

HT 502

**Class 15 CHRISTIANITY IN THE POSTMODERN ERA
(1963–Present)**

The Ecumenical Movement in America

The State of Roman Catholicism, Post Vatican I

Postmodernism

New Age Movement

Current Issues in Conservative, Dispensationalist Groups

OUTLINE OF AMERICAN CHURCH HISTORY

Historically

Colonial Era	National Era	Modern Era	Post-Modern Era
Age of Divine Sovereignty	Age of Biblistic Rationalism, Common Sense	Age of Rationalism, Science	Age of Privatism, Despair, Self
Theocentrism	Biblicistic Rationalism	Autonomous Rationalism	Individualism

Theologically

Course Overview

- I. Christianity and the Age of Enlightenment in Europe (1600–1800)
- II. Christianity in the Era of British Colonialism (1600–1776)
 - *The Rise of Pietism
- III. Christianity in the National Era (1776–1880)
- IV. Christianity in the Modern Era (1880–1963)
- V. Christianity in the Postmodern Era (1960–2021)**

IV. The Post-Modern Era (1963–Present)

- A. The Current State of Mainline Denominationalism.
- B. The State of Roman Catholicism in America post-Vatican I.
- C. The Modern Ecumenical Movement.
- D. The New Age Movement.
- E. Issues in Conservative, Bible Church Movement.

A. The Current State of Mainline Denominationalism.

2. Denominations characterized by merger and sociological dissension.

The Numerical Decline of the Mainline Churches in the 1970s and 1980s

The Episcopal Church	17%
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The Disciples of Christ (Christian Church)	29%
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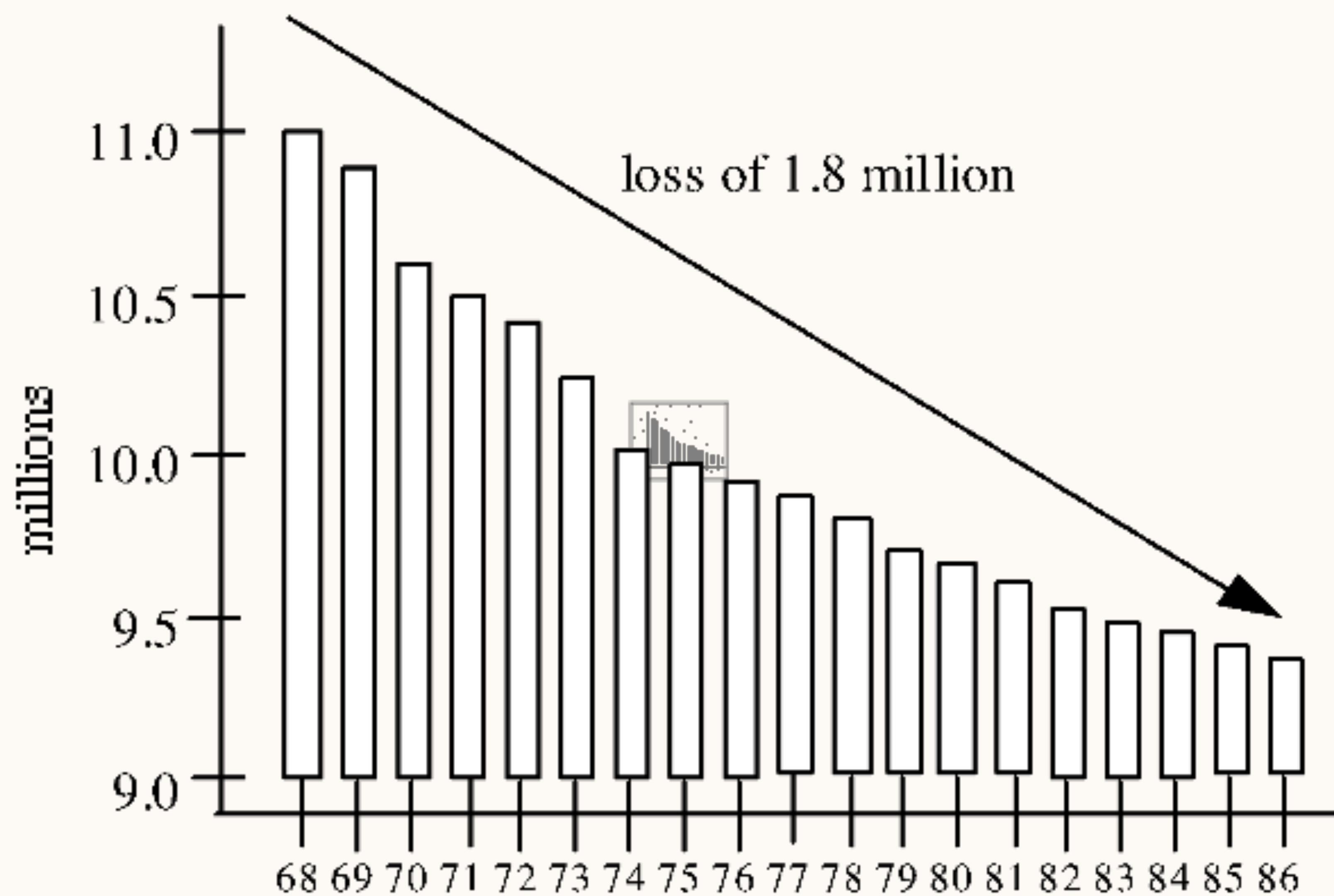
The Presbyterian [□] Church	25%
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The United Church of Christ	16%
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The United Methodist Church	13%
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"The Present Crisis: The Impact of Membership Decline
in the Mainline Churches" *Quarterly Review* 7
(Fall 1987):74-75.

Membership Changes 1968 — 86



Source: *The United Methodist Reporter* (17 July 1987)

Statistics of Numerical Membership, 1990–2003

American Baptist Churches (USA) declined approximately 7%

Episcopal Church declined approximately 5%

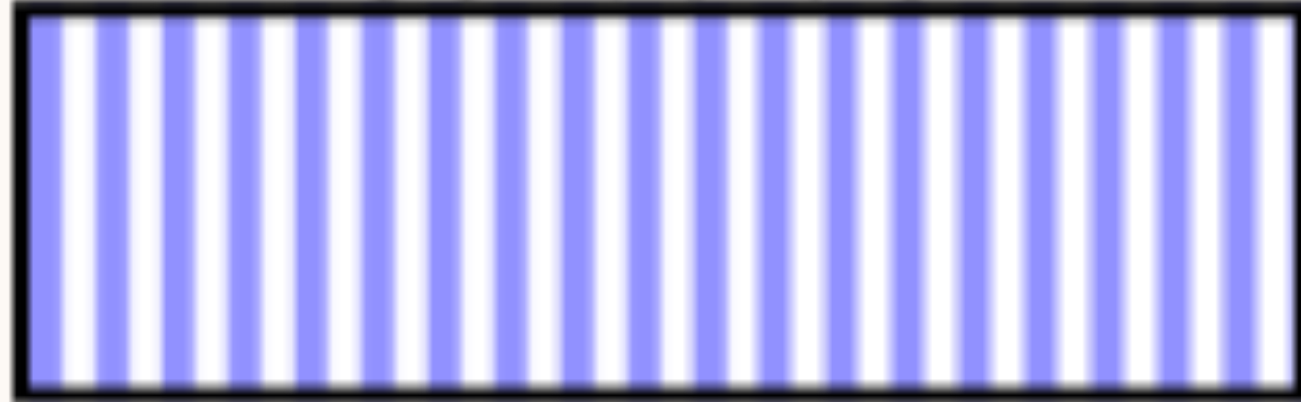
Disciples of Christ approximately 27%

The Presbyterian Church, USA approximately 15%

United Methodist declined over 8%

History of the Northern Baptists

Northern
Baptist
Convention



1908

American
Baptist
Convention



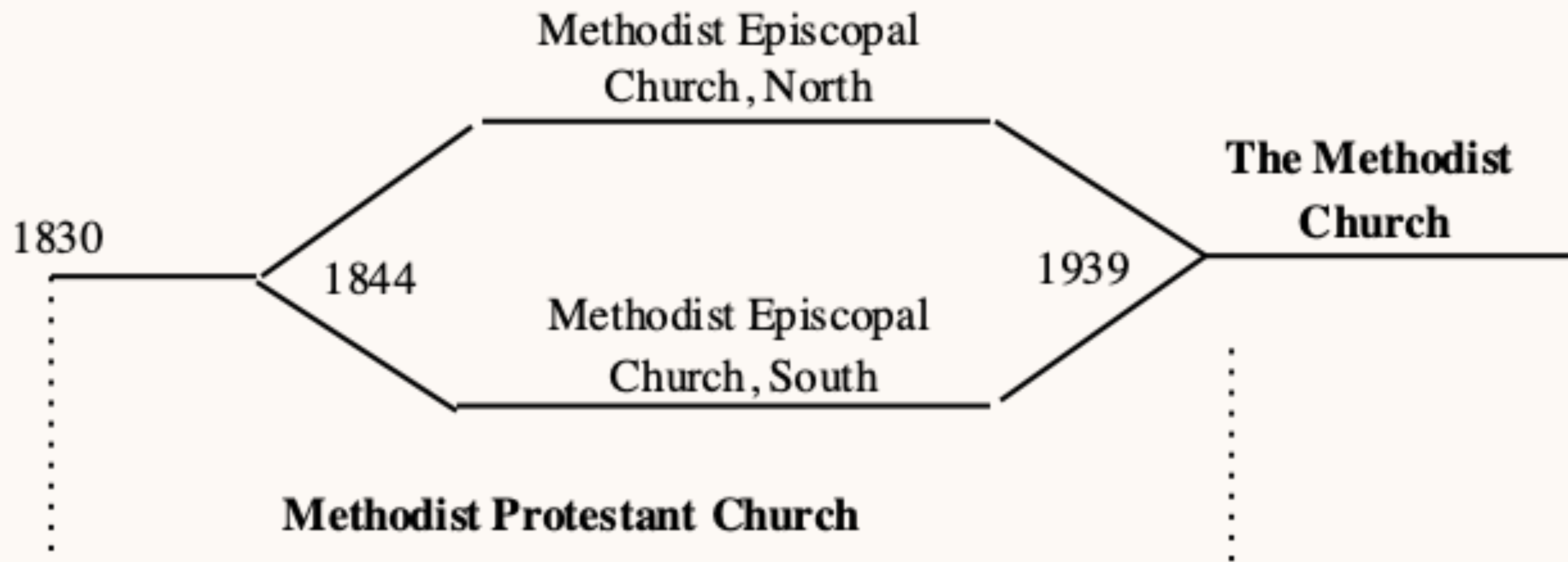
1950

American Baptist
Churches in the U.S.A

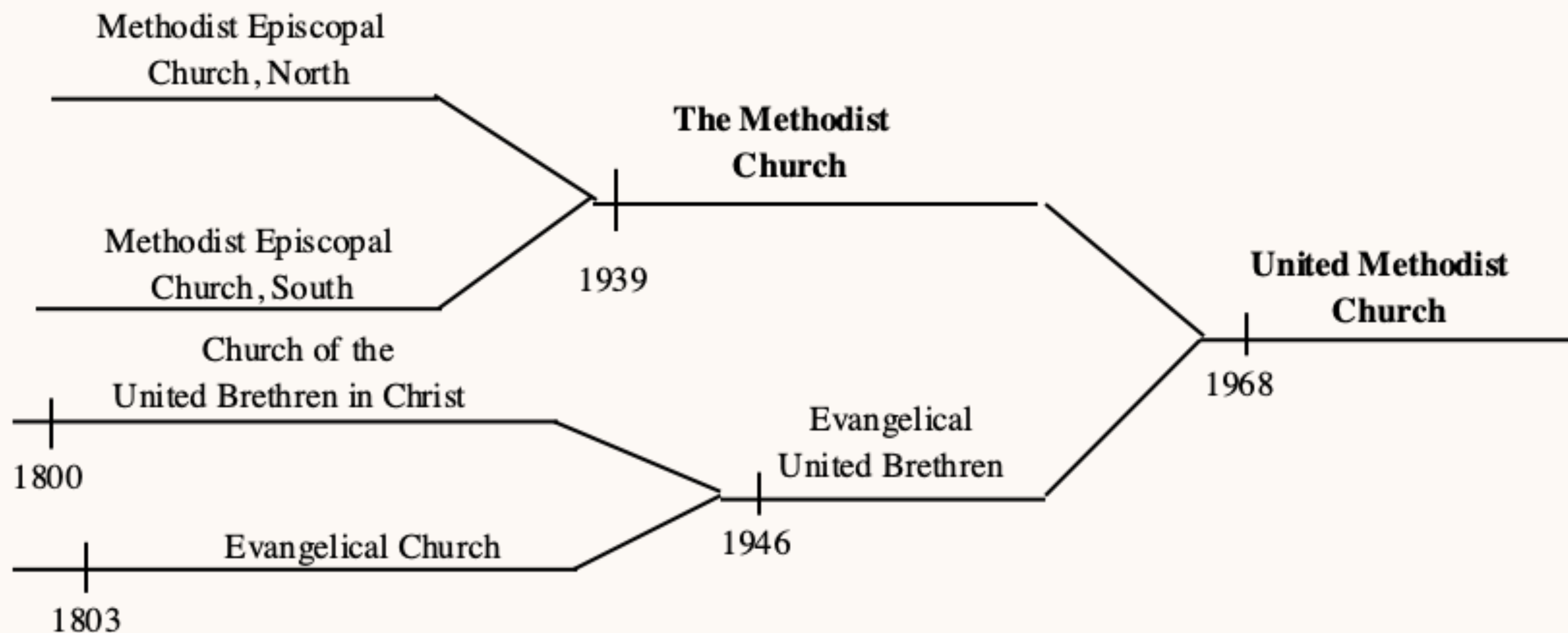


1972

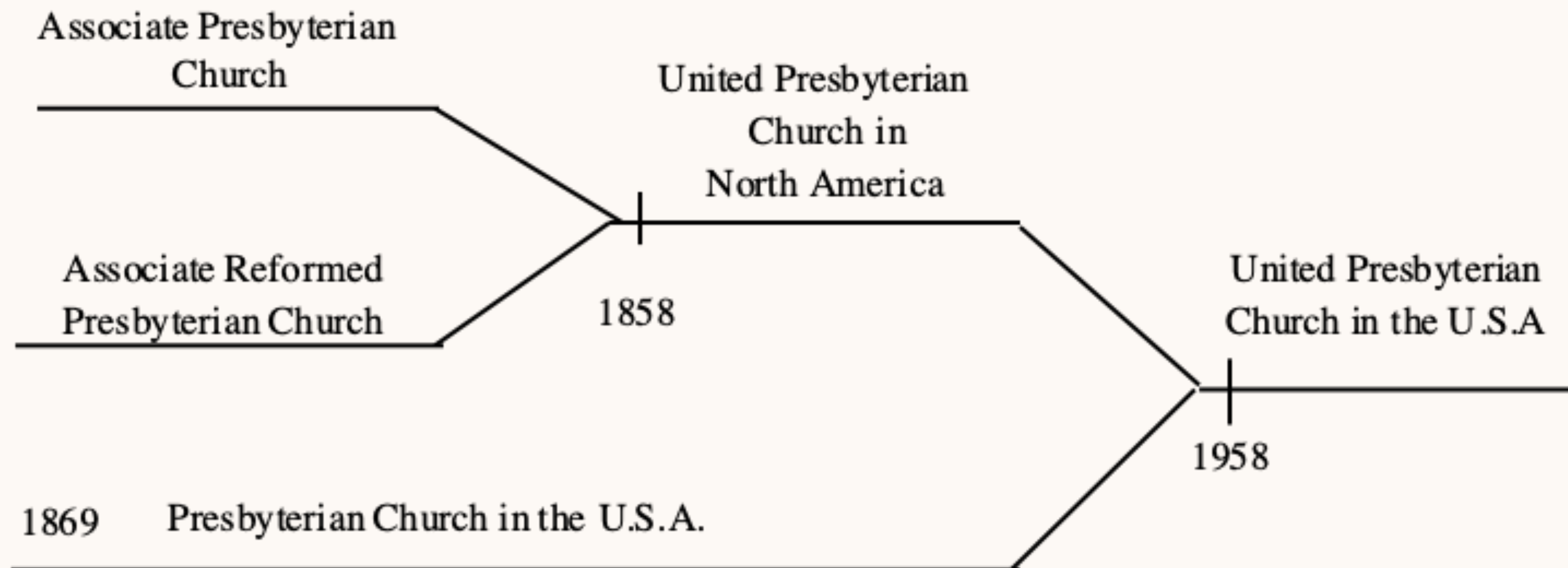
History of the Methodist Church in America



History of the American Methodist Church

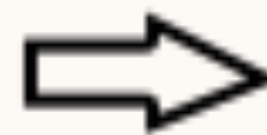


History of Presbyterianism in America

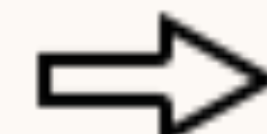


The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

The United
Presbyterian Church
of North America
1858



The United
Presbyterian Church
in the U.S.A.
1958



The
Presbyterian Church
in the U.S.A.
1869



The
Presbyterian Church
(U.S.A.)
1983



The
Presbyterian Church
in the U.S.
1865

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church

1983

The Presbyterian Church
in the United States

The Presbyterian Church
in the United States of America

The United Presbyterian Church
in the United States of America

The Evangelical
Presbyterian Church

1981

The History of Congregationalism in America

Christian Churches

Congregational Christian
Churches

1931

New Divinity
Congregationalism

Conservative Congregation
Christian Conference

1935

The History of Congregationalism in America

Evangelical Synod
in North America

1943 Evangelical and
Reformed Church

Reformed Church
in the U.S.A.

United Church
of Christ

1957

Congregational
Christian Churches

1931

Congregational
Christian Churches

1955

History of the Protestant Episcopal Church

The Church
of England

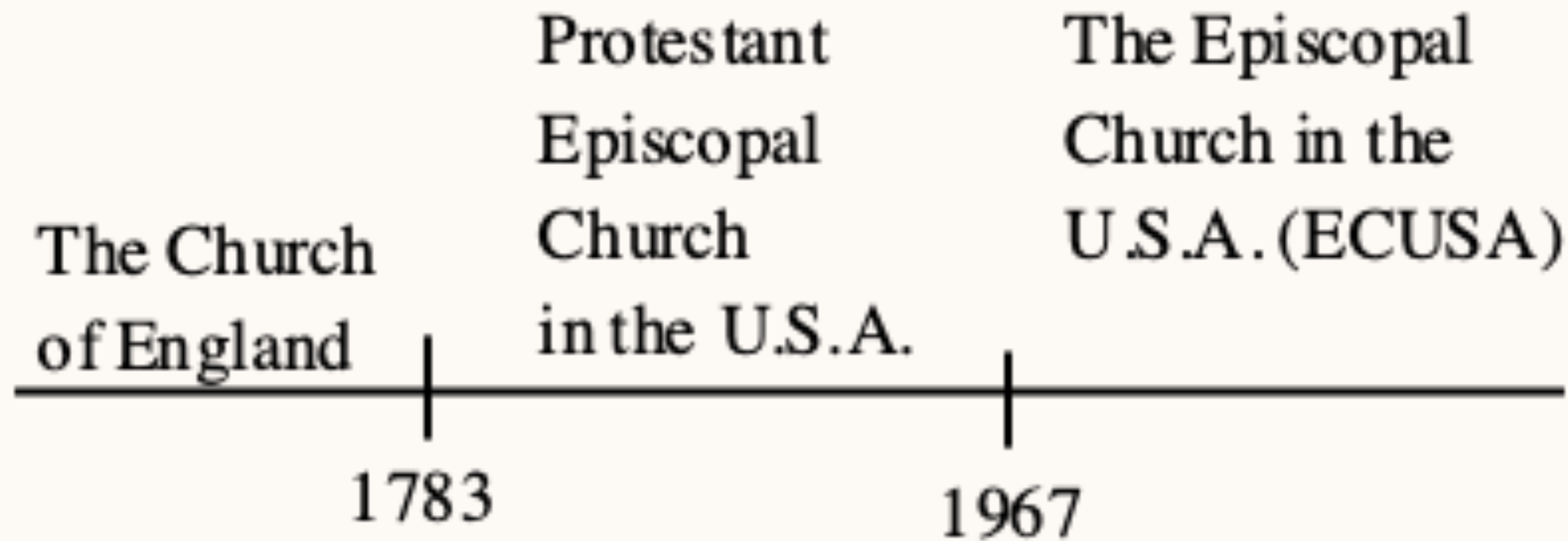
1789

Protestant Episcopal Church

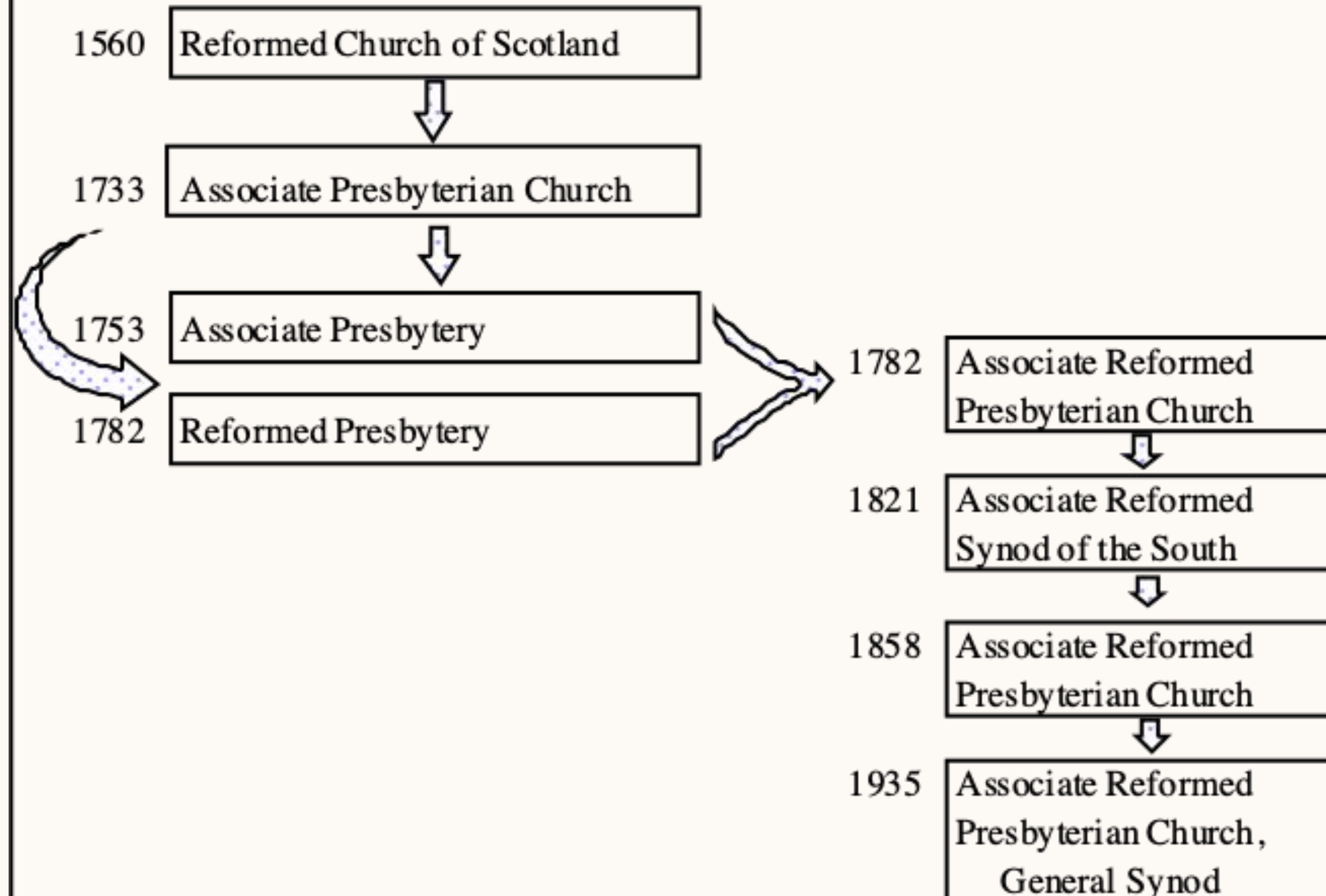
Reformed
Episcopal Church

1873

History of the Episcopal Church in the U.S.A. (ECUSA)



The History of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, General Synod



The Baptist General Conference

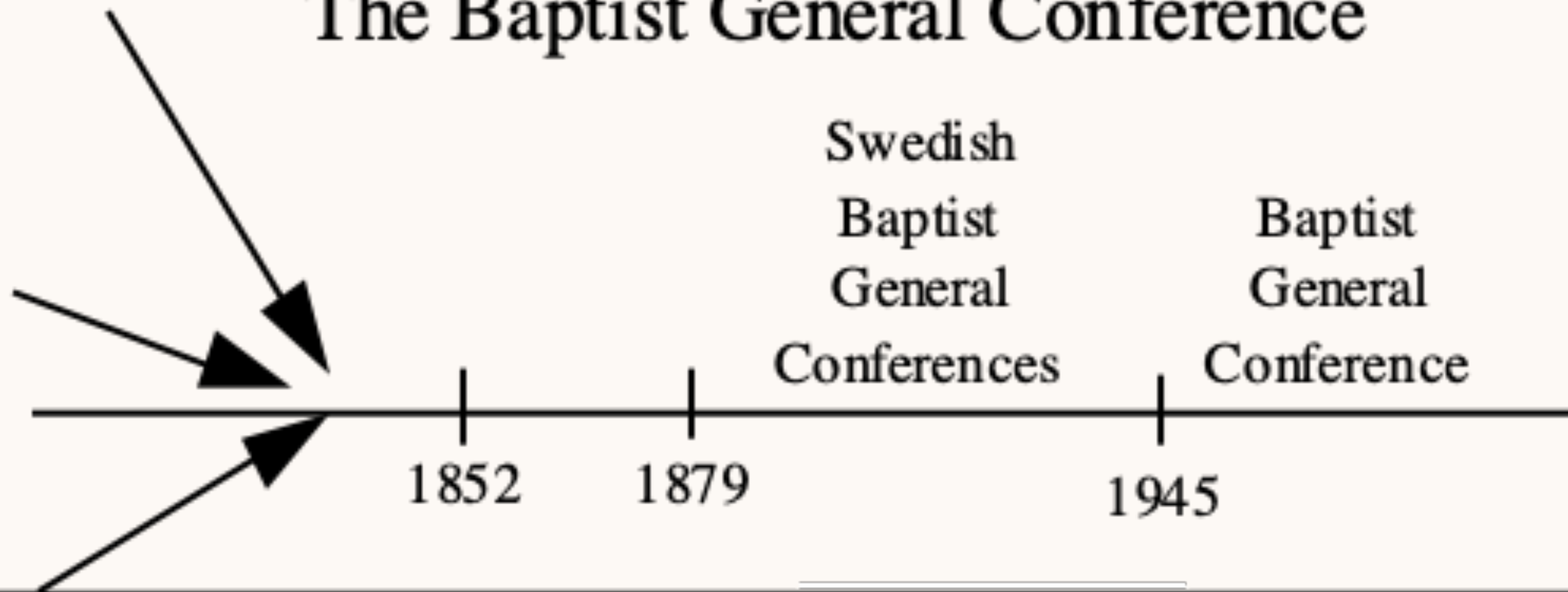
Swedish
Baptist
General
Conferences

Baptist
General
Conference

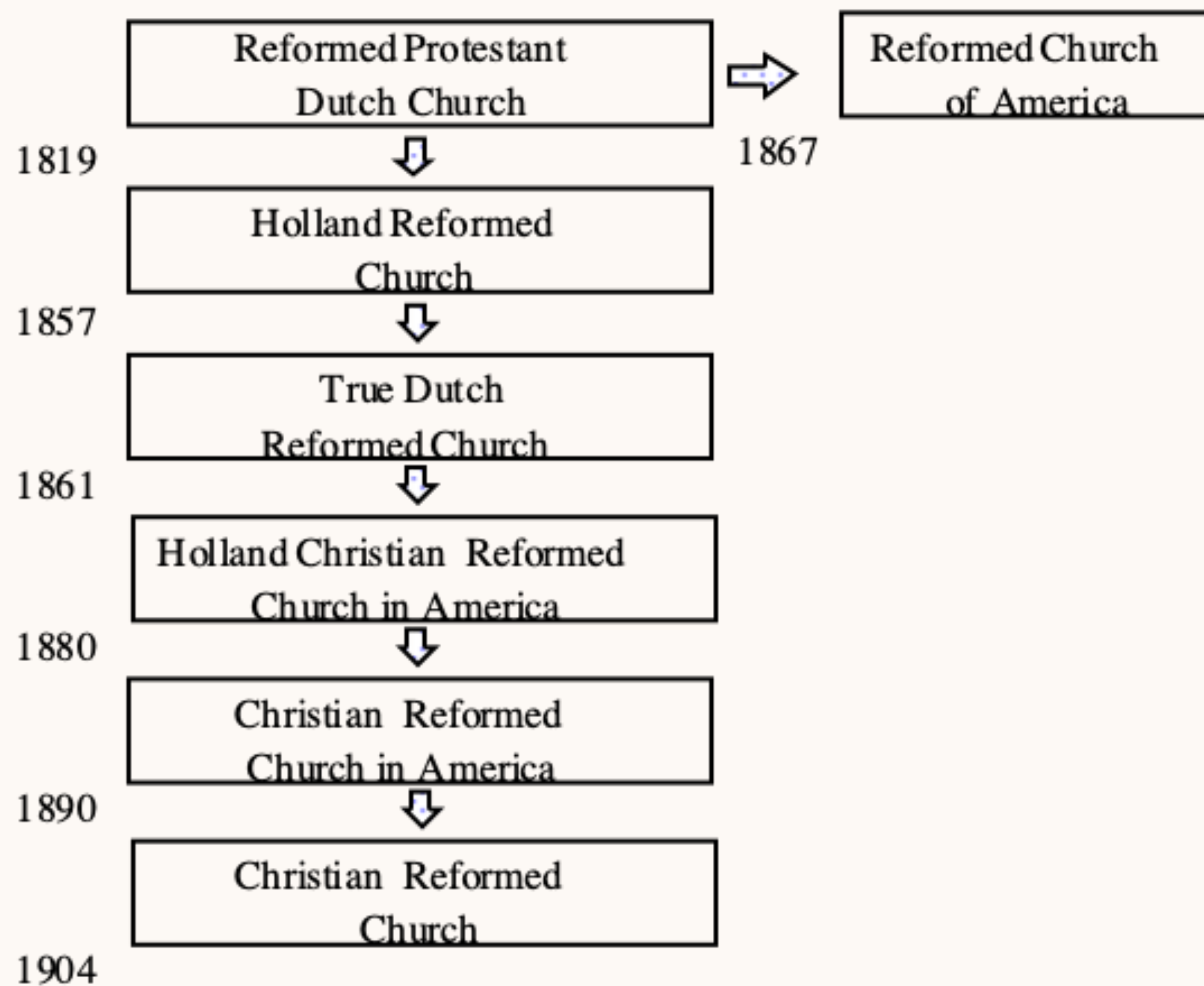
1852

1879

1945



The History of the Christian Reformed Church



The Cumberland Presbyterian Church

The Presbyterian Church, U. S.

The Presbyterians
in America

1838

The Presbyterian Church, U. S. A.

: 1906

The Cumberland Presbyterian Church

The History of the Evangelical Covenant Church of America

Swedish Evangelical
Lutheran Church,
Mission Synod

1873

Swedish Evangelical
Lutheran Church,
Ansgari Synod

1874

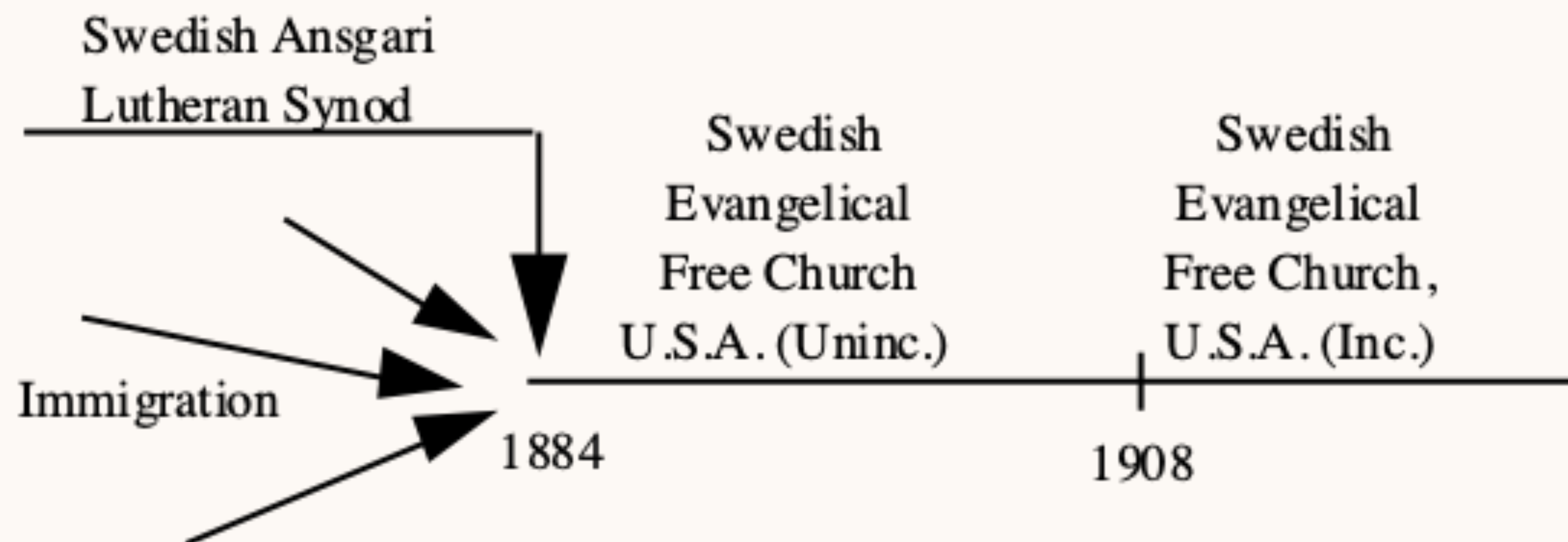
1885

Swedish Evangelical
Mission Covenant
Church of America

1957

Evangelical
Covenant Church
of America

The Origins of the Swedish Evangelical Free Church in the U.S.A.



The Origins of the Evangelical Free Church Association

Western Evangelical
Free Church
Association (Cong.)

Evangelical
Church
Association

1891

1912

Norwegian
Danish
Immigrants

Eastern Evangelical
Free Church
Association

1891

The Evangelical Free Church of America

Evangelical Free
Church Association

1912

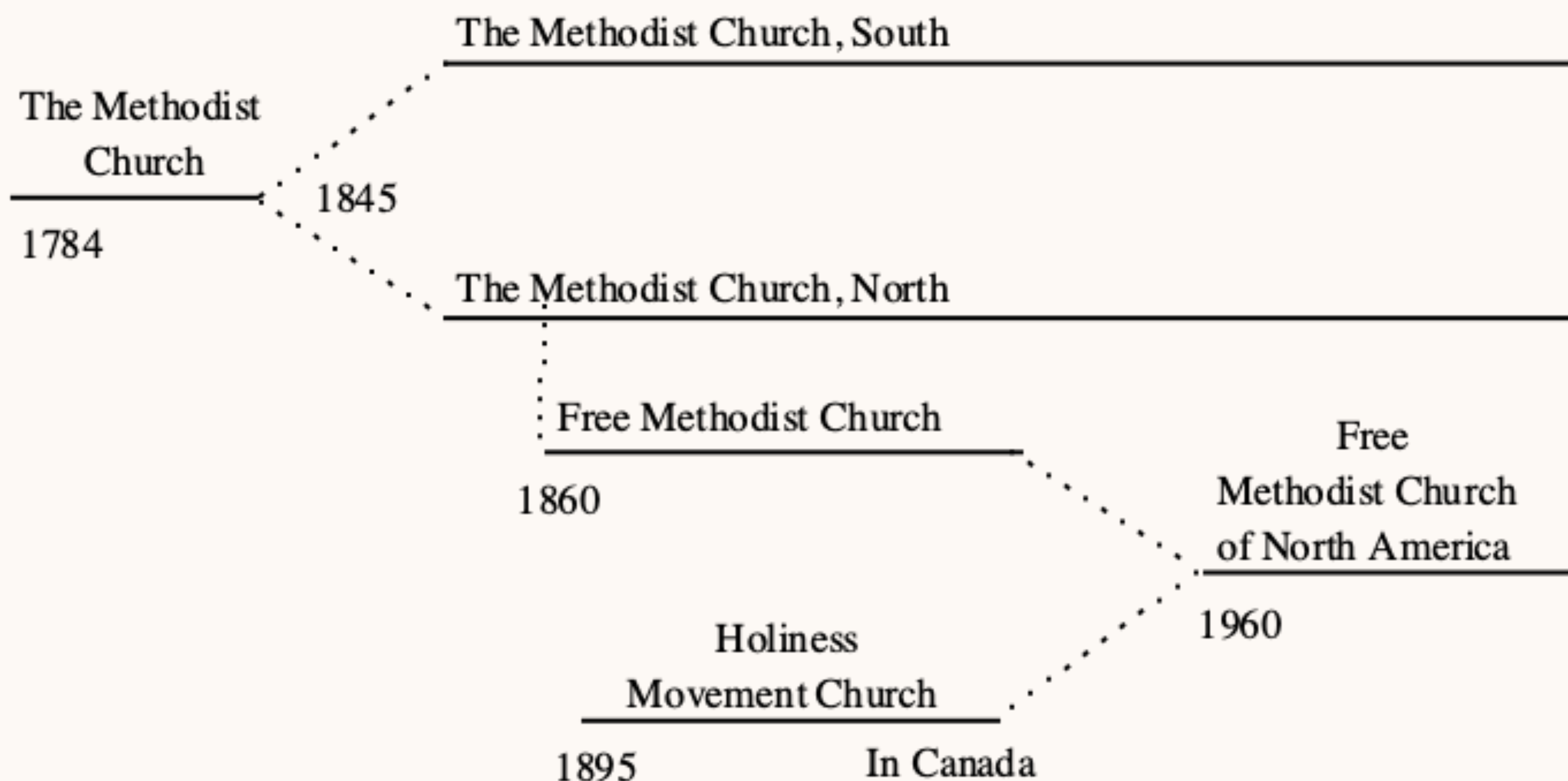
Swedish Evangelical
Free Church. U.S.A.

1884

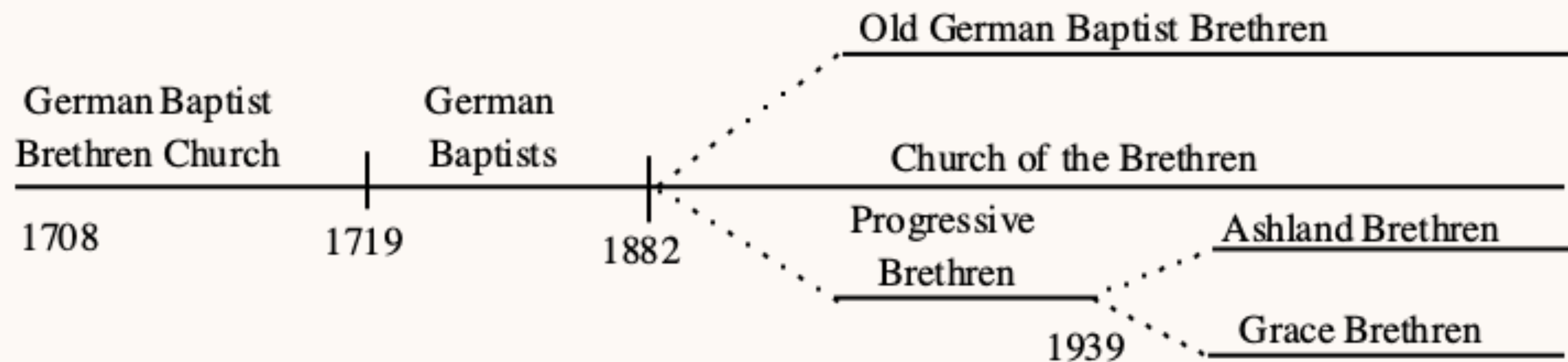
1950

The Evangelical Free
Church of America

The History of the Free Methodist Church of North America



The Origins of the Grace Brethren Church



The History of the Reformed Church of America

Dutch
Reformed Church

1571

Dutch Reformed
Church of
North America

Reformed
Protestant

Dutch Church

Reformed
Church

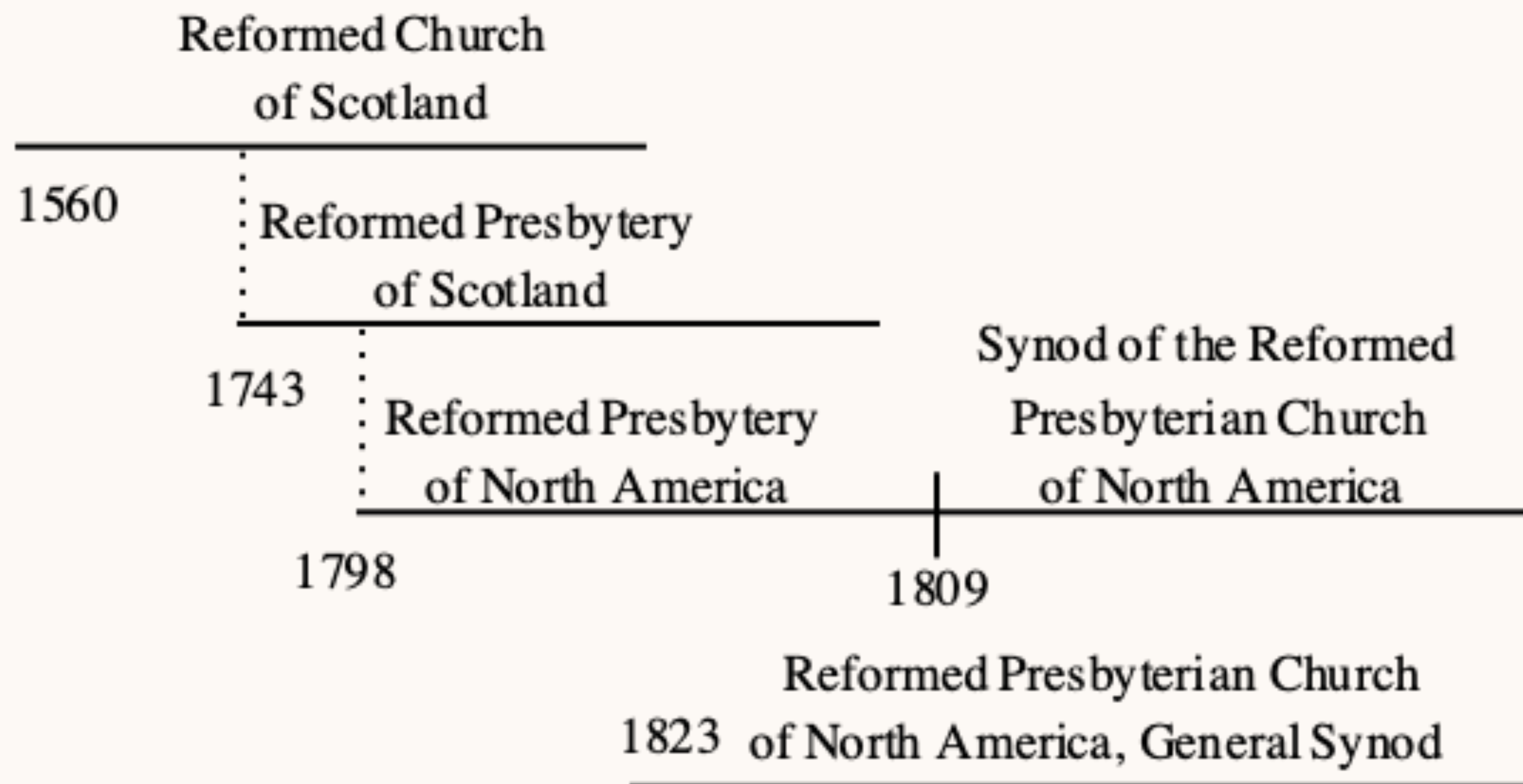
of America

1792

1819

1867

The History of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America



The Councils of the Roman Catholic Church

Trent
1543-1563

Vatican I
1870

Vatican II
1963-1965

"We were
Hated"

"We were
Ignored"

"We were
*Welcomed as
errant brethren*"

“John Dewey, in 1909, analyzing the influence of Darwinism on philosophy, stated that one effect of Darwin’s theories had been a “recrudescence of absolutistic philosophies; an assertion of a type of philosophic knowing distinct from that of the sciences, one which opens to us another kind of reality from that to which the sciences give access; an appeal through experience to something that essentially goes beyond experience. This reaction affects popular creeds and religious movements as well as technical philosophies.”

“Many other indications point toward a revitalization of mysticism. Evelyn Underhill, in the preface to the twelfth (1930) edition of her masterpiece, *Mysticism*, observed, ‘The philosophic and theological landscape ... with its increasing emphasis on Transcendence, its new friendliness to the concept of the Supernatural, is becoming ever more favourable to the metaphysical claims of the mystics.’ She cited the ‘prompt welcome’ given to the works of Rudolf Otto and Karl Barth as partial indications of an altering intellectual milieu, becoming willing to listen to the mystics.”

~ *The Limitations of Mysticism*, Robert G. Collmer

The Church Growth Movement

Missions Observations

Stateside Application

**Institute of
Church Growth
Eugene, OR**

**Institute of
Church Growth
Fuller Seminary
Pasadena, CA**

**Overseas princi-
ples applied:
the rational
marketing
phase**



1933



1965



1985

Postmodernism and Authority



Reason

**20th
Century**

Postmodernism



The Private Self

**R
e
j
e
c
t
s**



**Reason
Revelation
Tradition**

Postmodernity and the “Self”

“The self-esteem theory predicts that only those who feel good about themselves will do well—which is supposedly why all students need self-esteem—but in fact feeling good about yourself may simply make you over-confident, narcissistic, and unable to work hard....

“In this world, we will perpetually be somewhat sick, mentally and physically. We do not need to be psychologically sound to know and love Christ—for which we should be profoundly grateful.”

Paul Vitz, “Leaving the Psychology Behind”

in No God But God

“Within America, the past generation has witnessed a titanic double shift: from the more traditional emphasis on individualism, with its accompanying concern with majority rule, to the more recent emphasis on tribalism, with its accompanying concern with minority rights.”

Os Guinness, “More Victimized Than Thou”

in No God But God

The Relationship of Secular Humanism to New Age Philosophy

Critical Analysis

1.

Need to change

2.

Inadequacy of solutions

Solution

1.

Appeal to a forgotten tradition

2.

Promise of hope

Secular Humanism and New Age Teachings Compared

Nature of God:

Nature of Reality:

Basis of Knowledge:

Nature of Man:

Nature of the Human Dilemma:

Locus of the Human Solution:

Death:

Ethics:

History:

Religion:

Christ:

Secular Humanism

Nonexistent

Material monism (matter/energy)

Rational

Product of evolution

Ignorance of the external world

Reason/technology

End of existence

Situational/relative

Linear, chance

Superstition

Moral teacher

New Age Movement

Impersonal/amoral

Mystical monism (spirit/consciousness)

Contemplative

Spiritual being

Ignorance of internal potential

Consciousness (self)

Illusion, reincarnation

Situational/relative

Cyclical

Syncretism

An avatar (guru-god)

The Premises and Denials of New Age Teaching

Monism

Premises

"All is one"; "all the same"

Denials

Denial of divine creation and created plurality. Rejection of all dualisms.

Pantheism

"All is god"

Denial of a personal God. Rejection of creator/creaturely distinctives.

Anthrotheism

"Man is god"

Denial of human finiteness. Rejection of human uniqueness (image of God).

Cosmic Consciousness

"Man creates reality";
"The messiah within"

Denial of human limitation. Rejection of the need for divine grace.

Religious Syncretism

"The religions are equally useful"

Denial of the uniqueness of Christianity. Rejection of Christ's claims.

Cosmic Evolution Consciousness

"The end of history is planetary consciousness"

Denial of a divine control over history. Rejection of a divine eschaton.