

state; they further resent the inclusion of Muslim schools within the public school system.

### **Sudan**

Sudan has a population of 36 million people, 70 percent of whom adhere to Islam, 25 percent to traditional religions, and 5 percent to Christianity. Most Muslims are found in the north of the country, while the Christians are mainly in the south and in the city of Khartoum. While Sudan officially espouses freedom of worship, Islam is effectively the state religion, the government having stated that Islam must inform the country's laws, policies, and institutions.

International agencies have accused Sudan of abducting Christian and animist children and raising them as Muslims. The government has also taken children into the military for forced religious indoctrination and participation in Sudan's civil war. Prisoners taken in this war, which pits the Arab and Islamic north against the "rebel" Christian and animist south, have been forced to adopt Islam and have even been sold into slavery. As of 2002, over 2 million Christians and animists had died in the civil war.

The Sudanese government forbids Christian communities to build permanent churches. Conversion may only be one-way: non-Muslims may convert to Islam, but the 1991 Criminal Act makes Muslim conversion to another religion punishable by death. Christians have been arrested for their beliefs and activities, and while Muslims may preach to Christians and animists, Christians are forbidden to seek converts. Foreign missionaries and religious organizations have experienced many administrative roadblocks, such as delayed processing of work permits and residence visas.

All abandoned children are regarded as Muslim and open to adoption only by Muslims. This policy applies even when the children are known animists or Christians. Non-Muslims are allowed to adopt non-Muslim children only, but Muslims may adopt any child. Conversion is sought in every walk of life. In prisons the government supports Islamic organizations that entice non-Muslim inmates to convert. Islamic non-governmental organizations also withhold food and other essentials from needy people in war zones unless they become Muslims. All children in refugee camps are required to study the Qur'an; in contrast, rebel-controlled areas offer complete freedom of worship.

## **The Larger Context**

Freedom of religion and conscience is fundamental to political and other freedoms. The United Nations has recognized this by placing religious freedom in its constitution, and all member states have agreed to grant such freedom to all their populations. Though both Nigeria and Sudan, for example, guarantee religious freedom to their people, in practice, both have not lived up to their guarantees; Sudan, moreover, violates the U.N.-guaranteed right to change one's religion.

The majority of countries in Africa, however, tend to be tolerant of religious differences. Ghana, for example, is a model of amity, where differences are generally settled peacefully. Senegal with its vast majority of Muslims is tolerant of both its Christians and adherents to traditional religions.

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*See also* British Empire; Coptic Christians; Islam; Rastafari and Religious Freedom; Slavery; South Africa

### **Further Reading**

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**Asia** See Baha'i; Buddhism; China, Communist; China, Imperial; Confucianism; Daoism; Falun Gong; Hinduism; India; Islam; Islamic Empire, Medieval; Israel; Jainism; Japan; Jihad; Judaism; Middle East; Pakistan; Shintoism; Sikhism; Tibet; Turkey; Unification Church

## Augustine on Religious Coercion

The reasoning of St. Augustine (or Augustine of Hippo, 354–430 CE) on religious coercion is important. Since his views supplied theological justification for the Inquisition, Augustine influenced religious freedom and persecution in Europe long after his death. As well, he forcefully argued that law should encode the rights of truth over those of error.

### The Donatist Controversy

Augustine's focus vis-à-vis coercion was the Donatist church, although his views are implied in his arguments concerning the Manichaean heretics and the pagans. The Donatists emerged primarily in North Africa after the persecutions inflicted by Emperor Diocletian between 303 and 305 CE. Donatists held that clergy who had surrendered Christian scriptures to Roman authorities when ordered to had sinned, thereby forfeiting the legitimacy of their ordination; these clergy, therefore, could no longer perform valid sacraments. The Donatist faction cut itself off from churches that disagreed with it on the implications of this sin.

Most churches held that the sin of surrendering sacred books was insufficiently serious to disqualify clergy from further sacred functions. Although several councils of bishops confirmed the majority opinion, roughly half the North African churches upheld the Donatist position over the fourth and early fifth centuries.

### Augustine's Engagement with Religious Coercion

Augustine first considered the issue of religious coercion, or more precisely, government coercion of religious practice, in the early 390s CE. Earlier, in the mid 380s, he had made outstanding political connections in Rome and Milan, and positioned himself for a

major governmental position. He relinquished this career in 386, and was baptized a Roman Catholic at Easter of 387 by Bishop Ambrose of Milan. He was later ordained Roman Catholic priest after three years of semi-retirement in rural North Africa.

As a relatively recent Christian convert and a new clergyman, Augustine first argued against using coercive force in religious matters. He argued that genuine faith must be freely chosen: while coercion might shape practice, it could not change hearts.

In a letter to Vincentius, Augustine later admitted reversing this position: "The Donatists are much too active, and it seems to me it would be advisable for them to be restrained and corrected by the powers established by God [e.g., the Roman Empire; see Romans 13:1]. For we now rejoice over the correction of many who hold to Catholic unity, defend it so sincerely, and are so happy over their freedom from their former error. . . . However, a strange force of habit makes some of them think that they cannot be changed for the better except under the influence of this fear, and then they turn their anxious minds to consider truth" (Augustine 1953, 56–57).

Augustine changed his thinking on coercion under the pressures of office after becoming a bishop in the Roman tradition (397 CE) and as he developed his theology. As a bishop, he was a civic as well as spiritual leader and was responsible for the well-being of his clergy. Augustine faced a rival Donatist bishop in Hippo, and the conflict led to unsuccessful plots against his life and the targeting of certain priests in his diocese.



Augustine the teacher as depicted by Benozzo Gozzoli in one of a series of seventeen frescoes in the Church of Saint Augustine at San Gimignano, completed in 1465.

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