

Major Themes in Christian History

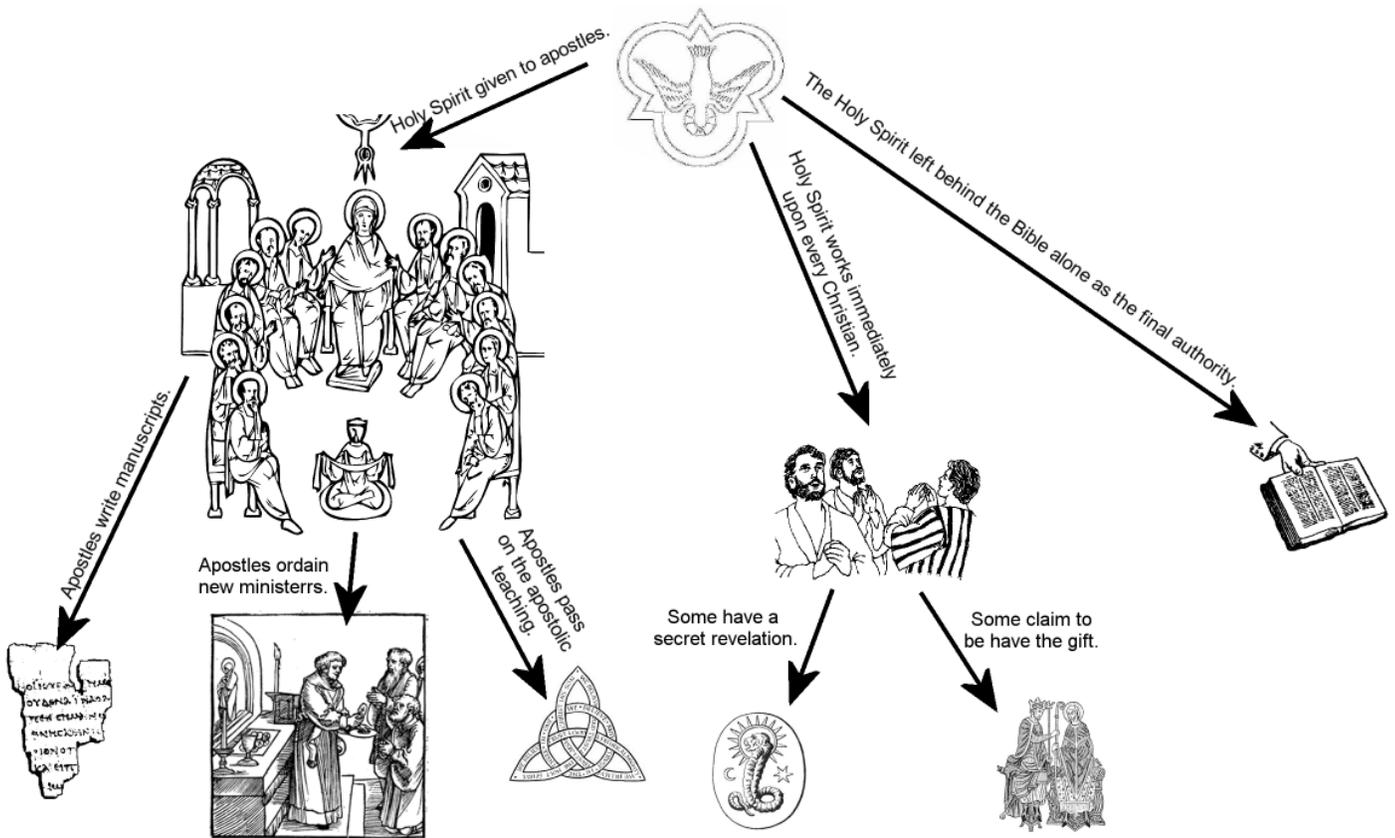
1. The Person of Jesus Christ

- a. He's just a man (Jews; non-Christians)
- b. He's a man endowed with divinity (eastern religions; New Age; liberals)
- c. He's God's first creation, His Son, come in human flesh (Arians; Jehovah's Witnesses)
- d. He's only God, but appears as a human being (Docetists; Gnostics)
- e. He's God who has adopted the human Jesus and came upon Him at His baptism (adoptionists)
- f. He's God and man, but not in one Person. (Nestorianism; Calvinism?)
- g. He's God and man, Whose divine nature has absorbed the human nature, so that they are one (Eutychianism; Coptic Christianity; Armenians; etc.)
- h. He's God and man in One Person, with two natures, divine and human (Nicene orthodoxy)

2. The Trinity

- a. Orthodox teaching: Three Persons; One God
- b. Modalism: Each "person" had an age; God wears three masks
- c. Arianism: One God, the Son and Spirit are creations
- d. Tritheism: Three Gods (what we do NOT believe)

3. Authority in the Church



- a. If Holy Spirit is the final authority, then...
 1. He set up the apostles as the authority
 - aa. Through their writings (New Testament)
 - bb. Through their ordaining and training new ministers (ordination)
 - cc. Through the passing on of their teachings (the Apostles Creed)
 - dd. Tradition is a friend
 2. He saw to the writing of the New Testament, which had an authority in and of itself
 - aa. The Bible was a “stand alone” authority
 - bb. It becomes terribly important which manuscripts are truly “God’s Word”
 - cc. Scholarship becomes extremely important.
 3. He speaks to Christians through the ages immediately, that is, independent of Scriptural or apostolic authority
 - aa. Cults of personality pop up here and there, with their leaders claiming to have been inspired by the Holy Spirit.
 - bb. Tradition can become the enemy; charisma and leadership is most important
 - b. If the Holy Spirit is not the final authority, then Christ’s teachings are a matter of historical curiosity alone, discerned through scholarly study.
4. Power: Who decides, based on the above authorities?
 - a. The Roman bishop (Roman Catholicism)
 - b. A council of bishops (Roman Catholicism; Orthodoxy)
 - c. The Church in convention (Reformation churches)
 - d. A congregation (Congregationalism; Baptist; etc.)
 - e. The charismatic leader (Gnostics, charismatics)
 5. The Work of Christ: Sin and Salvation
 - a. Orthodox themes
 1. The restored creation: Christ’s death is the death of the old order
 2. Anselm’s ideas of atonement: satisfying a just God
 3. Justification: Christ’s righteousness is our’s before God
 - b. Other themes
 1. Gratia infusa: God gives us grace to become better
 2. Pelagianism: We have to work with God to be saved
 3. Arminianism: We have to choose to be saved
 4. Calvinism: Our salvation is part of the bigger story of God revealing His glory
 5. Liberalism: Following Christ’s example of love
 6. Gnosticism: Salvation is about personal escape from their deceptive world
 6. Christianity and Politics
 - a. The Church under the cross (pre-Constantinian)
 - b. The Church as partner of State (post-Constantinian)
 - c. The Church as coexisting with State with some friction (Medieval; modern)
 7. Missions
 - a. How does the Church relate to culture?
 - b. What is the nature of true conversion? (eg. post-Constantinian, in barbaric lands, in the world today)