

Reasons for the diversity of belief and practice within Christianity

Faith Literacy Bitesize

Session 3

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- Examples of different Christian opinions and practices
- What are the three main divisions in Christianity?
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Christians are a very diverse group of people

Queen Elizabeth II

Martin Luther King

Nelson Mandela

Florence Nightingale

Stormzy

Bear Grylls

Tom Hanks

Mary Berry

Christians have diverse opinions and practices

Christians have a range of opinions, which differ between individuals, cultures and across time.

For example, Christians have been both **for** and **against**:

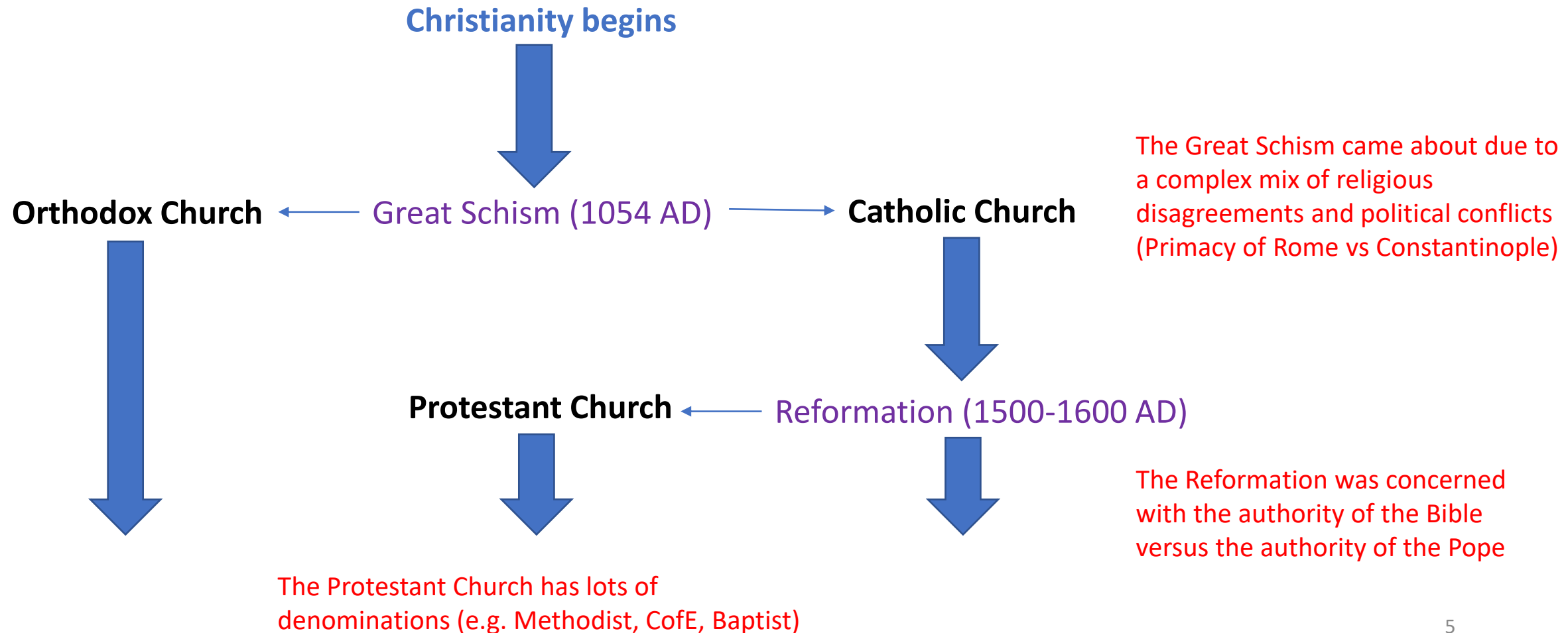
- Slavery
- Gun control
- Abortion
- Same sex marriage
- The ordination of women priests
- Social redistribution
- Environmental issues

Some of these issues have been resolved, but others still divide Christians in the UK or abroad.

Christians also have different views about some of the beliefs and teachings of the church.

What are the three main divisions in Christianity?

Historic differences of opinion on matters of church and biblical authority have led to the three major divisions we see today: Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant.



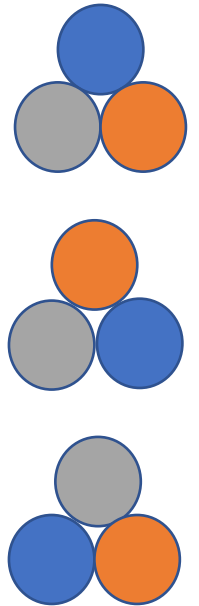
Denominations versus traditions

An important way of explaining differences within Christianity is the relative importance of **three different sources of authority**: **church tradition**, **Bible text**, **Christian principles**.

These all matter, but the choice of **which** source of authority should have the **determining voice** on an issue, or where the **emphasis** is placed within Christian practice, is associated with the different 'traditions' or 'varieties' of Christianity.

For example, and in very broad brush terms:

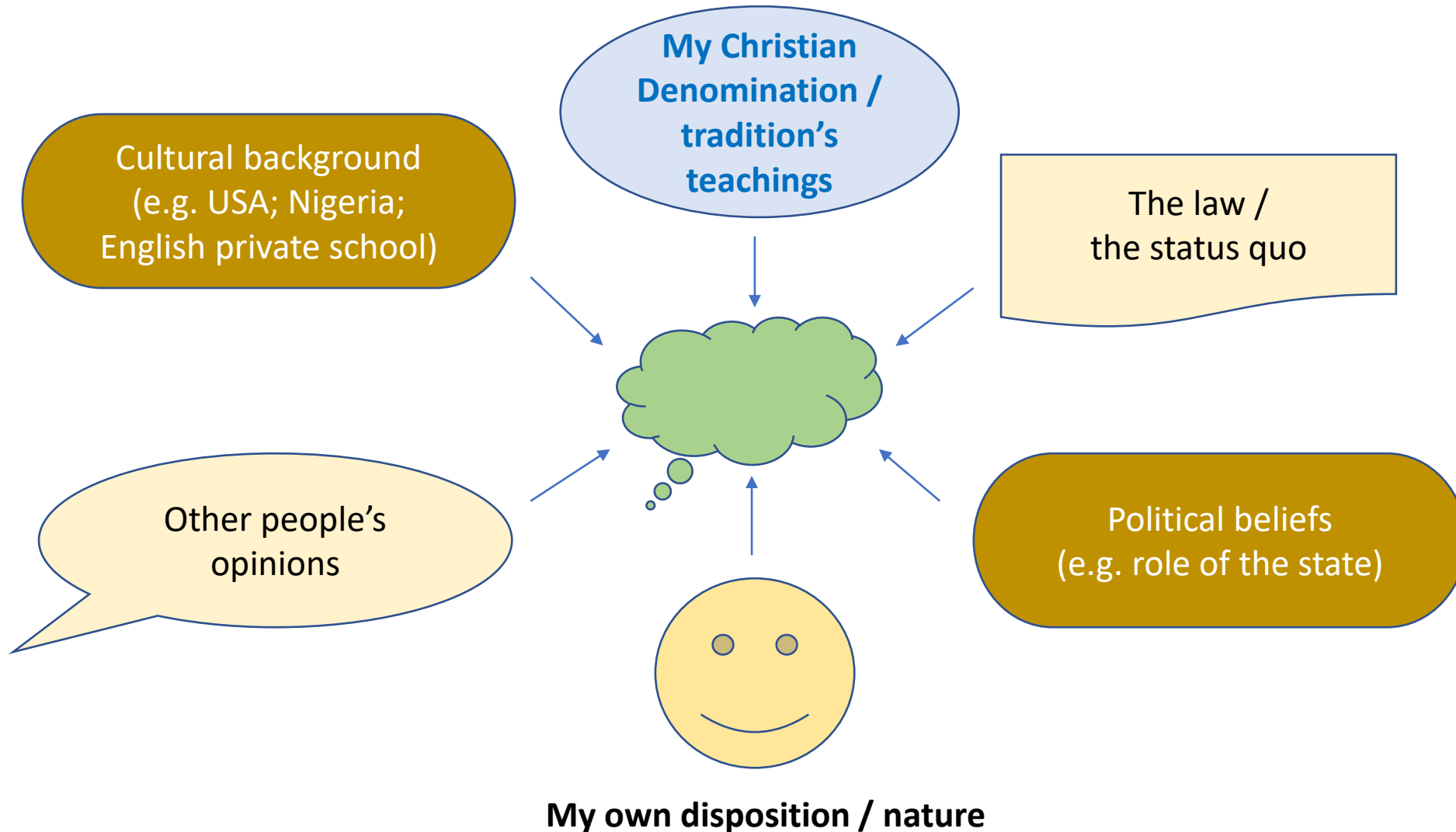
- 1) If **church tradition / teaching** has the supreme role = a **Catholic** (or Anglo-Catholic) tradition
- 2) If the **Bible text** has the highest authority = an **Evangelical** tradition
 - Within this, if direct revelation from God is important = a **Pentecostal** or **Charismatic** tradition
- 3) If applying **Christian principles** to be relevant in today's society is key = a **Liberal** tradition



This may explain disagreements **within** denominations (e.g. as seen in the Church of England, where there is a mix of Liberal, Evangelical and Anglo-Catholic churches in one denomination).

Diversity at the level of the individual Christian

Ultimately, at the level of the individual, their own 'tradition' of Christianity may interact with wider personal and cultural factors to inform their personal beliefs.



Questions for discussion

1. What did you agree or disagree with in this talk?
2. How are the different denominations and traditions we learned about portrayed in the media? Or discussed by people in the country?
3. If you come from another religious background: do you recognise any similar differences between groupings within your religion?