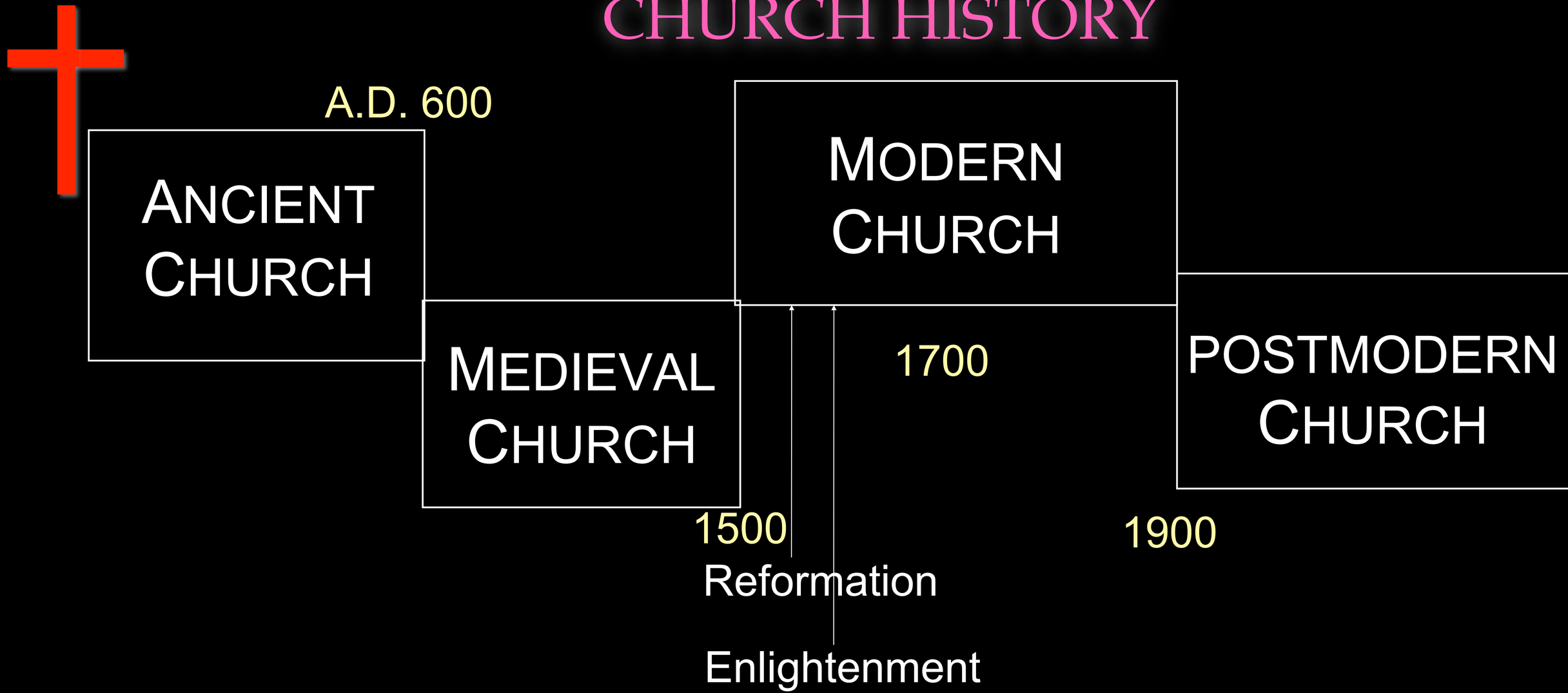
HT 502
Class 5

Christianity in the New American Nation (1776–1880).

A. The Rise of Religious Change.
B. The Emergence of the Theological Seminary.

DIVISIONS OF CHURCH HISTORY



OUTLINE OF AMERICAN CHURCH HISTORY

Historically

Colonial Era	1776	National Era	1880	Modern Era	1963	Post-Modern Era
Age of Divine Sovereignty		Age of Biblistic Rationalism, Common Sense		Age of Biblistic Rationalism, Common Sense		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)
III. Christianity in the National Era (1776–1880)
IV. Christianity in the Modern Era (1880–1963)
V. Christianity in the Post-Modern Era (1960–2021)

Worldview

Application

Political/National or Individual Decisions

Logical Sequence

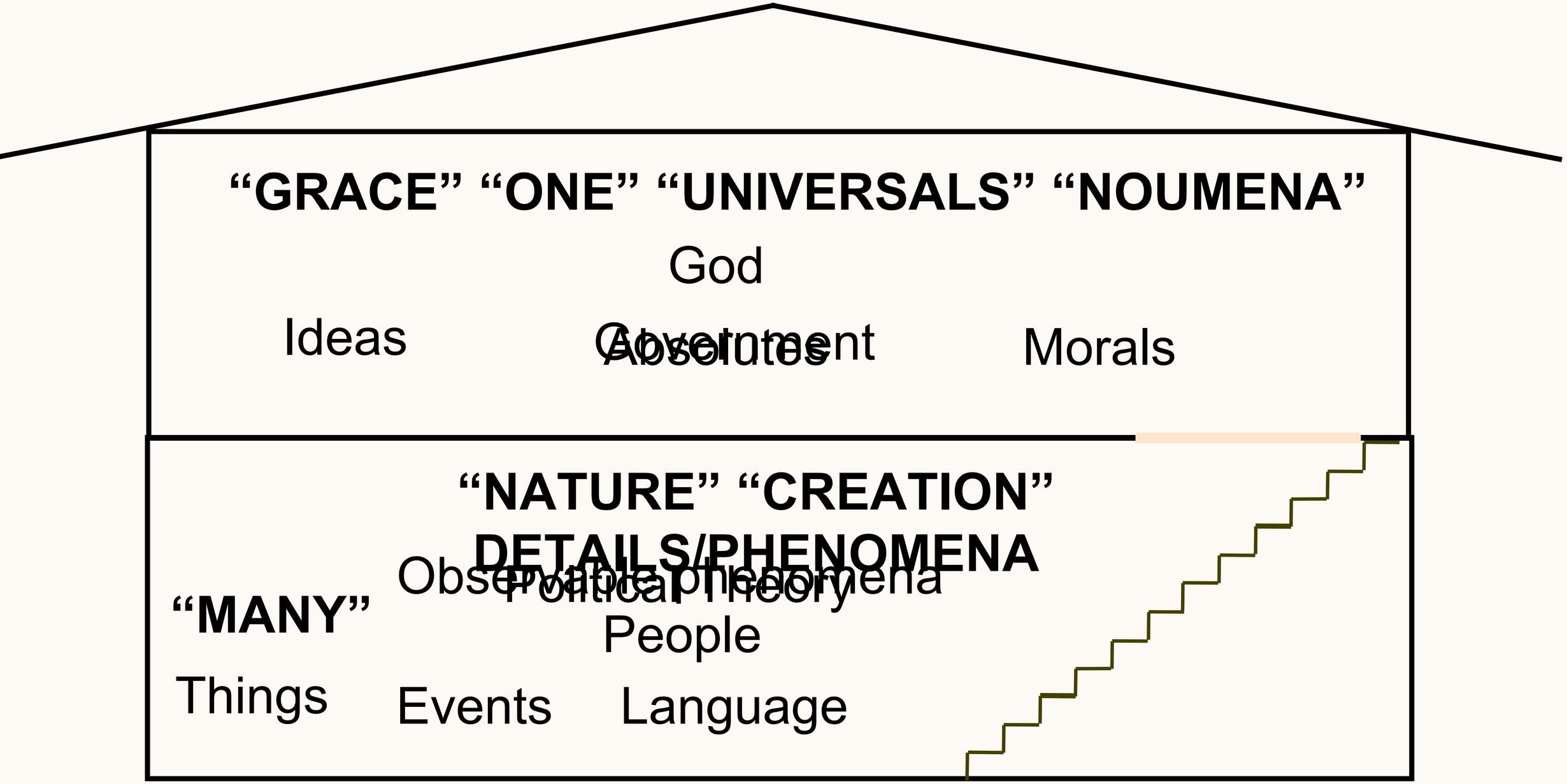
Ethics: What is right? What is wrong? What is good or bad?

Pressures of life

Epistemology: How do we know truth? right from wrong? Just or unjust?

Metaphysics: Ultimate reality, i.e., God, matter, energy, nothing, what kind of deity?

Foundation of *all* thought


“GRACE” “ONE” “UNIVERSALS” “NOUMENA”
God
Ideas
Government
Absolutes
Morals
“NATURE” “CREATION”
DETAILS/PHENOMENA
Observable Phenomena
Political Theory
“MANY”
People
Things
Events
Language

The Basis of Knowledge

	SYSTEM	STARTING POINT	METHOD
Autonomous Systems of Perception	RATIONALISM Descartes Spinoza Leibnitz	Innate ideas Faith in human ability.	Independent use of logic & reason
	EMPIRICISM Locke Berkely Hume	Sense perceptions External experience; Scientific method; Faith in human ability	Independent use of logic & reason
	MYSTICISM George Fox Transcendentalism	Inner, private experience; intuition Faith in human ability	Independent, Nonlogical, nonrational, nonverifiable
Divine Viewpoint	REVELATION	Faith in the objective revelation of God	Dependent use of logic and reason

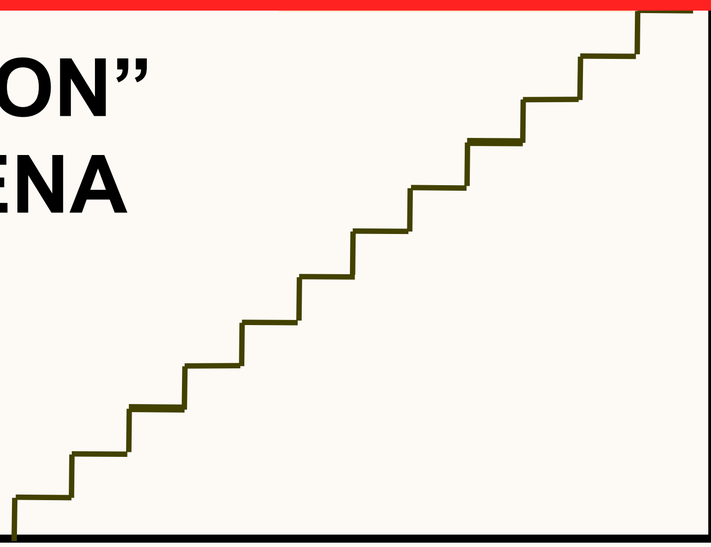
No Meaning, No God
Existential Darkness, Despair

EPISTEMOLOGICAL BARRIER

“NATURE” “CREATION”
DETAILS/PHENOMENA

Observable phenomena

Things People Events Language



II. The National Era (1776–1880)

A. The Rise of Religious Change.

B. The Emergence of the Theological Seminary.

C. The Second Great Awakening in America.

D. The Old School/New School Schism in Presbyterianism.

E. Charles G. Finney and Finneyism.

F. The Layman's Prayer Revival.

G. The Rise of Perfectionistic Religious Communities.

H. The Civil War, Slavery, and the Churches.

III. The Modern Era (1880–1960)

IV. The Post-Modern Era (1960–present)

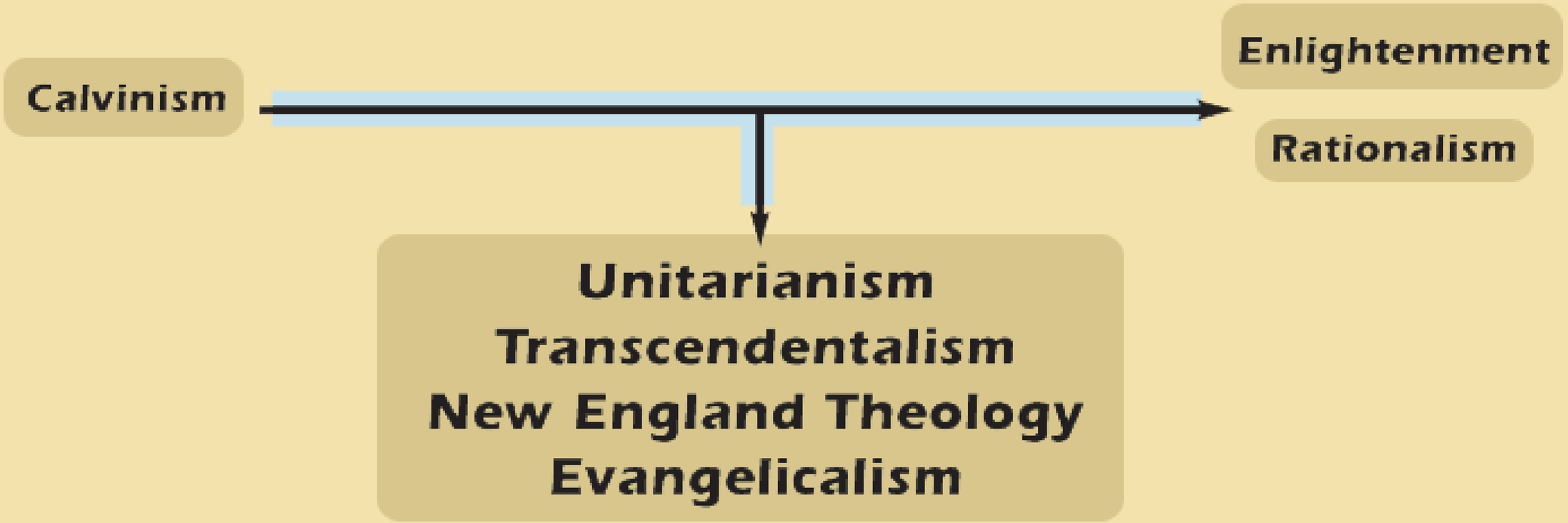
THE NATIONAL PERIOD OF AMERICAN CHURCH HISTORY

Religious Change in New England: Theological Divisions within Congregationalism

A. The Effect of the War on Religion [Background]
B. Religion and the Constitution of the United States (1789).
C. Religion as a Result of the War for Independence.
D. The Rise of Religious Change in New England: Theological Dissension within Congregationalism.
    1. The roots of religious change in New England
    2. The radical division in New England Calvinism: the rise of Unitarians and Transcendentalists.
    3. The moderate division in New England Calvinism: the rise of “consistent Calvinists” or New England Theology.

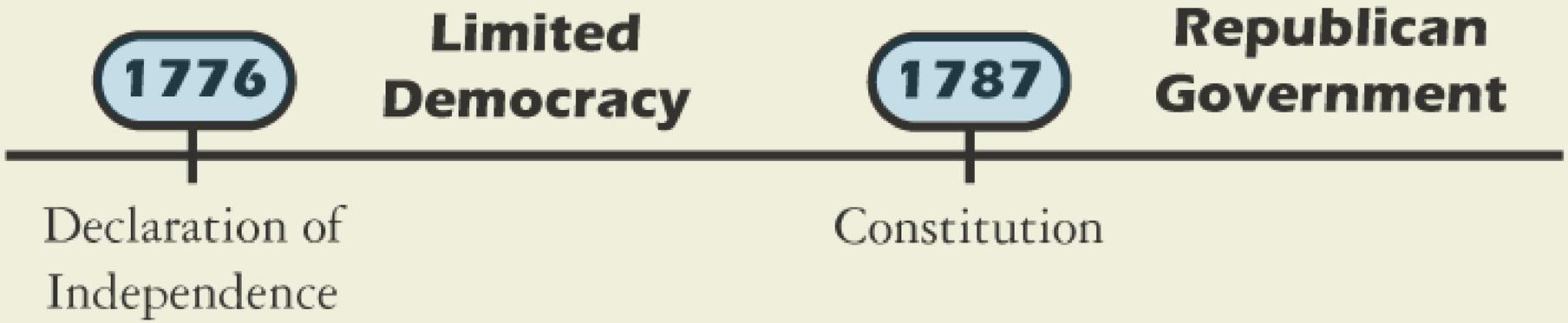
A. The Effect of the War on Religion [Background]

Developments within Nineteenth-Century American Theology



A. The Effect of the War on Religion [Background]
B. Religion and the Constitution of the United States (1789).

The Enlightenment, Religion, and the Birth of the Nation



ENLIGHTENED RATIONALISM

“Why is it that, next to the birthday of the Savior of the World, your most joyous and most venerated festival returns on this day [July 4th]?... Is it not that, in the chain of human events, the birthday of the nation is indissolubly linked with the birthday of the Savior? That it forms a leading event in the progress of the gospel dispensation? Is it not that the Declaration of Independence first organized the social compact on the foundation of the Redeemer’s mission upon earth? That it laid the corner stone of human government upon the first precepts of Christianity…?” (John Quincy Adams, An Oration Delivered Before the Inhabitants of the Town of Newburyport at Their Request on the Sixty-First Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence (Newburyport, MA: Morris and Brewster, 1837), 5, 6.

“The highest glory of the American Revolution … was this: it connected in one indissoluble bond, the principles of civil government with the principles of Christianity.”

~John Quincy Adams, as summarized by J. Wingate, The Pulpit of the American Revolution: Or, the Sermons of the Period of 1776, The Era of the American Revolution, ed. Leonard W. Levy (Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1860; reprint, NY: DaCapo, 1970, xxxix).

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The First Amendment in the Bill of Rights

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

“It prevented the federal government from establishing a national religion, but it did not grant power to that government to interfere in the church-state relations decided upon by the states.”

~Thomas Woods, *Politically Incorrect Guide to American History,* 20.

1. **Historical usage: Precedents for the “wall of separation” metaphor.**

“[There are those who hold] that Bishops may not meddle with the affairs of the commonwealth because they are governors of another corporation, which is the Church, nor Kings, with making laws for the Church because they have government not of this corporation, but of another divided from it, the Commonwealth, and the walls of separation between these two must forever be upheld.”

~Richard Hooker (circa 1590s)

Quoted in: Dreisbach, Daniel. *Thomas Jefferson and the Wall of Separation Between Church and State* (Critical America (New York University Paperback)) . NYU Press. Kindle Edition.

“[T]he faithful labors of many witnesses of Jesus Christ, extant to the world, abundantly proving that . . . when they have opened a gap in the hedge or wall of separation between the garden of the church and the wilderness of the world, God hath ever broke down the wall itself, removed the candlestick, and made His garden a wilderness, as at this day.”

~Roger Williams (1644)

Quoted in: Dreisbach, Daniel. Tho*mas Jefferson and the Wall of Separation Between Church and State* (Critical America (New York University Paperback)). NYU Press. Kindle Edition.

“the separation of the Church from the State did not mean the severance of the State from God, or of the nation from Christianity.”

~Methodist Bishop Charles Betts Galloway (1 September 1849 – 12 May 1909)

1. **Historical usage: Precedents for the “wall of separation” metaphor.**

2. **Historical context of the Danbury Letter.**

“Wall of Separation Between Church and State”

Danbury Baptists:
“[W]e have reason to believe that America’s God has raised you up to fill the Chair of State out of that goodwill which He bears to the millions which you preside over. May God strengthen you for the arduous task which providence and the voice of the people have called you. … And may the Lord preserve you safe from every evil and bring you at last to his Heavenly Kingdom through Jesus Christ our Glorious Mediator.”

“Wall of Separation Between Church and State”

Danbury Baptists:
“[Our sentiments are uniformly on the side of religious liberty: that religion is at all times and places a matter between God and individuals, that no man ought to suffer in name, person, or effects on account of his religious opinions, [and] that the legitimate power of civil government extends no further than to punish the man who works ill to his neighbor. But sir, our constitution of government is not specific. … [T]herefore what religious privileges we enjoy (as a minor part of the State) we enjoy as favors granted, and not as inalienable rights.”

1. **Historical usage: Precedents for the “wall of separation” metaphor.**

2. **Historical context of the Danbury Letter.**

3. **How did the author understand the meaning of this in light of other statements and practices?**

Jefferson's Answer to the Danbury Baptists

"Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between man and his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legislative powers of government reach actions only, and not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature would 'make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,' thus building a wall of separation between Church and State. Adhering to this expression of the supreme will of the nation in behalf of the rights of conscience, I shall see with sincere satisfaction the progress of those sentiments which tend to restore to man all his natural rights, convinced he has no natural right in opposition to his social duties."

“No nation has ever yet existed or been governed without religion nor can be. The Christian religion that has been given to man is the best religion that has been given to man and I, as Chief Magistrate of this nation, am bound to give it the sanction of my example.”

~Thomas Jefferson

1947 *Everson* v. *Board of Education* decision

1. **Foundation: Madison and Jefferson played leading roles. Jefferson wrote**

   “On receiving it [the Constitution when he was in France] I wrote strongly to Mr. Madison, urging the want of provision for the freedom of religion, freedom of the press, trial by jury. ... *This is all the hand I had in what related to the Constitution*.” [emphasis added]

1947 *Everson* v. *Board of Education* decision

1. **Foundation: Madison and Jefferson played leading roles.**

   No, they didn't

   55 individuals were involved in writing the Constitution.
   90 were involved in the writing of the Bill of Rights.
   Jefferson was not there.

The *Everson* case set up four criteria:

- **There must be a wall of separation.**
- **The primary purpose of a religious activity had to be secular [Lemon Test, 1971]**
- **The activity cannot have the appearance that the government is endorsing religion [Endorsement Test, 1984]**
- **If a single individual is uncomfortable in the presence of a public religious activity it is unconstitutional [Psychological Coercion Test, 1992]**

1. **Historical usage: Precedents for the “wall of separation” metaphor.**

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3. **How did the author understand the meaning of this in light of other statements and practices?**

No power over the freedom of religion … is delegated to the United States by the Constitution [i.e., the 1st Amendment]

In matters of religion, I have considered that its free exercise is placed by the Constitution independent of the power of the general government.

Our excellent Constitution … has not placed our religious rights under the power of any public functionary.

Thomas Jefferson's Actions

1774 as VA Gov. called for a public day of fasting and prayer.
1776 July 4 National seal proposal included the children of Israel in the Wilderness
Various bills introduced into the VA legislature punishing sabbath breakers, marriages that violated the Levitical laws; days of fasting and prayer, saving church property.

Thomas Jefferson's Actions

1795–1870s	Church services in the Capital building; also in the War Department and Treasury Department. Attended every Sunday he was in Washington.
1801	Urged local government to make land available for Christian purposes.
1802, 03, 04	Federal bills setting aside government land for missionaries to propagate the gospel to Indians.
1804	Assured a Christian religious school of the patronage of the government.

THE·GUARDIAN·C

“No nation has ever yet existed or been governed without religion nor can be. The Christian religion that has been given to man is the best religion that has been given to man and I, as Chief Magistrate of this nation, am bound to give it the sanction of my example.”

~Thomas Jefferson

Christianity, the Federal Government, and State Government

Federal Government:

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."
(Article I, Amendments to the Constitution)

State Government:

"Every person who shall be chosen a member of either house to any office or place of trust … [shall] also make and subscribe the following declaration, to wit: "I do profess faith in God the Father, and in Jesus Christ His only Son, and in the Holy Ghost, one God, blessed for evermore; and I do acknowledge the holy scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be given by divine inspiration."
(Article 22, Constitution of Delaware [Sept 21, 1776])

The following is an excerpt from Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas's Wriston Lecture to the Manhattan Institute in 2008:

"Let me put it this way; there are really only two ways to interpret the Constitution — try to discern as best we can what the framers intended or make it up. No matter how ingenious, imaginative or artfully put, unless interpretive methodologies are tied to the original intent of the framers, they have no more basis in the Constitution than the latest football scores."

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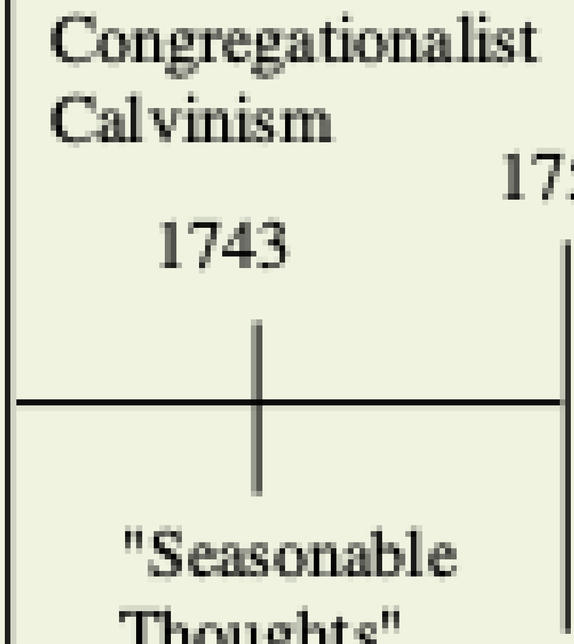
THE FIRST GREAT AWAKENING

The Dissolution of Theological Consensus

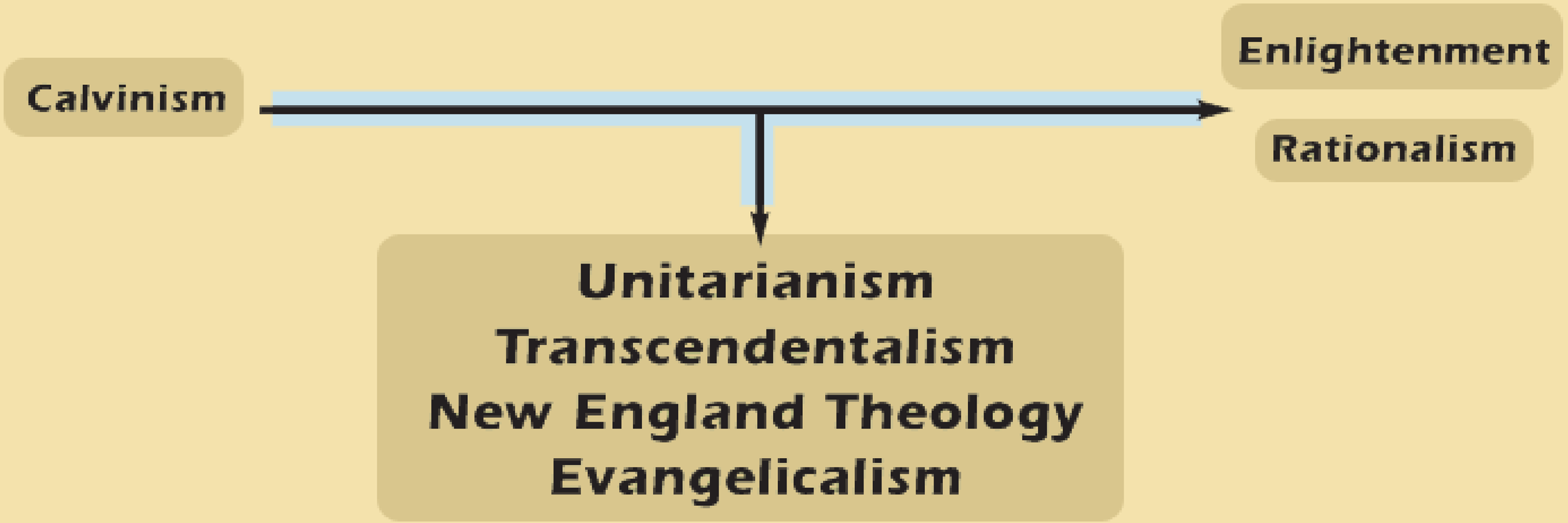


Age of Reason
Pietism

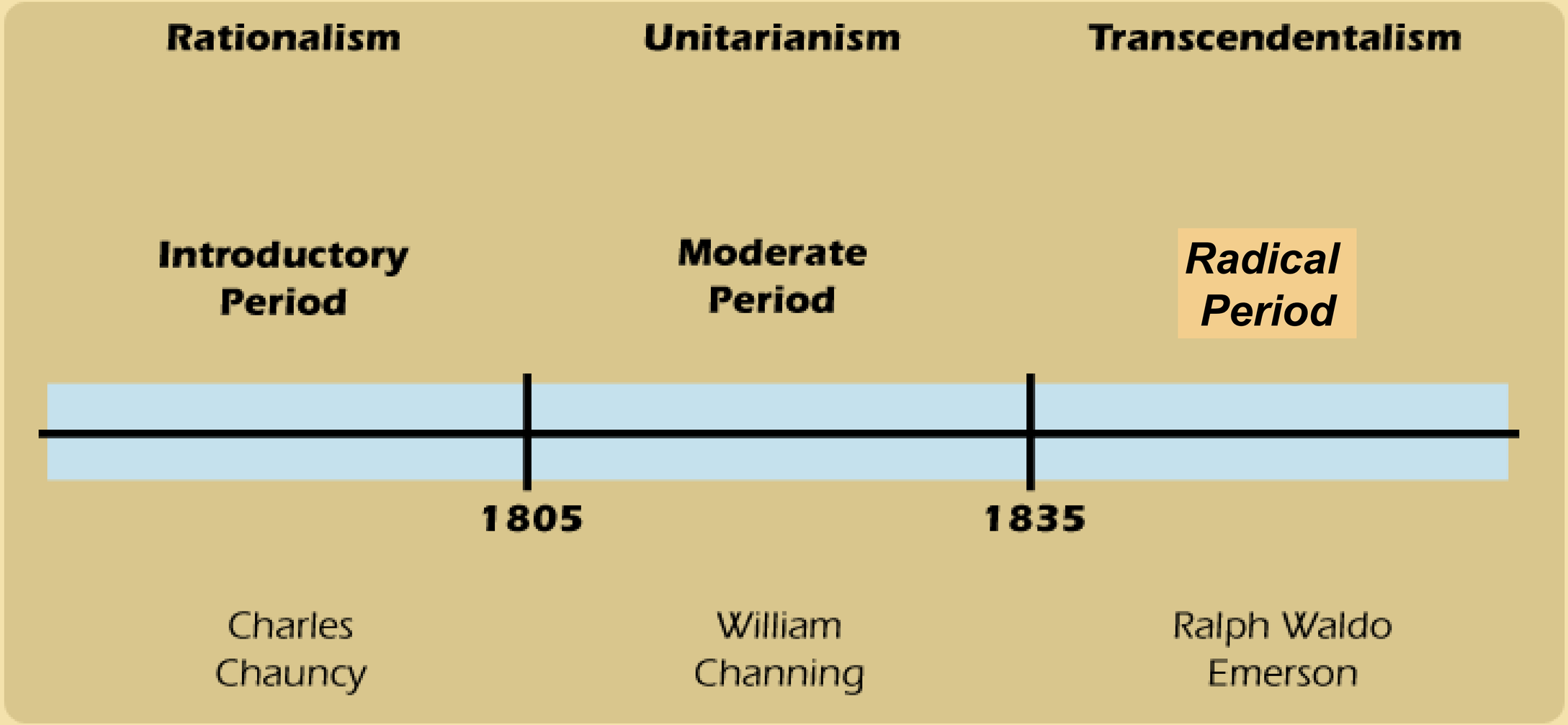
Old Calvinists (Creedalists)	Ezra S. Stiles Samuel Niles John Porter
Strict or Consistent Calvinists (New England Theologicans)	Samuel Hopkins Joseph Bellamy Nathaniel Emmons Timothy Dwight
Liberal Calvinists (Unitarians)	Charles Chauncy Ebenezer Gay Jonathan Mayhew

The Spread of Theological Rationalism

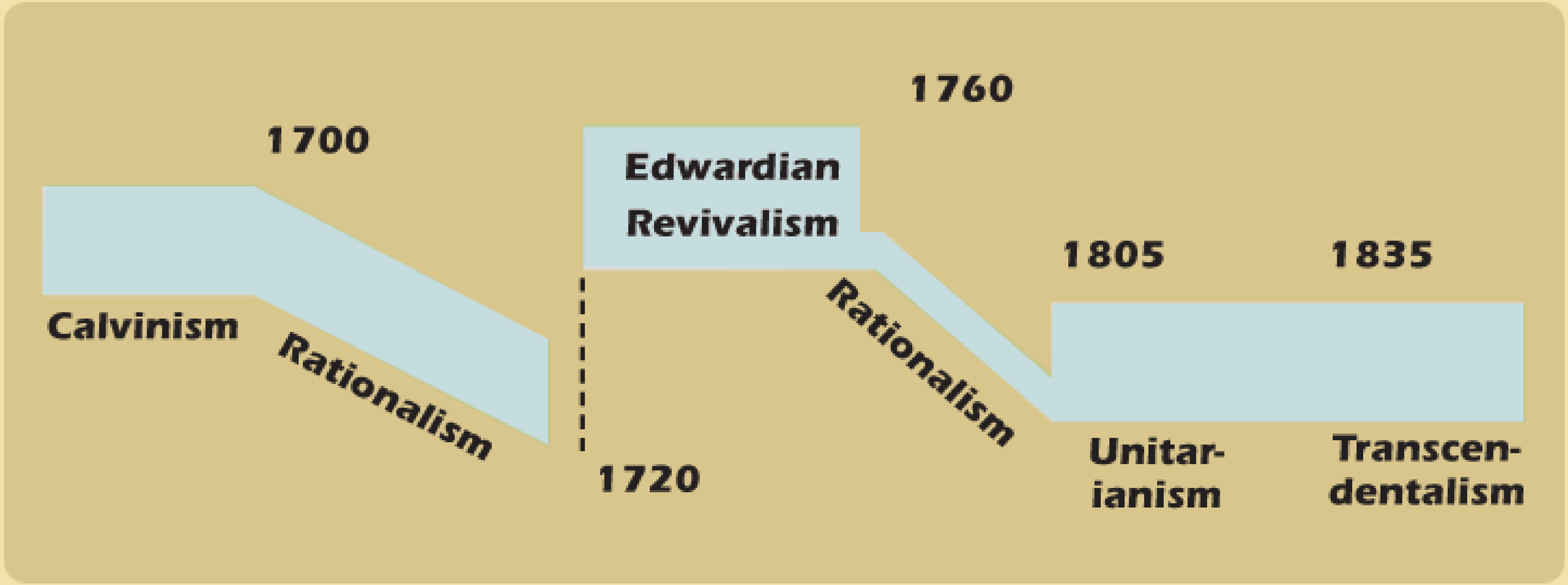
Developments within Nineteenth-Century American Theology



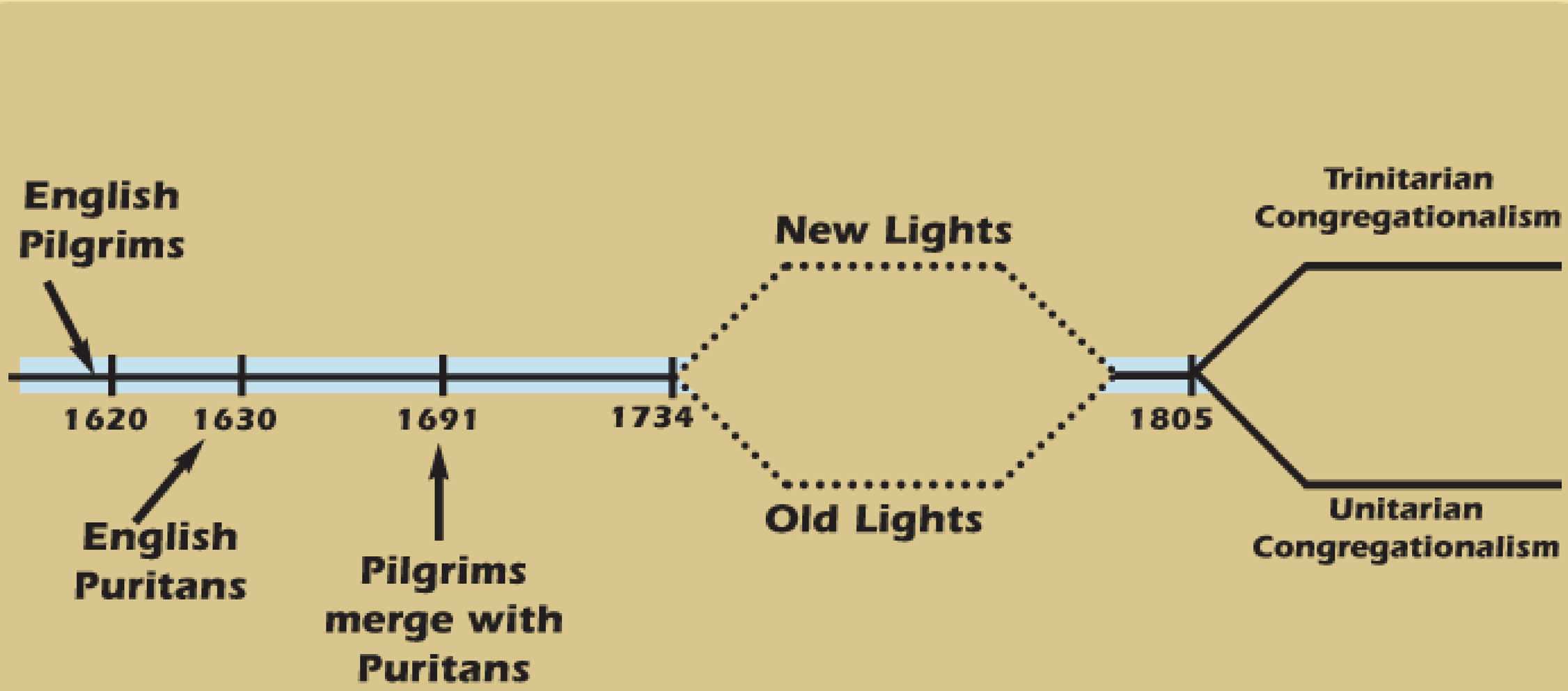
The Rise of Unitarianism in America



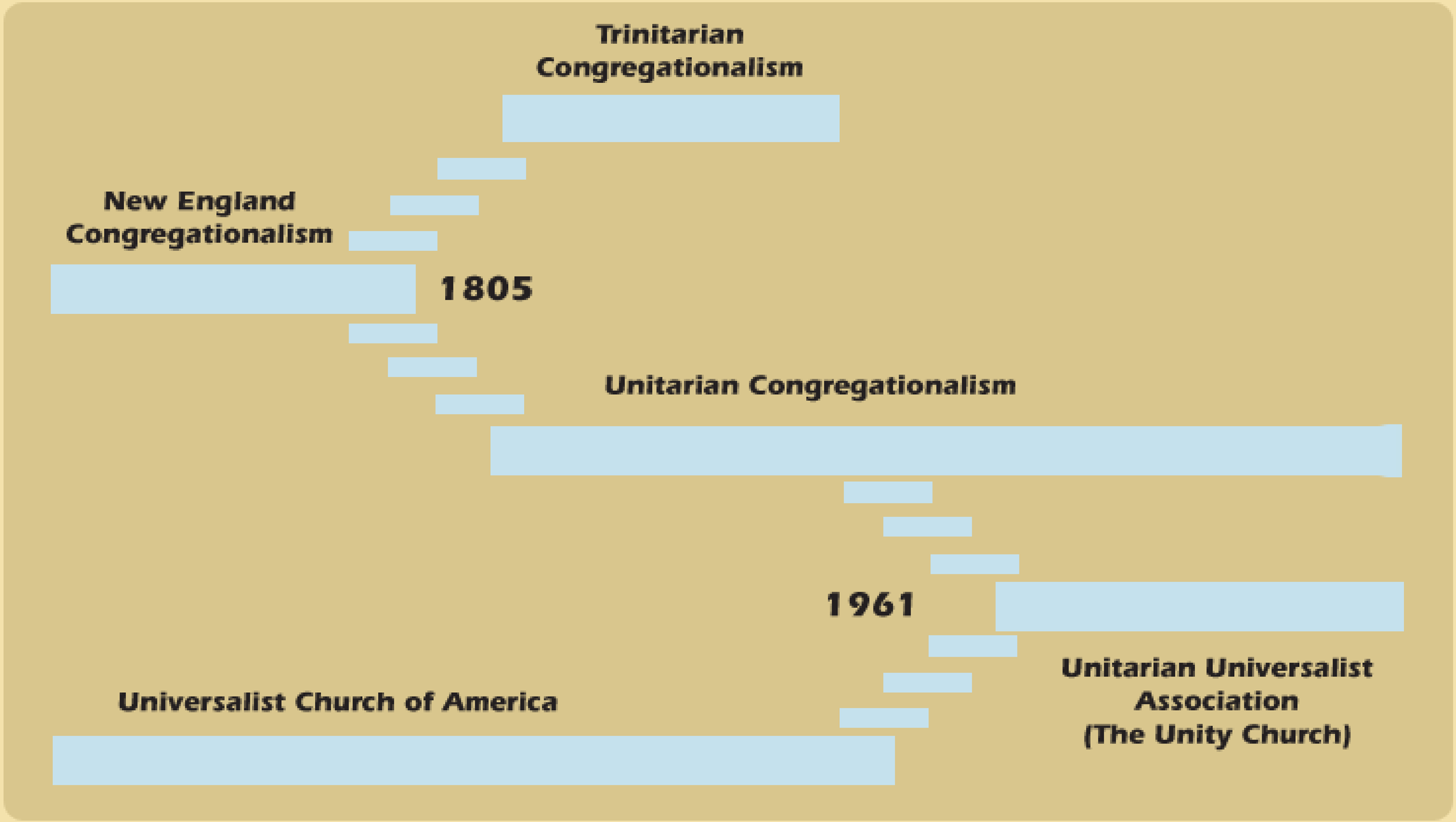
The History of Theological Change in New England



Congregationalism in America



The History of Unitarianism in America



Governmental View of the Atonement [Hugo Grotius]

God: Administrator, Judge, Sovereign Ruler

Sin: A Violation of the Moral Order

Man's Need: A Demonstration of How Seriously God Looks upon Sin

Christ's Death: To Sustain God's Moral Universe

The atonement of Christ was to demonstrate God's divine justice, an example to man of how seriously God looks upon sin, and argues that moral obedience merits commendation and disobedience merits condemnation. [works salvation]