain near the Peruvian border. Many Ecuadorans believe that **Roldós Aguilera** was assassinated, given the multiple death threats leveled against him because of his reformist agenda and the contradictory accounts of the fatal incident.

Roldós Aguilera was immediately succeeded by Vice-President **Oswaldo Hurtado** (1981-1984) who was followed in 1984 by **León Febres Cordero** (1984-1988) of the Social Christian Party. **Rodrigo Borja Cevallos** (1988-1992) of the Democratic Left (ID, *Izquierda Democrática*) party won the presidency in 1988, competing in the runoff election against **Abdalá Jaime Bucaram Ortiz**, the brother-in-law of **Roldós Aguilera** who founded the Ecuadoran Roldosista Party (PRE, *Partido Roldosista Ecuatoriano*). The **Borja Cevallos** government was committed to improving human rights' protection, carried out some needed reforms, and was noted for opening Ecuador to foreign trade. The **Borja Cevallos** government concluded an accord that led to the disbanding of the small terrorist group named after former Liberal President Eloy Alfaro Delgado. However, continuing economic problems undermined the popularity of the ID government, and opposition parties gained control of Congress in 1990.

Beginning in the late 1990s, there was a high emigration of Ecuadorans due to the nation's deteriorating economic and political conditions, which culminated in a severe economic and financial crisis in 1999. An estimated 400,000 Ecuadorans now live in Spain and about the same number in Italy; about 100,000 now live in the United Kingdom, while several hundred thousand Ecuadorans live in the U.S., mostly in the New York City area. Other Ecuadorans have migrated to other Latin America countries, tens of thousands have gone to Japan, and thousands more to Australia.

The emergence of the Amerindian population as an active political constituency has added to the democratic volatility of the country in recent years. The Quichua population, in particular, has been motivated by government failures to deliver on promises of land reform, lower unemployment and provision of social services, and to stop the exploitation of indigenous territory by the land-holding elite. The indigenous movement, along with continuing destabilizing

efforts by both the elite and leftist movements, has led to a deterioration of the power and influence of the executive office. Lacking political capital, **President Lucio Gutiérrez** (2003-2005) was unable to forestall his removal from office by Congress in April 2005. Vice-President **Alfredo Palacio** took his place and remained in office until the presidential election of 2006, in which **Rafael Vicente Correa Delgado** defeated banana tycoon Alvaro Noboa Pontón in a run-off contest.

At the start of the 2006 presidential campaign, Correa Delgado founded the Alianza PAIS (*Patria Altiva y Soberana*, a movement that espouses national sovereignty, regional integration, and economic relief for Ecuador's poor and marginalized masses. After eight ineffective presidents in ten years, the frustrated population elected the left-leaning **Correa Delgado** in late-2006 (a friend of Venezuela's current president, Hugo Chavez) who promised major governmental and economic reforms. President Correa Delgado, an economist and self-described "humanist," took office in January 2007.

Despite Correa Delgado's earlier promises not to do so, in June 2009, Ecuador joined the Chavez-backed "Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas" (ALBA), founded in 2004 between the governments of Venezuela, Cuba and Bolivia, which represents the first attempt at regional integration that is not based primarily on trade liberalization but on a new vision of social welfare and equity, in opposition to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between the U.S. Government and its Latin American partners.

During the past few decades, Ecuador has often placed great emphasis on multilateral approaches to international issues. Ecuador is a member of the United Nations (and most of its specialized agencies) and a member of many regional groups, including the Organization of American States (OAS), Rio Group, the Latin American Economic System, the Latin American Energy Organization, the Latin American Integration Association, and the Andean Community of Nations.

The Roman Catholic Church

The Spanish introduced Roman Catholicism in the 1530s, and the Bishopric of Quito was established in 1545. Making use of the infrastructure of the Incas, both Spanish authority and the Catholic faith were established throughout the territory. Following the initial diocesan synod in 1595, a program of evangelizing the Amazon lowlands began under the Dominicans.

Missionary work among the different Amerindian tribes on the tributaries of the Amazon was difficult, and the Dominican missions were destroyed in 1599 by the savage Jivaros (Shuar and Achuar). Later, however, the Dominicans re-established themselves and were assisted by the Jesuits who had worked in Quito since 1596. By the close of the 17th century, Ecuador was "well-evangelized," according to Catholic historians. However, after the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1767, who on the Napo River alone had established 33 missions among an estimated 100,000 inhabitants, the Dominicans were unable to maintain the work and the "converted natives fell back into paganism." During the colonial period, the Catholic Church founded institutions of learning such as the University of Quito, and established a printing press at the same place in 1760.

Steady progress in Christianizing the country was pursued through the 18th century; however, the country's independence from Spain in 1822 brought many problems. The Church's dependence on Spain for priests, male and female religious workers, and financial support led to a sharp cutback in the services provided. The Church's limitations, especially in pastoral

leadership and parish work, led to the further development of a **popular folk Catholicism**, which integrates many elements of traditional Amerindian culture, beliefs and practices (syncretism).

In 1848, the Diocese of Quito was upgraded to an archdiocese under Archbishop Nicolás Joaquín de Arteta y Calisto, who died in September 1849 and was replaced by Archbishop Francisco Xavier de Garaycoa Llaguno in 1851. Between 1786 and 1848, the following dioceses were established: Ayacucho (Huamanga), Cuenca, Guayaquil, Maynas, Popayán and Trujillo.

The Catholic Church has always had an important role in Ecuadoran government and society. The Constitution of 1869, approved by the Conservative government of **President Gabriel García Moreno** (1859-1865 and 1869-1875), declared the Roman Catholic Church the nation's official religion and only Catholics could obtain citizenship. Under the new president, a Concordat was established with The Vatican (1863), new dioceses were established, and schools and missions were given back to the Jesuits who had been permitted to return.

However, President García Moreno was murdered in August 1875, and his death not only put an end to the Concordat but also led to a wave of persecution against the Church under the new political regime. In 1885, when **Bishop Pietro Schumacher, C.M.**, became Bishop of Portoviejo (established in 1870), nearly all the native clergy were suspended and replaced by European priests and practically a new Conservative hierarchy was established under **Archbishop José Ignacio Ordóñez** (1882-1893), who participated in the First Vatican Council (December 1869 to October 1870) hosted by Pope Pius IX.

Part of the animosity García Moreno generated among Liberals was his friendship toward the Society of Jesus (Jesuits). During a period of exile, he helped a group of displaced Jesuits find refuge in Ecuador. He had also advocated legislation that would outlaw secret societies. This action and many similar ones encouraged the anti-Catholic parties of Ecuador, especially the Freemasons, to see in him an inveterate enemy.

While the political situation at that time was “extremely convoluted and murky,” the fact that García Moreno was elected to a second term of office (1869-1875) clearly indicates his popular appeal, both with the hierarchy of the Catholic Church and with the masses. His vigorous support of universal literacy and education based on the French model was considered both controversial and bold.

Anti-clerical forces in control of the government during the administration of Liberal **President José Eloy Alfaro Delgado** (1895 to 1901) repudiated the Concordat in 1895. In 1899, the Liberal government approved a new Constitution that guaranteed freedom of religion and respected all religions. These actions were a severe blow to the Catholic Church. Religious orders, among them the Capuchins, Salesians, Missionaries of Steyl, and the various sisterhoods, were all banished and Bishop Schumacher was exiled.

In 1910, the State religion was Catholicism but other creeds were tolerated. The State provided for the maintenance of Catholic worship and supported religious educational institutions, such as the three seminaries at Quito and one in each of the six dioceses. At the same time, the State ruled that no new or foreign religious order would be permitted in the country.

The Ecuadoran government was controlled by anti-clerical Liberals until 1925, when the so-called “Julian Revolution” led to the establishment of a new government that granted political and religious freedom to all without political interference from the Catholic hierarchy. The 1930s and 1940s were marked by economic and political instability and the emergence of populist politicians, such as **President José María Velasco Ibarro** who was the Conservative Party's presidential candidate in 1933. He served as president five times between 1934 and 1972 (sometime as a dictator); however, he only served one of those terms (1952-1956) without being

ousted by the army. In 1952, he described himself as a neoliberal who represented a “third position between capitalism and communism.”

Diverse tensions arose within the Ecuadoran Catholic Church during the 1960s and following years, which resulted from challenges posed by the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), the Conference of Latin American Bishops held in Medellín (Colombia) in 1968, the emergence of Latin American Liberation Theology, and the Catholic Charismatic Renewal movement. These powerful new currents polarized Catholic bishops, priests (diocesan and religious), lay brothers and sisters (members of religious orders), and the laity in general into various factions. *Traditionalists* wanted the Church to remain as it was prior to the reforms approved by the Second Vatican Council (mid-1960s), with an emphasis on apostolic authority, orthodox theology, the sacraments and personal piety. *Reformers* generally supported the Church’s post-Vatican II stance of modernization and toleration of diversity based on its official Social Doctrine. *Progressives*, inspired by reforms approved at the Vatican II and Medellín conferences, sought to implement the new vision for “a preferential option for the poor” through social and political action aimed at transforming Ecuadoran society and establishing social justice through peaceful democratic means. *Radicals* adopted the Marxist-inspired Liberation Theology and advocated violent revolution by the people as a means of overthrowing rightwing military dictatorships and creating a Socialist State that would serve the poor marginalized masses. *Charismatic agents* sought to transform the spiritual and communal life of Catholics by means of the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit (including the “baptism of the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues”), rather than by political and social activism.

The Catholic Church has traditionally identified with the ruling Spanish elite and was thus unprepared to deal with the radical program introduced by **Bishop Leonidas Eduardo Proaño Villalba** (1955-1987) of the Diocese of Riobamba in the Province of Chimborazo, who identified his diocese with the rights of the Quichuas and other Amerindian peoples and who introduced a broad range of programs, not only to draw them closer to the Church but to bring reforms to secular society in rural areas. By the mid-1970s, Bishop Proaño Villalba was being excluded from meetings of the other bishops, but he was able to retain the support of the Vatican.

In Ecuador, there is one major national shrine dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, *la Basílica Sagrado Corazón de Jesús*, Patron of Ecuador, in Quito; and three are dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Virgin of El Quinche, now the Patroness of Ecuador, is credited with many miracles and the Indians ask varied favors through her intercession. In late November every year, thousands of people walk down the valleys surrounding Quito to visit the shrine in the capital; they carry torches or pocket lamps and tell stories of miraculous healings. The present shrine was declared a national sanctuary in 1985: *Santuario Nacional de Nuestra Señora de la Presentación del Quinche*.

Seventy kilometers from the city of Loja in the mountains of southern Ecuador is the town of El Cisne, the site of a much-venerated Marian shrine in the Diocese of Loja, Cuenca Province. The *Iglesia de Nuestra Señora del Cisne* was built in 1742 and modeled after a similar basilica in Harlungenberg, Germany. In 1594, the inhabitants of El Cisne region desired to have their own religious relic, similar to the Virgin of Guadalupe in Mexico City. Representatives of the local people traveled to Quito, where they requested that sculptor Don Diego de Robles create the Virgin de El Cisne statue. The result was a fine carving in cedarwood, measuring 62 centimeters in height, which is considered "a people's Madonna," a protector of the Indians. The image was crowned by ecclesiastical authorities in 1943 and her feast is celebrated annually in November.

Another National Shrine is dedicated to the nativity of the Virgin Mary, which is located in the parish of Magdalena, Diocese of Guaranda, Bolívar province: *El Santuario Nacional de Nuestra Señora María Natividad del Guayco*.

In 2004, the Ecuadoran Catholic Church was divided administratively into four archdioceses (Quito, Cuenca, Guayaquil and Portoviejo) and 19 dioceses with 1,151 parishes that were served by 1,779 priests (1,019 diocesan and 760 religious priests), assisted by 69 permanent deacons, 1,360 male religious and 4,759 female religious workers. Catholic male religious orders include the Franciscans, Mercedarians (Order of Our Lady of Mercy), Dominicans, Augustinians, Carmelites, Capuchins, Jesuits, Salesians, St. Vincent de Paul (Lazaristas), Oblates and Congregation of St. Joseph. **The current Archbishop of Quito is Mons. Raúl Eduardo Vela Chiriboga**, who was appointed in March 2003.

In addition, there are two Eastern Orthodox denominations in Ecuador that are in communion with the Vatican. The **Orthodox Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Maronite Rite)** was founded in 1978 in La Atarazana, Guayaquil, now led by the Rev. Flavio Alexis Alfaro, a former Roman Catholic priest. In 2002, the **Holy Orthodox Catholic Church** was founded in Quito (Archdiocese of Ecuador and South America) to serve Greeks, Slavs and Arab Orthodox Christians; since 2004, this denomination has been led by His Eminence Vladika Chrysóstmos (an Ecuadoran) who supervises the Monastery of Anástasis and the Seminary of St. Basil in Quito.

The Protestant Movement

In the face of almost total Catholic hegemony in Ecuador, James Thompson (b.1788–d. 1854), a Scottish Presbyterian and agent of the **British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS)**, initiated a Protestant presence in the country in 1824. This initiative was followed up by BFBS agent Lucas Matthews in 1828. The Rev. Isaac Watts Wheelwright, an agent of the **American Bible Society (ABS)**, visited Guayaquil and Quito in 1835 where he assisted in the establishment of public education at the request of **President Vicente Rocafuerte y Bejarano** (1834-1839). It was not until 1892 that another ABS agent visited Ecuador, the Rev. Francisco Penzotti, and distributed the Scriptures in Guayaquil.

In 1896, the non-denominational **Gospel Missionary Union** (GMU, now **Avant Ministries**) sent its first three missionaries, who were able to take advantage of the opening provided by the repudiation of the country's Concordat with the Vatican by the **Liberal government of Eloy Alfaro** (1895-1901, 1906-1911). They initiated work along the Pacific Coast and in the Amazonian lowlands among the primitive Amerindian Shuar and Achuar (Jivaroan), known as "headhunters," who live in scattered communities along the tributaries of the Rio Napo and the Rio Paute, but their greatest success was among the Quichua in the Andean highlands. Later, their work was organized as the **Gospel Missionary Union Churches** (1949), which is now the largest non-Catholic denomination in Ecuador.

The Christian and Missionary Alliance (CMA) opened work in 1897, and today its affiliated churches are called the **Ecuadoran Evangelical Church**. The **Methodist Episcopal Church**, now an integral part of the **United Methodist Church** in the USA, sent its first missionaries in 1900. **The Seventh-Day Adventist Church** initiated work in 1905. Several independent **Pentecostal missionaries** arrived during the period 1910-1930.

After World War II, Ecuador became a major focus of Evangelical Christian missions in South America, in part due to the attention brought by the work of the **World Radio Missionary Fellowship**. In 1931, Clarence Jones and Reuben E. Larson, both of CMA background, began

Ecuador's first radio station with a 250-watt transmitter in Quito. HCJB, or the "Voice of the Andes" as it is best known, also was the first religious radio station established outside the USA.

After World War II, as other groups developed their own radio ministries, they gave support to HCJB and used it to build their various mission activities. The most famous incident associated with the station occurred in 1950s, beginning with the 1956 murder of five evangelical missionaries who, with the assistance of HCJB, had pioneered work among the Auca (Waorani) Indians, a remote tribe of hunters and gatherers located in the Amazonian lowlands. The missionaries' deaths were widely reported and debated in evangelical circles, as well as the relocation of the wife and sister of two of those who were killed to Auca territory where they bravely engaged in missionary work, which led to the eventual "conversion" of the people who had actually murdered the missionaries.

The only other Protestant groups to begin missionary work in Ecuador prior to 1945 were the **Church of the Brethren** in 1935 and **Child Evangelism Fellowship** in 1941. Among the groups that began ministries in Ecuador between 1945 and 1959 were **The Missionary Church** (Fort Wayne, IN – 1945), the **Oriental Missionary Society** (OMS International – 1946), the **Evangelical Covenant Church** (1947), **Missionary Aviation Fellowship** (1948), the **Southern Baptist Convention** (1950), the **Lutheran-affiliated World Mission Prayer League** (1951), **Wycliffe Bible Translators** (1953), the **General Conference Mennonite Church** (1953), **Heifer Project International** (1955), the **International Church of the Foursquare Gospel** (1956), the **Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ecuador** (Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod - 1956), the **United Pentecostal Church** (1957), the **Church of England in Ecuador** (1957, later known as the Anglican Province of Ecuador in 1982, affiliated with the International Anglican Communion; there are two dioceses of the Episcopal Church in Ecuador, which is part of the IX Province of the Episcopal Church in the USA); the **Berean Mission** (1959), and the **Apostolic Church of Faith in Jesus Christ** (Oneness Pentecostal, 1959).

Several older U.S. mainline denominations—the **Evangelical and Reformed Church** (now a constituent part of the **United Church of Christ**), the **Presbyterian Church in the U.S.** and the **United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.** (both now constituent parts of the **Presbyterian Church USA**), and the **Evangelical United Brethren** (now a constituent part of the **United Methodist Church**) combined their resources in 1945 to create the **United Andean Mission in Ecuador**. Although they intended to launch work in several countries, their efforts have been limited to Ecuador with only modest success, although its various medical, agricultural and educational efforts have been well received.

Historically, the establishment of Protestant denominations and service agencies in Ecuador can be described as follows: prior to 1900 (four groups), 1900-1944 (four), 1945-1959 (15), 1960s (18), 1970s (22), 1980s (18) and the 1990s (10). In summary, the period 1960 to 1989 witnessed the largest development of new church associations and service organizations in the country.

A number of **national Amerindian churches** have emerged since the mid-1960s, including the **Church of the Holy Spirit** (1967), the **Universal Independent Church of Christ** (1970), and the **Voice of Jesus Christ Church**, all of which are Pentecostal groups. **The Association of Indigenous Evangelical Churches of Chimborazo** (GMU-affiliated) was the largest Protestant or Free Church association in the country in 1985: 235 congregations with an estimated 30,000 members, an average attendance of 80,000, and 130,000 adherents (source: the *Directorio de la Iglesia Evangélica del Ecuador*, listed as Hatch 1985 in the bibliography). Other GMU-related church bodies at this time were the **Association of Gospel Missionary Union Churches** (founded in 1896: 8,500 adherents among mestizos), the **Association of Indigenous Churches of**

Cotopaxi (founded in 1972: 2,000 adherents), the **Association of Indigenous Churches of Tungurahua** (founded in 1978: 2,000 adherents), the **Association of (indigenous) Shuar Evangelical Churches** (founded in 1980: 2,000 adherents), and the **Association of Indigenous Churches of Pinchincha** (also founded in 1980: 1,550 adherents).

The largest Protestant denominations (or affiliated groups of church associations) in Ecuador in 1985 (Hatch 1985) were the following: all **GMU-related church associations** (348 congregations with 35,858 members and an estimated 146,600 adherents), the **Christian & Missionary Alliance** (121 congregations with 9,400 members), the **Southern Baptist Convention** (101 congregations with 5,700 members), the **Assemblies of God** (two associations: 71 congregations with 5,495 members), the **International Church of the Foursquare Gospel** (70 congregations with 5,467 members), the **Evangelical Covenant Church** (39 congregations with 2,135 members), all **Lutheran World Federation-related churches** (17 with 1,250 members). All other denominations had less than 1,000 members each. *It should be noted that the Seventh-Day Adventist Church was not included in this study.*

The largest Protestant denominations in Ecuador in 1995, based on the *World Churches Handbook* (Brierly 1997), were the following: all **GMU-related church associations** (560 congregations with 71,800 members and an estimated 123,000 adherents), the **United Pentecostal Church** (65 congregations with 15,000 members and 30,000 adherents), the **Christian & Missionary Alliance** (190 congregations with 13,400 members and 32,500 adherents), the **Baptist Convention** (112 congregations with 12,300 members and 35,000 adherents), the **Seventh-Day Adventist Church** (37 congregations with 10,300 members and 17,800 adherents), the **International Church of the Foursquare Gospel** (110 congregations with 8,100 members and 26,400 adherents), the **Assemblies of God** (150 congregations with 5,410 members), and the **Evangelical Covenant Church** (51 congregations with 3,880 members).

More recently, the **Seventh-Day Adventist Church** reported the following statistics for the period 2001-2007: 84 churches with 42,377 members in 2001, and 150 churches with 74,096 members in 2007 (year-end statistics).

Protestant organizations were usually divided between predominantly indigenous organizations, such as the **Council of Evangelical Indigenous People and Organizations (FEINE)**, and *mestizo* organizations. In large cities, Protestant megachurches, some with more than 10,000 members, have continued to grow substantially. There is a high percentage of *mestizo* Protestants in the Guayaquil area.

Interdenominational work began with the establishment of the **Inter-Mission Fellowship**, founded in 1950, which included a spectrum of Protestant missionary organizations. It was superseded by the **Ecuadoran Evangelical Confraternity (CEE)** in 1964, a reflection of the emergence of autonomous Ecuadoran denominations. In 2007, the CEE membership included more than 150 denominations and independent church associations that represented conservative Evangelicalism. The CEE is affiliated with the **Latin American Confraternity of Evangelicals (CONELA)** and the **World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF)**.

Some of the ecumenical Protestant denominations are affiliated with the **Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI)**, which established its continental headquarters in Quito in 1987. CLAI is associated with the **World Council of Churches (WCC)** and is active in the broader ecumenical scene in the continent. CLAI members in Ecuador are: the **Faith, Integrity and Hope Council of Evangelical Indigenous Organizations and Peoples of Ecuador** (*Consejo de Pueblos y Organizaciones Indígenas Evangélicas del Ecuador / Fe Integridad y Esperanza*); the

Episcopal Church of Ecuador; the Evangelical Lutheran Church; and the United Evangelical Church of Ecuador.

Other Religions

There are several denominations of the Western Catholic tradition in Ecuador that are independent of the Vatican. The **Priestly Fraternity of Ecuador** (affiliated with the International Organization of Married Catholic Priests, based in the USA) is led by the Rev. Alonso Pérez of the parish of Iglesia La Dolorosa in Ambato. The **Priestly Fraternity of St. Pius X** (founded in Switzerland by Mons. Marcel Lefèvre in 1970) administers a parish in Quito and only celebrates the Mass in Latin; the **Old Catholic Church** has been led by Bishop José Javier Guanulema in Saquislí since 2005. The **Reformed Catholic Church**, founded in 2002 in San Camilo, Quevedo, is led by Bishop Vicente Ney Valero, a former Episcopal priest. The **Latin Catholic Church**, founded in 2003 in Barrio Guamaní in southern Quito, is headed by Luis Bolívar Lara, also a former Episcopal priest; this is a Spiritualist group that performs healing rituals with the “intervention” of a dead Venezuelan medical doctor, Gregorio Hernández, known as a folk healer. Finally, the **Ecumenical Catholic Church** was founded by Juventino Espinoza in Barrio La Cristianía in northern Quito; its current leader is Bishop José Vicente García, a lawyer.

Many non-Protestant “marginal” Christian groups are also present in Ecuador: the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS-Mormons, founded in 1965; one temple, 294 congregations and 185,663 members in 2007; on 1 August 1999, the Guayaquil Mormon Temple was dedicated by LDS President Gordon B. Hinckley); the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society (also known as Jehovah’s Witnesses: 764 congregations and 64,792 adherents in 2008); the Children of God, also known as The Family (located in Valle de los Chillos); the Philadelphia Church of God; the Israelites of the New Universal Covenant (also in Peru and Bolivia); Christadelphian Bible Mission; the Unity School of Christianity; the Voice of the Chief Cornerstone (from Puerto Rico); Growing in Grace Ministries International (headquarters in Miami, FL); Light of the Word Church (from Mexico); and the God is Love Pentecostal Church and the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God from Brazil.

Non-Christian religions include Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism, Baha’i, Islam and Subud. Hindu-derived groups include: the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKON), Vaisnava Mission, the Brahma Kumaris Community, the Singh Rajinder Community, the Divine Light Mission, International Sri Sathya Sai Baba Organization, Osho-Bhadra Meditation Center, Srila Sridhar Swami Seva Ashram, Sawan Kirpal Ruhani Mission-Science of Spirituality, the Maharishi Community of Ecuador, and Transcendental Meditation (TM). There is a small Jewish community in Ecuador, whose approximately 1,000 members are found primarily in Quito and Guayaquil. There are more than 5,000 Chinese in Ecuador, many of whom continue in their Buddhist and Taoist faiths. Buddhist groups include the Buddhist Community of Ecuador (the Pagoda Yuan Heng is located in La Garzota, Guayaquil), the International Zen Association, the Dahrma Buhdi Susila Community, and the Tibetan Buddhist Community. The Baha’i Faith, introduced in the mid-1900s, has experienced growth, especially among some of the Amerindian peoples and those of African descent. Also, the Sunni Muslim (Islamic Center of Ecuador) and the Subud Association have a small following.

The Ancient Wisdom Tradition is represented by Freemasonry (Grand Equinocial Lodge of Ecuador); the Ancient and Mystical Order of the Rosae Crucis (AMORC); the Grand

Universal Fraternity, Order of Aquarius (GFU), founded in Venezuela); the Gnostic Community of Ecuador; and the Universal Gnostic Christian Movement.

The Psychic-Spiritualist-New Age traditions are represented by the Center of Esoteric Studies, Providence Spiritual Center, New Age Holistic Center, Ishaya Techniques, the Silvan Method, the Church of Scientology (also known as Dianetics), the Community of Oriental Spirituality, and the Unification Church (founded in Korea by the Rev. Sun Myung Moon).

Popular Catholic religiosity (syncretistic) is practiced by a majority of the Hispanic white and *mestizo* population. Among practitioners of Amerindian religions and “popular Catholic religiosity” there are “specialists” who practice witchcraft (*brujería*), shamanism (*chamanismo*) and folk healing (*curanderismo*). The Quichua people make up about 40 percent of the present population of Ecuador. However, it is among the various smaller Amerindian groups in the remotest parts of the country, especially in the headwaters of the Amazon River, that traditional animistic religion has survived relatively untouched by the outside world. Among the Quichua there are still followers of Inti, the traditional Inca sun god.

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