The States

- Introduction: Task, Methodology, & Findings (Carl H. Esbeck & Jonathan J. Den Hartog)
- New Jersey (John Fea)
- Delaware (Evan Haefeli)
- Rhode Island (James S. Kabala)
- Pennsylvania (David Little)
- North Carolina (Nicholas P. Miller)
- New York (Kyle T. Bulthuis)
- Virginia (Carl H. Esbeck)
- South Carolina (Miles Smith IV)
- Kentucky (Keith Harper)
- Tennessee (Edward R. Crowther)
- Georgia (Joel A. Nichols)
- Ohio (Michael S. Ariens)
- Louisiana and Missouri (Kevin Pybas)
- Vermont (Shelby M. Balik)
- Maryland (Michael D. Breidenbach)
- Connecticut (Robert J. Imholt)
- New Hampshire (Brian Franklin)
- Maine (Marc M. Arkin)
- Florida (Nathan A. Adams IV)
- Massachusetts, 1780-1833 (John Witte, Jr. and Justin Latterell)
What was an establishment?

1. Government financial support of the state church: assessments to pay ministers and rents from glebe lands.

2. Government control over the creeds, order of worship, polity, and clerical appointments of the state church. Licensure of state-tolerated dissenting (termed “nonconformist”) clerics; licenses tethered to a single meetinghouse, thereby preventing itinerant preaching by nonconformists.

3. Mandatory attendance at worship services in the state church, prohibitions on church services by others, and required licensure to open a meetinghouse for nonconformists.
What was an establishment?

4. Use of the state church to record births, marriages, and deaths; to perform all marriages and funerals; and to administer tax revenues for care of the poor and widowed.

5. Religious tests. Public office and voting rights confined to members of the state church or a broader religious test to include nonconformists. Religious preferences for securing military commissions, government contracts, as well as admission to university and faculty appointments.
Research Findings

1. Neither the U.S. Constitution of 1787–88 nor the First Amendment of 1789–91 contributed to the disestablishment process in the original thirteen states.
Research Findings

2. Not only did each of the original and early admitted states have its own unique disestablishment, but it cannot be said that the disestablishment story in any one state was more important than that of others.
Research Findings

3. A majority of the colonists who agitated for disestablishment were religious dissenters who, although in agreement concerning the general tenets of Protestant Christianity, still materially differed from the established Protestant church in their state. Their beliefs motivated them to seek freedom for reasons that are rooted in Christianity, as they understood the teachings of that faith.
4. Protecting the “right of private judgment” in individual religious observance and practice came easily to the new American states. However, voluntarism in the funding of ministers and churches—leading to the repeal of religious tax assessments and glebes—was slow and arduous work.
Research Findings

5. Neither resistance to the Congregational (Puritan) establishment in New England nor the Church of England establishment in the southern colonies was a material cause of the War of Independence against Great Britain.
Research Findings

6. While the new states continued to be anti-Catholic, that did not shape the disestablishment project.
7. The conventional view of Thomas Jefferson’s broad influence on the disestablishment process in the states has little support in the evidence reported by our chapter authors.
Questions & Answers