

Same Bible, Totally Different Rulebooks

A Sketched Guide to Why Baptists
and Methodists Disagree

The 177-Year-Old Instinct to Walk Away

1845 split

The Issue

Should a missionary be allowed to own slaves? (The rest of the country said no).



The Action

Southern Baptist pastors pack up and walk out of their denomination over this single argument.



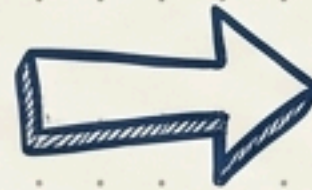
The Result

The founding of the Southern Baptist Convention (now the largest US Protestant denomination).

2022 split

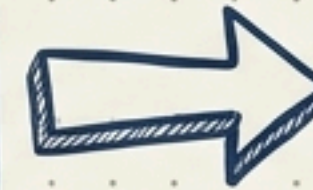
The Issue

Should the denomination ordain LGBTQ clergy and allow same-sex marriage?



The Action

Conservative United Methodist pastors break off.

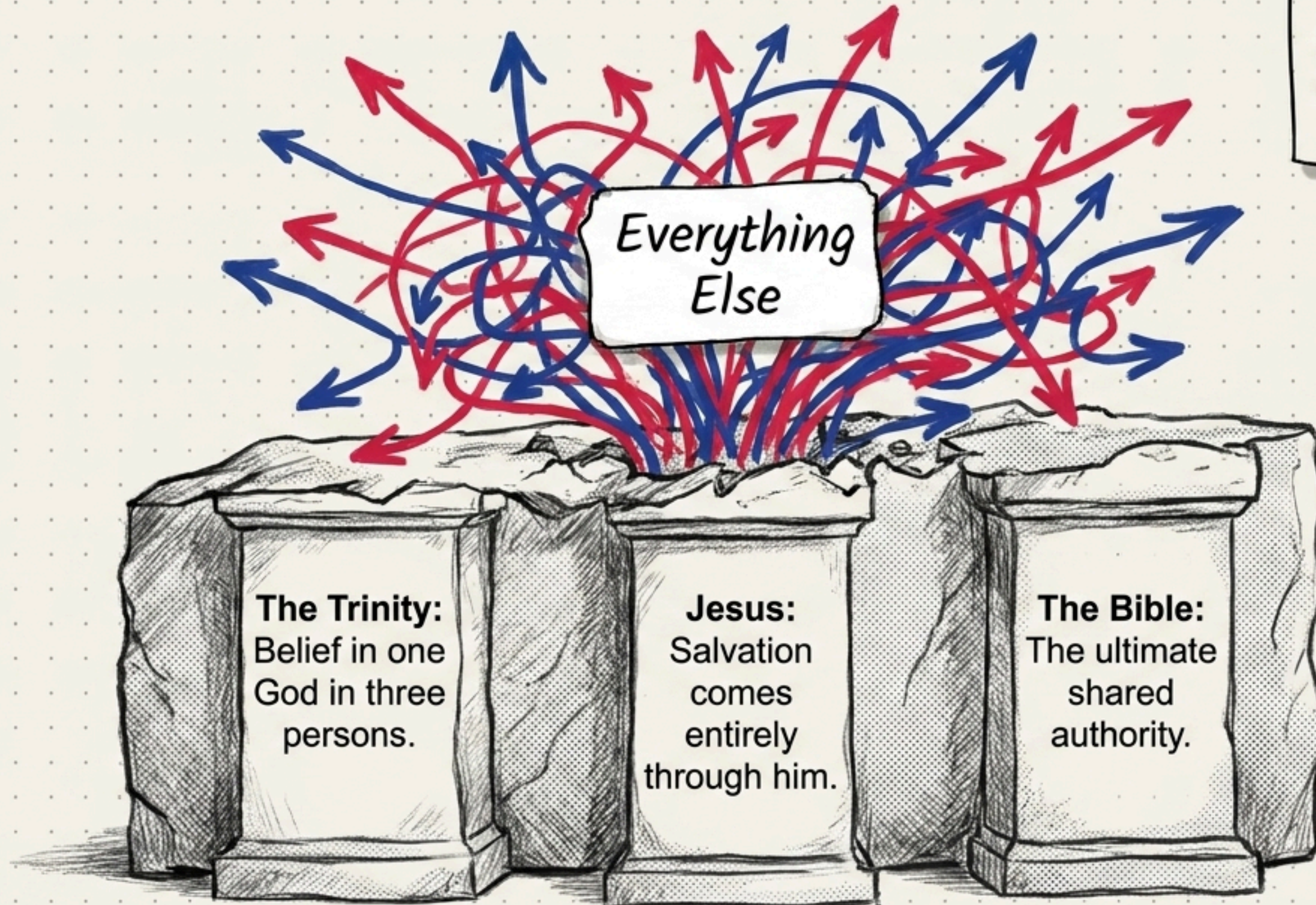


The Result

The Global Methodist Church forms. By 2023, over 7,600 congregations (nearly 25% of the denomination) left.

The Shared Bedrock

They share the same family tree, not enemy lines. But once you move past the foundation, they don't agree on basically anything else.



Baked-In DNA: Exiles vs. Academics

Baptist DNA: Persecuted Early = Hates Centralized Power.

In 1609, former Anglican priest John Smyth hides in Amsterdam with English exiles. He radically baptizes himself as an adult.

In 1636, preacher Roger Williams is kicked out of Massachusetts for saying the government cannot force worship.

By 1638, Williams starts the first Baptist church in America (Providence, RI).



Methodist DNA: Born in an Oxford Club = Loves Methodical Structure.

In the 1720s at Oxford, student John Wesley joins his brother Charles in a religious club.

They operate on a strict, obsessive schedule: pray at set times, study scripture, visit prisoners.



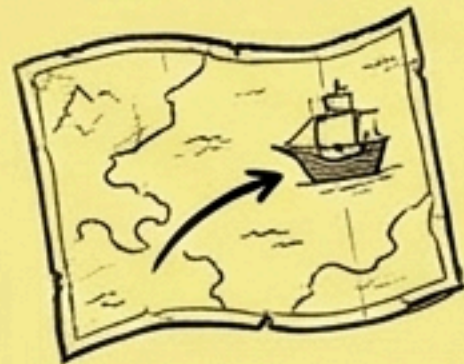
Neither Movement Went Exactly to Plan



Did You Know?



Methodist was an insult. Other students mocked the Oxford club for their rigid routine. It wasn't a badge of honor; it started as a joke.



John Wesley never left. He remained an Anglican priest until his death in 1791. Methodism only became a separate denomination because there weren't enough Anglican priests in America to manage its explosive growth.



Roger Williams walked away. The founder of the first American Baptist church eventually left the Baptists too, believing the true church had lost its original apostolic authority.

The Big Fight: Who Gets Saved, and Who Decides?



Baptist (Calvinist Lean)

God chooses who gets saved (Election).
Once God saves you, it cannot be undone.

"Once saved, always saved."

** Not all Baptists are strict Calvinists*



Methodist (Arminian Lean)

God offers salvation to literally everyone,
granting real freedom to accept or reject it.

"Free to enter, free to walk away."

The Baptism Dilemma: Grace vs. Choice

Methodist View (Infant & All Ages)



A sign of God's grace given before the person has done anything to earn it (similar to Old Testament circumcision). Done by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion.

Baptist View (Believers Only)



Baptism is a personal response that must come after real belief. A baby cannot be baptized meaningfully because they cannot yet understand the choice. Done by **full immersion only**.

Interesting Fact: For most of Christian history, baptizing babies wasn't controversial. The fierce debate over believer's baptism ignited during the Protestant Reformation.

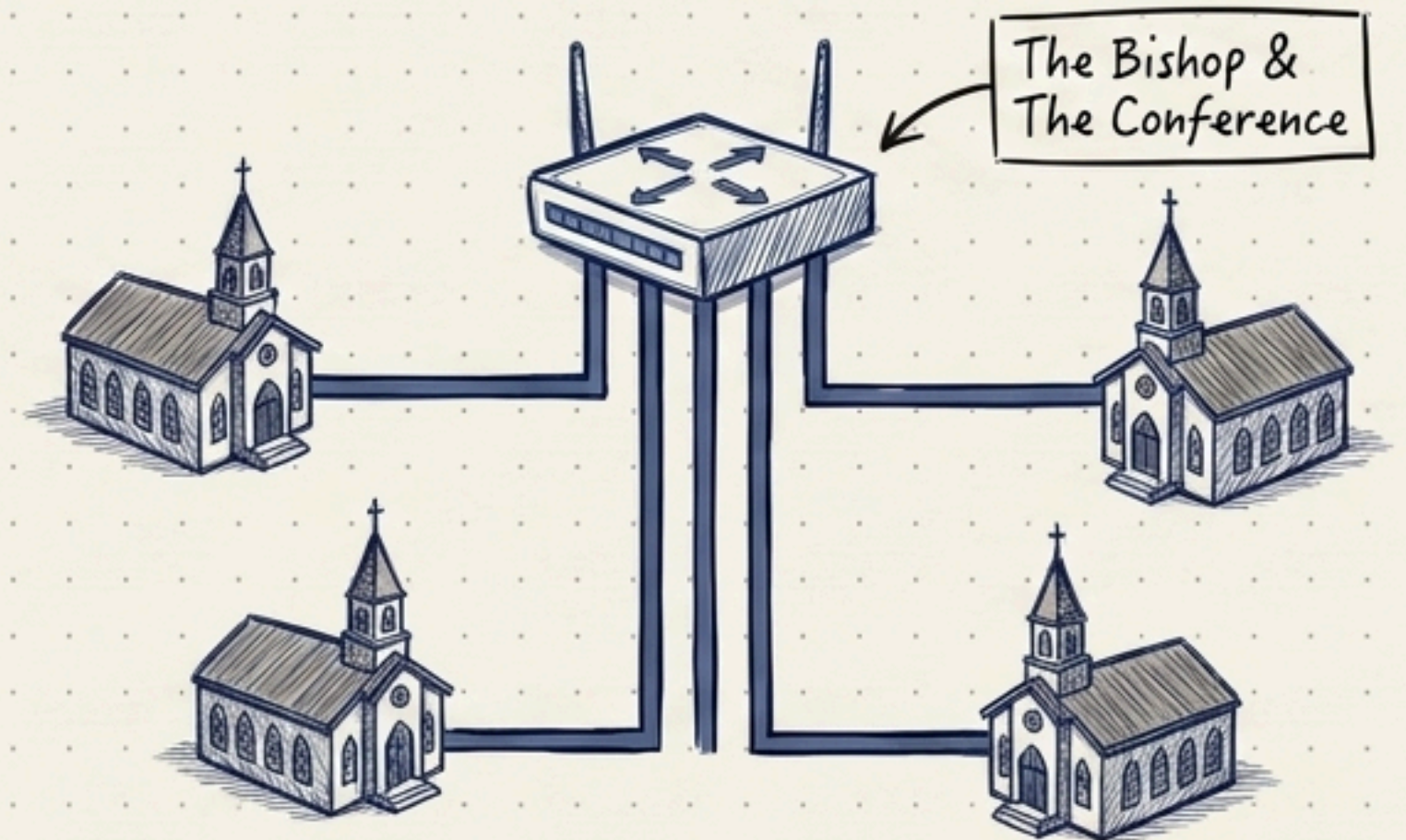
Governance: Who is Actually in Charge?

Baptist (Congregational Polity)



Every single local church is completely autonomous. They own their own building, hire their own pastor, and answer to no one above them. The Southern Baptist Convention is just a voluntary partnership.

Methodist (Connectional / Episcopal Polity)



Local congregations belong to a massive, larger system of annual and general conferences. Bishops, not the local churches, assign and appoint the clergy.

The Tale of the Tape

The Great Divide at a Glance		
	Baptist	Methodist
Roots	 Persecuted Exiles.	 Academic Club.
Salvation	 Once Saved, Always Saved.	 Free Will to Enter/Leave.
Baptism	 Adult Immersion Only.	 Infants + Grace First.
Governance	 Total Local Autonomy.	 Connected Bishops.

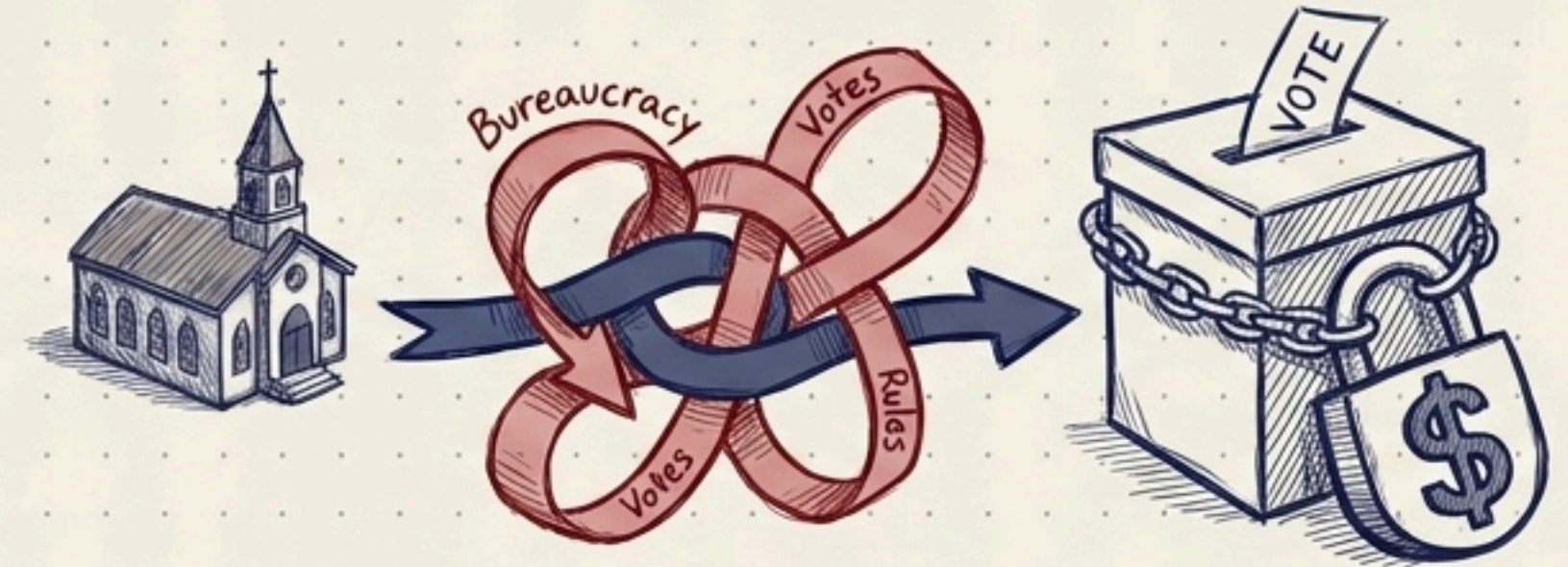
Why the Splits Looked So Different

Baptist Mechanics - 1845



Because Baptist churches are entirely autonomous, there is no higher authority to leave. Splitting is just a matter of walking away and forming a new voluntary group. No permission needed.

Methodist Mechanics - 2022

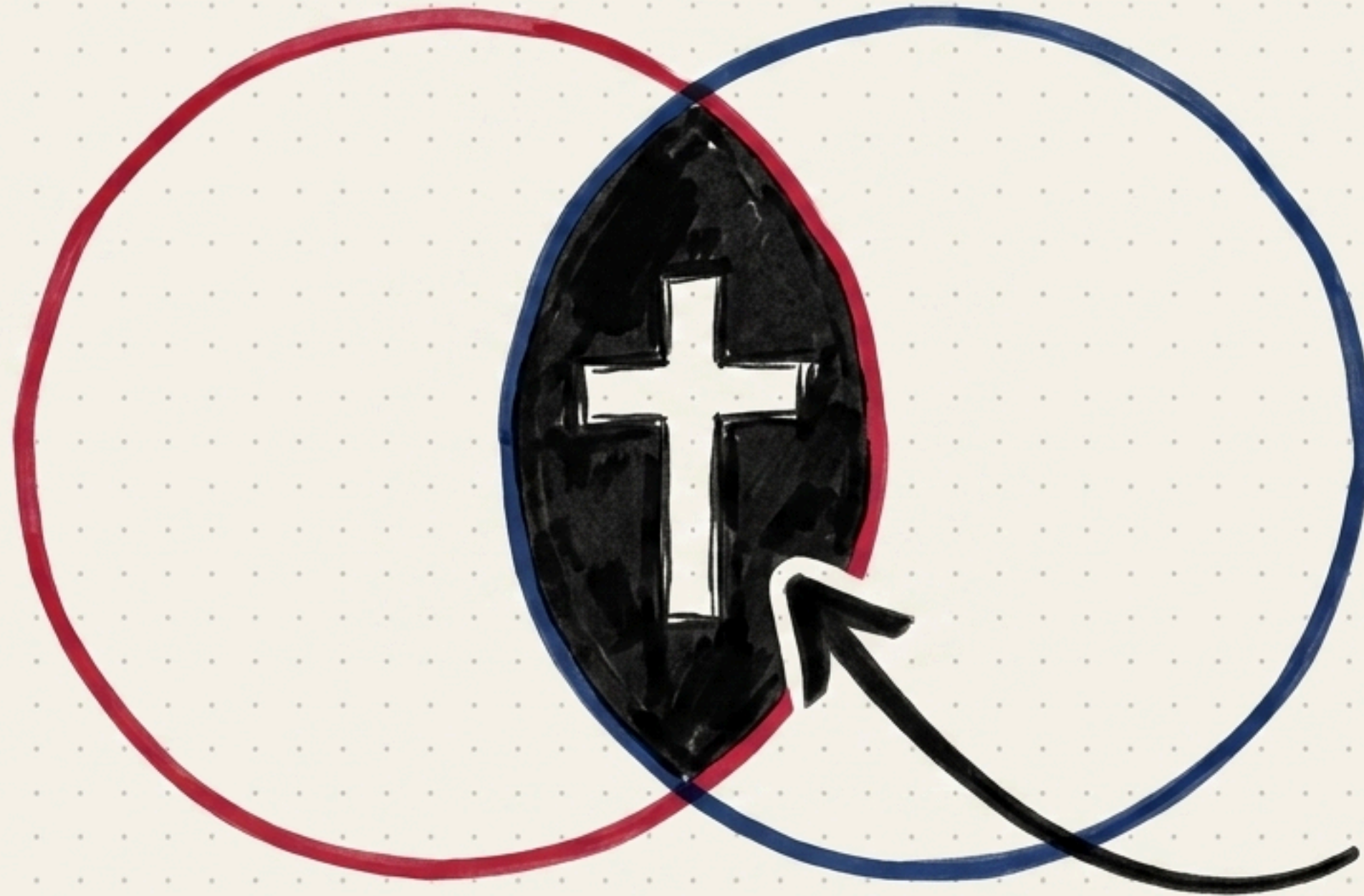


Because Methodists are deeply connectional and share property, leaving is a bureaucratic divorce. Churches had to hold formal votes to disaffiliate, and in many cases, pay the denomination just to keep their own buildings.

The Aha Moment: The theology directly dictates the mechanics of their history.

Disagreeing on the Details, Agreeing on the Core

Despite centuries of arguing over salvation, water, and who holds the keys to the building, these massive historical shifts have all happened within the bounds of the same foundational faith.



It's a debate inside the same family, not a war across enemy lines.