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

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RELIGION IN PUERTO RICO

Country Overview

The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico is located in the Caribbean Sea, east of the Dominican Republic and west of the Virgin Islands. Geographically, Puerto Rico is an archipelago that includes the main island of Puerto Rico and a number of smaller islands and keys, the largest of which are Vieques, Culebra and Mona. In terms of size, the main island of Puerto Rico is the smallest by land area and second smallest by population in the Greater Antilles, which includes Cuba, Hispaniola and Jamaica. Puerto Rico, popularly known as "The Island of Enchantment," has a land area of 3,425 square miles (8,870 km²) and 1,900 square miles (4,900 km²) is water. It has a population of 3,994,259 (July 2007 estimate), mostly of European and African heritage.

San Juan is the capital and most populous municipality in Puerto Rico. According to the U.S. Census of 2000, it had a population of 433,733, which would rank as the 42nd-largest city in the U.S. if counted as such. The population of the San Juan Metropolitan Statistical Area (SJMSA), including San Juan and the municipalities of Bayamón, Guaynabo, Cataño, Canóvanas, Caguas, Toa Alta, Toa Baja, Carolina and Trujillo Alto, is about 2 million inhabitants. Today about half the country's population lives and works in the SJMSA. The Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport near San Juan is the largest aerial transportation hub in the Caribbean, and one of the largest in the world in terms of passenger and cargo movement. The Port of San Juan is the largest in Puerto Rico, and is the busiest port in the Caribbean and the 10th busiest in the U.S. in terms of commercial activity and cargo movement, respectively.



Puerto Rico does not have any first-order administrative divisions as defined by the U.S. Government, but it does have 78 municipalities, which are subdivided into wards or barrios, and those into sectors. Each municipality has a mayor and a municipal legislature elected for a four-year term. The municipality of San Juan (previously called "town") was founded in 1521, followed by San Germán in 1570, Coamo in 1579, Arecibo in 1614, Aguada in 1692 and Ponce

in 1692. An increase of settlement saw the founding of 30 municipalities in the 18th century and 34 in the 19th century. Six were founded in the 20th century; the last being Florida in 1971.

According to the U.S. Census of 2000, eighty-four percent of Puerto Ricans described themselves as "White"; 10.9 percent as "Black or African American"; 8.3 percent as "Some other race," 0.7 percent as "American Indian," and 0.5 percent as "Asian" (the total is more than 100 percent because individuals may have reported more than one race). Other ethnographical studies have found that 74 percent of the population is a mixture (*mestizo*) of white, black and Amerindian (Taíno), and only 10 percent is white and about 16 percent is black. The majority of the early Spanish soldiers and settlers arrived without women, and most of them cohabitated with black or Taíno women. This mixture formed the basis of the early Puerto Rican population.

The official languages are Spanish and English, with Spanish being primary. English is taught as a second language in public and private elementary and high schools and in the universities. Puerto Rican Spanish has evolved and has many idiosyncrasies that differentiate it from the language spoken in other Spanish-speaking countries. This is the result of influences from ancestral languages, such as those of the Taínos and Africans, and more recently from the English language as a result of heavy migration between Puerto Rico and the U.S. mainland.

Emigration has been a major part of Puerto Rico's recent history. Starting soon after World War II, a combination of poverty, cheap airfare and hope for better economic conditions caused waves of Puerto Ricans to move to the continental U. S., particularly to large cities in New York; New Jersey; Massachusetts; Washington, DC; Pennsylvania; Illinois and California. This trend continued even as Puerto Rico's economy improved and its birth rate declined. In 2003, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated that more people of Puerto Rican birth or ancestry lived in the U.S. than in Puerto Rico.

In addition, Puerto Rico has become the permanent home of over 100,000 legal residents who immigrated from Spain and Latin America, mainly from Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Colombia, Venezuela and Argentina. An influx of Chinese immigrants began to arrive in Puerto Rico after the Chinese Exclusion Act was repealed in 1943, and in the 1960s when hundreds of Chinese fled Cuba after Fidel Castro came to power.

In the early 1900s, the greatest contributor to Puerto Rico's economy was agriculture and its main crop was sugar. In the late 1940s, a series of government projects encouraged a significant shift to manufacture via tax exemptions, and manufacturing quickly replaced agriculture as the main industry. Economic conditions improved dramatically after the Great Depression of the 1930s due to external investment in capital-intensive industries such as petrochemicals, pharmaceuticals and technology. Once the beneficiary of special tax treatment from the U.S. government, today local industries must compete with those in more economically depressed parts of the world where wages are not subject to U.S. minimum wage legislation. In recent years, some U.S. and foreign-owned factories have moved to lower wage countries in Latin America and Asia. Puerto Rico is subject to U.S. trade laws and restrictions. The Commonwealth's unemployment rate was 12 percent as of January 2009. Puerto Rico is the fifth largest worldwide consumer of U.S. products.

Tourism is an important component of Puerto Rico's economy, which generates an estimated \$1.8 billion annually. In 1999, an estimated 5 million tourists visited the island, mostly from the USA. Nearly a third of these were cruise ship passengers. A steady increase in hotel registrations since 1998 and the construction of new hotels and new tourism projects, such as the Puerto Rico Convention Center, indicate the current strength of the tourism industry.

Current Religious Situation

No information is currently available about religious affiliation in Puerto Rico based on recent census data or public opinion polls. However, the *World Christian Encyclopedia* (Barrett, second edition, 2001) estimated that Roman Catholics represented 75 percent of the total population, Protestants and Independents 19.5 percent, Margin Christians 2.5 percent, other religions 1.4 percent, and non-religious 1.6 percent in 2000.

In 1980, *World Christianity: Central America and the Caribbean* (Holland 1981) estimated that 90 percent of the total population was Catholic, eight percent Protestant, and two percent other/none. However, it was reported that 15 percent of those who lived in San Juan claimed to be Protestant, which indicates a higher percentage of Protestants in cities than in other areas of the country.

Historical Overview of Social, Political and Religious Development

When Christopher Columbus arrived in Puerto Rico during his second voyage to the Americas on November 19, 1493, the island was inhabited by a group of Arawak Indians, known as Taínos. They called the island "Borikén" or, in Spanish, "Borinquen." Columbus named the island San Juan Bautista in honor of Saint John the Baptist. Later, the island took the name of Puerto Rico (Spanish for "Rich Port"), while the capital was named San Juan. In 1508, Spanish *conquistador* Juan Ponce de León became the island's first governor. Various forts and walls, such as *La Fortaleza* (the oldest executive mansion in continuous use in the Americas), *El Castillo San Felipe del Morro* and *El Castillo de San Cristóbal*, were built to protect the port of San Juan from European enemies.

The Taíno tribe was largely killed off by the combination of disease, violent warfare, a high incidence of suicide, and harsh conditions imposed by the Spanish colonial system. After the decline of the Amerindian population in the early 16th century, Africans slaves were brought to Puerto Rico to work on sugarcane plantations, which became the island's main industry. The number of slaves in Puerto Rico rose from 1,500 in 1530 to 15,000 by 1555. The vast majority of the black slaves imported by the Spanish were Yorubas and Igbos from Nigeria. The slaves were stamped with a hot iron on the forehead, a branding which meant that they were brought to the country legally and prevented their kidnapping. During the 19th century, slave revolts attempted unsuccessfully to overthrow Spanish rule.

The French, Dutch and English made several attempts to capture Puerto Rico but failed to achieve long-term occupancy. During the late 17th and early 18th centuries, Spain's colonial emphasis was on the more prosperous mainland territories, which left Puerto Rico impoverished of settlers. The island became primarily a garrison for Spanish ships on their way to or from richer Spanish colonies. In 1570, there were an estimated 1,000 whites and 10,300 black slaves and Amerindians. A Spanish edict of 1664 offered freedom and land to African people from non-Spanish colonies, such as Jamaica and St. Dominique (Haiti), who immigrated to Puerto Rico and provided a population base to support the Puerto Rican garrison and its forts. The freeman who settled the western and southern parts of the island soon adopted the language and customs of the Spaniards. However, in 1673, the estimated total population of Puerto Rico was only 820 whites, 667 black slaves and 304 free non-whites (included Amerindians).

During the 1800s, thousands of immigrants arrived from Spain (mainly from Catalonia, Asturias, Galicia, the Balearic Islands, Andalusia and the Canary Islands), along with numerous Spanish loyalists from Spain's former colonies in South America. In addition, hundreds arrived from Corsica, France and Portugal, along with settlers from Ireland, Scotland, Germany, Italy and

others who were granted land by Spain during the *Real Cédula de Gracias de 1815* ("Royal Decree of Graces of 1815"), which allowed European Catholics to settle in Puerto Rico with a certain amount of free land. This mass immigration during the 19th century helped the population grow from 155,000 in 1800 to almost a million at the close of the century. The census of 1858 reported that the population included 300,430 identified as whites; 341,015 as free colored; and 41,736 as Negro slaves. Slavery was finally abolished in Puerto Rico on March 22, 1873.

French immigration to Puerto Rico came about as a result of the economic and political situations that occurred in various places, such as Louisiana (USA), Saint-Domingue (Haiti) and parts of Europe. Also, in 1815, the Spanish Crown decided that one of the ways to end the pro-independence movement in Puerto Rico was to allow Europeans of non-Hispanic origin who swore loyalty to the Spanish Crown to settle on the island. The decree encouraged slave labor to revive agriculture and attract new settlers. Therefore, the Royal Decree of Graces of 1815 was printed in three languages: Spanish, English and French. The French who immigrated to Puerto Rico intermarried with the locals and settled in various places on the island. They were instrumental in the development of Puerto Rico's tobacco, cotton and sugar industries and distinguished themselves as business people, politicians and writers.

**The Puerto Rican population according to
the Spanish Royal Census for 1827, 1834 and 1847**

CATEGORY	Year 1827	Year 1834	Year 1847
White	163,000	189,000	618,000
Mixed Races	100,000	101,000	329,000
Free Blacks	27,000	25,000	258,000
Black Slaves	34,000	42,000	32,000

Contemporary Puerto Ricans date their independence from Spain to the unsuccessful revolt of 1868 led by Ramón Emeterio Betances (1827–1893), who proclaimed the island's independence prior to his defeat by Spanish military forces. The institution of slavery was finally abolished in 1873. Puerto Rico was Spain's last colony in the Americas in 1898 when, as a result of the defeat of Spanish forces by the U.S. military in the Spanish American War, control of Puerto Rico passed to the U.S. Government that year. English was imposed as the official language, and in 1917 Puerto Ricans became U.S. citizens but with limited control over local government; the governor and other key officials were not elected but appointed by the U.S. president, and the governor could veto any legislation.

After World War II, local rule was turned over to the island's residents. The new government, elected in 1948, moved to transform Puerto Rico into a commonwealth. The U.S. Government retained power in foreign relations, defense and some financial affairs; Puerto Ricans retained their U.S. citizenship. An ongoing debate over the island's status has been held in Puerto Rico, with some favoring statehood and others desiring full independence, but the commonwealth status continued to be supported by the majority of the population.

Today, Puerto Rico has a republican form of government, subject to U.S. jurisdiction and sovereignty. Its current powers are all delegated by the U.S. Congress and lack full protection

under the U.S. Constitution. Puerto Rico's head of state is the President of the United States of America.

The nature of Puerto Rico's political relationship with the U.S. is the subject of ongoing debate in Puerto Rico, the U.S. Congress and the United Nations. In 2005 and 2007, two reports were issued by the U.S. President's Task Force on Puerto Rico's Status: both reports concluded that Puerto Rico should continue to be a U.S. territory under the plenary powers of the U.S. Congress. Reactions from Puerto Rico's two major political parties were mixed. The People's Democratic Party (PPD) challenged the task force's reports and committed to challenging Puerto Rico's "colonial status" in all international forums, including the United Nations. The New Progressive Party (PNP) supported the Task Force reports' conclusions and supported bills to provide for a democratic referendum process among Puerto Rico voters.

Luis Guillermo Fortuño-Burset (b.1960) is the ninth and current Governor of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. Fortuño is also the president of the pro-statehood New Progressive Party of Puerto Rico (NPP) and a member of the U.S. Republican Party. Fortuño holds the distinction of being the first Republican to be elected Governor of Puerto Rico since 1969, and only the second Republican governor since 1949. He began his term in office on 2 January 2009.

The Roman Catholic Church

Historically, the Roman Catholic Church has been the dominant religion in Puerto Rico. The first ecclesiastical province was established in 1511 by Pope Julius II with three dioceses: two in Hispaniola (Santo Domingo and Concepción de la Vega); the third was in the island of San Juan (modern Puerto Rico). The new dioceses were made suffragans of the Province of Seville, Spain.

Father Alonso Manso, Canon of the cathedral of Salamanca was transferred to the newly-erected See of San Juan, of which he took possession two years later. When he arrived in 1513, the island had only two European settlements, which were inhabited by approximately 200 Spaniards and about 500 native "Christians." According to a letter that this prelate addressed later to the Spanish monarch, he was the first bishop to reach the New World.

Bishop Manso was the first Inquisitor General of the Indies, appointed in 1519 by Cardinal Adrian de Utrecht, who later became Pope Adrian VI (1522). The cardinal made this appointment in the name of the Regent of Castile, whom he represented while Bishop of Tortosa. The Vice-Provincial of the Dominicans, Pedro de Cordoba, resided in Santo Domingo until the establishment in 1522 of the Convent of St. Thomas Aquinas, the first religious community in Puerto Rico.

The first Catholic church was erected in 1511 at Caparra and dedicated to St. John the Baptist. The edifice was a temporary structure, which fell into ruin on the transfer of the capital. In 1512 a like structure was erected for the inhabitants on the southern coast at a point known as San German, some distance from the actual site of the town of that name. For many years the Diocese of Porto Rico had only these two centers of worship, with little increase in population.

The location of the actual cathedral of San Juan marks the site of the first church erected in 1520 or 1521 by Bishop Manso. This wooden structure was replaced by Bishop Bastidas, who began the work in 1543, and in the year following informed the king that the building was still unfinished for lack of funds; the same was true in 1549. Successive structures were destroyed by hurricanes, earthquakes and foreign invaders, and were replaced by others, "each surpassing in beauty the former and continuing for four centuries on this spot the hallowed sanctuary of the mother church of the diocese."

The present cathedral, which is comparatively modern in its principal part, dates back to the early part of the 18th century. The rear portion, however, reveals a distinct style of architecture from a much more remote period. On 12 August 1908, the remains of Don Juan Ponce de Leon were solemnly conveyed from the Church of San José to the cathedral, where a suitable monument now marks the resting place of this “intrepid soldier and Christian cavalier.”

Iberian Popular Catholicism was brought to Puerto Rico by the first Spanish settlers and inhabitants of the Island of Borinquen. Everyday life was governed by the Church's liturgical calendar and was organized in cycles or periods, namely Advent, Nativity, Epiphany, Lent and Easter.

When Africans were forcibly transported to the New World as slaves, they brought with them their ancient religious beliefs and practices. The Catholic Church, which had as its mission the evangelization and Christianization of indigenous communities since the beginning of Spanish colonialism, also proceeded to force African slaves to convert immediately to Christianity.

The effort of converting black slaves to Christianity commenced at the moment they came ashore on Borinquen. As soon as church authorities learned about the arrival of a slave ship, priests were assigned to visit the ship and screen the passengers to determine their religious traditions. Immediately after coming ashore, priests began to teach the Catechism to the newly arrived African slaves, educating them in the foundations of Catholic doctrine, which is the first step towards receiving the Sacrament of Baptism.

Frequently, slave traffickers deceived church authorities by saying that the slaves had already been Christianized in Africa. If the priests believed the traffickers, the slaves were sold immediately and went to live with Catholic families without having the slightest idea about Christian doctrine or having received the Sacrament of Baptism.

However, the bishop often demanded that the Africans be baptized again in the parochial churches where they would live as slaves in different haciendas and plantations. Thereafter, the parochial priests had to make sure the slaves went to Mass every Sunday and on holy days of obligation, went to Confession and participated in the Eucharist, and complied with the teachings of the Church.

In 1538, Emperor Charles V had ordered slave owners to send their slaves to the monastery or church closest to their haciendas so they could be taught Christian doctrine at a time scheduled by the priest in charge. Every year, landowners had to pay their district priest or chaplain eight silver coins for each slave they owned. At the same time, slave owners had to provide priests with ornaments, wine, wax and lodging free of charge when they visited their haciendas in compliance with their responsibilities.

During the first year of their arrival, every African had to be properly indoctrinated in the principles of the Catechism and be able to recite them from memory. Often it was difficult for some slaves to learn what the church authorities required, which the slave owners blamed on the lack of intelligence of the African race. However, the priests went ahead and baptized the slaves if they sensed their sincerity, humility and willingness to learn Christian doctrine. A penalty of twenty-five *pesos* was charged to slave owners who did not comply with the mandatory religious indoctrination during the required time period. Many slave owners forced their slaves to learn the Catechism using cruel punishments to avoid being charged with negligence by the priests. Later, the required one-year period to administer the Sacrament of Baptism was extended to two years, which gave slave owners more time to comply with their religious obligations.

However, many black slaves resisted conversion to Roman Catholicism and devised many ways of hiding their allegiance to their traditional belief systems. Some of the African slaves brought to the New World had embraced Islam in their countries of origin, but most of them

conserved elements of their ancient animistic beliefs and practices. Moreover, the language barrier hindered communication between Catholic evangelists and their potential converts.

Consequently, the black slaves had no choice but to go along with the outward expressions of the Catholic Faith while secretly observing their African traditions. The rosaries were sung as promises to the saints or as pledges of gratefulness for the soul of the sick or the dead in the family, and this practice was used to conceal the chanting of prayers and promises to their ancient gods and goddesses when sung in their ancestral languages.

In 1591, Franciscan Friar Nicolás de Ramos was bishop of Puerto Rico and was later promoted to Archbishop of Santo Domingo. In 1594, he sent a letter to the Spanish King about what happened in San Juan de Puerto Rico with certain black witches, which says (Cayetano Coll y Toste, *El Boletín Histórico de Puerto Rico*, III [1927], pages 48-49; prosody, syntax and spelling have been modernized):

Dear Sir: While I was bishop of Puerto Rico, I discovered a large group of black male and female witches presided over by the devil in the form of a goat. Each night, they vigorously denied the existence of God, the Mother of God, and the sacraments of the Holy Mother Church, affirming they had no other god other than the devil in which they believe. They went to the countryside with certain ointments to practice these exercises. And it was not a dream because there were people who personally saw them and witnessed these rituals. And even though the witches offered corals and other gifts to buy the witnesses' silence, they came forward and informed me. To serve justice, I punished them with beatings and exile; and I forced three of them to renounce vehemently...because they confessed without having to turn to threats or torture. With several accomplices as witnesses, they were found guilty.

The owners of the black women chose to appeal the extradition of their slaves. During the extradition appeal, the three which had renounced their ways, as accounted in their own confession, which was voluntary, without torment or threats and proven by many witnesses, relapsed into error. Therefore, I had no choice but to relegate them to the secular authorities, using the *ad abolendam de hereticis* chapter to guide me with the entire process. And, to execute justice, we waited for the Governor, as ordered in the chapter titled *ut iniquitacionis negatione de hereticis in sexto*.

Then, with an appointed Governor in charge, Diego Méndez executed justice, and they wanted to keep the money for the black women slaves. After many requests and supplications, the money was sent to the Council. I sent a message to Puerto Rico to notify the owners who requested that the women be burned at the stake and to the Governor to make sure they were excommunicated. Diego Menéndez was just the executioner of my orders, and as such, under the penalty of excommunication and without demanding details of the process, was obliged to execute and do justice subject to the penalty of excommunication. And, if they wanted to request something, they must ask me, not him. [It appears that these poor black women were burned at the stake as heretics and that their owners asked the civil authorities for compensation.]

This account demonstrates elements of resistance used by Africans against the new religious creed imposed on them. In the events of 1591-1594, the accused black women went back to their old religious traditions and rituals, which were considered by Catholic authorities to be heretical and pagan. Going against the Catholic Faith was an additional form of repudiation of Spanish culture, which at that time in history approved of the practice of slavery.

Although Catholicism grew in Puerto Rico, its leadership was all by wiped out late in the 17th century by a smallpox epidemic; only four priests survived and they were given little additional assistance during the early part of the next century. The Catholic Church was greatly

strengthened in the early 19th century, when additional priests came to Puerto Rico from other regions in Latin America where wars of independence had put their lives in danger. Their loyalty to Spain did not go unnoticed when the various slave revolts began to occur.

In 1833, Bishop Pedro Gutierrez de Cos died, leaving the diocese vacant until the nomination in 1846 of Bishop Francisco de La Puente, O.S.D. During this interval the Catholic Church was subjected to violent measures on the part of the governors of the island, who confiscated a great deal of the Church's property and disbanded the only two communities of religious men, the Dominicans and Franciscans, appropriating to the State their convents and other properties.

During the Spanish domination of the island the Catholic Church was under royal patronage and the civil and religious authorities were intimately associated. On the assumption by the United States of control over Puerto Rico in 1898, full justice and every consideration was granted by the new government, which even went to the extent of paying \$300,000 for the church property previously confiscated by Spain.

After the U.S. Government took control of Puerto Rico in 1898, the Catholic Church struggled to retain its traditional role and self-image as a Latin American institution while trying to remain relevant in the new U.S.-oriented world. The Catholic Church of Puerto Rico entered the 20th century without a single bishop, but new dioceses were created in 1924, 1960 and 1964. San Juan was elevated to archiepiscopal status in 1960.

In 1903, the Diocese of Porto Rico was severed from the province of Santiago de Cuba, and administered directly by the Holy See. All municipalities in Puerto Rico had at least one Catholic church (building), most of which are located at the town center or main plaza.

In 1910, the Diocese of Porto Rico was comprised by 78 parishes, which were mainly served by members of the religious bodies: the Lazarists, Augustinians, and Capuchins from Spain; the Dominicans from Holland; and the Redemptorists from Baltimore, Maryland. About 300 women belonging to the different religious communities were chiefly at work in the schools and hospitals. The Carmelites, Sisters of Charity, Religious of the Sacred Heart, and Servants of Mary were established in Spanish colonial times. Since the U.S. occupation, addition religious communities have arrived: the Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart; the Sisters of St. Francis from Buffalo, NY; the Sisters of St. Dominic from Brooklyn, NY.

Diverse tensions arose within the Puerto Rican 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, 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 Puerto Rican society and establishing greater 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 the rightwing military dictatorships in Latin America 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 Charismatic Renewal found strong support in Puerto Rico in the 1970s and has continued to attract a large number of participants. The majority of Puerto Ricans are still Roman Catholics despite the growth and development of the Protestant movement after 1898, and especially since the 1960s.

In 2002, the Puerto Rican Catholic Church consisted of one archdiocese, the Metropolitan See of San Juan de Puerto Rico, five dioceses (Ponce, Arecibo, Mayagüez, Caguas and Fajardo-Humacao) and 354 parishes that were served by 365 diocesan priests and 367 religious priests (total of 752); 418 permanent deacons; 498 male religious and 1,152 female religious. The current Archbishop of San Juan is Roberto Octavio González Nieves, O.F.M., who was appointed and installed in 1999. The previous archbishop, Cardinal Luis Aponte Martínez, served from 1964 until his retirement in 1999. He had the honor of being the first Puerto Rican to be appointed bishop in 157 years.

The patron saints of Puerto Rico are St. John the Baptist and Our Lady of Divine Providence, which are celebrated the night of 24-25 June and the Saturday before 3rd Sunday of November, respectively.

The Protestant Movement

The first non-Catholic church in Puerto Rico dates to the activity of an English Presbyterian trader who started a small church in 1860. Religious tolerance was proclaimed in 1868, and in 1872 the first continuous Protestant work was initiated by the Church of England’s bishop in Antigua, who erected the first Anglican church at Ponce. That work was turned over to the EPISCOPAL CHURCH, which had sent missionary representatives very soon after the Spanish American War between Spain and the USA ended in 1898, when control of Puerto Rico passed to the U.S. Government. Responsibility for the work was initially turned over to the bishop of Chicago but was later moved to the jurisdiction of the bishop of Sacramento, California. Puerto Rico is currently organized as an extraprovincial diocese of the Episcopal Church.

Protestantism was suppressed under the Spanish regime but was encouraged under U.S. occupancy and governance, making modern Puerto Rico interconfessional. The establishment of the **Episcopal Church in Puerto Rico** heralded the arrival of missionaries from a number of other U.S. denominations, beginning with the Northern Baptists, the Congregational Christian Church, the Christian Church-Disciples of Christ, the Evangelical United Brethren, the Evangelical Lutherans, the Presbyterian Church in the USA, the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Christian & Missionary Alliance between 1898 and 1900, followed by the Seventh-Day Adventist Church in 1901.

William Sloan, a minister in the **Northern Baptist Convention** (now the AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES IN THE U.S.A.), made an initial tour of the island and made recommendations that led to the founding of Baptist work there. Following an agreement among the several denominations, the Northern Baptists focused their work in the north, between Ponce and San Juan. The first congregation was opened in Rio Piedras, a suburb of San Juan. The Convention of Baptist Churches of Puerto Rico was formed in 1902.

Lutheran work was initiated in 1898 by the Augustana Synod (now a constituent part of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA) in San Juan. Five churches were founded during the first decade, and eventually responsibility for the work passed to the United Lutheran Church in America.

The first Presbyterian missionaries arrived (J. M. Greene and Milton El Cadwell) in 1899 and concentrated their work in the area of Aguadilla and Mayagüez. The first church was organized in 1900 and a presbytery was established in 1902. In January 1973, the **Boriquén Synod of the Presbyterian Church** in the USA was officially founded, which reported 71 congregations and 8,385 members in 1998.

The Methodist Episcopal Church (now a constituent part of the UNITED METHODIST CHURCH) responded to the new situation in Puerto Rico by sending Charles W. Drees (1851–1926) to the island in 1900. Drees, who had previously been working in Uruguay, initiated both Spanish and English services in San Juan. The work remained attached to the United Methodist Church until 1992, when it was set apart as the semiautonomous Methodist Church of Puerto Rico. It became fully autonomous in 2000.

Seventh-day Adventist work began in 1901 with the arrival of missionary A. M. Fischer in Mayagüez. The work was organized in 1909 into the East Puerto Rico Conference and the West Puerto Rico Conference, both of which are part of the Antillian Union Conference, which also includes work in the Dominican Republic. The Puerto Rican Union Conference reported 290 churches in 2007 with 36,442 members; in 1997, there were 256 churches with 30,087 members.

In 1931, the **United Evangelical Church (UEC)** was formed in Fajardo, Puerto Rico, by a merger of the United Brethren in Christ, the Christian Church-Disciples of Christ, and the Congregational Christian Church. In 1990, this denomination officially became part of the United Church of Christ in the USA. In 1995, the UEC reported 61 churches, 42 preaching points and 4,591 members.

The Evangelical Congregational Church of Puerto Rico (*Iglesia Evangélica Congregacional de Puerto Rico*) was founded in 1948 in Humacao, Puerto Rico. The original name of this denomination in Puerto Rico was the United Brethren in Christ (*Los Hermanos Unidos en Cristo*).

Throughout the 20th century, a variety of traditional Protestant and Free Churches and service agencies initiated work in Puerto Rico: the Church of the Nazarene (1944), the Mennonite Board of Missions (1945), Child Evangelism Fellowship (1946), International Gospel League (1949), Wesleyan World Missions (1952), Baptist Bible Fellowship (1955), Home Mission Society of the Southern Baptist Convention (1956), Baptist Mid-Missions (1959), Grace Ministries International (1963), Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Church (1963), Baptist International Missions (1965), Biblical Ministries Worldwide (1968), independent Christian Churches and Churches of Christ (1976), Macedonian World Baptist Missions (1981), Maranatha Baptist Mission (1983), UFM International (1986, formerly known as Unevangelized Fields Mission), Apostolic Christian Church (1989), InterVarsity Mission (1992), Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (1993), Open Door Baptist Missions (1995), and World Indigenous Missions (1996).

The Church of the Nazarene began in Puerto Rico in 1944, when a group of independent churches were accepted by general agreement into the worldwide Nazarene fellowship. Shortly thereafter, a radio broadcast ministry was begun in San Juan, which is said to have reached over 3 million listeners. Also in 1944 Lyle Prescott and his wife were assigned to St. Croix. Part of their responsibilities included supervising the work in Puerto Rico, which is located 100 miles west of St. Croix. The Prescotts were later reassigned to Cuba and the infant work started there in 1945. In 1954, the Rev. and Mrs. Porter were assigned to Puerto Rico and they were influential in beginning the Nazarene Bible Institute on the island; however, this institute was closed in 1971. By this time many pastors were enrolled in university-level classes to match the educational level

of their congregants. In 1980, during the General Assembly in Kansas City, Puerto Rico was officially recognized as a regular district.

Pentecostalism, especially, had a significant role in the development of a variety of new Puerto Rican initiated churches, many of which have spread throughout the Spanish-speaking world, including Hispanic communities in the USA.

The Pentecostal Church of God, International Mision (*Iglesia de Dios Pentecostal, Misión Internacional* - IDPMI), was founded in 1916 by Juan L. Lugo and other Puerto Rican leaders in Arecibo, Puerto Rico. It was affiliated with the Assemblies of God in the USA from 1918 until 1956, when the two church bodies went their separate ways. In 1999, this denomination reported 2,123 congregations in 32 countries, with approximately 221,000 members. The current PCOG president is the Rev. William Hernández Ortiz, with offices in San Juan, PR. Missionary work is conducted in many Latin American countries.

The Defenders of the Faith (*Defensores de la Fe*) was founded in 1925 in Kansas City, MO, by the Rev. Gerald B. Winrod. It began as a Fundamentalist denomination and became part of the Pentecostal movement in Puerto Rico through the ministry of Juan Francisco Rodríguez Rivera in 1934, with headquarters in Bayamón. This denomination has affiliated churches in Latin America and the Caribbean.

International Evangelical Church Soldiers of the Cross of Christ (*Iglesia Evangélica Internacional Soldados de la Cruz de Cristo*) is a sabbatical Pentecostal denomination, founded between 1922-1925 in Habana, Cuba, by Ernest William Sellers (1869-1953), a Methodist laymen and businessman from Wisconsin, who was known by his followers as "Apostle Daddy John." Missionary work is conducted in most Latin American countries and in the USA, from its international headquarters in Miami, FL.

The Church of Christ in the Antilles (*Iglesia de Cristo en Las Antillas*) was founded in 1935 in Los Dolores del Río Grande, Puerto Rico, by Rev. Pablo Rodríguez García in 1934-1935 following evangelistic campaigns conducted by the Rev. Francisco Olazábal in the Caribbean. In 1938, when the name of the denomination was changed to **Council of Missionary Churches of Christ** (*Concilio de Iglesias de Cristo Misionera*), a small group of pastors retained the original name but later changed it to the **Universal Church of Christ** (*Iglesia de Cristo Universal*). The churches affiliated with this denomination are mainly located in Puerto Rico and the Eastern USA.

The Council of Missionary Churches of Christ (*Concilio de Iglesias de Cristo Misionera*) was founded in 1938 in Los Dolores del Río Grande, Puerto Rico by Florentino Figueroa Rosa. This denomination resulted from a reorganization of the **Church of Christ in the Antilles** (*Iglesia de Cristo en Las Antillas*). The current name was adopted in 1987. Today there are affiliated churches in the USA, Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean (Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic and Cuba), all the Central American countries, Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay and Paraguay. In December 2007, this denomination reported 771 organized churches and 274 missions, with an estimated total membership of 45,400. Whereas this denomination reported 96 organized churches in Puerto Rico, there were 309 affiliated churches in Honduras, 101 in the USA, 38 in the Dominican Republic and 35 in Venezuela.

The International Council of Pentecostal Churches of Jesus Christ (*Concilio Internacional de Iglesias Pentecostales de Jesucristo*) was founded in Puerto Rico in 1938 by the Rev. Félix Rivera Cardona, who previously was a pastor with the Pentecostal Church of God in Mayagüez. Missionary work was begun in New York City in 1947 by Juana Rivera, Félix' sister. The international headquarters are located in Ponce, Puerto Rico. There are 110 churches

in Puerto Rico and 10 in New York City, and missionary work is conducted in about 10 other Latin American countries.

The Church of God, Inc. (*La Iglesia de Dios, Inc.*) was founded in 1938 in Fajardo and Las Piedras, Puerto Rico, by Aurelio Tiburcio and Benito Cintrón, among others, in response to “a great Pentecostal revival within the traditional churches, especially among sugar plantation workers.” The central offices are now located in Caguas. Through emigration affiliated churches were established in the USA (mainly in Chicago, IL, and East Chicago, IN), the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Honduras, El Salvador and Panama.

The Assembly of Christian Churches (Asamblea de Iglesias Cristianas) was founded in 1939 in New York City by a group of Puerto Rican pastors – Carlos Sepúlveda, Felipe G. Sabater, Pedro Serrano and Frank Hernández – who were marginalized by the Mexican-American leadership of CLADIC (Concilio Latino Americano de Iglesias Cristianas) in 1938, after the death of the famous Mexican Pentecostal evangelist Francisco Olazábal in Texas. Sepúlveda and his associates wanted to continue the legacy of Olazábal among Puerto Ricans. Today there are affiliated churches in the Caribbean and Latin America, principally in Puerto Rico.

The Samaria Evangelical Church (*Iglesia Evangélica Samaria*) was founded in 1941 in Puerto Rico by Pentecostal pastor Julio Guzmán Silva. It has affiliated churches in many Latin American countries.

The Worldwide Missionary Movement, Inc. (*Movimiento Misionero Mundial, Inc. - MMM*), was founded in 1963 in Puerto Rico by the Rev. Luis M. Ortiz Marrero and his wife, Rebecca de Ortiz, who had served in the Dominican Republic and Cuba as missionaries with the Assemblies of God from 1944 to 1960. They returned to Puerto Rico in 1959 and organized the **Worldwide Missionary Movement** with headquarters in Trujillo Alto in 1963. After Ortiz’ death in 1996, the Rev. Rubén Rosas Salcedo was named president of the association. In January 2003, this denomination reported 4,980 churches, 4,400 preaching points and 3,949 pastors in 52 countries. Missionary work is conducted in most Latin American countries, in the USA and Canada, in Europe (England, Germany, Holland, Italy and Spain), Africa, Australia and Asia).

The famous Puerto Rican Pentecostal evangelist José Joaquín (Yiye) Avila founded the “Christ is Coming Ministry” in 1967 in Camuy, Puerto Rico. Avila has celebrated divine healing and liberation campaigns throughout the Americas and in Spain. In 1988, he founded a T.V. network called The Miracle Network (“La Cadena del Milagro”), which includes five channels that cover all of Puerto Rico and the Caribbean.

The International Council of Churches Freed by Jesus Christ, Inc. (*Concilio Internacional de Iglesias Libres por Jesucristo, Inc.*) was founded in 1974 in Bronx, NY, by the Rev. Valentín Cruz Canales, who was born in Santurce, Puerto Rico. He also founded the *Instituto Evangélico Elim* in 1974 with extension programs in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic. This Pentecostal denominational has affiliated churches in the USA, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Haiti and Colombia.

**TABLE OF STATISTICS ON
THE LARGEST PROTESTANT DENOMINATIONS
IN PUERTO RICO, 1980**

	DENOMINATION	ESTIMATED CHURCHES	ESTIMATED MEMBERS
1	Pentecostal Church of God, International Mission	324	22,667
2	Seventh-Day Adventist General Conference	174	12,207
3	United Methodist Church	172	12,062
4	Christian Church-Disciples of Christ	143	10,014
5	American Baptist Churches	136	9,501
6	Assemblies of God	121	7,892
7	United Presbyterian Church	108	7,578
8	United Evangelical Church	76	5,348
9	Church of God (Cleveland, TN)	72	4,654
10	Christ Missionary Church	65	4,245
11	Episcopal Church	65	4,243
12	Defenders of the Faith	59	3,834
13	Church of God, Inc.	50	3,250
14	Pentecostal Church of Jesus Christ	39	2,509
15	United Lutheran Church	35	2,448
16	Southern Baptist Convention	33	2,308
17	Church of Christ in the Antilles	26	1,672
18	Christian & Missionary Alliance	15	935
19	Church of the Nazarene	12	800
20	Samaria Evangelical Church	16	750
	TOTALS = 20 denominations	1,741	118,917
	(all other denominations had less than 750 members)		
	ESTIMATED TOTALS FOR PUERTO RICO 1980	2,089	142,700

(Source: Holland 1981:207)

The Missionary Association of Pentecostal Churches, Inc. (Asociación Misionera de Iglesias Pentecostales, Inc. - AMIP) was founded in 2003 by the Rev. José D. Muñoz in San Juan. The AMIP operates the Berea Bible Institute in San Juan and has extension programs in other countries via the Internet. There are affiliated churches in Cuba, Dominican Republic, Panama, Colombia, Ecuador, Chile and the USA.

**TABLE OF STATISTICS ON
THE LARGEST PROTESTANT DENOMINATIONS
IN PUERTO RICO, 1989**

	DENOMINATION	ESTIMATED CHURCHES	ESTIMATED MEMBERS
1	Pentecostal Church of God, International Mission	480	66,953
2	American Baptist Convention	82	54,000
3	Assemblies of God, General Council	326	45,640
4	Seventh-Day Adventist General Conference	245	35,000
5	Assembly of Christian Churches	160	22,400
6	Christian Church-Disciples of Christ	93	17,600
7	Church of God Mission Board (Cleveland, TN)	195	14,346
8	Defenders of the Faith	123	12,000
9	Episcopal Church	38	12,000
10	United Methodist Church	70	10,000
11	Independent Fundamentalist Baptist Churches	51	10,000
12	Boriquen Presbyterian Synod (United Presbyterian USA)	69	9,256
13	Missionary Church of Christ	81	8,000
14	Christian & Missionary Alliance	51	5,631
15	All Lutheran Churches	26	5,049
16	United Evangelical Church	58	5,000
17	Church of the Nazarene	36	4,500
18	Baptist Association (Southern Baptist-related)	59	4,200
19	Fellowship of Charismatic Christian Churches	50	3,000
20	House of Youth Church	15	2,230
	TOTALS = 20 denominations	2,308	344,575
	(all other denominations had less than 2,200 members)		
	ESTIMATED TOTALS FOR PUERTO RICO 1989	2,770	413,490

(Source: "Puerto Rico: A People Prepared," produced by the Lausanne Puerto Rico Country Committee, Country Profile Series, Lausanne II Congress on World Evangelizations, July 11-20, 1989, Manila, The Philippines)

In addition, Pentecostal denominations from the USA began work in Puerto Rico: the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel (1930), the Church of God of Prophecy (1938), the CHURCH OF GOD (CLEVELAND, TENNESSEE) (1944, known as the Church of God Mission Board – *Iglesia de Dios Mission Board*, with headquarters in Saint Just), the ASSEMBLIES OF GOD (1957), Open Bible Standard Churches (1958), the United Pentecostal Church International (1962), and the Pentecostal Free Will Baptist Church (founding date unknown).

Other Protestant denominations include the *Sociedad Misionera Internacional* of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church Reform Movement, General Conference, which has its Puerto Rican headquarters in San Juan; the Brethren Assemblies (Plymouth Brethren); the Church of the Brethren; the Christian Reformed Church; Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches; Free

Methodist Church; National Association of Free Will Baptists; Southwide Baptist Fellowship; and The Salvation Army. Also, the Berachah Church (an independent fundamentalism church founded in 1935 in Houston, TX, by C. W. Colgan and Robert B. Thieme, Jr.) claims to have mission work in Puerto Rico. The Maranatha World Revival Church (*Iglesia de Avivamiento Mundial Maranatha*) was founded in 1974 in Chicago, IL, by Nahum y Minerva Rosario. It now has more than 300 affiliated churches in the USA, Mexico, Costa Rica, Panama, Puerto Rico, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Argentina, Chile, Venezuela, Europe and Africa.

In addition, according to Puerto Rican historian and sociologist Samuel Silva Gotay:

Independent Christian churches or ministries have populated all the corners of the island. Their temples are full of faithful who seek simple answers to their questions and uncertainties, while historic Catholic and Protestant Churches seem distant to people's realities.

"The programs of the Catholic and Protestant churches no longer respond to people's needs, in particular in the countryside and poor barrios in the towns and cities, said historian and religious sociologist Samuel Silva Gotay.

The growth of these religious movements is linked to times of social and economic crisis, but also responds to the search for existential responses, that come from human nature itself, Silva told the daily *El Nuevo Dia*...

Many of these new churches have also gotten involved in mass communication media like radio, television and Internet to disseminate their message.

Even if they begin in humble tents, in a few years they become empires. The secret? According to Silva Gotay is that they occupy the spaces that traditional Christian Churches have neglected.

Moreover, unlike historic Churches, these independent churches preach the so-called "theology of prosperity" that proclaims economic wealth as a sign of blessings.

These groups generally share a conservative theological vision that leads them to affiliate themselves with the current government ideologies.

"Historic Churches meanwhile, tend to be critical and distant from the State," he said.

--- Source: <http://www.wfn.org/2005/11/msg00128.html>

In 1908, the Federation of Evangelical Churches of Puerto Rico was established, which was later known as The Evangelical Union of Puerto Rico in 1916, the Association of Evangelical Churches of Puerto Rico in 1934, and the Evangelical Council of Puerto Rico (ECPR) in 1954. Current members of the ECPR are the Presbyterian Synod of Boriquén, the Christian Church-Disciples of Christ, the American Baptist Association, the Methodist Church, Church of the Brethren, the United Evangelical Church, the First Union Church and the Second Union Church.

Member organizations of the **Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI)**, which is affiliated with the World Council of Churches (WCC), in Puerto Rico include the entire ECPR membership. Additional associate members include: Caribbean Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Episcopal Church Diocese of Puerto Rico.

The **Latin American Confraternity of Evangelicals (CONELA)** is not associated with an interdenominational evangelical fellowship organization in Puerto Rico, but the CONELA representative is listed as David Casillas.

Other Religions

The **Puerto Rican National Catholic Church** (independent of the Vatican) was founded in Puerto Rico in 1926 by Mons. Héctor Gonzáles, loosely affiliation with the Polish National Catholic Church in the USA. In 1961, the former changed its name to the **Holy Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church of Puerto Rico** and became affiliated with the Russian Orthodox Church in the Americas. In 1968 González withdrew from the latter and formed the **Western Rite Vicariate** with parishes in Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Brazil and the USA. The name was later changed to the **United Hispanic Old Catholic Episcopate**, but after several years of controversy the official name was changed again to that used today: **Hispanic-Brazilian Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, St. Pius X** (headquarters in Brooklyn, NY).

Holy Eastern Orthodox Church**

Non-Protestant marginal Christian groups in Puerto Rica are: the Church of Christ, Scientist (Mary Baker Eddy, 1892; Boston, MA), Christadelphian Bible Mission, Growing in Grace International Ministries, Jehovah's Witnesses, Light of the World Church (Mexico), Mormons, Mita Congregation, People of Amos Church, Philadelphia Church of God, Unity Church, Voice of the Cornerstone, and Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (also known as *Oración Fuerte al Espíritu Santo*, founded in Brazil in 1977 by Bishop Edir Macedo and arrived in Puerto Rico in 1993).

Gardner H. Russell began meetings affiliated with the CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS (LDS) in 1947 among U.S. military personnel stationed at Guajataca. He later opened a mission in San Juan. By 1987, membership had increased to 12,000. Despite the move of several military church members from Puerto Rico in 1993, membership had reached 19,700 throughout the island. In 1996, the number of LDS congregations had grown to the point that the San Juan Mission was formally recognized, with headquartered in Rio Piedras. In 2005, the LDS reported 43 congregations and 29,064 members. The JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES entered the country in the early 1930s. By 2005, there were 323 JW congregations in Puerto Rico with 24,601 adherents.

Mita Congregation (Congregación Mita), established in 1940 in San Juan, was founded by Juanita García Peraza, who is known as "Mita" = "Spirit of Life" and her followers are called "los Mitás." She is believed by her followers to be the embodiment of the Holy Spirit and the "voice of God on earth." After Juanita's death in 1970 at age 72, the new head of this movement became **Teófilo Vargas Seín**, who is called Aarón by his followers. There are affiliated churches in many countries of the Caribbean Basin, including the Dominican Republic, Costa Rica and Colombia. The original San Juan community serves as a developmental model for the newer congregations abroad which, in turn, communicate with the center through all modern media. Active members have swollen to over 30,000 world-wide. The new San Juan temple alone seats 6,000; but actually the largest following is in Colombia, which has now surpassed Puerto Rico as a whole; the Dominican Republic ranks third, with 65 congregations.

The **People of Amos Church – Iglesia Pueblo de Amós** (1972, Puerto Rico; founded by **Nicolás Tosado Avilés** [1919-2007]; after the death of Mita Congregation founder Juanita García

Peraza in 1970, there was a power struggle between Teófilo Vargas and Nicolás Tosado over who would be the maximum leader of Mita Congregation, which resulted in Vargas winning that leadership position and Tosado being expelled from the movement. In 1972, Tosado left with a small group of followers and formed the People of Amos Church, with “Amos” being Tosado’s new spiritual name. Since 1991 its headquarters have been in Barrio Guzmán Abajo de Río Grande, Puerto Rico. From Puerto Rico this new movement spread to the USA (mainly in Texas, Georgia and California), El Salvador (now with more than 20 congregations), Spain, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Mexico. Tosado, who was considered by his followers to be “a Prophet and Intercessor between God and men” and in whose body dwelt “The Divine Trinity,” died at age 88 in December 2007 in Puerto Rico.

The Voice of the Cornerstone (*Voz de la Piedra Angular*) was founded in 1974 in Cayey, Puerto Rico, by William Soto Santiago, a disciple of the Pentecostal evangelist and faith-healer William Branham who founded a similar movement in Jeffersonville, Indiana, in 1955. Although there is no evidence that the two ever met, Soto borrowed much of the teachings of Branham and launched his own movement, calling himself the “Voice of the Chief Cornerstone” and the “Angel who opens the Seventh Seal” in the Book of Revelation. There are affiliated groups in many countries of Latin America.

Non-Christian religions in Puerto Rico include: Bahai, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Ancient Wisdom, and Psychic-Spiritualist-New Age traditions.

During the early 20th century **Jews** began to settle in Puerto Rico. European Jewish refugees fled from German-occupied territories in the 1930s and 1940s. The majority settled in the island's capital, San Juan, where in 1942 they established the first Jewish Community Center.

Puerto Rico's economic boom of the 1950s attracted a considerable number of Jewish families from the U.S. mainland, who were joined after 1959 by an influx of Jewish families from Cuba. In 1952, Puerto Rico achieved U.S. commonwealth status. That same year a handful of American Jews established the island's first synagogue in the former residence of a wealthy German family. The synagogue, called Shaare Zedeck, hired its first rabbi in 1954. A Hebrew School was established in 1959 and by 1970, there were 600 members of the synagogue, a Hadassah chapter, and B'nai Brith and Young Judaea youth groups.

Today, Puerto Rico is home to the largest and wealthiest **Jewish community** in the Caribbean, with over 3,000 Jewish inhabitants, and is also the only Caribbean island in which all three major Jewish denominations are represented. Most of the Jewish community lives in San Juan, but there are also Jewish families in Ponce and Mayagüez. San Juan has three synagogues: Reform Congregation Temple Beth Shalom, established in 1967; Conservative Congregation Shaare Zedeck, established in 1953; and Chabad Lubavitch of Puerto Rico, established in 1997. In addition, there is a Satmar Community in the western part of the island in Mayagüez, known as Toiras Jesed; and a Reform and a Conservative synagogue in the city of Santruce.

In 2007, there were 5,119 **Muslims** in Puerto Rico, with eight mosques spread throughout the island, with most Muslims living in the San Juan suburb of Rio Piedras.

Buddhism is represented in Puerto Rico by Mahikari de America, Centro Soto Zen de Puerto Rico, Rinzai-Ji, *Centro de Meditación y Estudios Budistas del Caribe* (Theravada and Mahayana traditions), and the Padmasambhava Buddhist Center (Tibetan Buddhism).

Hindusim is represented by the Krishnamurti Foundation (Hato Rey), International Society of Divine Love, INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS (ISHKON), Sri Sathya Sai Baba International Organization, Sri Chinmoy centers, and Transcendental Meditation (TM).

Chinese religions in Puerto Rico include: *** ; the only **Japanese-origin religions** on the island are Mahikari (“Divine True Light”) and Sekai Mahikari Bunmei Kyodan.

The **Ancient Wisdom tradition** includes: the Ancient Mystical Order Rosae Crucis (AMORC), which has lodges in Mayagüez (Font de la Jara Chapter), Ponce (Ponce Lodge) and San Juan (Luz de AMORC Lodge); Freemasonry; *Gran Fraternidad Universal, Misión de Acuario* (GFU, founded in Venezuela by “Dr. Serge Raynaud de la Ferrière”); and the Christian Gnostic Movement (founded by “Samael Aun Weor” in Mexico).

The **Psychic-Spiritualist-New Age** traditions include: the Celicia Temple (also known as “Las Profetas,” founded in a slum area of Caguas, Puerto Rico, in 1953), the Spiritist Confederation of Puerto Rico (founded in 1903), the Movement for Inner Peace, the New Thought Development Foundation (founded in 1987 in San Juan), and the CHURCH OF SCIENTOLOGY.

Puerto Rico is one of several island nations where Afro-Caribbean religions have been very successful. Various African religious beliefs and practices have been present since the arrival of black slaves in Puerto Rico. In particular, the belief systems of Ifa from Nigeria (among the Yoruba people) and Palo Mayombe from the Congo River basin (among Bantu peoples) find adherence among those who practice some form of African traditional religion. In addition, Taíno religious beliefs and practices have been rediscovered or reinvented to a degree by a handful of advocates who practice Amerindian spirituality.

SANTERIA, also known as **Regla de Ocha**, derived from Yoruban religion with an overlay of Spanish Catholicism, is very strong in Puerto Rico today. According to scholars, modern Santería was introduced into Puerto Rico by Cuban immigrants during the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. The popular Afro-Cuban-Puerto Rican religious tradition known as *Santería* honors its deities and the dead with offerings of flowers, food dishes, the burning candles, ritual cleansing with rum, and other animistic practices. Also, **Regla Arará** is practiced in Cuba and Puerto Rico; this is a variation of Vodou in Haiti.

The belief in magic spells, male and female witches, disembodied spirits, the devil and occult practices are neither in the past nor are today an exclusive patrimony of black Puerto Ricans. Because Santería identified Yoruban deities with Roman Catholic saints, initially as a means of retaining the African belief system while outwardly practicing Roman Catholicism, many Puerto Ricans identify with both religions.

Many Puerto Rican Catholics practice religious syncretism, which combines ancient animistic beliefs and practices of Amerindian and African-roots with a Roman Catholicism imposed on Native Americans and African slaves by civil and religious authorities during the Spanish colonial period. The result is a “popular Catholicism” that retains significant elements of African and Amerindian spirituality, which includes animistic beliefs and practices such as **magic** (white and black, good and evil), **witchcraft** (*bujería*), **herbal healing** (*curanderismo*) and **shamanism** (the shaman is an intermediary with the spirit world).

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