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

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Religion in Argentina

Country Overview

This large country is located in the southeastern region of the South American continent, separated from its western neighbor, Chile, by the high Andes Mountains. Argentina, with Buenos Aires as its capital, is bordered by Paraguay and Bolivia to the north and Uruguay to the northeast. From the Province of Buenos Aires south to the Province of Tierra del Fuego, Argentina is bordered on the east and south by the Atlantic Ocean.

The nation is divided into 23 provinces and six major geographically-distinct regions. The fertile plains of the *Pampas region* (provinces of Buenos Aires, Córdoba, Santa Fe, San Luis and La Pampa) in the center of the country are the main source of its famous agricultural and livestock wealth, and home to the famous Argentine “cowboy” (*el gaucho*).

The *Cuyo region* in west-central Argentina includes part of the rugged Andes mountain range along the western border with Chile, and to the east is an arid region where melting waters from the snow-capped mountains irrigate a lowland oasis, which is the center of a rich fruit and wine growing area in Mendoza and San Juan provinces; further north the region gets hotter and drier with more geographical variation in La Rioja province.

The southern *Patagonia region* (provinces of Neuquén, Río Negro, Chubut, Santa Cruz and Tierra del Fuego) is generally a temperate grassland (steppe or prairie) of flatlands and rolling hills, without trees except near rivers and lakes, but forests grow along its western border with Chile in the Andes Mountains and in the southern province of Tierra del Fuego, both of which contain several large lakes; this region also includes the oil-rich area around the city of Comodoro Rivadavia in Chubut province.

The *Gran Chaco region* in the north (the provinces of Chaco and Formosa) is seasonally wet and dry, and mainly used for many decades, until the 1990s, for growing cotton and raising livestock, now substituted in large part by grains, mostly soya; it contains subtropical forests, scrubland and some wetlands, which are home to a large variety of plant and animal species.

The *Mesopotamia region* includes the land between the Paraná and Uruguay rivers, which is shared by the provinces of Corrientes and Entre Ríos; it features fertile pasture land for livestock (cattle and sheep), poultry and plant production (yerba mate, linseed, tobacco, citrus and rice) in Entre Ríos, and the Iberá wetlands (13,000 km²) in central Corrientes province; it also includes Misiones province, which is more tropical and subtropical, with rainforests and the famous Iguazú Falls on the Brazilian border.

The *Northwest region* has the highest average elevation and parallel mountain ranges, several of which have peaks higher than 6,000 m (19,685 ft); these ranges grow wider in geographic extent towards the north and are divided by fertile river valleys, the most important being the Calchaquí Valleys in the provinces of Catamarca, Tucumán and Salta. The province of Santiago del Estero has an arid climate with flatlands characterised as semi-desert and steppe, the soil is rich in lime and salt, and it is



largely agricultural (cattle, cotton, tobacco, soybean, maize, onion and leather products) and lacking in manufacturing. Further north is the province of Jujuy, on the border with Chile and Bolivia, which lies mainly within the *Altiplano* (a plateau that averages 3,500 meters in elevation with peaks of 5,000 meters) in the Central Andes, whereas to the southeast the sierras descend to the Gran Chaco region – the province’s main economic activities are mining, forestry and agricultural products (mainly sugarcane).

The current population of Argentina is 40,482,000 (2008 estimate) and the national territory includes 2,766,891 km². The Greater Buenos Aires Area is composed of the Federal District (the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires) with about three million inhabitants and 24 adjacent municipalities with approximately 9 million inhabitants; the conglomerate urban population is about 12,789,000. Other large cities in Argentina include Córdoba (1,372,000), Rosario (1,242,000), Mendoza (885,000), San Miguel de Tucumán (789,000) and La Plata (732,000).

Most Argentines (an estimated 86 percent) are descendants of European immigrants who arrived between 1850 and 1950. According to the 1895 federal census, the nation’s total population was 3,945,911, distributed as follows: Argentines, 2,950,384; foreigners, 1,004,527. Of the foreign-born population, 492,636 were Italians; 198,685 Spaniards; 94,098 French; 91,167 Spanish Americans (mainly Bolivians, Chileans, Uruguayans and Paraguayans); 24,725 Brazilians; 21,788 British; 17,142 Germans; 12,803 Austrians; and 1,381 citizens of the United States of America (USA).

Current Religious Situation

Today, freedom of religion is guaranteed for all citizens by the Constitution. The Roman Catholic Church maintains its official status (Article Two); nevertheless, since the Constitutional reform of 1994, adherence to Catholicism is no longer a requirement for eligibility to the offices of president and vice president of the republic. The recent governments have increasingly promoted interfaith dialogue through advisory committees. Diverse religious groups enjoy tolerance and coexistence but not necessarily equality in Argentine society.

A series of public opinion polls taken nationally between 1995 and 2008 reveal a picture of religious change in Argentina: Catholic adherents declined while Protestants and those with no religious affiliation increased in size. These polls show that the number of Protestant adherents has increased slowly at the expense of the Catholic population, which has declined by 11.5 percentage points since 1995. However, those who identify as “non-religious” have increased more significantly between 1995 and 2008, from less than three percent in 1995 to 11.3 percent in 2008. Relatively speaking, the percentage of those who are affiliated with “other religions” has not increased notably during this same period.

In 1995, the country was reported to be 88 percent Catholic, the Protestant population was about seven percent, and other religious groups combined with the nonreligious comprised about five percent. By April 2001, according to a public opinion poll by Gallup-Argentina, only 70 percent claimed to be Catholic, 11 percent were Protestant, three percent were affiliated with other religions, and 16 percent reported no religious affiliation (or were nonresponsive). The latter category includes those who may believe in God, although with no religious affiliation, as well as agnostics and atheists.

During January-February of 2008, the educational consortium of CEIL-PIETTE-CONICET conducted a national public opinion poll on “Religious Beliefs and Attitudes in Argentina,” with the following results regarding religious affiliation: Catholic 76.5 percent, Evangelical 9.0 percent (Pentecostal 7.9 percent), other religions 3.3 percent, and “indifferent” 11.3 percent (includes agnostics, atheists, those with no religious affiliation, and

no response). However, the “evangelical” category may not include all groups traditionally associated with the Protestant movement, such as Seventh-day Adventists.

According to Argentine sociologist Hilario Wynarczyk, the percentage of Evangelicals in Argentina today (May 2009) could be between 10 and 13 percent of the total population, an opinion shared by the main leaders of the evangelical federations. In addition, Wynarczyk states that the Catholic population that participates actively in the life of their church is only about five percent nationally. This means that in many local communities the number of active evangelicals may be greater than the number of active Catholics in terms of weekly church attendance. The main difference between the two is that the level of influence that the Catholic Church has in Argentine society is greater than the evangelical influence, especially in the area of education – private primary and secondary schools and universities.

In the section called “ranking of beliefs” of the 2008 CEIL-PIETTE-CONICET poll, heading the list were those who said they believe in Jesus Christ (91.8 percent), while the lowest percentage were those who believe in the effectiveness of *curanderismo* (38.8 percent). Those interviewed who claimed to believe in “esoteric energies” or powers were 64.5 percent. What this means is that many of those who claim to believe in Jesus Christ also accept folk healing (*curanderismo*) and esoteric energies as compatible with Christianity. When asked, “Have you at any time consulted a folk healer, horoscope, psychic, palm-reader or astrologer?” 31.5 percent stated they had consulted a folk healer, 19.6 percent had consulted a horoscope, 16.7 percent had consulted a psychic, 7.7 percent had consulted a palm-reader, and 4.8 percent had consulted an astrologer. *These responses reveal the strong presence of religious syncretism among the people of Argentina.*

In 1992, the Secretariat of Religion (*Secretaría de Culto*) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs listed 2,986 registered religious groups: about 400 were Roman Catholic (mainly religious orders and institutions) or Eastern Orthodox organizations; 1,790 were Protestant groups; 382 were listed as “diverse spiritual cults”; and 387 were groups of Afro-Brazilian origin, such as Umbanda and Condoblé.

An analysis of the evolution and structure of the data available from the National Registry of Non-Catholic Religions (*cultos no católicos*), conducted by Wynarczyk in his doctoral dissertation (2007), reveals that the number of registered religious groups reached a high of 3,105 in 1996. Between 1997 and 2000, there was a decline of 779 registered groups due to an administrative purging of records based on various legal arguments.

Wynarczyk discovered that of the existing 2,326 religious groups registered as of June 2000, 71.1 percent represented evangelical groups (denominations and independent churches); 18.5 percent represented Spiritist, Afro-American and Afro-Amerindian religious groups; and the remaining 10.4 percent represented unclassified groups.

The most recent analysis by Wynarczyk (May-June 2009) of the National Registry of Non-Catholic Religions reveals a total of 3,082 registered groups as of June 2009. The geographical distribution of these groups was similar to that found in 2000, with 67.8 percent concentrated in the Federal Capital (16 percent in the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires and 52 percent in the Province of Buenos Aires. The rest of the nation had 32.3 percent of the registered religious groups, with the largest concentrations in the provinces of Córdoba (5.7 percent), Santa Fe (5.2 percent), Chaco (2.8 percent) and Mendoza (2.6 percent).

In order to understand the significance of these findings, it must be understood that the largest portion of the population of the Province of Buenos Aires is found in the area surrounding the City of Buenos Aires, in what is called the *Conurbano Bonaerense*, which contains 24 percent of the national population. In addition, the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires (Federal District) contains 8 percent of the nation’s population; therefore, the total population of these continuous metropolitan areas houses 32 percent of the Argentine population.

Wynarczyk also reports the existence of 17 megachurches (each with more than 2,000 people in attendance on a single Sunday) that are classified as Protestant (all are Pentecostal or Charismatic). Eight of these are located in the Buenos Aires metropolitan area (seven in the Federal District and one in the *Conurbano Bonaerense*); three are located in the city of Rosario (Santa Fe Province); two in the city of Córdoba (Cordova Province); two in Neuquén Province (cities of Neuquén and Plotier); one in the city of Mendoza (Mendoza Province); and one in the city of San Salvador (Jujuy Province).

In addition, the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God – a religious group classified as Marginal Christian that was founded in Brazil and that is not in communion with evangelical denominations in Argentina – has about 20 “megachurches” in major Argentine cities, many of which meet in former movie theaters.

Finally, the principal concentrations of evangelicals that are related to the immigration of Lutherans and Calvinists (during the latter half of the 19th century and the first half of 20th century) are located in the provinces of Misiones, Entre Ríos, Santa Fe and Buenos Aires, in direct relationship to the principal areas of agricultural production.

No additional information is available regarding the geographical distribution of the Protestant population in Argentina by regions and provinces.

The Spanish Colonial Period and Early Development of the Roman Catholic Church

In 1502, Amerigo Vespucci commanded the first Spanish ship to arrive at the mouth of the Río de La Plata (“the Silver River”), and the first attempt at Spanish colonization in Argentina began in 1516. Permanent settlement began in 1536, when Pedro de Mendoza arrived with a large force that was well-supplied with equipment and horses. He founded a settlement on the southern bank of the Río de la Plata, called *Santa María del Buen Aire* and known today as Buenos Aires.

Although the territory of modern Argentina was inhabited by largely nomadic Amerindian groups at the time of Spanish colonization, the influx of the Europeans all but wiped them out. However, the remnants of these groups survive in the peripheral areas along the southwestern Andes Mountains and along the northern border with Bolivia and Paraguay.

Argentina gained its independence from Spain in the period 1810-1816, after the commercial bourgeois of Buenos Aires and its allies ousted the Spanish Viceroyalty of the River Plate, created in 1776 and encompassing what is now Chile, Paraguay, Argentina, Uruguay and part of Bolivia.

The Roman Catholic Church was established in Argentina with the arrival of Franciscan missionaries in 1536. Their work was supplemented by the Jesuits who arrived in 1586; they were especially active among the Amerindian people. The expulsion of the Jesuits in 1767 placed the Catholic Church in a leadership crisis, which was merely deepened by the social, economic and political forces that created an independent Argentina in 1816 as part of the United Provinces of South America. The post-colonial ruling elite were both anti-Spanish and anti-clerical. Their opposition to the Catholic Church was manifested in an attempt (ultimately unsuccessful) to establish an independent Argentine Catholic Church. At the end of the 19th century, the country was reported to be 99 percent Catholic, and Catholicism was the state religion.

The Catholic Cathedral of Buenos Aires was erected on the site of the first church in the settlement, built by Don Juan de Garay in 1580. This church and all the others built later depended upon the Catholic authorities of Paraguay until 1620, when Pope Paul V, at the request of King Philip III of Spain, established the Diocese of Buenos Aires. In 1866, the Diocese of Buenos Aires was elevated to an archdiocese.

In January 1910, the Archdiocese of Buenos Aires included 1,700,000 inhabitants, mostly Catholics, located in 130 parishes, with 260 secular priests and 60 religious priests. The male religious communities in the diocese were: Franciscans, Dominicans, Fathers of the Sacred Heart, Pallottines, Community of the Divine Word, Passionists, Salesians (since 1896 the Mission of Pampa Central had been entrusted to them), Brothers of the Christian Doctrine and Marists. Also, there were at least 28 female religious communities in the archdiocese.

The patron saint of Argentina, The Virgin of Luján, is honored with a pilgrimage and festival on May 8. Her shrine (*Basílica Nuestra Señora de Luján*) is located 65 km west of the City of Buenos Aires. Some of the popular Folk Saints of Argentina are “Difunta Correa” (María Antonia Deolina Correa, who allegedly died in the 1850s), whose shrine located in Vallecito, about 60 km east of San Juan in western Argentina; “Gaucho Gil” and “Pachamama” (Mother Earth). Shines to these “folk saints” have become major places of pilgrimage where every year thousands of devoted Catholics gather to pay homage.

Historical Overview of Social, Political and Religious Development

A wave of foreign investment and immigration from Europe after 1850 led to the development of modern agriculture and to a near-reinvention of Argentine society and the economy, which led to the strengthening of a cohesive state. Between 1880 and 1929 Argentina enjoyed growing prosperity and prestige, and became one of the 10 richest countries in the world as a result of an agricultural export-led economy.

Conservative elements, representing the oligarchy, dominated Argentine politics via the National Autonomist Party (1874-1916) through non-democratic methods (electoral fraud and corruption) until 1916, when the centrist Radical Civic Union won the country's first free elections. President Hipólito Yrigoyen Alem (1852–1933), who served two presidential terms (from 1916 to 1922 and again from 1928 to 1930), enacted a series of social and economic reforms, which were most popular with the middle class and provided assistance to family farmers and small businesses. The worldwide economic depression, which began in late 1929, greatly affected the nation's economy and caused much social and political unrest throughout the country. Irigoyen's inability to deal with this growing crisis, combined with increasing levels of violence between left-wing and right-wing elements, prompted the military to remove him from office in 1930, which led to another decade of Conservative rule and to the implementation of more protectionist policies. During World War I and most of World War II, Argentina was politically neutral and became a leading source of food supplies for the Allied Nations.

In the post-World War II period, growing political and social discontent in Argentina led to the presidency of Colonel Juan Domingo Perón (b.1895-d.1974) in 1946, under the banner of the Labor Party and with two stated goals: social justice and national economic independence. María Eva Duarte de Perón (7 May 1919 – 26 July 1952) was the second wife of President Perón and served as the First Lady of Argentina from 1946 until her death in 1952. She is often referred to simply as Evita.

Between 1946 and 1952, Mrs. Eva Perón became very powerful within the pro-Peronist trade unions as an advocate of labor rights. She also ran the Ministries of Labor and Health, founded and ran the charitable Eva Perón Foundation (1948), championed women's suffrage, and founded and ran the nation's first large-scale female political party, the Female Peronist Party, as a new social force that incorporated an important number of women, mainly of the popular classes, for the first time as subjects in the political struggle.

Juan and Evita Perón worked together to empower the working class by increasing wages and employment, and to expand the number of unionized workers and of social and educational programs. Labor unions grew from around 500,000 members in 1945 to over 2

million by 1950, primarily in the General Confederation of Labor (CGT, *Confederación General del Trabajo*), the nation's principal labor union. Argentina's labor force numbered around 5 million people in 1950, which made it the most unionized nation in Latin America.

This was the first time that Argentines had witnessed their government giving so much attention to the working class and the poor, and the oligarchy was greatly displeased with Perón's policies. Throughout Perón's first (1946-1952) and second terms (1952-1955) as president, his economic advisors encouraged accelerated industrial and urban development. On 4 June 1952, Evita rode with Juan Perón in parade through Buenos Aires in celebration of his re-election as President. This was the first election in which Argentine women had been allowed to vote. In an official ceremony a few days after Juan Perón's second inauguration, Evita was given the official title of "Spiritual Leader of the Nation." Perón's administration became increasingly occupied in struggles with the Catholic hierarchy and with his own Peronist movement. Consequently, Perón rid himself of many of his important and capable advisers, while promoting patronage among his strongest supports.

Perón, an authoritarian populist leader and a nationalist, was intolerant of both left-wing and conservative opposition groups; and he faced strong and growing opposition from many sectors, including members of the Catholic hierarchy, the upper class, the armed forces, the universities, the national media and business interests, the Conservatives, the Communists and the Socialists, as well as the U.S. government. Perón was an admirer of Germany's Adolf Hitler, Italy's Benito Mussolini and Spain's General Franco and their respective fascist regimes. Under Perón's own regime many Nazi war criminals were granted asylum after World War II, and large fortunes were said to be made by Perón and his close associates. However, the Perón administration, surprisingly, was not anti-Semitic, because Argentina accepted more Jewish immigrants from Europe than any other country in Latin America during the post-war years.

Perón's troubles with the Roman Catholic Church finally led to his excommunication by Pope Pius XII on June 15, 1955, following the expulsion of two Catholic priests that Perón believed were behind his recent public image problems. In retribution, Peronist crowds ransacked eleven Catholic churches in Buenos Aires, including the Metropolitan Cathedral. Then, on September 16, 1955, a nationalist Catholic group of high-ranking military officers, from both the Army and Navy, overthrew Perón in a violent coup; he fled to exile in Paraguay, then to Panama and eventually to Spain with an estimated fortune of between \$100 and \$500 million.

Throughout Argentina, Peronism and even the display of Peronist memorabilia was banned by the anti-Peronist government of General Pedro Eugenio Aramburu (1955-1958). Peronists and moderates in the Army organized a failed counter-coup against Aramburu in June of 1956, but Peronism continued to be a powerful political and social force in the nation. Aramburu's repressive military dictatorship was opposed by the Radical Civic Union, the Justicialist Party (Peronist), the Argentine Socialist Party, the Democratic Progressive Party and the Popular Block, which called for immediate and free democratic elections to end the nation's political crisis.

This paved the way for Juan Perón's return to power in 1973, but he only served as President for nine months, until his death in 1974; he was succeeded by his (third) wife and vice president, María Estela Martínez de Perón, popularly known as Isabel. The resulting conflict between left and right-wing extremists led to lawlessness and financial chaos throughout the country. President Isabel Martínez (1974-1976) was not very strong politically, and a military junta led a coup against her in March of 1976. The new military government at first brought some stability and built numerous important public works, but its unpopular economic policies led to a sharp decline in living standards and to record foreign debt.

This repressive military dictatorship launched a seven-year campaign against suspected dissidents and subversives, known as *The Dirty War* (1976-1983), during which many people, both opponents of the government as well as the innocent, were "disappeared" in the middle of the night. They were taken to secret government detention centers where they were interrogated, tortured and eventually killed. These people are known as "*los desaparecidos*." The estimated casualties from this unpopular war range from 10,000 to 30,000 people.

Although the military dictatorship carried out its war against suspected domestic subversives throughout its entire existence, it was ironic that a foreign foe brought the regime to an end. In the early 1980s, it became clear to both the world and the Argentine people that the government was behind the tens of thousands of disappearances. The military junta, which faced increasing opposition over its dismal human rights record as well as growing accusations of corruption, sought to quell domestic criticism by launching a military campaign to regain control of the disputed Falkland/ Malvinas Islands, located in the South Atlantic Ocean about 360 miles from the Argentine coast. However, after 72 days of conflict, the British military won the war. This unexpected loss was the final blow for the disgraced Argentine military regime, and in 1982 it restored basic civil liberties and lifted its ban on political parties. The Dirty War ended when President Raul Ricardo Alfonsín's civilian government took control of the country on December 10, 1983, under the banner of the Justicialist Party – the largest component of the Peronist movement.

Alfonsín's government (1983-1989) took steps to account for civil rights abuses during the Dirty War, establish civilian control of the armed forces and consolidate democratic institutions. Members of the three military juntas during the Dirty War were prosecuted and sentenced to life terms. However, the previous regime's foreign debt left the economy restricted by conditions imposed by both its private creditors and the International Monetary Fund (IMF); priority was given to servicing the foreign debt at the expense of public works and domestic credit. Alfonsín's failure to resolve the nation's worsening economic problems and the active opposition of the (Peronist) General Confederation of Workers (CGT) caused him to lose public confidence. After a currency crisis in 1989 produced runaway inflation (a 15-fold jump in prices), Alfonsín left the presidency five months early.

Newly-elected President Carlos Saúl Menem of Syrian descent (Justicialist Party, 1989-1999) began to pursue privatizations and, after a second period of hyperinflation in 1990, was forced to impose a fixed peso-dollar exchange rate in 1991 and to adopt far-reaching market-based policies, which dismantled protectionist barriers and business regulations while accelerating privatizations. These reforms contributed to significant increases in investment and economic growth with stable prices through most of the 1990s. However, a series of international financial crises and the over-valuation of the fixed peso-dollar produced a growing economic crisis. The sense of stability and well-being among the general population that had prevailed during the first half of the 1990s quickly eroded, and by the end of his term in December 1999 these accumulating problems and reports of government corruption had made President Menem quite unpopular. In this period poverty, again, started to reach critical levels.

President Fernando de la Rúa (1999-2001) – of the Alliance for Work, Justice and Education (a political alliance of the Radical Civic Union and FREPASO) – inherited diminished competitiveness in exports, as well as chronic fiscal deficits. The Finance Ministry was eventually forced to take measures to halt growing capital flight and to stem the imminent debt crisis, which culminated in freezing bank accounts. This situation, together with a serious institutional crisis produced by the resignation of the nation's Vice-President, produced a climate of popular discontent. On 20 December 2001, Argentina entered into its worst institutional and economic crisis since 1890. There were a series of violent street

protests, which led to clashes with the police and resulted in several fatalities. This chaotic climate finally resulted in the resignation of President de la Rúa.

After a two-week period of political uncertainty, on 2 January 2002 interim President Eduardo Alberto Duhalde (a Peronist with center-left economic policies) was appointed by the Legislative Assembly. Argentina has forced to default on its international debt and the fixed peso-dollar exchange rate was rescinded, which caused a major devaluation of the peso and a spike in inflation. Argentina had to cope with an accelerating economic crisis, with unemployment as high as 25 percent by late 2002, and with the lowest real wages in sixty years. This crisis accentuated mistrust in politicians and government institutions. However, after a year of public protest, the economy finally began to stabilize by late 2002, and restrictions on bank accounts were lifted in December. While benefiting from a devalued exchange rate, the government implemented new policies based on re-industrialization, import substitution and increased exports, and the nation began seeing consistent fiscal and trade surpluses.

Néstor Carlos Kirchner of Swiss and Croatian descent, who previously served as mayor of the city of Río Gallegos and later as governor of Santa Cruz Province, was elected president in May 2003. Kirchner, a Peronist, could be described both as a Social Democrat and a politician with great sympathy for the ideals of the left-wing of the Justicialist Party during the 1970s. During his presidency (2003-2007) Argentina restructured its defaulted foreign debt with a steep discount (about 66 percent on most bonds, paid off its IMF debts, renegotiated contracts with public utilities, nationalized some previously privatized enterprises, and pursued vigorous income policies and public works investments. Since then Argentina has enjoyed substantial economic growth and social stability.

Despite his popularity, Néstor Kirchner forfeited the 2007 presidential campaign in favor of his wife, Senator Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (Justicialist Party), who won by a landslide that October. She became the second woman elected as president of Argentina (December 2007). Despite achieving a large majority in Congress, President Fernández saw her controversial plans for higher agricultural export taxes defeated by Congress in July 2008. However, following massive agrarian protests and lockouts from March to July 2008, the nation's robust economic growth quickly returned and double-digit inflation eased somewhat. The present global financial crisis has prompted President Fernández to step up her husband's policy of state intervention in troubled sectors of the economy.

The Roman Catholic Church since 1946

Unlike its counterparts in Chile and Brazil, the Argentine Catholic Church has, until recently, been known as one of the most politically conservative in South America, due to its basic rejection of progressive trends in Latin American Catholicism. This conservatism originated in its preference for strong Church-State relations during the colonial era, but these historic ties were exacerbated during the strongman rule of President Juan Perón (1946–1955) of the populist Labor Party. Initially the Argentine Catholic Church established a strong relationship with President Perón, but his attempt to consolidate social power through state control of most social institutions and groups conflicted with the Church's own agenda. The Perón government frequently harassed Catholic Action groups that sought to organize Catholic youth and workers to achieve greater social justice. The Church-State conflict came to a head in 1955 when the Perón government legalized divorce and prostitution, and expelled two Catholic priests who criticized Perón's morality and leadership. Most Argentine Catholic bishops were strong supporters of the nationalist military coup that overthrew Perón that year.

Because the Peronists continued to cause social unrest during the following decades, the Catholic hierarchy actively supported two anti-Peronist military dictatorships, which ruled

from 1966-1973 and from 1976-1983, respectively. During the latter repressive dictatorship, some Catholic priests were known to be present at interrogation and torture sessions conducted by police and military officials. Appeals by the citizenry for Catholic authorities to intervene and denounce human rights abuses and government misconduct were largely ignored. However, since Argentina's return to democratic civilian rule in 1983, the Catholic Church has attempted to repair its tarnished image as a consequence of its support for two repressive military dictatorships and to distance itself from partisan politics.

Diverse tensions arose within the Argentine 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 Argentine society and establishing social justice through peaceful democratic means. *Radicals* adopted the Marxist-inspired Liberation Theology and advocated violent revolution by the people as a means of overthrowing the anti-Peronist military dictatorships and creating a Socialist State that would serve the poor marginalized masses. *Charismatic agents* sought to transform the spiritual and communal life of Catholics by means of the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit (including the "baptism of the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues"), rather than by political and social activism.

The Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR) began in Argentina under the leadership of priest Alberto Ibáñez Padilla as early as 1969, but not without difficulties in gaining the approval of the archbishop of Buenos Aires. It was not until 1973 that the CCR was officially established in Argentina with the proper ecclesiastical approval and administrative controls, which led to a growing withdrawal of Catholics from participation in "ecumenical" (attended by Evangelicals and Catholics) charismatic groups and activities due to pressure from Catholic authorities.

During the next 25 years, there was a significant spiritual awakening among Roman Catholics in many parts of Argentina due to their participation in CCR activities, such as prayer groups, conferences, healing campaigns, rallies in soccer stadiums, etc. In 1985, priest Felicísimo Vicente initiated the CCR in his parish, Sanctuary of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in San Justo, which became a center for the CCR in Greater Buenos Aires. Also, priest Darío Betancourt of Colombia played an important role in the growth and development of the CCR in many cities of Argentina, especially between 1985 and 1995. In November of 1994, Betancourt was the principal speaker at a CCR rally in Velez Stadium in Buenos Aires attended by an estimated 50,000 people.

Today, there are 14 ecclesiastical provinces (headed by an archdiocese) of the Roman Catholic Church in Argentina, with over 50 dioceses, headed by the Archbishop of Buenos Aires, Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, S.J., who is also the president of the Argentine Episcopal Conference.

The Catholic Church was strengthened by a century of heavy immigration (four million arrived between 1850 and 1950) from predominantly Catholic European countries, such as Italy, Spain, Ireland and Poland. However, other Catholic immigrants arrived from the

Ukraine, Armenia and the Middle East, as well as Eastern Rite believers. Affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church in Argentina and with the Vatican are the following Eastern Rite Apostolic Exarchates: Santa María del Patrocinio [Pokrov] en Buenos Aires de los Ucranios (1968); San Gregorio de Narek en Buenos Aires de los Armenios (1981); San Charbel en Buenos Aires de los Maronitas (1990); and the Greek-Melkite Catholic Church in Argentina (2002, Cathedral of San Jorge in Córdoba).

Also present in Argentina is the Priestly Society of Saint Pius X (SSPX), founded in 1969 by Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre in France, which is an international congregation of priests that has establishments in almost every major country. Known as *Fraternidad Sacerdotal San Pío X* (FSSPX) in Argentina and founded in Buenos Aires in 1978, this controversial religious order represents *Traditional Catholics*, who only use the Tridentine Mass in Latin and who reject the teachings of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), which in 1975 resulted in the SSPX no longer being recognized as an organization within the Roman Catholic Church and in the excommunication of Archbishop Lefebvre and four of his bishops in 1988 by the Vatican. The FSSPX headquarters in Argentina are at the *Seminario Nuestra Señora Corredentora* in La Reja, Moreno, Buenos Aires province.

The Protestant Movement

The early presence of Protestantism in Argentina (1800s) was due in large part to the immigration of English Methodists, Scottish Presbyterians, German and Scandinavian Lutherans, Italian Waldensians, Welsh Protestants, German-Russian and French-Swiss Baptists, Armenian Congregationalists, Dutch Mennonites, and Dutch Reformed, among others. Today, at least nine branches of Eastern Orthodoxy also exist, and there is a small Anglican presence. Missionary efforts by Anglicans (from the Church of England) and Presbyterians (from the Church of Scotland) began in Argentina in 1824, ministering to English and Scottish immigrants in their own languages in Buenos Aires. The Anglican work is now incorporated into the Anglican Province of the Southern Cone. The Methodist Episcopal Board of Missions began work in Buenos Aires in 1836. In the 1850s, Anglican missionaries (later, the South American Missionary Society) began work among the Amerindians in the Patagonian region and later in the Chaco region of northern Argentina. During the late 1800s, new Protestant missionary efforts were begun among the Spanish-speaking population: the Christian Brethren/Plymouth Brethren (1882), Salvation Army (1882), Seventh-day Adventist Church (1894), Christian and Missionary Alliance (1895), South American Evangelical Mission (1895), and Regions Beyond Missionary Union (1899).

The Evangelical Church of the River Plate dates to 1840 with the arrival of German Lutheran and Reformed immigrants in Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay. In 1843 the German Evangelical Congregation was founded in Buenos Aires, which was the first German-speaking community in the Río de la Plata region. This became the mother church to scores of other German-speaking congregations in Argentina. Later immigrants from Switzerland, Austria, Russia, Brazil and Romania joined these congregations because they had in common the German language. In 1899, the German Evangelical Synod of the River Plate was established as part of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), with which it became officially affiliated in 1934. In 1965 the synod approved a new constitution and was renamed the Evangelical Church of the River Plate (IERP), and it became independent of the EKD. Today, about 70 percent of the members live in Argentina and the rest in Uruguay and Paraguay. Twenty-two Lutheran, Reformed and United regional churches (*Landeskirchen*) form the Evangelical Church in Germany (*Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland - EKD*).

In 1969 the *Instituto Superior Evangélico de Estudios Teológicos* (now ISEDET University Institute) was established to train pastors and Christian workers as a joint venture

between the Evangelical Church of the River Plate and Methodist, Waldensian, Disciples of Christ, United Lutheran, Danish Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican and Presbyterian Churches.

In 1956, the Evangelical Church of the River Plate became affiliated with the World Council of Churches, as well as a member of the Argentine and Uruguayan Federation of Evangelical Churches. Also, this denomination is a member of the River Plate Lutheran Council, which was created in 1992 as a space for dialogue with churches affiliated with the World Lutheran Federation. Since 1978 it has participated in the Latin American Council of Churches, and since 1991 in the World Alliance of Reformed Churches.

Dozens of other Protestant mission agencies arrived during the early 1900s, notably the Southern Baptist Convention (1903), the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) (1904), Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (1905), the Assemblies of God (1914), the Mennonite Church (1917), and the Danish Lutheran Church (1924).

The New Apostolic Church International is hard to classify, but it arrived in South America around 1920 when a number of New Apostolic families from Europe settled near the mouth of the Rio de la Plata in Argentina and Uruguay. The church apostle assigned to South America was the Dutchman Sijtze Faber who settled in the province of Córdoba, from where he cared for the small group of families. In 1930, when Chief Apostle Helper Franz-Wilhelm Schlaphoff visited South America, it was decided that worship services would be conducted in the local languages. The New Apostolic Church in Argentina has been officially recognized by the state since 1938. This religious group, founded in England in 1830, was originally named the Catholic Apostolic Church. It has roots in Presbyterian, Congregational and Anglican theology and church polity; and **it is a pre-Pentecostal body that believes in and practices the charismatic gifts of healing, prophecy and speaking in tongues.** Today its international headquarters are located in Zurich, Switzerland.

In 2000, according to Dr. Peter Brierly, the estimated size of the non-Pentecostal Protestant denominations in Argentina was as follows: Seventh-day Adventist Church (72,900 members), the Evangelical Baptist Convention (49,700), Plymouth Brethren (*Iglesias Evangélicas Cristianas en la República Argentina* - 36,500), Evangelical Lutheran Church (Missouri Synod - 22,400), Church of God (Anderson, Indiana - 19,600), and the Anglican-Episcopal Church (12,000). All other non-Pentecostal Protestant denominations had less than 10,000 members each in 2000.

Pentecostals represent about 70 percent of all Protestants in Argentina, due to substantial church growth resulting from spiritual revivals since the mid-1950s, beginning with the Tommy Hicks Crusade in 1954. The largest Pentecostal denominations in Argentina in 2000 were reported to be the following (estimated membership by Brierly): National Union of the Assemblies of God (137,000), Vision of the Future Church (led by Omar Cabrera - 132,000), Swedish-Norwegian Assemblies of God (93,700), Italian Christian Assemblies (48,400), Chilean Evangelical Pentecostal Church (40,900), Foursquare Gospel Churches (31,900), Church of God International (Cleveland, Tennessee – 24,500), Christian Pentecostal Church of God (24,100), and the United Evangelical Church of Argentina (23,500). All other Pentecostal groups in Argentina had less than 20,000 members each in 2000, according to Brierly.

In 2008, the National Union of the Assemblies of God (NUAG) in Argentina continued to have phenomenal church growth: more than 934,000 believers worship in 1,154 local churches. Twenty-five years ago, not one NUAG church had more than 700 members. In Buenos Aires today, three churches have more than 20,000 believers each. While large evangelistic campaigns account for much of the church growth, the local churches also emphasize relationship development and discipleship – mainly through cell groups, witnessing, training for ministry, church planting and missions. More than 140 Argentine AG missionaries were ministering abroad and eight served as home missionaries.

The Charismatic Renewal Movement (CRM), known as *Movimiento de Renovación* in Argentina, began in 1967 at the home of a Plymouth Brethren businessman, Alberto Darling, located in a wealthy suburb of Buenos Aires, when members of an informal Monday night “prayer meeting” spontaneously experienced *glossalalia* (“speaking in tongues”), later identified as the “baptism of the Holy Spirit.” The weekly meetings continued and grew in attendance as more people came to see what was occurring. At the beginning of 1968, the group leaders rented a larger facility to accommodate 600-700 participants.

As the number of charismatic groups multiplied, many Catholics began to participate, along with Evangelicals, and experienced the baptism and gifts of the Holy Spirit as well. Some of the early leaders of this movement were Alberto Darling (Plymouth Brethren), Orville Swindall (Plymouth Brethren), Juan Carlos Ortiz (Assemblies of God), Jorge Himittian (Christian & Missionary Alliance) and Keith Benson (Overseas Crusades).

One of the major events that led to the expansion of the Argentine CRM to other countries and continents was an ecumenical conference, later called the first Latin American Renewal Congress, held in 1972 in Buenos Aires. Many Argentine Evangelicals and Catholics participated, along with representatives from at least twelve other countries, who became catalysts for the spread of the CRM.

Many Pentecostal leaders credit decades of dictatorial and military misrule, Argentina’s Dirty War and its humiliating loss to Great Britain in the War of the Falkland/Malvinas Islands, the people’s loss of confidence in traditional religion, and serious socioeconomic problems as factors in creating a spiritual vacuum in the nation and making the Argentine people more responsive to movements of spiritual renewal since the 1950s. These include the mass conversions that took place during the Tommy Hicks Crusade in Buenos Aires in the 1950s; the tens of thousands who participated in the Charismatic Renewal movement in the 1970s and 1980s; and mass evangelistic, healing and deliverance crusades conducted by Omar Cabrera, Carlos Annacondia, Héctor Gimenez and others during the 1980s and 1990s, etc., especially among the working class.

According to some sources, the Great Argentine Revival began in 1982 with the first city-wide, interdenominational crusade by former businessman turned evangelist, Carlos Annacondia. Previously, Omar Cabrera, who heads what has been called “the fastest-growing Christian movement in Argentina,” founded the Vision of the Future Ministry, with headquarters in Buenos Aires, in 1972; Cabrera is said to have pioneered many of the crusade practices that Anaconda later popularized.

According to studies conducted by Wynarczyk (1995), the Protestant population of Gran Buenos Aires (*Distrito Federal* and *Conurbano Bonaerense*), in general, can be described as follows: the Evangelical population only represents about four percent of the middle and upper-middle classes, whereas among the lower classes the Evangelical population averages 20 percent or more. According to the Protestant church directory produced by Norberto Saracco in 1992, there were more than 1,200 local congregations in Gran Buenos Aires.

Many of the older Protestant denominations had been involved in the multinational Confederation of Evangelical Churches of the River Plate, which was replaced by the Argentina Federation of Evangelical Churches (FAIE) in 1958. Many of the Pentecostal denominations are members of the Pentecostal Evangelical Confraternity Federation (FECEP). Today, the denominations associated with the Protestant ecumenical community are members of FAIE, which is affiliated with the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI) and the World Council of Churches (WCC). Many of the more conservative Evangelical groups are members of the Christian Alliance Federation of Evangelical Churches in the Argentine Republic (FACIERA), which is affiliated with the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA).

Other Religions

The study by the education consortium of CIEL-PIETTE-CONICET, conducted during January-February 2008 on religious affiliation, reported that those affiliated with “other religions” was 3.3 percent of the national population; and those “indifferent” 11.3 percent (includes agnostics, atheists, those with no religious affiliation, and no response).

There are a number of small Eastern Orthodox communities in Argentina, which include the Armenian Apostolic Church (Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, Armenia); Greek Orthodox Church (Patriarchate of Antioch); Orthodox Church of the Ecumenical Patriarchate (Constantinople: Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America, Parish of Buenos Aires); Autocephalous Orthodox Church in South America (Metropolitan Archdiocese of Brazil, Argentina and Colombia of The Greek Orthodox Church - Old Calendar, headquarters in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil); Rumanian Orthodox Church of America in Buenos Aires; Russian Orthodox Church (Patriarchate of Moscow); Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church - ROAC, Mission of Our Lady of Vladimir (Diocese of South America under Metropolitan Valentin of Suzdal, Vladimir, Russia); Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia - ROCOR (Metropolitan Laurus of New York City); Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch (Patriarchal-Vicariate of Argentina); and Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church of North & South America and the Diaspora (under Archbishop Odon of Manizales, Eparch of All Latin America, Spain & Portugal and his superior, Metropolitan Mefodiy of Kyiv & All-Ukraine); and the Slavic Belorussian Orthodox Church, founded in Buenos Aires in 2001 by Father Alfredo M. Mingolla.

In addition, among the non-Protestant Christian-based groups in Argentina are the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City, Utah: founded in Argentina in 1925; reported 863 congregations with 363,990 members in 2007); the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Independence, Missouri – known today as the Community of Christ); the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, popularly known as Jehovah’s Witnesses (1,782 kingdom halls and 131,513 adherents in 2005); the Christadelphian Bible Mission; The Family International (formerly known as the Children of God, founded by Moses David); Christian Science (Church of Christ, Scientist); Unity School of Christianity (Association of Unity Churches International); Light of the World Church (Guadalajara, Mexico); Voice of the Cornerstone Church (Puerto Rico, founded by William Soto Santiago); Growing in Grace Ministries International (Miami, FL; founded by José Luís de Jesús Miranda); and the quasi-Pentecostal Universal Church of the Kingdom of God and the God is Love Pentecostal Church, both from Brazil.

The Jewish community of Argentina is the largest in South America and the fifth largest in the world. The first Jews in Argentina were Marranos from Spain, and Sephardic Jews still form a significant and visible portion of the Argentina Jewish community. Jews from Germany, North Africa, and the Balkans began to arrive in large numbers in the 1860s, and the first Eastern European Jews (Ashkenazi) arrived in 1889. Today, more than 300,000 Jews reside in Argentina, about two-thirds of whom live in Gran Buenos Aires; they have their center in the Representative Organization of Argentine Jews. In addition, Jews of Iberian origin (an estimated 60,000 to 100,000) have formed the Central Sephardic Community. Eastern European Jews, representing Orthodox Judaism, have formed the Latin American Rabbinical Seminary. Despite a return to democracy and increasing tolerance of religious pluralism since 1983, some anti-Semitism persists in Argentina. In 1994 nearly 100 people were killed when a Jewish community center in Buenos Aires was bombed by terrorists, and the perpetrators were never apprehended.

The same migrations from North Africa and the Middle East that brought Jews to Argentina also brought a large quantity of Muslims, who formed mosques in Buenos Aires and Mendoza and have now adopted a missionary stance *vis-à-vis* the Spanish-speaking population. The country's Muslim population is the largest in Latin America today. Of the 500,000 to 600,000 in the Muslim community, the Islamic Center estimated that 90 percent are Sunni and 10 percent Shiite. In addition, Subud, a Sufi-related movement founded in Indonesia in the 1920s by Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo, has been present in Argentina since 1958. There are also Schools of the Fourth Way, influenced by Georges Ivanovich Gurdjieff and Sufism. Both of these later groups have a small number of adherents. By contrast, the Baha'i Faith has about 6,000 adherents and more than 100 centers in Argentina.

Some of the other religious groups that exist in Argentina today are associated with Buddhism, Hinduism and Sant Mat traditions. Buddhism entered the country through the immigration of Japanese, which steadily increased during the 20th century. The following Buddhist groups are present in Argentina: Japanese Soto School (Tangen Daisetsu lineage), Soka Gakkai International, Sekai Kyusei Kyo Izunome (SKKI, Johrei Center), International Zen Association (Paris, France), Buddhist Community Seita Jodo-Shinshu Honpa-Honganji, Kagyu Dak Shang Choling, Shobo An Zendo, and the Tzong Kuan Buddhist Temple. The Church of Perfect Liberty, founded in Japan, also exists in Argentina.

Hindu groups include the Argentine Association of Transcendental Meditation (TM, Maharishi Mahesh Yoghi), Brahma Kumaris (Raja Yoga), Vedanta Society (Order of Ramakrishna), Krishnamurti Foundation, Sawan Ruhani Mission (Science of Spirituality), Vaisnava Mission, International Society for Krishna Consciousness (Hare Krishnas), Ananda Marga Yoga Society (The Way of Perfect Happiness), Swami Shivapremananda Foundation (*Centro Sivananda Yoga Vedanta*).

The Sant Mat tradition is represented by the Master Ching Hai Meditation Association (founded in the 1980s in Taiwan), the Movement of Spiritual Inner Awareness (MSIA, founded in Southern California by John-Roger Hinkins in 1968), and the Light and Sound of God religion (Eckankar, founded by Master Paul Twitchell in the USA in 1965).

In 2005, the Argentine government reported a population of about 600,000 Amerindian peoples (about 1.6% of the total population). Many of them continue to maintain traditional animistic beliefs and practices, the most numerous of whom are the Mapuches who dwell along the Chilean border in the southwest. The Guaraní people (called "Chiriguano" by the Spanish colonists) still inhabit areas of the Corrientes, Entre Rios and Salta provinces of northern Argentina, where shamans and *curanderos* are recognized as alternative healers, and the sophistication of Guaraní religious thought has been recognized by early Catholic missionaries (Jesuits and Franciscans) and modern anthropologists.

The Tobas traditionally were nomadic hunter-gatherers in the Gran Chaco region (now divided between Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay). Today, about 60,000 poor and marginalized Tobas dwell in rural and urban communities in the provinces of Chaco, Formosa, Santa Fe and Salta in northern Argentina, as well as in urban squatter settlements (*villas miseria*) in Gran Buenos Aires, especially in the districts of Quilmes and Ciudadela. During the 1980s and 1990s, more than 10,000 Tobas migrated south from Chaco into the province of Santa Fe and established squatter settlements around the city of Rosario. Many Tobas continue to practice their traditional animistic religion, although some have become Roman Catholics or Protestants.

According to Wynarczyk (May 2009), many Tobas have been converted to Pentecostalism and have formed their own denomination, the United Evangelical Church (Iglesia Evangélica Unida, IEU), which also includes some who are non-Tobas but who are almost

equally poor and marginalized. The IEU congregations are located principally in the provinces of Chaco and Formosa, both in urban and rural areas.

Animistic religion is also practiced by Quechua-speaking Bolivians who work seasonally on sugarcane plantations in northern Argentina, mainly in Tucumán province. An estimated 100,000 Quechuas dwell in the neighboring province of Santiago del Estero. Overall, about 20 indigenous languages are still spoken in Argentina.

Since the mid-1950s, several varieties of Afro-Brazilian religions (also animistic) have been present in Argentina, including the Center of African Religion (Ile Afonxa Xango e Oxum Leusa), the Xango Aganyu African Temple, and many other Candomblé and Umbanda centers. In 1992, there were more than 380 of these groups in Gran Buenos Aires.

Western esoteric religions are commonplace in Argentina, representing Ancient Wisdom and Spiritualist-Psychic-New Age groups. The Panamerican Spiritualist Confederation (influenced by the Frenchman Hypolyte Leon Denizard Rivail, known internationally as “Allan Kardec”) was founded in Buenos Aires in 1946, and it has affiliated members in Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Honduras and Mexico. Other groups include Freemasonry (arrived between 1795-1802), The Theosophical Society (founded by the Russian Helena Petrovna Blavatsky in New York City in 1875), the Anthroposophical Society (founded by Rudolf Steiner in Germany in 1917), the Basilio Scientific School (cofounded by Blanca Aubretón and Eugenio Portal in Argentina in 1917; named after Portal’s father, Pedro Basilio Portal), the True Spiritism Society (founded in 1928 by Joaquín Soriano in Córdoba Province, Argentina), Sacred Order of the American Knights of Fire (later called the Cafh Foundation, founded by Santiago Bovisio in 1937 in Buenos Aires), Association for Research and Enlightenment (ARE, founded by Edgar Cayce in 1931 in Virginia, USA), the Grand Universal Fraternity (founded in Venezuela in 1948 by Serge Raynaud de la Ferriere), Ancient and Mystical Order of the Rosae Crucis (AMORC), Rosicrucian Fellowship, Church of Scientology (founded in Arizona by science fiction writer L. Ron Hubbard in 1952), the Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity (founded by the Rev. Sun Myung Moon in Korea in 1954), the Universal Gnostic Movement (founded in the 1950s in Mexico by Víctor Manuel Gómez Rodríguez, known as Master Samael Aun Weor after 1956), the New Acropolis Cultural Association (founded by Jorge Angel Livraga Rizzi and his wife, Ada Albrecht, in Buenos Aires in 1957); and the Hermetic Philosophical Institute (founded in Santiago, Chile, in 1970 and Buenos Aires in 1983 by Darío Salas Sommer, a.k.a. “John Baines”). Siloism, also known as the Movement of Inner Liberation, was founded in 1969 in Argentina by Mario Rodríguez Cobo, known as Silo; in 1978 he also founded The Community, the Green Party and the Humanist Party. Also present is the Raelian Movement International (founded in France in 1974 by Claude Vorilhon, known as Rael), and several other flying saucer–extraterrestrial study groups.

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