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**ENCYCLOPEDIA OF RELIGIOUS GROUPS IN
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN:
RELIGION IN THE FALKLAND/MALVINAS ISLANDS**

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Religion in the Falkland Islands (Las Islas Malvinas)

Country Overview

The Falkland/Malvinas Islands are an archipelago in the South Atlantic Ocean, located approximately 460 km (290 mi) from the southeast coast of mainland South America. The archipelago, which consists of East Falkland, West Falkland and 776 lesser islands, is a self-governing British Overseas Territory. According to the 2006 census, the total population was 2,955, mainly of British ancestry.

The capital, Port Stanley (population 2,116 in 2006), is located on the northeastern coast of East Falkland. Construction of the new settlement began in 1843, and it became the capital in July 1845. It was named after Lord Stanley, Secretary of State for War and the Colonies at the time. Today, Stanley is the main shopping center on the islands and the hub of East Falkland's road network. Stanley Airport is used by internal flights and provides connections to British bases in Antarctica. It was opened by the Argentine Air Force in November (previously, international flights were by sea-plane from the city of Comodoro Rivadavia in Argentina's southern Patagonian region). Flights to Argentina ended after the 1982 conflict. A weekly commercial flight to Punta Arenas in Chile commenced in 1993, which now operates out of the Royal Air Force's Mount Pleasant Airbase, located southwest of Port Stanley.

The total land area is 4,700 square miles (12,173 km²), slightly smaller than Connecticut or Northern Ireland, with a coastline estimated at 800 miles (1,288 km). The two main islands on either side of Falkland Sound make up most of the land. These are East Falkland, which contains most of the population; and West Falkland. Both islands have mountain ranges, the highest point being Mount Usborne at 705 meters (2,313 ft) above sea level on East Falkland. There are also some boggy plains, most notably in Lafonia, on the southern half of East Falkland.



The Falkland Islands provided an early base for provisioning ships and hunting and commercializing products derived from whales and seals; processing plants were built on East Falkland and South Georgia, but after these industries ended the wool trade became the mainstay of the islands' economy. Virtually the entire area of the islands was used as pasture land for sheep, and wool was the major industry from the 1870s to 1980. Since then, the islands' economy has become more diversified with greater dependence and revenue from tourism, commercial fishing, and servicing the fishing industry as well as some agriculture.

The Falkland Islands have the highest standard of living in South America. The islands use the Falkland pound, which is tied to sterling. Executive authority is vested in the British Queen and is exercised by the Governor on her behalf. The Governor is also responsible for the administration of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, as these islands have no native inhabitants. Defense and Foreign Affairs are the responsibility of the United Kingdom. The current Governor is Nigel Haywood, appointed in October 2010.

Under the Constitution, which came into force on 1 January 2009 that replaced the 1985 Constitution, there is an Executive Council and a Legislative Assembly of the Falkland Islands. The Executive Council, which advises the Governor, is also chaired by the Governor. It consists of the Chief Executive, Financial Secretary and three Legislative Councilors, who are elected by the other Legislative Councilors.

The Legislative Council consists of the Chief Executive, Financial Secretary and the eight Legislative Councilors, of whom five are elected from Stanley and three from Camp, for four-year terms. It is presided over by the Speaker, currently Keith Biles. There is no political party activity on the islands.

Since the re-establishment of British rule in 1833, Argentina has claimed sovereignty over the Islas Malvinas. In pursuit of this claim, which is rejected by the Falkland Islanders, Argentina invaded the territory in 1982. This precipitated the 74-day undeclared Falklands War between Argentina and the United Kingdom that resulted in the defeat and withdrawal of the Argentine forces. After the war, the British increased their military presence on the islands, constructing RAF Mount Pleasant and increasing the military garrison. Although the United Kingdom and Argentina resumed diplomatic relations in 1992, no further negotiations on the sovereignty issue have taken place.

Since the war, there has been strong economic growth in both fisheries and tourism. The largest company in the islands used to be the Falkland Islands Company (FIC), established in 1851 as a private firm but later became a publicly-traded company on the London Stock Exchange. The FIC was responsible for the majority of the economic activity on the islands, which was based on wool production for export to Britain, although its farms were sold in 1991 to the Falkland Islands Government. However, the company operates several retail outlets in Stanley and is involved in port services and shipping operations.

Farmland accounts for 4,339.73 sq mi (1,123,985 hectares), more than 90 percent of the Falklands land area. Since 1984, efforts to diversify the economy have made the fishing industry the largest part of the economy and have generated increasing income from tourism. Sheep farming was formerly the main source of income for the islands and still plays an important part with high quality wool exports going to the UK. According to Falklands Government Statistics, there are over 500,000 sheep on the islands with roughly 60 percent on East Falkland and 40 percent on West Falkland.

According to the results of the latest Falkland Islands Census (8 October 2006), the total civilian population of the archipelago (about equal in land area to Wales or Connecticut) was only 2,955. This figure, which includes civilians connected with the military installations at Mount Pleasant

but not military personnel or their families, represents an increase of 1.44 percent since the last census was taken in 2001.

Although the rate of immigration to the Falklands is showing signs of a slight slow down, the number of residents with more than ten years in the islands increased from 1,507 in 2001 to 1,557 in 2006. Also on the rise, but to a lesser extent – from 1,325 in 2001 to 1,339 in 2006 – is the proportion of the population born in the islands (called Falklanders), which now stands at 54.2 percent. The next largest group by birth is composed of people from the UK or the island of St. Helena, who amounted for 31.9 percent of the population.

The 2006 census report shows that those present in the Falklands when the census was taken were born in 56 different countries, although this number represents only 25 different nationalities. The greatest growth by citizenship was Chilean, whose numbers rose to 104 from 39 in 2001.

About 70 percent of the population is of British ancestry, primarily as a result of Scottish and Welsh immigration to the islands. The native-born inhabitants call themselves Islanders; the term “Kelpers,” from the kelp which grows profusely around the islands, is no longer used. People from the UK who have obtained Falkland Island status are known locally as “belongers.”

A few Islanders are of French, Gibraltarian, Portuguese and Scandinavian ancestry. Some are the descendants of whalers who visited the islands during the last two centuries. There is also a small minority of South Americans, mainly of Chilean origin, and more recently people from the island of St. Helena have also come to work and live in the Falkands.

Current Status of Religion

According to the 2006 census, the principal religion was Christianity (67.2 percent) and its main denominations were the Church of England (Anglican, 26.5 percent) and the Roman Catholic Church (Apostolic Prefecture of the Falkland Islands, 18.5 percent); and other Christian groups were 7.0 percent: includes the United Free Church of Scotland (Presbyterian), the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and the Greek Orthodox Church. Other religions were 1.3 percent and included the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Baha'i Faith and small numbers of Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim believers. However, those with no religious affiliation totaled 31.5 percent of the population.

Overview of Social, Economic and Political Development

There is some dispute about which European explorer first set foot on the Falklands. The islands appear on numerous Spanish maps and those of other nationalities, beginning in the 1520s. The English explorer John Davis, commander of the *Desire* (one of the ships belonging to Thomas Cavendish's second expedition to the New World), is recorded as having visited the islands in 1592. He was separated from Cavendish's fleet off the coast of what is now southern Argentina by a severe storm and landed on the islands, which for some time were known as "Davis Land." In 1594, English commander Richard Hawkins visited the islands. Combining his own name with that of Queen Elizabeth I, the "Virgin Queen," he gave them the name "Hawkins' Maidenland." Many give the Dutchman Sebald de Weert credit for “discovering” the islands in 1600.

In January 1690, Captain John Strong of the *Welfare* was heading for Puerto Deseado (now in Argentina). Driven off course by contrary winds, he reached the Sebald Islands instead and landed at Bold Cove. He sailed between the two principal islands and called the passage "Falkland Channel" (now Falkland Sound), after Anthony Cary, 5th Viscount Falkland, who as Commissioner of the Admiralty had financed the expedition (Cary later became First Lord of the Admiralty). The island group later took its English name from this body of water.

The first settlement in the Falkland Islands was founded in 1764 by a French navigator and military commander, Louis Antoine de Bougainville, on Berkeley Sound at present-day Port Louis, East Falkland. He claimed the islands in the name of French king Louis XV.

In January 1765, British captain John Byron, unaware of the French presence, explored and claimed Saunders Island at the western end of the group, where he named the harbor Port Egmont. He sailed near other islands, which he also claimed for King George III. In 1766, a British settlement was built at Port Egmont. In 1767, the islands were formally ceded to Spain and placed under a governor subordinate to the Buenos Aires colonial administration. Spanish forces attacked Port Egmont and expelled the British in 1770, which brought the two countries to the brink of war. However, a peace treaty allowed the British to return to Port Egmont in 1771, with neither side relinquishing sovereignty.

In 1774, as a result of economic pressures leading up to the American Revolutionary War, the British withdrew unilaterally from many of its overseas settlements, including Port Egmont. Upon its withdrawal from the Falklands in 1774, the British left behind a plaque and a British flag to assert its claims to the territory. Between 1776 and 1811, Spain maintained a settlement in the Malvinas Islands (so-named by the Spanish authorities), which was administered from Buenos Aires as part of the Viceroyalty of the Rio de la Plata. In 1811, during the Argentine War of Independence (1810-1818), the Spanish settlers abandoned the islands and also left behind a plaque asserting Spain's claim to the territory.

On 6 November 1820, Colonel David Jewett, captain of the frigate *Heroína*, raised the flag of the *United Provinces of the River Plate* (Argentina) at Port Louis. Jewett was a U.S. privateer in the employment of Buenos Aires businessman Patrick Lynch, who had obtained a corsair license from Buenos Aires Supreme Director José Rondeau. Jewett had landed on the islands the previous month, after a disastrous eight-month voyage with most of his crew disabled by scurvy and disease. After resting in the islands and repairing his ship, he was relieved of command and returned to South America.

In 1824, Luis Vernet was granted a concession by the Buenos Aires government to develop the island of Soledad (East Falkland), where he founded a settlement in 1828. He played an important role in the development of the islands, especially in the sphere of fishery conservation. On 30 August 1829, Vernet was formally installed as governor of the islands under the authority of the Buenos Aires government, which used the occasion to lay claim to the islands on the basis of prior occupation, the consent of the maritime powers and geographical proximity.

Modern Argentina claims that U.S. naval forces from the *USS Lexington* sacked and destroyed this settlement in 1831 after Governor Vernet seized U.S. seal hunting ships during a dispute over

fishing rights. In November 1832, Argentina sent Commander Mestivier as an interim commander to establish a penal settlement, but Mestivier was killed in a mutiny after four days.

In January 1833, the British sent two warships (the *Clio* and the *Tyne*) to the Falklands and informed the Argentine commander that they intended to reassert British sovereignty. The existing settlers were allowed to remain and an Irish member of Vernet's settlement, William Dickson, was appointed the islands' governor. Vernet's deputy, Matthew Brisbane, returned later that year and was informed that the British had no objections to the continuation of Vernet's business ventures provided there was no interference with British control. Argentina, divided by civil war and impoverished, lacked the means and power to challenge the British occupation.

Since 1833, the Argentine Government has consistently repeated its claims to the Malvinas Islands, yet has lacked the power to back up its claims. In 1910, the British Foreign Office voiced its doubts as to the validity of Britain's claim to sovereignty over the Falklands, and the weakness of its case is given as the reason why it had never been submitted for international arbitration (Honeywell 1982: 36). Since 1833, every Argentine school child has been taught how the "British pirates" forcibly evicted his/her countrymen from the Malvinas Islands.

The settlement at Port Stanley (built between 1843 and 1845) soon grew as a deep-water port and specialized at first in ship repairs. Before the construction of the Panama Canal, Port Stanley was a major repair stop for ships sailing through the Straits of Magellan or around Cape Horn at the southern end of the continent. The rough waters and intense storms found there forced many ships to stop at Stanley Harbor, and the ship repair industry helped to drive the island's economy. Later, Port Stanley became a base for ships that specialized in whaling and sealing in the South Atlantic and Antarctic oceans.

Later, the British Royal Navy built a supply base at Port Stanley, and the islands became an important coaling station for steam ships navigating between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. The Battle of the Falkland Islands took place in December 1914, during World War I, with a British victory over the smaller Imperial German Asiatic Fleet. During World War II, Port Stanley served as a Royal Navy supply station for ships that took part in the famous Battle of the River Plate in 1939 between British and German naval forces.

Sovereignty over the Falkland/Malvinas Islands again became an issue in the second half of the 20th century. Argentina saw the creation of the United Nations as an opportunity to present its claim on the islands to the rest of the world. When signing the U.N. Charter in 1945, Argentina stated that it reserved its right to sovereignty of the Malvinas Islands and its right to recover them. The United Kingdom's response was to state that the Falklanders first had to vote for the British withdrawal in a referendum, and that this was an essential precondition for the fulfillment of UN Resolution 1514 (XV) on decolonizing all territories still under foreign occupation.

Talks between British and Argentine foreign missions took place in the 1960s but failed to come to any meaningful conclusion. A major sticking point in all the negotiations was that the two thousand inhabitants of mainly British ancestry preferred that the islands remain a British territory.

One result of these talks, however, was the creation of the islands' first international air service. In 1971, the Argentine Air Force, which operates the state airline LADE, began amphibious flights between Comodoro Rivadavia in southern Argentina and Port Stanley. The following year, Britain agreed to allow Argentina to build a temporary airstrip, which was completed that November. Flights between Stanley and Comodoro Rivadavia continued twice a week following the construction of the permanent airstrip until 1982. During the same period, YPF, the Argentine national oil and gas company (now part of Repsol YPF), supplied the islands' energy needs.

On 2 April 1982, Argentine military forces mounted amphibious landings of the Falkland Islands (*Islas Malvinas*) under the command of Lieutenant-Commander Guillermo Sánchez-Sabarots. The Argentina Amphibious Commandos Group landed at Mullet Creek and attacked the Moody Brook barracks. The British defense of the islands was organized by Governor Sir Rex Hunt and the defense forces were under the command of Major Mike Norman of the Royal Marines. The military engagement between the Argentine amphibious personnel carriers and the Royal Marines east of Stanley, and the battle and final surrender of Government House, marked the beginning of the Falklands War (2 April-14 June 1982).

Two separate British naval task forces (surface vessels and submarines) and the Argentine fleet were operating in the neighborhood of the Falklands, and soon came into conflict. The first naval loss was the World War II vintage Argentine light cruiser ARA *General Belgrano*. The nuclear-powered submarine HMS *Conqueror* sank the *general Belgrano* on 2 May. Three hundred and twenty-three members of *Belgrano's* crew died in the incident. Over 700 men were rescued from the open ocean despite cold seas and stormy weather. The losses from *General Belgrano* totaled just over half of the Argentine deaths in the Falklands' conflict and the loss of the ARA *General Belgrano* hardened the stance of the Argentine government.

After a series of land and sea battles, a cease fire was declared on 14 June when the commander of the Argentine garrison in Stanley, Brigade General Mario Menéndez, surrendered to Major General Jeremy Moore. Overall, a total 907 people were killed during the 74 days of the conflict: 649 Argentines and 255 British servicemen and two female civilians (who were killed by friendly fire).

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 war also helped to avoid a possible war with Chile and set the stage for the return of democracy in Argentina in 1983 when the first free general elections were held since 1973. The war had a major social impact by destroying the Argentine military's image as the "moral reserve of the nation," which it had maintained through most of the 20th century.

After the war in 1982, Britain's Lord Shackleton published a report on the economy of the Falkland Islands that recommended many improvements. On 1 January 1983, the Falkland Islanders gained British citizenship under the British Nationality (Falkland Islands) Act 1983; and, on 3 October 1985, the Constitution of the Falkland Islands was established. A new constitution, in January 2009, modernized the chapter on fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual, and it embedded self-determination into the main body of that charter. The new constitution also replaced the Legislative Council with the Legislative Assembly, and better defined the role of the Governor and the Chief Executive. The Falkland Islander's lifestyle was

improved by investments that Britain made after the war and by the liberalization of economic measures that had been stalled through fear of angering Argentina.

Diplomatic relations between the UK and Argentina were not restored until 1989 under a formula that put the issue of sovereignty to one side (*the sovereignty umbrella*) and established a framework within which further talks on matters of mutual interest could be held.

Since the war, successive Argentine governments have stated their intention to pursue their claim to the Falkland/Malvinas Islands by peaceful means. On the 22nd anniversary of the war, Argentina's President Néstor Kirchner gave a speech insisting that the islands would become part of Argentina. In June 2003, the issue was brought before a United Nations committee and several attempts were made by Argentina to open talks with the United Kingdom to resolve the issue of the islands.

However, in March 2009, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown stated in a meeting with Argentine President Cristina Fernández that there would be no talks over the future sovereignty of the Falkland Islands. As far as the governments of the UK and of the Falkland Islands are concerned, there is no issue to resolve. The Falkland Islanders themselves are almost entirely British and maintain their allegiance to the United Kingdom

Religious Overview

The modern religious development of the islands began after the British occupation in 1833.

Church of England (The Anglican Church): 11 churches with about 700 adherents in 2000. The jurisdiction of the Falkland Islands is extra-provincial to the Archbishop of Canterbury. *Christ Church Cathedral* and the neighboring *Whalebone Arch* are two of Stanley's most iconic attractions, situated in the center of Port Stanley on Ross Road and easily visible to cruise passengers as they make their journey to the shore. Consecrated in 1892 by the first Bishop of the Falkland Islands, the Rev. Waite Hockin Stirling, *Christ Church Cathedral* is the most southerly Anglican cathedral in the world. It has a tower with five bells, and its stained glass windows date from the 19th and 20th centuries. In 1977, the Archbishop of Canterbury resumed episcopal jurisdiction over the Falkland Islands and South Georgia, which had been relinquished in 1974 to the Anglican Church of the Southern Cone of America.

Roman Catholic Church (Apostolic Prefecture of the Falkland Islands, established in 1952): one church with about 240 adherents in 2004. *St. Mary's Catholic Church*, consecrated in 1899, is an attractive example of a Victorian building, located on Ross Road opposite the Standard Chartered Bank in Port Stanley. Its pastor is **Monsignor Michael Bernard McPartland S.M.A** (Society of African Missions), who was born in Britain in 1939. He was appointed Apostolic Prefect of the Falkland Islands and Ecclesiastic Superior of St. Helena, Ascension Island and Tristan da Cunha by Pope John Paul II in August 2002.

United Free Church of Scotland (Presbyterian): six churches with about 600 adherents in 2000. *The Tabernacle* of the United Free Church, consecrated in 1892, is another Victorian building, located on Barrack Street in Port Stanley.

Other Protestant denominations include the **Evangelical Lutheran Church** (one small congregation), the **Seventh-day Adventist Church** (four churches with about 130 adherents in 2000, and the **New Apostolic Church** (one small congregation that began in 1992; it has had a resident priest since 2006).

Marginal Christian groups: the **Jehovah's Witnesses** (Watch Tower Bible & Tract Society), with one church and about 20 adherents in 2005.

Other Religions

The **Greek Orthodox Church** is present and ministers to Greek fishermen; and there is a small **Baha'i Faith** congregation of about a dozen adherents. In addition, also present are a few Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim believers.

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