

**APPROVED BY GOD**  
**A CASE FOR MODERN DISESTABLISHMENT**

by

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## Introduction

The State Establishment of a Church as the recognized and favored spiritual entity sends shivers up the spine of independent-minded Christians. The concept of Establishment seems as foreign to American Christians as Ecclesiastical Courts and suing for missed tithes. When Virginians of early America decided to disestablish the Episcopalian church, take away its lands, and cease collecting taxes for the support of Anglican ministers, independent church groups of all denominations applauded this as a result of the grace of God granting freedom and equal status to all churches. The principal of Establishment has slowly reared its ugly head in our modern society in the form of a favored church status with governmental entities. This favored status is in the form of church incorporation. The incorporation of churches in early America was synonymous with Establishment. Baptists in New England called incorporation “unchristian surrender to the state”. Presbyterians in Virginia like the respected and learned pastor William S. Plumer, argued for one week to the Virginia State Legislature against passing a bill to allow churches to incorporate.

There have been two basic kinds of churches in England for over five hundred years, the Established Church of England, and all other unrecognized churches. Great independent pastors like John Gill and Charles Spurgeon both spoke against the Established Church. There are now two basic forms churches of America have taken. One is the recognized form of an incorporation, giving churches a favored status as a charitable institution, with benefits of IRS code 501(c)(3) status, tax exemption, and other state subsidies and privileges. The other is the same status as all other early American churches, the state unrecognized, but God-recognized, un-entangled, unincorporated church.

There are also two kinds of churches in Russia. There are the registered churches, which absolutely follow the laws which bind these churches to certain performances, like non-attendance of children. American Christian leaders condemn these churches for registering with the Russian government and stipulating to their demands, which are judged as against the Word of God. The other kind of Russian churches are applauded by American Christian leaders as the “True Churches” of Russia, namely, the unregistered churches.

When the Ecclesiastical Law Center met with leaders of the Russian Baptist Church in Portland, Oregon in April of 2002, we found Christian men who were confused by the dichotomy of American Christian thinking. Here they were, having fled to America for religious freedom, with brethren still in the gulag back in Russia, and the first thing American attorneys tell them to do is go to the state of Oregon and incorporate their churches,

and then apply to the IRS for tax exempt status. Sadly, we realized these Russian Baptists had discovered the hypocrisy of American Christians. They gave a great sigh of relief when we told them that Baptist groups in early America agreed with them 100%.

The story is told of a man who loved dogs. He spoke all across the country on the subject of his love of dogs. One day he was paving his sidewalk. When he had finished smoothing out the concrete, a large dog walked right through it. Patiently, he smoothed it out again, and went to his garage to get some barrels to use as barriers. While he was gone, the dog came back and walked through his concrete. He again smoothed it out, placed the barriers around it with tape surrounding the barriers. When he went inside his house, the dog jumped the tape, walked around the wet concrete and sat down right in the middle of it. When the man came out of his house, he was so angry he got his gun and shot the dog. His neighbor noticed his behavior, and came up to him and said, "I thought you loved dogs." The angry man replied: "I love dogs in the abstract; I just can't stand dogs in the concrete."

This book goes beyond the abstract. No longer is not being incorporated a theory. It is a basic fact of history, backed up by the Scriptures, that true churches did not go to the state for recognition and benefits. We trust by the end of the book you will not be desirous of having incorporation "in the concrete".

The Authors