

LATIN AMERICAN SOCIO-RELIGIOUS STUDIES PROGRAM -
PROGRAMA LATINOAMERICANO DE ESTUDIOS SOCIORRELIGIOSOS
(PROLADES)

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

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Last revised on 23 September 2009

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Religion in Uruguay

Country Overview

The Oriental Republic of Uruguay is located on the Atlantic Coast of South America, at the mouth of the Río de La Plata, between Argentina and Brazil. This small country only has 68,039 square miles of land with a population of approximately 3.4 million (2008 estimate). The terrain of Uruguay is similar to the Argentina pampas, where raising livestock (cattle and sheep) is the principal activity.

The landscape features mostly rolling plains and low hill ranges with fertile coastal lowlands. A dense fluvial network covers the country, consisting of four river basins or deltas: the Río de la Plata, the Uruguay River, the Laguna Merín and the Black River. Several lagoons exist along the Atlantic Coast. The highest point in the country is the *Cerro Catedral* (1,686 feet above sea level) in the *Sierra Carapé* hills. To the southwest is the Río de La Plata, the estuary of the Uruguay River, which forms the western border, and the Paraná River that flows through Brazil, Paraguay and Argentina over a course of 1,600 miles.

Today, Uruguay is divided administratively into 19 departments (provinces), which have limited autonomy under the central government. Its capital, Montevideo, is the nation's largest city (about 1.3 million in 2004) and its major seaport, and it is the only city in the country with a population of over one million. Also, Montevideo was ranked the highest in quality of life in Latin America in 2007. A continuing problem is that, in reality, there are two Uruguays, not one. One is the Montevideo Metro Area, with about one-third of the population and with most of the services and privileges of civilization. The other Uruguay is the back country where life is rough and hard, and where the public services are meager and distant.

The inhabitants of Uruguay are predominantly white (about 88 percent) and largely of European origin, mostly Spanish and Italian, but some are descended from Portuguese, English or other European nationalities. *Mestizos* (mixed white and Amerindian) represent about 8 percent of the population, and mulattoes and blacks about 4 percent. The indigenous Charrúa were virtually wiped out early in the Spanish colonial era.

The economy is largely based on agriculture (10 percent of GDP and the most substantial export) and the state sector. According to Transparency International, Uruguay is rated as the least corrupt country in Latin America, together with Chile. The nation's political and labor conditions are among the most free in South America. Uruguay is one of the most economically-developed countries in Latin America, with a high GDP per capita and is ranked the 47th highest in quality of life in the world.



Current Religious Situation

Originally identified as a Roman Catholic country, the Church and State have been separate since 1919, and the 1966 Constitution guarantees freedom of religion to all inhabitants. The number of Catholic adherents in Uruguay has declined noticeably since 1900. Today, Uruguay is considered the second-most secularized nation in Latin America, after the Socialist Republic of Cuba.

According to the 2006 National Housing Survey conducted by the Uruguayan National Institute of Statistics, only 47.1 percent of the population identified themselves as Roman Catholic, while 40.4 percent professed no religious faith whatsoever; the latter includes those who "believe in God but without religion" (23.2 percent) and those claiming to be atheist or agnostic (17.2 percent). Only 11.1 percent identified as "non-Catholic Christians" (includes Eastern Orthodox, Protestant and others); 0.6 percent as followers of Umbanda or other Afro-Brazilian religions; 0.3 percent as Jewish; and 0.4 percent as adherents of "other religions." However, it should be noted that most practitioners of Afro-Brazilian religions also self-identify as Roman Catholics due to the syncretistic nature of "popular Catholicism."

According to Latinobarómetro (a public opinion polling organization based in Santiago, Chile), the Evangelical proportion of the Uruguayan population increased from 6.8 percent in 1996 to 9.4 percent in 2006.

Historical Overview of Social, Political and Religious Development

Archaeological evidence points to the habitation of the eastern shore of the Uruguay River, which marks the boundary between modern Argentina and Uruguay, for at least ten thousand years. Modern history, however, begins in 1527, when Capitan Sabastián Gaboto and his Spanish crew sailed up the Uruguay River. At that time, three Amerindian groups—the Charrúa, the Chanaes and the Guaraní—dominated the area. The Spanish arrived in the territory of present-day Uruguay in 1516, but the Amerindian's fierce resistance to conquest, combined with the absence of gold and silver, limited settlement in the region during the 16th and 17th centuries.

The Spanish paid little attention to this region until, in 1603, the governor of Asunción (Paraguay) introduced cattle into what proved to be good pasture land. The addition of cattle and horses to the native habitat proved a major step in its transformation—cattle, in particular, drove out other mammals and the conversion of the natural habitat to grazing land altered the local flora. The Spanish founded their first permanent Spanish settlement in Uruguayan territory in 1624 at Soriano on the Río Negro, while the Portuguese founded their first settlement at Colonia del Sacramento in 1680.

Increased Portuguese settlement on the lower coast of South America led the Spanish to assert their hegemony over the area. In 1724, Spanish authorities founded a military fortress at the entrance of the Río de La Plata, where the city of Montevideo now exists, and the territory of Uruguay was incorporated into the Viceroyalty of Peru. In 1776, the Spanish created the Viceroyalty of Río de La Plata, which included the territory now comprising Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay and Bolivia.

The decision to create a fourth viceroyalty was a result both of the Spanish Crown's desire to decentralize the rule of his Spanish-American empire and of a recognition that the area south of Brazil required greater military defenses in view of Portuguese encroachments along the

northern shore of the Río de la Plata. Spain also wanted to curtail contraband trade between Portuguese ports in Brazil and the Spanish port of Buenos Aires in Argentina.

In 1811, José Gervasio Artigas, who became Uruguay's national hero, launched a successful revolt against Spain, defeating Spanish forces on May 18 in the Battle of Las Piedras. Addressing the 1813 Constitutional Convention, Artigas stated that he openly favored religious liberty for all: "We shall promote civil and religious liberty to its maximum imaginable extension." A similar position was taken by other Liberators: Francisco de Miranda in Venezuela; Francisco Morazán in Central America; Bernardo O'Higgins in Chile; Bernardino Rivadavia, Moreno and Belgrano in Argentina; Vicente Rocafuerte in Mexico, among others.

In 1814, Artigas formed the Federal League of which he was declared Protector. However, Uruguay did not win its final independence until 1828, following a three-way armed struggle between Spain, Argentina and Brazil for control of its territory, called the Eastern Province. The nation's first Constitution was adopted on 18 July 1830. During the remainder of the 19th century, Uruguay experienced a series of elected and appointed presidents; interventions and conflicts with neighboring states; political and economic fluctuations; and large inflows of immigrants, mostly from Europe.

Uruguay's political landscape was divided between two parties, the Conservative *Blancos* (wore white armbands) and the Liberal *Colorados* (wore red armbands). The Colorados were led by José Fructuoso Rivera (b.1789-c.1854), the nation's first president (1830-1834, and again between 1839 and 1843), who represented the business interests of Montevideo; the Blancos were headed by Manuel Oribe (b.1792-d.1857, president between 1835 and 1838), who looked after the agricultural interests of the countryside and promoted protectionism. The Uruguayan parties became associated with warring political factions in neighboring Argentina. The Colorados favored the exiled Liberal Argentine Unitarios, many of whom had taken refuge in Montevideo, while Oribe was a close friend of the Conservative Argentine ruler, Juan Manuel de Rosas.

In 1838, President Oribe was forced to resign by former President Rivera, but Oribe organized a rebel army and began a civil war, called "La Guerra Grande," in 1839 that lasted until 1852. After a nine-year siege of Montevideo, Oribe was defeated in 1852 with help from Brazil and Argentine rebels who opposed Oribe's principal supporter, Manuel de Rosas in Argentina. Rosas was a conservative politician who governed Argentina's Buenos Aires Province from 1829 to 1832, and again from 1835 to 1852. Rosas was one of the first famous *caudillos* ("strongmen") in Latin America. During his rule, he united Argentina, provided an efficient government and strengthened the economy.

The economy greatly improved after the "Guerra Grande" (1839-1852), due to livestock-raising and export. Between 1860 and 1868, the number of sheep in the country rose from three to seventeen million, because of improved methods of husbandry introduced by European immigrants. Montevideo became a major economic center for the Río de La Plata region. Thanks to its natural harbor, Montevideo became a major port for the transshipment of goods to and from Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay.

Economic development accelerated during the latter part of the 19th century as increasing numbers of immigrants established businesses and bought land in Uruguay. Partly through their efforts, sheep were introduced to graze together with cattle, ranches were fenced, and pedigreed bulls and rams were imported to improve the quality of livestock. Earnings from the export of wool (which became the leading export in 1884), hides and dried beef encouraged the British to invest in railroad construction and in the modernization of Montevideo, notably in its public utilities and transportation system, which encouraged additional immigration.

The Liberal **Colorado Party**, representing both Liberal and Social Democratic traditions, is responsible for developing Uruguay as a welfare state financed by cattle export revenues; it has governed the nation during most of its history since Independence. Its roots are in the port city of Montevideo, the new immigrants of Italian origin, and the backing of foreign commercial interests. The Conservative **National Party** (“Blancos”), later affiliated with the Christian Democrat movement, represents the interests of the nation’s large agricultural producers, the Catholic clergy and commercial interests.

José Batlle y Ordoñez (1856-1929) of the *Partido Colorado* governed as president from 1903 to 1907 and again from 1911 to 1915. He is credited with creating the modern Uruguayan state and redistributing much of the land previously controlled by a small group of large landowners. His leadership coincided with a period of economic prosperity, and the immigration of a large number of Europeans led to the spread of democratic values. He and his newspaper, *El Día*, were frankly anticlerical, and Batlle was responsible for severing the ties between Church and State in 1916, and for banning clerics from controlling public schools. As a result, the active Catholic sector of the population is small and the majority of the people seem quite indifferent to religion.

The nation’s economic growth slowed between 1955 and 1961 because Uruguay consumed 87 percent of its national income, which left a scant 13 percent for investment in the nation’s infrastructure. The public payrolls were overloaded by the mid-1960s: government agencies and state-owned corporations were burdened with one-fourth of the country’s jobs and under constant pressure from labor unions and politicians to multiply jobs without regard to efficiency. By the late 1960s, Uruguay began experiencing serious economic problems, which included inflation, mass unemployment and a sudden drop in the workers’ standard of living, partly because of a decrease in demand in the world market for agricultural products.

President Jorge Pacheco Areco (1967-1972) of the Colorado Party, upon assuming office, immediately implemented price and wage freezes in an attempt to control inflation, and enforced a state of emergency in June 1968 due to growing student militancy and labor unrest. Constitutional safeguards were repealed during his term in office, and the government allegedly used torture during interrogations, brutally repressed demonstrations, and imprisoned political dissidents.

In response to the constitutional crisis and human rights abuses by the government, and increasing inflation and corruption in the business sector, a group of students formed the Tupamaro revolutionary movement, also known as the *Movimiento de Liberación Nacional (MLN)* - National Liberation Movement, and instituted a campaign of urban guerrilla warfare. The Tupamaros kidnapped and later released several foreign nationals, robbed banks and distributed food and money in poor neighborhoods, freed political prisoners, attacked public security forces and assassinated police officials. Their efforts succeeded in first embarrassing, and then destabilizing, the government, which responded by imposing modified martial law during a period of civil war, from June 1968 to March 1969.

The U.S.-trained police force and the Uruguayan military unleashed a bloody campaign of mass arrests and selected disappearances (as part of Operation Condor), which diminished the strength of the guerrilla movement. The use of torture by security forces was particularly effective, and by 1972 the MLN’s principal leaders had been arrested and imprisoned under terrible conditions for the next 12 years.

In 1971, a truce was declared between the government and the Tupamaros, which led to a relatively quiet atmosphere for the November 1971 national elections, in which Pacheco wanted to run for a second-term but was prohibited from doing so by the Constitution. A referendum was

held to change the Constitution to allow for re-election, but it was defeated. Consequently, **Juan María Bordaberry** became the Colorado Party's candidate and won the election for the presidential term 1972-1976.

However, in 1973, President Bordaberry dissolved the General Assembly and began ruling by decree as a military-sponsored dictator until disagreements with the military leadership led to his deposition before his original term of office had expired. During the period 1973-1981, several civilian political leaders participated in the civilian-military administration before Gen. Gregorio Conrado Álvarez took over the reigns of government and ruled from 1981 to 1985. Free elections were finally allowed in 1984, and the new democratic government began a process of recovering from a troubled political climate and a negative economic situation.

Meanwhile, many opposition parties began to unite, drawing support from the two traditional parties – the Colorado Party and National Party – and created a new coalition, named the Frente Amplio ("Broad Front"). After democracy was restored to Uruguay in 1985, the Tupamaros returned to public life as part of a political party, the Movement of Popular Participation (*Movimiento de Participación Popular, MPP*).

Today, the MPP comprises the largest single segment of the ruling leftwing *Frente Amplio* coalition. Between March 1985 and March 2005, there was a democratic transition of power between the following presidents: Julio María Sanguinetti (1985-1990, Colorado Party), Luis Alberto Lacalle (1990-1995, National Party), Julio María Sanguinetti, second term: 1995-2000, Colorado Party), and Jorge Batlle Ibáñez (2000-2005, Colorado Party).

The national election of 2004 brought the *Frente Amplio* – a broad coalition of socialists, former Tupamaros, communists and Social Democrats, among others – to power, with majorities in both houses of parliament, under the leadership of President Tabaré Vázquez (2005 to date), who won by an absolute majority.

Roman Catholic Church

Christianity was introduced into Uruguay in 1616 with the arrival of two Roman Catholic religious orders, the Franciscans and the Jesuits. The Jesuits took the lead in missionizing the native population, and Uruguay became a primary region for the development of “communal villages” (*reducciones*) into which their converts were relocated. The mission system thrived until 1767, when the Jesuits were expelled by the Pope, as part of an international disaster that befell that religious order. The communal villages largely disappeared during the next decade after being taken over by the civil government and other religious orders.

In the meantime, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Buenos Aires (established in 1620) extended its hegemony to the small colonial city of Montevideo in 1726. The Vicariate Apostolic of Montevideo was established in 1830 and upgraded to the Diocese of Montevideo in 1878; it was elevated to archdiocesan status in 1897.

The Uruguayan Catholic Church was greatly affected by large-scale immigration from Europe that began in the 19th century and gave the country its unique character today, with 94.6 percent of the population being of European extraction. Although the immigrants were largely from Catholic countries, many were nominal believers or irreligious, which helps explain the highest percentage of nonreligious persons in the country today.

According to Miguel Ángel Pastorino, director of Uruguay's Service for Study and Advice on Sects and New Religious Groups and a member of the bishops' National Commission of Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue, “in Uruguay there are many nominal Christians, because 54 percent say they are Catholic, but only 2.3 percent attend Mass; and of those who attend Mass,

not all are committed to the faith of the Church and its mission.” The growth of Protestant denominations and other non-Catholic religious groups in Latin America is due to the "pastoral vacuum" that the Catholic Church has suffered in recent decades, together with its own internal conflicts.

Diverse tensions arose within the Uruguayan Catholic Church during the 1960s and following years, resulting from challenges posed by the Latin American Bishops Conference in Medellín (Colombia) in 1968, Latin American Liberation Theology and the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. These new movements polarized Catholic bishops, parish priests, religious workers and the laity into various factions: *traditionalists* who wanted the Church to remain as it was prior to the reforms approved by the Second Vatican Council (late 1960s); *reformers* who supported the Church's modern stance; *progressives* who sought to implement the new vision for “a preferential option for the poor” through social and political action aimed at transforming Uruguayan society and establishing social justice through peaceful democratic means; *radicals* who adopted Marxist ideology and advocated violent revolution by the people as a means of overthrowing the oligarchy and creating a socialist state that would serve the marginalized masses; and charismatic agents (priests, nuns and lay members) who 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”).

Since the mid-1960s, the Uruguayan Catholic Church – influenced greatly by papal calls for a refocus of attention on the needs of the urban poor – has directed significant resources toward assisting the lower classes and empowering the laity in the church. However, only about half the national population identifies as Roman Catholic today, and weekly church attendance is reported to be very low.

Since 1950, overall, there has been a serious decline in available pastoral services, especially in the nation's largest urban area, the Archdiocese of Montevideo, where the average priest was responsible for twice as many parishioners in 2004 (1:3,483) as compared to 1950 (1:1,709). Between 1950 and 2004, the number of priests (diocesan and religious) in the Archdiocese declined from 547 to 244. During this same period, the number of Catholic adherents declined from about 70 percent of population in the Archdiocese in 1950 to about 63 percent in 2004.

In the midst of this general decline in Catholic demographics, a renewal movement occurred that revitalized the faith of many Catholics and made their lives more meaningful. Diocesan priest Julio César Elizaga (b.1929) was a pioneer in the Catholic Renewal Movement (CRM) in Uruguay, and one of the few priests in the country who was authorized by the Vatican to conduct exorcisms. In addition, the Rev. Juan Carlos Ortiz, who was a pastor with the Assemblies of God in Buenos Aires, played an important role in the early development of the CRM in Argentina and Uruguay, along with the Trappist monks, during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

According to a 1969-1970 study by CLAR (*Confederación Latinoamericana de Religiosos*), there were 693 members of male religious orders in Uruguay, of which 64 percent were native-born, 3.3 percent were born in other Latin American countries, and 32.7 percent were born in other countries. Regarding the 1,592 members of female religious orders in Uruguay at that time, 43.4 percent were native-born, 22.6 percent were born in other Latin American countries, and 33.4 percent were born elsewhere. This study revealed that Uruguay had a very high number of native-born male religious workers compared to other Latin American countries; only Colombia, Ecuador and Mexico had a higher percentage, with 82.1, 76.4 and 87.1 percent, respectively.

In 2004, the Uruguayan Catholic Church reported 10 dioceses with 228 parishes, which were served by 215 secular priests and 271 religious priests (486 total), assisted by 63 permanent deacons, 398 male religious and 1,281 female religious workers. The Archdiocese of Montevideo is led by Mons. Nicolás Cotugno Fanizzi, S.D.B., appointed in December 1998.

Nuestra Señora de los Treinta y Tres is the Patron of Uruguay, whose annual festival is celebrated on the second Sunday of November at the *Santuario Nacional de Nuestra Señora de los Treinta y Tres* in the city of Florida, Department of Florida, located in the center of the nation. The small image of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary (only 36 cm tall) was first noted in 1779 in a Jesuit mission in the town of Pintado; the image was later moved to the town of Florida and dedicated to 33 heroes of the Uruguayan Independence movement who appealed to the statue of the Virgin Mary for assistance in time of crisis.

Padre Pío was a Roman Catholic Capuchin Franciscan priest, born as Francesco Forgione in southern Italy in 1887, who is an alleged mystic and miracle-worker, venerated worldwide for the stigmata he claimed to have received from an angel; the “stigmata” were open wounds in his hands that reportedly bled for fifty years, from 1918 until he died in 1968.

The Protestant Movement

The first Protestant churches in Uruguay were formed early in the 19th century. American Methodists (now the United Methodist Church) made their initial probe of Uruguay in 1835, and missionary work was established in Montevideo in 1839. Methodist work was closed in 1842 because of the civil war then raging (1839-1852), and it was not until 1870 that a permanent work was reestablished. The affiliated churches became the independent Evangelical Methodist Church of Uruguay in 1969. Early Methodist success in Uruguay is attributed to the missionary labors of Dr. Thomas B. Wood and to the conversion of a young Italian immigrant, Francisco G. Penzotti (b.1851-d.1925), who went on to become a prominent evangelist across the continent and an agent of the American Bible Society.

The Evangelical Church of the River Plate dates to 1840 with the arrival of German Lutheran and Reformed immigrants in Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay. Later, they were joined by others from Switzerland, Austria, Hungary, Russia, Brazil and Romania. Many had in common the German language and, in 1899, they created the **German Evangelical Synod of the River Plate**, 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. About 70 percent of the IERP members live in Argentina, the others in Uruguay and Paraguay. Twenty-two Lutheran, Reformed and United regional churches (*Landeskirchen*) form the Evangelical Church in Germany (*Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland - EKD*).

Members of the **Waldensian Church** (followers of Peter Waldo, a pre-Reformation French schismatic leader in the 12th century) were among the immigrants from Italy who began to arrive in 1856, but it was not until 1877 that an ordained pastor was assigned to provide clerical leadership. Although, today, this is the fifth-largest Protestant denomination in the country, many of its congregations continue to be served by lay leadership. New immigrants also began to establish colonies in the Argentine provinces of Santa Fe and Entre Ríos, and at the beginning of the 20th century the Waldensians in Uruguay began to expand their work into the Argentine provinces of Buenos Aires and Las Pampas. In 1895, the Waldensian congregations in the Río de

la Plata region began to hold annual conferences, but it was not until 1934 that a formal denominational structure was organized in both countries as the **Federation of Waldensian Evangelical Churches of the River Plate**. Until 1965, the Federation was an integral part of the Italian Waldensian Church, but in that year it held its own synod for the first time. Over time other Reformed immigrants from Europe arrived in Uruguay and helped strengthen the membership of the Waldensian Church in the Río de La Plata region.

The first Anglican missionaries arrived in 1866 to serve British immigrants and later established the **Anglican Church of Uruguay**, which is now part of the Anglican Province of the Southern Cone (established in 1981, encompassing Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay and Argentina). Arriving later in the century were the **Brethren Assemblies / Plymouth Brethren** (1882) and **The Salvation Army** (1890) from England, and the **Seventh-day Adventist Church** (1895) from the USA.

The relative freedom of religion throughout the 20th century has been conducive to the establishment of a variety of Protestant and Free Church denominations in Uruguay, mostly from the USA, which includes the following: the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board (1911), Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (1936), Evangelical Church of Uruguay (founded by the Fred Dabold family in 1946), Church of the Nazarene (1948), United Lutheran Church in America (1948), Mennonite Brethren Church (1948), Worldwide Evangelization Crusade (1950), Mennonite Brethren Missions and Services (1950), Augustana Lutheran Synod (1952), independent Christian Churches and Churches of Christ (1952), Mennonite Board of Missions (1954, Uruguayan Mennonite Conference, established in 1956), Armenian Missionary Association of America (1954; founded in Worcester, MA, in 1918), Church of God of Prophecy (1957), Baptist Bible Fellowship (1958), the Christian & Missionary Alliance (1960), Freewill Baptist Association (1961), Baptist World Mission (1968), Christian Church/Disciples of Christ (1970), Gospel Mission of South America (1970), Church of God (Anderson, IN – 1984), and the Baptist General Conference (1991).

Uruguayan Pentecostalism began with the arrival of U.S. missionaries from the United Pentecostal Church in 1930, followed by the Swedish Assemblies of God in 1938, the U.S. Assemblies of God in 1944, the Church of God (Cleveland, TN) in 1945, and the Church of God of Prophecy in 1957. During the 1980s, about 70 Pentecostal denominations existed in Uruguay and their total membership surpassed that of all the non-Pentecostal denominations. As in Brazil and Argentina, Uruguayan Pentecostals have engaged in spiritual warfare against Afro-Brazilian religious cults, which are considered to be satanic. In addition, the more traditional Pentecostal denominations have opposed the arrival in the 1980s of Brazilian missionaries of the God is Love Pentecostal Church and the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, which are considered to be contaminated with Afro-Brazilian spiritism.

Between 1948 and 1951, about 1,200 Mennonites from West Prussia and Poland arrived in Uruguay as refugees after World War II, and had been living in displaced persons camps in Denmark. The Mennonite Central Committee in the USA helped make arrangements for them to be relocated in Uruguay, at first housed in old army barracks and vacant warehouses in Paysandú and Arapey. Being eager to work and earn their own livelihood, individuals and small groups immediately took whatever work they could find, from skilled laborers and factory workers to farm hands and domestic servants. The first permanent agricultural settlement was begun in April 1950 on a 2,900-acre ranch at El Ombu, located about 180 miles northwest of Montevideo, near the small town of Young. The El Ombu ranch was divided into 75 homesteads of varying

sizes. The farmers immediately organized an agricultural cooperative and began to develop the land and improve their housing conditions.

By the end of 1955, two additional agricultural colonies had been established: the second was a 4,500-acre ranch located near Tres Bocas, now known as the Gartental settlement; and the third was named Delta and established on 3,600 acres of land in San José Department, about 60 miles northwest of Montevideo. The cooperative practices of the German-speaking Mennonite colonies were a modern adaptation of the historic Mennonite Brotherhood economic principles of mutual aid. These practices made it possible for the colonies to survive economically, whereas individual efforts would not have been successful.

There are at least four Mennonite church associations in Uruguay: the Council of Mennonite Brethren Congregations in Uruguay, which was organized among Polish immigrants in 1948 aboard ship before reaching Uruguay; the Conference of Mennonite Churches in Uruguay was established in the mid-1950s, which is affiliated with the General Conference Mennonite Church in North America and with the Union of German Mennonite Congregations in Germany; also, the Mennonite Church of North America established a mission in Montevideo in 1954 to serve the larger community. In addition, the Mennonite Central Committee has maintained a service center in Montevideo since 1948 as a coordinating agency between Mennonites in Uruguay and those in North America. The Mennonite Biblical Seminary was established in Montevideo in 1956 as a bilingual institution (German and Spanish), with the support of North American Mennonite mission boards. The seminary was replaced in 1974 with the Mennonite Study and Retreat Center in Montevideo to facilitate leadership training.

According to Brierly, in 2000, the largest Protestant denominations in the country were the following: the U.S.-based Assemblies of God (with an estimated membership of 10,200), the Seventh-day Adventist Church (8,020), the Baptist Convention (4,500), the Swedish Assemblies of God (4,320), the Waldensian Church (3,200), the Evangelical Church of the River Plate (2,050), the Evangelical Pentecostal Church (from Chile, 1,790), and the Christian and Missionary Alliance (1,397).

The New Apostolic Church International is difficult 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. This religious group was originally named the Catholic Apostolic Church and was founded in England in 1830; it has roots in Presbyterian, Congregational and Anglican theology and church polity. 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. According to Brierly, this church body had an estimated 19,300 members in 2000.

About a dozen Uruguayan Protestant denominations have united in the **Federation of Evangelical Churches of Uruguay**, which is affiliated with the **World Council of Churches (WCC)**. It grew out of the **Uruguay Committee of the Confederation of Evangelical Churches of the River Plate**, originally founded in 1939. The more conservative Evangelical churches have come together in the **Christian Association of Evangelical Churches in the Republic of Uruguay**, which is affiliated with the **Latin American Confraternity of Evangelicals (CONELA)** and the World Evangelical Alliance (WEF).

Historically, the Protestant population of Uruguay has been the smallest of the Southern Cone countries, and one of the reasons for this can be found in the long secular tradition of the country. According to the 1908 census, 61.2 percent of the total population was Roman Catholic; 37.2 percent described themselves as atheistic, agnostic or evolutionist; and only 1.6 percent considered themselves Protestant. In the 1980 national census, Catholics were 59.5 percent,

Protestants were 1.9 percent, followers of other religions were 3.6 percent, and those who declared themselves to be “not religious” were 35 percent. In the 2006 census, only 47.1 percent identified as Roman Catholic; 40.4 percent professed no religious faith whatsoever; 11.1 percent identified as "non-Catholic Christians," which includes Eastern Orthodox, Protestant and marginal Christian groups); and only 1.3 percent were adherents of "other religions."

Other Religions

There are several **Eastern Orthodox** jurisdictions in Uruguay. Immigrants from Greece, Russia, the Ukraine and Armenia have established their several branches of the **Orthodox Church**. The Greeks are part of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America under the Ecumenical Patriarchate; the Russians with the Russian Orthodox Church (Patriarchate of Moscow) and with the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, Diocese of South America and Buenos Aires; the Ukrainians with the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church of North & South America and the Diaspora (under Archbishop Odon of Manizales, Eparch of All Latin America, Spain and Portugal and his superior, Metropolitan Mefodiy of Kyiv and All-Ukraine); and the Armenians are affiliated with the Armenian Apostolic Church (Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, Armenia).

Several U.S.-based non-Protestant religious bodies are present as well, the largest of which are the **Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints** (arrived in 1944 and reported 90,292 members and 162 congregations in 2007) and the **Jehovah's Witnesses** (with 156 congregations and 10,951 members in 2005). Also present are controversial quasi-Protestant bodies, such as Growing in Grace Ministries International (followers of Miami-based Apostle José Luis de Jesus), the People of God (founded in Paraguay in 1963), the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God and the God is Love Church (from Brazil). The Seicho No Ie, founded in Uruguay in 1978, is a Japanese New Thought group.

Jewish immigration to Uruguay began early in the twentieth century and peaked in the 1920s and 1930s, when some ten thousand Jews fled the Nazis. With continued immigration after World War II, some 40,000 Jews eventually came to reside in the country. There are three significant groupings of Sephardic, Hungarian and German background, which are organized into the *Comunidad Israelita Sefardi*, *Comunidad Israelita Húngara* and the *Comunidad Israelita*. The Israelite Central Committee of Uruguay in Montevideo provides some unity to the Jewish community, which today is estimated at 25,000. According to local Jewish leaders, since 2002 the number of Jews has declined due to emigration.

The **Muslim** population lives primarily near the border with Brazil, with an estimated 300 to 400 Muslims in the country, but the majority were reported to be minimally active in religious activities. Although there are no mosques in Uruguay, there are two Islamic centers, in Canelones and Montevideo. Also, **Subud**, a Sufi-related movement founded in Indonesia in the 1920s by Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo, has been present in Uruguay since 1958. The small **Baha'i community** is concentrated primarily in Montevideo.

In April 2006, approximately 850 families practiced **Buddhism** in Uruguay, some of whom were affiliated with the Diamond Way and Karma-Kagyupa Buddhist organizations.

There is a small Asian-Indian community in Uruguay but most **Hindu-related groups** are composed of non-Asian Indians, including the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKON), the International Sri Sathya Sai Baba Organization, the Shivapremananda Ashram of the Divine Society (also known as *Centro Sivananda Yoga Vedanta*), and Transcendental Meditation (known as TM).

The Afro-Brazilian religions of **Umbanda, Quimbanda and Batuque** began to appear in the 1940s near the Uruguay-Brazil border and later in Montevideo. Local centers of these religions, such as *Templo Afroumbandista Ile Oxalá Oxalufâ Pâe Dario de Oxala*, have spread rapidly, primarily among Brazilian immigrants and Uruguayans of African descent. These Afro-Brazilian religions had approximately 5,000 adherents in Uruguay in 2000. The Afro-Umbandista Federation of Uruguay (*Federación Afroumbandista del Uruguay, FAUDU*) was founded in 1994 in Montevideo. Afro-Uruguayan is the term used to refer to Uruguayans of African ancestry; today, they are primarily located in Montevideo. Also present in Uruguay is **Candomblé**, another variation of Afro-Brazilian religions associated with the Orixás; for example, the **Ketu-Orthodox Apostolic Church** (*Ilé Oxossi Ataré Oni-Alaketu*) is located in Soriano, Cardona Province.

Other small religions include a few in the Ancient Wisdom tradition, such as: Freemasonry (Logía Masónica del Gran Oriente de Uruguay, founded in 1856 in Montevideo), the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis (AMORC), the Grand Universal Fraternity (founded in Venezuela), the Universal Gnostic Movement (1977), the Wiccan Community of Uruguay, the Pagan Society of Uruguay, and the Satanist Church (founded in 2006 by “Hermano Andrex” in Minas, Lavalleja Department).

Several Western Esoteric organizations were founded in Uruguay between 1896 and 1925: the Center of Occult Sciences (1896-1897), the **Theosophical and Occult Center (1896)**, the **Occult Lodge (1905)** and **Rama Hiranya (1905)**. Interest in Theosophy was kindled in Montevideo by Mrs. Annie Mennie Gowland, an English resident of Buenos Aires, who made periodic visits to Uruguay where she offered conferences on the subject and disseminated Theosophical principals, which led to the formal establishment of **The Theosophical Society** in Uruguay in January 1925, under the authorization of its international founded, Mrs. Annie Besant.

The Psychic-Spiritualist-New Age groups include: the Uruguayan Spiritist Federation, the Uruguayan Spiritist Center; the Church of Scientology; Ishaya Techniques; the Silvan Method; and the Unification Church. The latter is formally known as the **Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity**, and was founded by the Rev. Sun Myung Moon in Korea in 1954. This group is very active and has major property holdings in Uruguay, including a daily newspaper. Since 1980, Uruguay has become a major center for the dissemination of Unification Church literature throughout Latin America.

The New Acropolis Cultural Center was founded by Jorge Ángel Livraga and his wife, Ada Albrecht, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1957. A break-away group of this organization was founded by Ada Albrecht after she left Livraga and moved to Uruguay, where she established **Hastinapura Uruguay** (literal meaning: “city named after the elephants”) in 1981. Both of groups are considered post-Theosophical movement organizations.

Also, present in Uruguay is a 30-hectare estate, called “Casa Redención” (Redemption House) or the **Planetary Center of La Aurora**, which was founded by Elisabeth César (known by her followers as “Shimani”) during the 2000s near La Aurora and the Shrine of Padre Pío de Pietrelcina (built in 1987) in the Department of Paysandú, located on the southern bank of the Río Daymán about 25 km from the city of Salto. The region is well-known for alleged sightings of “flying saucers” and extraterrestrials. “Shimani” is a disciple of the famous Brazilian mystic, **José Hipólito Trigueirinho Netto** (b.1931), who has authored dozen of books such as *Esoteric Dictionary* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Kier Editorial, 1999) and *Calling Humanity* (Tahlequah, OK: Sparrow Hawk Press, 2002).

In July 2005, according to the Rev. Miguel Ángel Pastorino, director of Uruguay's Service for Study and Advice on Sects and New Religious Groups and a member of the Roman Catholic Bishops' National Commission of Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue: "Not only is there [in Uruguay] an exodus to different Gnostic and esoteric proposals, Afro-American cults, para-Christian sects, spiritualism, and 'flying saucer' sects [those who believe in UFOs], but there is also a silent turn to religious indifference, a product of the advanced secularization of our large cities."

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Last revised on 23 September 2009

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(6,789 words)