

Timeline of Religious Freedom



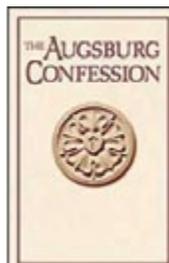
BY ROBERT SMITH



■ **1523: In “Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed,”** Martin Luther explained that Christians

should serve in government when called to do so and willingly obey its commands. However, when a government tries to compel a Christian to act contrary to the Word of God, he must resist and accept any punishment it would impose for such disobedience.

■ **1530: In the Augsburg Confession,** Lutheran princes adopted Luther’s view of temporal authority as their own.



■ **1776: According to legend, Lutheran pastor John Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg** preached a sermon on “For everything there is a season,” then removed his vestments to reveal the uniform of a Continental Army colonel.

■ **1838: The Kingdom of Saxony began to adopt provisions similar to the Prussian Union.** A group of confessional Lutheran pastors under Martin Stephan organized a colony of emigrants to seek religious freedom in Perry County, Mo.

■ **1923: In Meyer v. State of Nebraska, the Supreme Court** overturned a Nebraska law forbidding schools to teach modern languages in elementary school. Meyer, convicted of teaching German, argued that it was essential for students to be able to read Lutheran spiritual texts in that language.

■ **1963: In Sherbert v. Verner et al.,** a Seventh-Day Adventist was denied unemployment benefits when she was fired for refusing to work on Saturday. The Supreme Court held that Sherbert’s right to the free exercise of religion was violated when she was denied unemployment benefits.

■ **1972: In Wisconsin v. Yoder et al.,** the conviction of an Amish man for violation of the school compulsory attendance law was overturned because the Amish do not believe in school attendance for children beyond eighth grade.

■ **1981: In St. Martin Evangelical Lutheran Church et al. v. South Dakota,** a Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod congregation argued that religious teachers were exempt from collecting unemployment insurance. The court ruled unanimously in their favor.



■ **1998: In Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod v. FCC,** the Federal Communication Commission found KFYO and KFYO FM guilty of racial discrimination because it required all of its employees to be members of the LCMS and did not recruit minorities. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the 3rd Circuit found that the FCC had violated the free exercise rights of the LCMS and vacated the decision against it.

■ **2012: In Hosanna-Tabor Evangelical Lutheran Church and School v. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission et al.,** the Supreme Court found that a U.S. congregation or religious organization had an absolute right to appoint and dismiss its ministers of religion.

■ **2012: The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services** mandated that all employers, including most religious organizations, must cover birth control drugs and procedures, including those that can cause the death of the unborn, in their insurance plans — even if they oppose such actions as a matter of doctrine.



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