

Christianism: Catholic Syncretism in the New World

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A Quick Overview

What existed when the RCC arrived and how it got that way

The Motivations for the First Religious Movement

The Results of the First Religious Movement

Not Catholic Bashing

The Second Religious Movement

The Roman Catholic Church of the Spaniards

Highland Quichua Roman Catholicism

The Motivations for the Second Religious Movement

The Result of the Second Religious Movement

Commonalities of the Previous Religious Movements

The Commonalities in Motivation

The Commonalities in Results

What is the prevalent form of RCC in Andean Ecuador today?

Motivations for Current Movement away from RCC

Summary of the Results of the Current Movement

How are Evangelicals to avoid syncretism in this context?

Leadership Training

Church Planting Among the Highland Quichuas

What are the dangers today?

How can the RCC mistakes be avoided?

Chart: Comparative Religion Chart for Andean Ecuador

Endnotes

References

The syncretism under consideration needs a context in which it can be seen and understood. A similar story is found in scores of culture contexts throughout the Americas but the Highland Quichuas (HQ) of Andean Ecuador will be used as a case study. By way of introduction, let me share my background and interest in this specific area. I was a FMB/IMB missionary to these people as a church planter and then teacher, co-worker, and consultant. The persecution of the HQ people at the hands of the Roman Catholics in Ecuador is a topic that would warrant its own lecture another time. Suffice it to say that the persecution has been relentless, horrific, and continues to the present day.

I began to study these people informally when we were first appointed as missionaries in 1991. In subsequent educational opportunities I have deepened my level of understanding of the factors affecting them through their history. My first doctoral dissertation was a D.Miss. Dissertation at the Reformed Theological Seminary entitled, "A comparative analysis of the three major

religious movements of the Highland Quichuas of Andean Ecuador from the Inca conquest to the present.” A couple of years later I studied there again for a Ph.D. in Intercultural Studies and wrote a dissertation entitled, “Highland Quichuas: Discovering a culturally appropriate pastoral training model.”

We returned to Ecuador after I graduated from RTS to lead the Ecuadorian Baptist Theological Seminary and to train HQ believers. Upon my return I wrote and published a couple of books in Spanish for those working with the HQ to make the fruit of my research available and hopefully help in culturally appropriate pastoral preparation. At this point, an historical overview would serve us well to set the stage for the topic under consideration.

The study for this hour is the *ChristiAnimism* or *Christo-paganism* that has resulted from Catholicism being syncretized with indigenous animistic religions in the New World, specifically how it came about and how it can be avoided in the future. I want to address this matter by means of a case study of the Highland Quichua people of Andean Ecuador. In order to see the enduring Roman Catholic syncretism clearly, I will guide us through the major religious movements of this people group from the Inca conquest to the present. The most recent development is a movement toward Evangelical Protestantism but time does not permit a detailed consideration of that phenomenon. This diachronic panorama will provide a backdrop against which we can clearly recognize the steps and missteps that led to the errors and heresies that exist today.

Their first religious movement was an enforced shift from the traditional Andean animism of the Highland Quichuas to the religion of the Inca empire. Then, there was another enforced shift, this time to Roman Catholicism. Most recently, a shift has been occurring among the Highland Quichuas from their syncretized form of Catholicism to Evangelical Protestant Christianity. It would be wise to examine the motivations for and results of each shift in order to discern the nature of the remaining Catholicism and how errors may be avoided.

A Quick Overview

The Highland Quichuas are an indigenous people group that lives in the Andes of South America. The twenty five million people of the macro-culture live in Ecuador, Perú, Bolivia, Argentina, and Chile. They were conquered, subjugated for centuries, and considered virtually animals who were the property of the land owners. They are the lowest of the socioeconomic strata. They can be distinguished anthropometrically from Europeans and mestizos¹ alike by their “tea-colored” skin, short legs, elongated torsos and numerous other physical and cultural features that set them apart. They were a peaceful, agrarian society that lived high in the Andes at elevations of 7,000 to 15,000 feet above sea level. They were animists who worshiped the earth goddess, Pachamama, and the spirits of the land. They were easily conquered by the warlords of the Inca empire.

The Inca empire was born in the southern portion of Perú about the year 1438 AD. The exact origin of the Inca empire is the stuff of which legends are made. However it arose, it became a powerful, well-organized nation that spread quickly to the north. Within one hundred years the Inca empire extended from south of Santiago, Chile to southern Colombia (McIntyre 1975). The

Incas subjugated all that they encountered. One of the largest groups that they met on their march north was the Highland Quichua (HQ) nation.

The Inca had a complex political, agricultural, and religious system. The HQ were absorbed into the Inca empire as the working class. They served the Inca rulers for a hundred years and were taught to worship them as incarnations of the sun god. The Inca so infiltrated the HQ culture that its influence still continues. This was the scene onto which the Spanish conquistadors arrived.

They arrived in 1532 led by Francisco Pizarro. The adventurers came in search of gold and fame. They found not only gold but also a vast new world for the Spanish crown. The Spaniards betrayed and massacred the Inca ruler, Atahualpa, and subjugated his people (Mason 1964). The Spanish conquistadors brought Roman Catholic missionaries with them to establish a church in the New World (Dilworth 1967, Innes 1969, Villasís 1987).

The Roman Catholic Church (RCC) had a stake in the new world as well. The Pope wanted the new population to surrender to his and the Church's authority. Assuming a *tabula rasa* in the hearts and minds of the Highland Quichuas, a process was begun which "Christianized" the masses rather than evangelized them.² The records show that some of these Catholic missionaries were altruistic and sincere in their efforts. However, many of the Catholic workers who accompanied the conquistadors were also tainted by the quest for gold and fame (Prescott 1847).

In the last twenty-five years, an ever-increasing number of the HQ people have been moving from the mixture of the religious influences of their history to become Evangelical Protestants (Núñez and Taylor 1989, Stoll 1990, Berg and Pretiz 1992, Sills 1997, 2001). This step is being taken even as many other segments of the HQ population are demanding national independence from Ecuador (Jijón 1996). The voice of the HQ is being heard on a national and international level. In February of 2000 the HQ of Ecuador led the first ever successful political coup by indigenous people in the Americas by ousting then President Jamil Mahuad (*El Comercio*, March 13, 2000). Ecuador is facing an identity crisis as the HQ half of its population awakens and demands to be recognized.

There is a religious movement of tens of thousands of HQ from a highly syncretized, animistic Roman Catholicism to Evangelical Protestantism (EP). Protestant Missionaries have worked among them since 1903 with little fruit. After fifty years of working among the HQ of Chimborazo province in central Ecuador, Gospel Missionary Union missionary, Julia Woodward, could count on one hand the number of converts she had seen (Maust 1982). That was 1953, and it would be two more years before the first three baptisms would occur.

Today, this same province of Ecuador has 10,000 HQ members in EP churches and 20,000 in the worship services (Stoll 1990). In 1986, the EPHQ pastors in Ecuador claimed to have 50,000 attending their services. The Roman Catholic authorities said it was more--perhaps even 30 percent of the entire indigenous population (Stoll 1990). A May 2001 article in the Ecuadorian newspaper, *El Comercio*, states that 62 percent of Ecuador's 5.5 million HQ people identify themselves as Evangelical Protestant. Buhlman quotes a cardinal remarking on the EP

movement in Latin America as saying, "When the pope thinks of Latin America in the evening, he cannot sleep that night" (Buhlman 1977, 154).

However, some cynics claim that the move is merely a racial solidarity movement, or is otherwise politically motivated. There is great prejudice against the HQ in Ecuador. A common graffiti in the capital city says, "Be a patriot, kill an Indian!" The polarization of HQ and mestizos gives reason for the HQ to rally together. Some say that the EP movement is simply a means toward this end. Stoll states that anthropologists Joseph Casagrande, Blanca Muratorio, and Ecuadorian Roberto Santana concur with him that the current Evangelical Protestant movement among the HQ is an "ethnic revitalization movement" and the fruit of their desire for "ethnic autonomy" (Stoll 1990, 298). There are almost as many different opinions as there are detractors.

Perhaps the new HQ form of Evangelical Protestantism is resulting in simply a new syncretized folk religion. Some say that the EP movement is another expression of folk Catholicism (Poblete and Galilea 1984). Berg and Pretiz find that anthropologists and sociologists see very little difference between the RCC and EP popular religiosity. They state that some have noticed that the EP stress upon healing and material blessings make it look like ". . . a Protestant equivalent of Catholic popular religiosity" (Berg and Pretiz 1996b, 158). Some would say that the current generation of missionaries working among the HQ is simply witnessing a realignment of loyalties for expediency.

What is the difference, if any, between the past major religious movements among HQ and the current movement? Is the current movement a genuine break with the past and an embracing of Jesus Christ and His teachings or is it something less?

The findings and conclusions of my first dissertation supported the belief that the current religious movement reflects genuine conversion and is not like the previous major religious movements. But, how can EP missionaries work to ensure that the syncretism of past movements do not infect the church today? What mistakes did the RCC commit and how can we avoid them today?

First notice what existed when the RCC arrived and how it got that way.

This section addresses the motivations and results of the first two major religious movements among the HQ of Andean Ecuador. An understanding of the cultures, methods of conquest, and religions involved in these movements is essential. These religious movements involved hundreds of thousands of people and many years. Religious movements among ethnic groups do not occur in a vacuum; there are always extenuating circumstances. The cultural context surrounding each must be established as well. In this way, the reader will understand and appreciate the impact and pertinence of the findings.

However, it is not our purpose to provide an exhaustive ethnographic description of the Inca or HQ. Neither is it our aim to provide a thorough and detailed chronology of the historical events surrounding these movements. Such studies have been conducted and reported by many scholars including the excellent theses of Dilworth and Klassen (Dilworth 1967, Klassen 1974). The

purpose of the background information which follows is simply to provide a context in which to understand the explanation for the syncretism.

The Motivations for the First Religious Movement

The HQ were forced to accept the hierarchical form of animism held by the Inca. They were allowed to add the Inca form to their own system as long as the Inca animism was supreme. The Inca used methods such as ridicule and public whipping of the idol-gods of conquered peoples to convince them to worship as the Inca (Cobo 1979). Dilworth says, "Here was an empire controlled by absolute power. Capital punishment was the penalty for theft, adultery, and blasphemy against the sun god" (Dilworth 1967, 11). However, the introduction of a new religion was not adopted and adapted by the HQ entirely under duress. The HQ seemed to have embraced the new system as advantages were seen and compromises easily found.

The HQ saw that the Inca form of animism held many aspects in common with its own. They saw that the Inca worshiped the earth, the sun, the moon, and other aspects of nature. This enabled the HQ to identify easily with the Inca animism.

The Inca also allowed the syncretism of religions among its conquered people. One characteristic of animism is that it tends to be geographically determined, i.e., peoples near the ocean worship the ocean, mountain people worship the sun, the mountains, and the volcanoes, the jungle people worship the spirits of the animals, etc. This enabled the HQ to accept the Inca form of animism but to continue worshiping their own gods. Since none of their gods made any claim to absolute monotheistic dominance, this was a natural step.

The HQ found many advantages to following the way of the Inca. They quickly saw that the rebellious groups were exiled. They also noticed the well-ordered society of the Inca, the intelligence and wisdom of the new rulers, and the advantages to "fitting in." The Inca empire had even found a way to store food for long periods of time and so provide deliverance when there was no harvest. This must have impressed on them that *Pachamama* (the mother earth goddess) was pleased with the Inca way of worship.

Cobo stresses the "advantage" aspect of embracing the Inca religion by the indigenous cultures. He says that the Inca did not allow the conquered people to participate in the cult at first. It was held just out of reach in such a way that it came to be an honor to be allowed to profess it. Cobo says that they came to regard the Inca religion with more esteem than their own (Cobo 1979). The objective of the Inca was to make those conquered believe that only the Inca, and those whom they permitted, were able to worship *Viracocha* (the highest god and creator). Those who submitted to the Inca and were allowed to be a part of the Inca religion cult considered the honor a "great reward for their services" (Cobo 1979, 4).

In summary, the HQ motivations for the first major religious movement from their own form of animism to the Inca form were:

1. The Inca form of animism was enforced as the State religion.
2. The HQ identified easily with the new religion since it had much in common with their own.

3. Syncretism was not only allowed, it was encouraged and modeled for them by the conquerors.
4. It was advantageous for the HQ to accept the new religion, not only to avoid persecution, but to receive one's share of the new empire.

The Results of the First Religious Movement

The result of the first major religious movement of the HQ was syncretism pure and simple. Klassen states, "As a result of the Inca domination the numerous tribes and groups were taught religious syncretism. The emphasis was on addition not substitution" (Klassen 1974, 14). The Inca empire has been shown to allow syncretism and even to engage in such practice itself. The HQ were taught and led in HQ/Inca syncretism worship by Inca holy men as they were made to submit, not lead.

This syncretism continues to show itself in practice today. The most abiding aspects of this blend of religions is seen in the annual festival *Inti-Raymi* which celebrates the sun god, veneration of *Pachamama*, and mountain worship.

The HQ predate the Inca in Andean Ecuador. They lived there for hundreds of years with their own form of animism (Klassen 1974). When the Inca came, the empire's version of Andean animism was brought in and superimposed over the existing form. The blend was at once enforced, allowed, welcomed, adopted, and adapted. The remaining mixture was the result of the first major religious movement. This new form of HQ religion, when less than one hundred years old, was encountered by the Spaniards and their RCC missionaries. The HQ/Inca syncretism would not remain the religion of the HQ.

Not Catholic Bashing

As we begin this next section I want to stress that I am not Catholic bashing. After all, although they were misinformed and, for the most part, poor representatives of Christ, they were seeking to involve themselves in missions and extend Christ's kingdom the only way they knew.

Missions presentations from missionaries to Latin America always require an explanation because, inevitably, someone has an aunt or grandmother who is a "devout Catholic and warm-hearted Christian." While we certainly do not agree with RCC doctrine, rather than curse the darkness, we should prefer to light a candle. That is, we hope that an historical overview of the period will shed light and enable us to discern the errors of the past and avoid them in our endeavors. As a missionary in Latin America, I always stressed that being born again was more important than the church to which you belonged, believing as I do that the Holy Spirit will guide us into all truth.

What kind of RCC came to the New World? Remember that every church is informed to some degree by its culture and worldview. Christianity is not expressed in history in any pure form as if in a heavenly vacuum. What, then, was the historical context of the Catholic missionaries and their work in the Americas?

It is significant that from the 8th century to the end of the 15th century the Muslims occupied varying amounts of territory in the Iberian peninsula. Constant struggles were engaged to force

them out. During these eight centuries, spiritual battles between Jews, Catholics, and Muslims raged right alongside the flashing swords. The inquisition of medieval times pales in comparison with the exacting tortures of the Spanish inquisition that reigned from 1428-1820 for the purpose of purifying the RCC and ridding the world of “heretics.” The Spanish Inquisition not only illustrates their zeal for Catholicism but its severity colored their dogmatic RCC conservatism.

The Reformation, of course, began in earnest in the early 16th century. The Reformation, Counter-Reformation, and subsequent wrestling with biblical truth, brought about new understandings, tempered dogma, and broader perspectives even in the minds of many Catholics. But this fresh air of Reformation that was blowing throughout Europe never really penetrated south of the Pyrenees. However, this is not really an issue since the conquistadors and missionaries sailed about twenty years before that first Reformation Day of 1517.

In 1492 the Moors were finally pushed back across the Strait of Gibraltar and Columbus was given permission to sail by Ferdinand and Isabella. The Spanish explorers and conquistadors who followed took RCC missionaries with them. Notice what they did and did not do.

The Second Religious Movement

In 1532, Francisco Pizarro arrived in Perú with a contingent of Spanish soldier-adventurers seeking gold for the crown. The journey detailed by William Prescott shows that it was a perilous journey and a circuitous chain of events that led them to their landing on the Pacific shores of Perú (Prescott 1847). Although Pizarro was vastly outnumbered by the fierce Inca army, several things worked in his favor.

The Inca origin myth protected the Spaniards. Pizarro and his men were not killed immediately as could have easily been accomplished (Prescott 1847, McIntyre 1975). A legend existed that said the gods had left the area of Lake Titicaca and Cuzco. The legend holds that they departed Perú by walking across the sea. The gods are said to have been white men with beards and blue eyes. The legend states that they would one day return. The legend is said to be one possible reason that the Spaniards were spared certain death. Pizarro and his men were granted an audience instead of executions due to the hope that the gods had returned (Klassen 1974, McIntyre 1975). In battles he was aided by the fact that he and many of his men had guns and horses. The guns, cannon, and horses were all new to the Inca.

The Inca literally paved the way for the Spaniard; this is because of the intricate and extensive Inca road system. Without this road system, the cannons and horses would have done the Spaniards no good. The rugged Andean mountains were impassable for even a small group outfitted like Pizarro’s. In addition to their roads, the Inca had made bridges over passes and rivers that dropped hundreds of feet. The Spanish traveled quickly over such well laid highways. The areas where the roads did not reach were never conquered by the Inca nor the Spaniards (Gladwell 1980).

The Roman Catholic Church of the Spaniards

The RCC of the conquistadors was the pre-Reformational Catholicism of the Spanish Inquisition. It was monolithic and unyielding. The RCC demanded unconditional surrender and the Spanish forces were eager to carry out the demand. There were some RCC clerics who felt

compassion for the indigenous people. These were men such as Jesuits Bernabé Cobo, José de Acosta, and the Dominican monk and bishop Bartolomé de las Casas.

Klassen's research claims, "Threatened with the fear of death, the Indians were converted and baptized by the tens of thousands" (Klassen 1974, 22). The goal of the RCC was to get them to submit to the authority of the church and accept what it commanded. This comprised the RCC evangelization of the New World. Marzal states ". . . during the first years of the Conquest the ones placed in charge saw baptism as a form of legitimization, and the Indians viewed it as a social price which had to be borne" (Marzal 1996, 98).

Highland Quichua Roman Catholicism

As the change in outward form of religion came without understanding the new, the old religion simply found expression in acceptable RCC ways. Thus began the syncretism that exists today. The many parallels between the RCC and the HQ/Inca animism further enabled the blend. The many spirits of the mountains and natural phenomena could easily be renamed with saint names and the old idols could be replaced with new ones (Marzal 1996). Just as the HQ had prayed to the *apus* (mountain spirits), they saw the RCC praying to saints. Marzal finds that the reclothing of the old religions is the natural result of "compulsory evangelisation" (Marzal 1996, 18). The razing of the HQ/Inca syncretism temples and *huacas* (holy high places) with the construction of RCC chapels and shrines in their place made syncretism not only natural but easy.

The *Pachamama* cult found a substitute in Mariolatry. The cult of Mary in South America today is stronger and more defined than the doctrine of Christ; many prefer to think of her as co-redemptrix and would prefer a Quartet to a Trinity. According to what the HQ had learned from the Inca, as long as there was no conflict, the religions could all be added together (Wonderly 1967).

The Motivations for the Second Religious Movement

The second major religious movement of the HQ was from HQ/Inca syncretism to HQRCC. The motivation for it was in part due to the fact that the Conquest was led by men who looked remarkably like the legendary description of the creator god. The Conquest was also of a military nature and the conquistadors had weapons superior to their own. This military superiority enabled the conquering forces to require absolute obedience to their king, pope, and church.

In summary, the motivations for the second major religious movement of the HQ from the HQ/Inca syncretism to HQRCC are the following.

1. A legend warned the indigenous people that the creator god was a bearded white man who would return one day from across the water.
2. A powerful invading military enforced the new RCC as the State religion.
3. The conquistadors outlawed the HQ/Inca syncretism and sought to destroy it.
4. There was much in common between the HQ/Inca syncretism and the HQRCC so that they were able to syncretize it and justify their acceptance.
5. They found it to be very advantageous to accept the religion being imposed by the new rulers and owners of the land.

The Result of the Second Religious Movement

The result of the second major religious movement of the HQ was another syncretism. As has been described above, the parallels between the two religions, and the RCC emphasis upon outward forms of acceptance without heart conversion, combined to blend the HQ/Inca syncretism and the RCC into the HQRCC. The HQRCC is an aberrant form of RCC which is highly superstitious and animistic. In fact, the RCC priest and educator Marzal has shown that the syncretized HQRCC grows from its Andean HQ/Inca syncretism and RCC roots into a religion with two faces.

The HQ of this syncretism live in fear of the spirits and the saints, so they pray to both. They live in fear of offending *Pachamama* and the Virgin Mary so they sacrifice to both. They worry when their children become sick so they visit the HQ *curandero* (shaman) to get the traditional healing from the animistic spirits as well as the mestizo priest to get a prayer or a mass said for the patient. Baptism is accepted for their children but has come to mean protection from lightning (Marzal 1996). Prayers are chanted at the grave when burying family members to help them pass through the curtain to the land of the spirits (Marzal 1996). The HQRCC is highly animistic.

Commonalities of the Previous Religious Movements

The Commonalities in Motivation

In summary form, the motivations found to be in common between the first and second major religious movements of the HQ are as follows:

1. A nation with a powerful military invaded and enforced a new religion as the official State religion.
2. Many aspects were found in common between the old and new religions and these parallels made the new religion easier to accept.
3. Since the invading forces remained as the reigning conquerors, it was advantageous to accept their religion so as to avoid persecution as well as to receive one's share in the new order.
4. This reveals the movement to the new religion to be self-serving rather than the result of heart conversion.

The Commonalities in Results

The first two major religious movements among the HQ of Andean Ecuador under consideration have four aspects in common.

1. The movement from the old religion into the new resulted in a syncretized form of the two religions rather than a pure rejection of the old and an embracing of the new.
2. Both movements retained the animistic elements of previous religions.
3. Both movements resulted in the HQ being under the religious domination of conquering forces.
4. Both resulted in the HQ submitting to the holy men of the new religion without their own cultural representatives in leadership positions.

What is the prevalent form of RCC in Andean Ecuador today?

A few years ago Pope John Paul II was taken on a tour of the RCC in Latin America. He is said to have remarked after viewing all of the current manifestations of his church there that, "Latin

America needs to be re-evangelized.” Of course, the truth is that Latin America needs to be evangelized for the first time. The initial invasion of Europeans (as indigenous people in the Americas refer to Columbus’s discovery of the New World) brought RCC missionaries who “Christianized” the masses by force in violation of John 1:13 among many other passages.

These people movements in Latin America that find many coming to Christ in Evangelical Protestant churches have resulted in the RCC losing 400 people per hour to EP churches. In Brazil, it is over 800 per hour. This hemorrhaging loss has led the current Pope to return to refer to EP believers as “ravenous wolves” rather than the “separated brethren” label we received in Vatican II.

Motivations for Current Movement away from RCC

Ten primary motivations can be delineated regarding the current movement from HQRCC to EP which further describe the RCC in Andean Ecuador today.

1. The HQ have seen that their oppression has been brought about by an alliance of the RCC, the government, and the ruling socioeconomic class and they long to distance themselves from this alliance.
2. The HQ have never had any cultural representatives in the priesthood of the HQRCC and, therefore, have had to depend upon mestizos in a shrinking RCC priesthood.
3. The RCC never sought bridges for contextualizing the Gospel. This resulted in a syncretized HQRCC which appeared foreign and out of reach.
4. EPHQ leaders have emerged to plant autochthonous churches using culturally accepted methods and HQ musical tunes and instruments.
5. The EP movement allows the HQ to take control of his life and join other HQ in a people movement to EP.
6. The love and compassion shown by the EP missionaries and EPHQ has proven their concern for the HQ and gained a hearing for the Gospel.
7. The fears that are inherent in the HQ animism and the HQRCC make the Gospel very attractive to the HQ.
8. The Scripture translation work that is underway for the Quichua language has shown that EP missionary interest in the culture is genuine and that the cultures of the Bible are like the HQ in many respects.
9. The upward mobility that is brought about by the entrance of the Gospel in a HQ community or clan is a motivating factor.10) The greatest motivation for the EPHQ movement is the conviction of sin by the Holy Spirit and His regenerating work in the heart of HQ.

Summary of the Results of the Current Movement

In summary form, the result of the current movement among the HQ of Andean Ecuador from HQRCC to EP is as follows:

1. A humble, sincere body of believers that suffers persecution quietly and responds in love and respect rather than retaliation.
2. Christian believers who study the Scriptures and seek to bring their lives in line with what they teach.
3. A body of believers whose leadership has emerged from its own ethnic group to be trained and equipped as pastor-teachers.

4. A church of disciples of Jesus Christ that reproduces other Christians through evangelism and advances the cause of Christ among them by planting churches in other HQ communities.

How are Evangelicals to avoid syncretism in this context?

As responsible ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ, we would do well to study the history of the expansion of Christianity as well as the methodologies used by all who have gone before us in order to avoid their errors and to exploit their discoveries. We would be poor stewards not to stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before us and so be able to see beyond the horizons of the past.

1. Study to understand the HQ culture. The following advice from Dayton and Fraser is especially applicable in the HQ context, “The single most important element in planning strategies for evangelism is an understanding of the people to be evangelized.” They continue “Standard solutions to evangelize non-standard peoples violate the humanity of those being evangelized. They also make an offensive confusion of the Kingdom of God” (Dayton and Fraser 1990, 79).

2. Conduct all ministry in the Quichua language, and specifically, in the local dialect. A second-best approach is to conduct ministry in Spanish and utilize local Quichua interpreters. An unacceptable approach is to disregard Quichua and hope for good understanding of Spanish.

3. Pay close attention to HQ cultural norms and customs. For instance, one of World Vision’s problems has been to hold meetings in nice hotels where HQ do not feel welcome (Schreck and Paredes 1989). When Spanish is the ministry language and meetings are held in a mestizo context, hierarchical decision making comes too easily. HQ make decisions by seeking a consensus. The HQ style of leadership is by example and personal persuasion rather than by authoritarian control.

4. When major shifts are occurring among the seemingly “timeless” HQ, check to see what the motivations are as well as the resulting religion. Do not assume. Compare these motivations and results with those of former shifts to see whether they are the same or not.

5. Be very careful with the tendency to syncretize the HQ animism with EP among the HQ. They do not think or communicate with abstract concepts. Be very aware of their animistic tendencies and help them to be so as well.

6. Individualism is an unknown concept. Family relationships are of great importance. North American missionaries especially should be aware of our tendency to elicit decisions from individuals. Even decisions which affect individuals are made on a consensus basis.

Leadership Training

7. It is imperative to train HQ leaders. The Lausanne Committee found, “Local leadership must be developed from the first moment of work, with due confidence in indigenous leaders to lead their people” (Lausanne 1980, 19). However, care must be taken here. Some EP efforts have failed because a leader was selected by an outsider and not accepted by the HQ themselves. The

Gospel seemed to have been rejected, but really it was the local leader. The elders who are respected at the community level are usually married, older, and have leadership experience. The missionary should follow this cultural “lead” when choosing leaders in the church.

8. The women and children must be considered in any strategy. Outsiders often plan leadership training courses thinking that only the leaders will come. Families will come together and all must be included in any strategy. The concept of a nursery for the children while adults are in church is foreign. Everything is a family activity.

9. Oral biblical instruction is much more necessary with the HQ. This is owing to their animistic tendencies as well as to the high preliteracy. Mestizo converts may read the Bible or Christian books. HQ must be instructed orally from the basics forward. SIM reports that one EPHQ group that had been meeting for ten years did not know who Adam was (SIMNOW 1995).

Church Planting Among the Highland Quichuas

10. Given their oral history and high preliteracy, the “Chronological Bible Storying” method of sharing the Gospel and teaching the Scriptures is very successful. For these same reasons, the use of Christian films with Quichua dubbed over the sound track would be of much value.

11. All of the researchers studied have stressed the necessity of cultural substitutes. Great caution should be exercised regarding redemptive analogies that could lead to syncretism. HQ cultural events are important and the works which have taken root and grown in HQ soil employ substitutes. The HQ culture has always known *fiestas* with drinking and sexual promiscuity. EPHQ churches must have times of sober celebration to mark major life events if Christianity is to be accepted and not seen as foreign. Christian substitutes have been found and utilized for the *compadrazgo* (godparent/godchild) complex, haircutting ceremonies³, use of indigenous music and musical instruments, festivals of thanksgiving, harvest festivals, and baptism of infants. All should find some functional substitute in EPHQ churches which should worship in Quichua.

12. Ministries of mercy are all highly effective among the HQ. This effectiveness is sometimes seen and unfairly criticized. It is said that the HQ is taking a step of convenience to EP churches. However, the ministries of mercy are proof to the HQ that the EP missionaries are not out to “get” but rather to “give.” In addition to our own experience, others also point out the necessity of a ministry of helps (Reyburn 1954, Klassen 1974, Lausanne 1980, Stoll 1990). Effective ministries include medical clinics, schools, Scripture distribution, literacy work, radio teaching, and conferences. These should not be used as manipulative tools but as an outgrowth of love for them.

13. Decision making is not the choice of an individual. In HQ society, the community elders make the decision for the group after hearing from the people. Decisions for Christ are not made in church but rather in the home after conferring with family. This communal thinking is even evident linguistically in the first person plural pronouns. Quichua can express this pronoun inclusively as in “we and you.” Or it can express an exclusive idea, “we, but not you” (Lausanne 1980, 10).

14. The HQ culture requires great effort to understand it, be accepted in it, win converts, and plant a church. The frustrating fact is that this process must begin anew in each community. The rapport that it takes an outsider months to attain is attained quickly by another HQ. For this reason, William Carey's belief, "if India is to be won for Christ, the Indians will have to do it," is very appropriate in Andean Ecuador.

What are the dangers today?

The dangers of repeated syncretism today are legion. The syncretism explicitly taught to the HQ by the Inca and that unwittingly allowed by the RCC is still rampant. There are also other, new factors that exacerbate the possibility of fresh mixtures. One can quickly see seven dangers.

1. The EP church growth has far outstripped its trained leadership. In 1900 the first two missionaries began to work with the HQ. By 1955 the first three HQ were baptized. Fifteen years later, after an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in what could be called the Andean Great Awakening, there were over 350,000 believers. Today 62% of the HQ population identify themselves as EP. This is a "self-identification" for census purposes. No missionaries working among them would agree to such a high percentage; this would put the HQ born again believers at 3.2 million. However, the good news is that at least 62% of the HQ population say that they are not RCC. This means that they are open to hearing the Gospel.

2. The problem is that there are only approximately 2000 HQ Evangelical Protestant churches and these only seat about fifty people each. There are only 500 HQ pastors and none of these are trained as we would understand it. Due to the rugged nature of the Andes and the geography of the locations, some of these pastors are pastoring eight, ten, and twelve churches. There are very few training programs for HQ pastors.

3. There are eight dialects of Quichua in Ecuador alone. Five of these are not mutually intelligible. Only two dialects have a Bible, a third has only a New Testament. The HQ are an oral culture (as is roughly 70% of the world's population), therefore they are preliterate. They will have to be taught to read and write even after Scriptures are made available.

4. Another danger is the Pachakutik ethnicity movement underway in Ecuador today. Many are returning to their racial roots and declaring themselves to be separate from the nation of Ecuador. It is a movement that could sweep EP right along with it and undermine true Christianity, a la Constantine, or bar it from the culture as a "white man's religion."

5. Yet another danger is the vast emigration to Spain that is ongoing. In the last two years ten percent of the population has left the country looking for work. In many villages and towns in the mountains there are no men left to work, only young boys and very old men. Women are picking up the gender-specific roles of the men and thereby changing the culture. In other cases Peruvians are coming in and taking the work--along with the money earned. In addition to the economic hardships and the culture change, the families are taking a devastating blow in the aftermath of immigration. Many children have the money that absent parents send back to them where they live with grandparents, but they lack parental love and guidance in the home.

6. The dangers extend beyond the indigenous populations. Among the mestizo churches there is a dearth of leadership. In 1996 the IMB conducted a survey in which they discovered that there were only 160 Baptist churches. Only eighty of these churches had pastors. Of the eighty pastors that were in the country, only fourteen had been to seminary. Yet, this was the year that the IMB pulled out of theological education and the seminary all but closed.

7. One final danger to be mentioned is popular religiosity. Popular religiosity is being compared by many to a syncretized form of animism, RCC, and EP. It is basically a miracle cult that seeks a financial blessing or a healing in times of distress, much like the adherents of RCC seeking a miracle from the saints or Mary. One can see posters downtown advertising an upcoming crusade with photos of people with open mouths showing how God turned their fillings to real gold during the crusade. One cannot help but wonder why a God who could do that would not simply heal the tooth. There are also the claims of those who wore costume jewelry to a crusade and it turned to real gold during the service. This popular religiosity is a continuation of the syncretized RCC that saturates all of life in Latin America. EP believers in the USA are quick to condemn this animistic syncretism in its blatant form but fail to notice the same dynamic at work when a curse is blamed for the loss of a baseball series.

How can the RCC mistakes be avoided?

Intercultural skills are essential for avoiding the mistakes of the past. The Inca did not know or care about the cultures that they invaded. The RCC did not know or care about the cultures that they invaded. Both simply wanted to superimpose their religious system on a conquered people. The Inca encouraged syncretism as it served their interests. The RCC did not know to discourage it. The conquered people did the only thing they knew to do, blend the two together into a syncretism that answered all of life's questions.

We must learn what the people believe in order to teach how Christ and His Word speak to every area of life. When the missionary is not present, or when the leaders who are guiding these believers have not been trained to rightly divide the Word, they will create answers to life's problems that are mixed with past beliefs. When a villager is ready to plant a new crop and wants to know how to ensure crop success, he will do that in the only way he knows, and this involves Pachamama. When a child dies in an animistic context, the question is not "how" she died, but rather "why" she died. The question must and will be answered, usually by placing blame on the witch doctor in a rival village.

Paul G. Hiebert addresses this failure on the part of missionaries as the *Flaw of the Excluded Middle*. He states that most of the cultures of the world have a worldview that includes three levels. First, everyday life that we can see and hear. Second, animistic cultures live in a world saturated with both benevolent and malevolent spirits, ghosts of the recently departed dead, good and bad luck, evil forces, magic, and spirits of the mountains, jungle animals, volcanoes, etc. all of which must be appeased. Third, above all of this, is a creator god whom they venerate.

Western missionaries often go preaching about our Creator God and His love for us. We teach all about the doctrine of God and how He interacts with us. We also teach how He wants us to treat one another. We fail to address this "middle" area since it does not really exist for us, never

knowing that for them it constitutes all of life. There is no part of their life that is not consumed with their animism.

When we do not address it directly, they may eventually accept what we teach about the Most High God and also about man but they will continue with what they have always believed about the middle and find a way to make it “fit.” Hiebert writes that for years missionaries preached the Gospel thinking that as people accepted their teaching the old religion disappeared. In fact, Hiebert says, it only went underground awaiting opportunities to spring up again. We must learn these folk religions and worldviews so that we can address them with the Word of Truth.

In light of this critical failure to understand the worldview and culture, on the part of the RCC and many generations of EP missionaries as well, we can see how study of cultural anthropology can aid us in preaching and teaching the Gospel message. In fact, if missionaries of the past had possessed skills in understanding diverse cultures many martyrdoms might have ended differently. RCC missionaries went out with the culture of Spain and forced themselves on indigenous populations with the command, “Submit to the authority of the Pope and the King and Queen of Spain.” They cared little for the culture; if anything, the culture of the indigenous people was a cumbersome bother to be overcome and brought into line with Spanish customs and culture.

Intercultural communication skills are also helpful for recognizing the differing worldviews that cultures hold. Worldviews are much like the “software” of our brains. If we go with a Windows-based worldview and preach in a MAC-based culture context, the interface will not be smooth and we will not communicate clearly as we desire. Of course, this is not only true for crossing geopolitical lines. Pastors and teachers would do well to learn these skills before going to pastor in another area of their own country. In addition, pastors who serve in their own hometowns are constantly ministering to and among people of different cultural backgrounds as new members come from other states, and even from other countries. Intercultural communication should be a required course for all who seek to communicate the Gospel clearly in our age of rapid globalization.

Communicating clearly with another culture requires the language skills, obviously, but language is verbal *and* non-verbal. There is much more to communicating than speaking words. Body language, appearance, gestures, space, and a host of other factors are not only essential parts of the communication process, they differ from culture to culture. The RCC did not know or care about this truth. They preached their message in Latin until 1962.

Some cultures are more group oriented and collectivist while ours tends to be individualistic. Others are direct communicators and some are cultures characterized by indirect communication. Some cultures are very egalitarian regarding gender issues and others are masculine like our own. Some cultures seek to conceal any vulnerability while others are thrill seekers willing to try anything new. Some have a long-term orientation and this clashes with those who have a short-term orientation. All of these factors, and dozens more, are a part of the cultural preferences that inform our willingness and ability to interact with others.

What was the last command of our Lord Jesus Christ that we remember as the Great Commission? Jesus did not command us to go and get decisions from all people, nor to plant churches among all people. He said that we are to make disciples. But how can we do that? This awesome responsibility requires teaching them. To teach them we must be able to understand and be understood. To do that we must learn the culture. To learn the culture we must dedicate ourselves to the task. It includes bibliographic research, of course, but it also includes participant observation, language learning, and many other tools of responsible ethnographic research for effective intercultural communication. The RCC did not come as learners, they came as conquerors bent on imposing an uncontextualized religion, culture, and worldview on the conquered.

I was once helping a Baptist pastor who was in the USA and wanted to bring pastors on two-week trips to teach our people. After a time, the indigenous believers came to me and reported that this ministry was highly offensive to them due to some cultural insensitivity and a belittling attitude. These men were well-intentioned but were clueless regarding the culture of the HQ. I emailed the HQ concerns to this lead pastor in the USA. He did not respond. After several more complaints from the HQ brothers, I sent another email. I finally got a response that explained his desire to continue his original plan for ministry and closed with “We don’t care about the culture, we just want to teach the Bible.”

That was also the position of 16th century Roman Catholicism which led to ChristiAnimism: a superstitious syncretism that is the mixture of at least two religions, retaining elements of each but resulting in a third. Understanding the culture is the key to effectively engaging it for the glory of Christ and the advance of the kingdom within it.

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[Top of page](#)

Comparative Religion Chart for Andean Ecuador⁴				
<u>Basic Religious Beliefs</u>	<u>*Protestant</u>	<u>*Roman Catholicism</u>	<u>*Animism</u>	<u>HIGHLAND QUICHUA Syncretistic Animism</u>
Supreme Being	One God, revealed and experienced as Trinity; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit	Same as Protestant	Creator god. Empowers lesser beings.	Creator, Viracocha. God of Roman Catholicism, Mary, animistic spirits.
Key Figure in History	Jesus Christ	Jesus Christ	None	Virgin Mary
Teachings on Christ	One divine person, eternal with two natures, divine and human. Supreme ex. of God’s love for humankind and His intended pattern of living. God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.	Same as Protestant	No interest in Christ.	Christ is rarely mentioned. If so, He is either dead on the cross or a baby in His mother’s arms. Catholic doctrine subjugates Christ to Mary. She makes Christ and His work available to men.

Holy Spirit	Eternal member of the Trinity. Guide of Churches and Christians	Same as Protestant	God's presence and influence, active in the world, especially in nature.	Same as animism.
Holy Writings	Bible (Old and New Testaments). Authoritative unique, inspired Word of God. Norm of faith and practice.	Bible inspired and authoritative Canon includes 7 O.T. apocryphal books. Tradition reflects and interprets Scripture.	Oral (some written) tradition, folklore, accumulated wisdom of tribe.	Catholic and animism mixed with greatest emphasis on aural tradition since there was no written alphabet before Spanish.
Doctrine of Man	Created in God's image. Since Adam's fall, sin is inherent, all relationships are damaged beyond human ability to repair.	Persons able to respond to God with love or rejection; unable alone to avoid all sin.	Humans are subordinate to supernatural forces and spirit-beings.	Same as animism. God and Mary must be appeased by man's efforts through sacrifice, fiestas, and penance.
Doctrine of Sin	Willful rebellion against God.	Guilt of sin inherited (Mary uniquely excepted); pride is basic sin.	Acts which upset the harmony of nature, gods, or community.	Failure to offer to Pachamama, attend fiestas, obey priests, honor the virgin, shame clan and community.
Doctrine of Salvation	God's gift through Christ's atonement, received by grace through faith in Christ.	God's grace through Christ's atonement. Received through the sacraments, works through the Church. Mary is the key.	Well-being of the individual or tribe. Gained by prayer, pledges and sacrifice. Helps of spirits or ancestors.	Temporal salvation/ well-being found through traditional religion. Eternal salvation is through Catholic church and Mary, works, and obedience.
Life After Death	Eternal communion with God (Heaven) or eternal separation from God (Hell)	Purgatory, intermediate state of cleansing before Heaven. Heaven and Hell are almost identical with Protestantism	Existence in life is patterned after this world, but free of pain and suffering. Wicked are forgotten or annihilated.	Combination of Catholicism and animism. The future is never emphasized. The here and now is more important than eternal life.

Endnotes:

1. Mestizos are the race which has resulted from the mixture of the Spanish conquistadors and the indigenous people groups that were in the Americas. The mestizos are the ruling, dominant culture in Latin America today.
2. These terms are used advisedly to indicate that Roman Catholicism was imposed as the official religion. The vast majority of the indigenous people of Spanish South America were made Catholic Christians by submission to baptism, not by a presentation of the Gospel and the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.
3. Among the HQ, a boy's hair is not cut for the first time until he reaches six years of age. It is believed that uncut hair gives him strength to fight off the many diseases which decimate their children. A child is not named until he or she is a month old for this same reason.
4. Asterisks indicate that this information was obtained from a pamphlet printed by the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, publication 363-40P.

[Top of page](#)

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