

Old and New:

Christianity as an Organizing System

What is being organized?

Roman Catholicism was one of the fastest growing religions within the Roman Empire during its time. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is one of the fastest growing religions in modern times. The scope and scale of religions is based on the followers of a religion. An interesting way to look at religion is through the exchange of blessings, rites, and teachings – which I will refer to as *Sacred Arts* – for financial support from its believers in order to maintain its structure. People are being continually added and deleted through initiation into the religion and may leave the system through a change of beliefs or death. Therefore, these are physical resources that are being organized.

The global scope of Christian religions requires careful planning. In order for the system to have operational efficiency with a long-term legacy, Christianity organizes by hierarchy to spread Sacred Arts to as many people as possible. Catholicism lends itself to a narrow organizing system (fig. 1) when compared to LDS, which has a broad and large hierarchy (fig. 2). This results from a clear distinction between the clergy and laity whereas in LDS, members of the church become Aaronic priests as early as 12 years old. If a majority of your members are part of the clergy, assigning roles to them requires more specific roles. Though this may present scaling issues, the coordination and communication are mitigated through the strict hierarchy, authority, and belief structure of religion itself.

Since Christianity desires to bring its members to salvation, both Catholicism and LDS aims to have a lifetime that exists until every human soul is judged or united with God. This implies a lifetime that exists so long as humans exist and are sinning, which may be the remainder of human existence.

Why is it being organized?

The intended user of a religion are its believers which are provided with Sacred Arts for the purpose of salvation. In Catholicism, the Trinity blessed the Apostles with the authority to continue the teachings of Jesus and create bishops and cardinals under the direction of the Pope, who will work in their place to continue the mission of salvation (fig. 1). In LDS, the Godhead (a Trinity-like figure) gave similar authority to the Apostles, which was revealed to Joseph Smith who also mimicked the New Testament as well and created a Quorum of the Twelve lead by The First Presidency (fig. 2).

In both Catholicism and LDS, those highest in the hierarchy have the most authority and capabilities to bestow Sacred Arts onto a member. In Catholicism, a cardinal is a type of bishop that can vote for the new Pope, institute new bishops, and perform all of the Sacraments such as Baptism, and Holy Communion to the laity and clergy. However, a priest or monsignor is only capable of performing certain sacraments onto the laity and not instilling new bishops. The same goes for LDS where those in the Quorum of the Twelve or the Presiding Bishopric have more authority and capabilities compared to low-tier priests or Elders. In Catholicism, the clergy asks its laity to donate whatever it can to help fund its structure. In LDS, the laity and clergy are more integrated and connected and as a result, goods, services, and funds are provided by its members to support the church as a whole.

In a more abstract sense (fig. 3), in order to supply Sacred Arts to its users, a Trinity deity made its salvation available to its users through interactions with *Deputized Apostles* who are inheritors of the mission of the original Apostles (the equivalent of bishops or Quorums). These Deputized Apostles are led by a *Head Prophet-President* (equivalent to a Pope or First Presidency), the leader of the church that is voted into office and represents a direct communication between God and humanity. Deputized Apostles then create many *High Priests* who are responsible for many *Low Priests* that then provide access to teachings, blessings, and other Sacred Arts from the Trinity deity itself, to as many users and members it can reach globally and locally. Whenever a new large area has a population that wants salvation through Sacred Arts, new Deputized Apostles can be created to instill many new High and Low Priests to lead the communities in that area. In return, the users supply the church with donations that help fund the maintenance of the structure. This satisfies a personal and institutional goals of personal salvation within individual users and a continuous, adaptable, organized authority in a global sense. The structure of this organizing system lends itself to devoutness of its users which is intentionally aims to keep its members in-line to prevent their believed eternal damnation.

How much is it being organized?

Both Christianity and LDS have many members and a broad scope. This necessitates their use of a hierarchy with depth. Church members express their concerns with priests, who report to monsignors of many Parishes. Monsignors report to bishops and archbishops of entire diocese (regions) who then report the Pope who is believed to communicate with the God directly (fig. 1). The same applies to LDS where members report to their Elders, Ward Presidencies and Bishoprics, Quorums, so on and so forth until the First Presidency (fig. 2). It is essential to have specific roles and titles because certain roles only provide certain responsibilities. As mentioned above, only clergymen with the equivalent level of

Deputized Apostle in my abstract system (fig. 3) may create new Deputized Apostles or priests. However, any Low or High Priest or Deputized Apostle may provide a member with Sacred Arts.

When it comes to the hierarchy of Catholicism and LDS over time, it is important to both the laity and the clergy the name and date of when the Deputized Apostles were instilled within the respective chronology. This is because a majority of the credit and justification for authority in the belief system is determined by a common Christian concept known as *Apostolic Succession*. The Sacred Arts would only be valid when applied to a member if it were passed down from a true inheritor of the mission the Trinity deity bestowed onto an Apostle and his successor. By keeping this record in-tact, the religion continues to justify its claims to the keys of salvation in the eyes of its members. In the current system, the name of the clergy members is important because they effectively decide the direction of the church, how many members they reach, and how to deal with other institutions such as foreign governments.

Since there are tiers of authority in both Catholicism and LDS, responsibility weighs heavily on the superiors. This is why we see controversies such as molestation cases reflect heavily on the decisions of the presiding Pope, or in LDS's case, the First Presidency and his council. These processes cannot be automated because of the gravity of how the organizing system affects its individuals. However, the storage of names and positions can be stored digitally and physically within each religion's archives (a physical location that houses all intellectual and some physical properties at their headquarters).

In a religious sense, every time a member is added to the church, both Catholics and LDS believe that person is stored in *The Book of Life*, an archive of members of the church throughout time stored in heaven where God can review the name and actions of each individual. If I were to guess, a deity's resource description for members would include "name", "position (in relation to the church)", "time of living existence", and a time and date for every "relevant action". In a physical sense, each respective church keeps track of its members through physical and digital records of baptismal certificates. These certificates include "where" the person was baptized, "when" the person was baptized, and "who" the person is. Therefore, every member of the church has a location and time of origin, as well as a specific name. If a member, clergy or laity, dies as a member, and is buried within a church controlled grave, their death certificate is stored digitally and physically as well.

When is it being organized?

Whenever a member in both Catholicism and LDS changes status significantly, it is stored and archived. As mentioned above, initiation through Baptism is stored physically and digitally every time someone is added as a member to the church.

In Catholicism for example, if a lay person does the training to become a priest, their name and time of Holy Orders and laying of the hands by a bishop is stored. In LDS, when a Ward President is elected by their congregation, their name and position is also stored or changed. This becomes increasingly important the higher up you go in hierarchy because a change in position means the responsibilities of the individual for an entire community up to an entire area of a nation increases dramatically. Without accurate knowledge of the current Deputized Apostles, or Priests, the community will have no trace of authority to lead the church nor *efficient* access to salvation through the Sacred Arts.

How or by whom is it being organized?

Most of the organizing is done by the clergy of each religion. For example, church records of its members are handled by the priests. All priests and bishops are kept track by the council of bishops. In LDS, a similar approach is used but because there are more broad categories, Elders report to Presidencies and Bishoprics and so on. The roles of each member vary greatly in what Sacred Arts they can perform as well as how many members their decisions affect.

In a general Christian religion, the Deputized Apostles led by the Head President-Prophet handle the major structure and direction of the church as a whole supported by the High and Low priests to carry out interactions of the Sacred Arts and the members. In this case, the organizers are also members but typically they are those who hold higher authority in the system.

Where is it being organized?

Throughout time we've seen a change in the location of the headquarters of religion due to persecution or politics. As of right now, the headquarters of the Catholic Church is in the Vatican at Italy. The headquarters of The Church of Jesus of Latter-day Saints is in Salt Lake City, Utah. The highest tier of the authority, in the abstract sense, those of Deputized Apostle or Head Prophet-President equivalents, operate in those set locations. Their decisions are communicated digitally and physically by word of mouth to other leaders who then communicate down the chain to its members.

Other Considerations

Figure 3 can be applied to fit other Christian religions and with further abstraction, I'm sure this model can fit other monotheistic religions as well such as Judaism or Islam. With further abstraction of the authority structure and category names, this model may even fit all religions as organizing systems.

Figure 1 Roman Catholicism

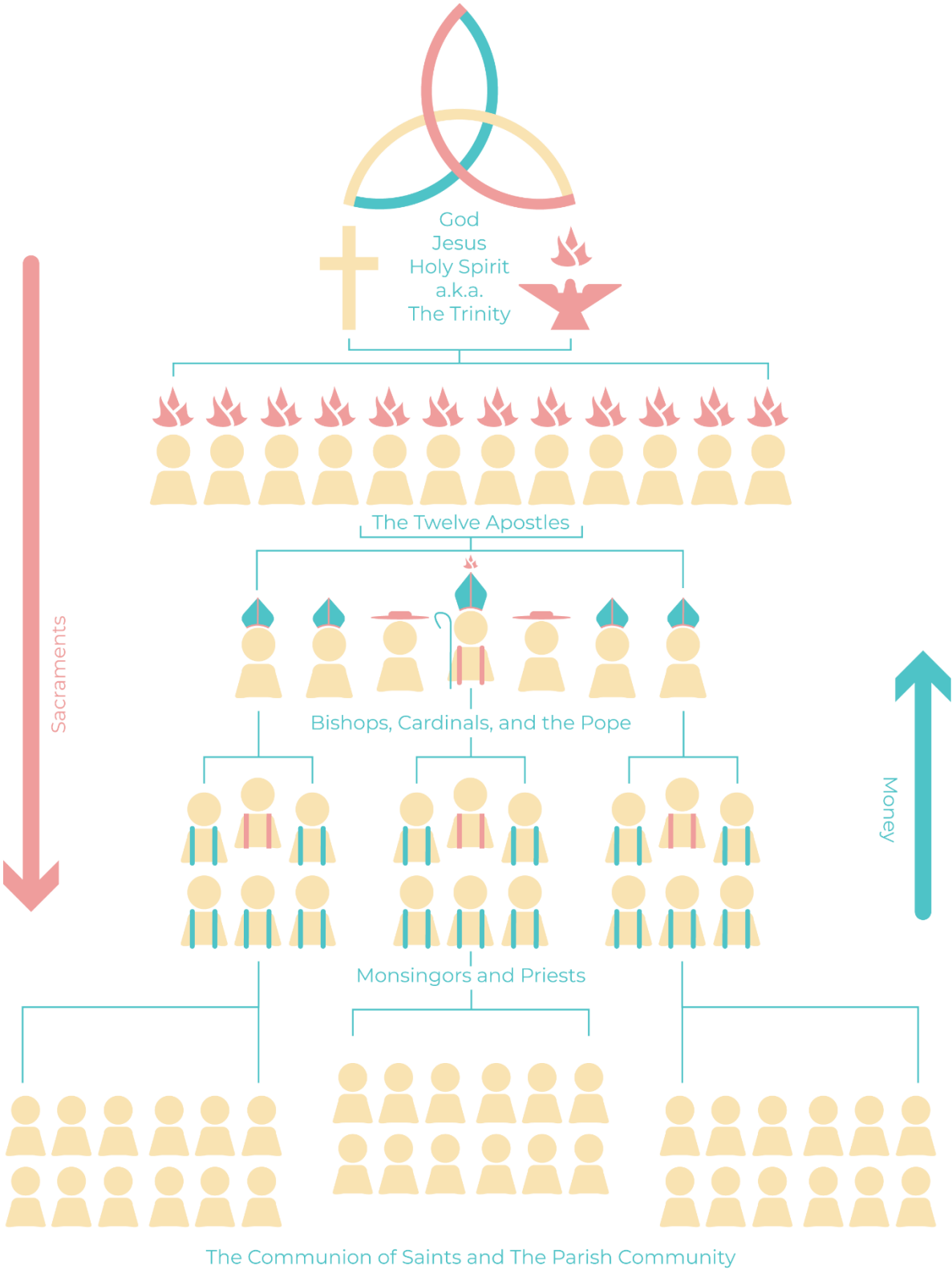


Figure 2 LDS

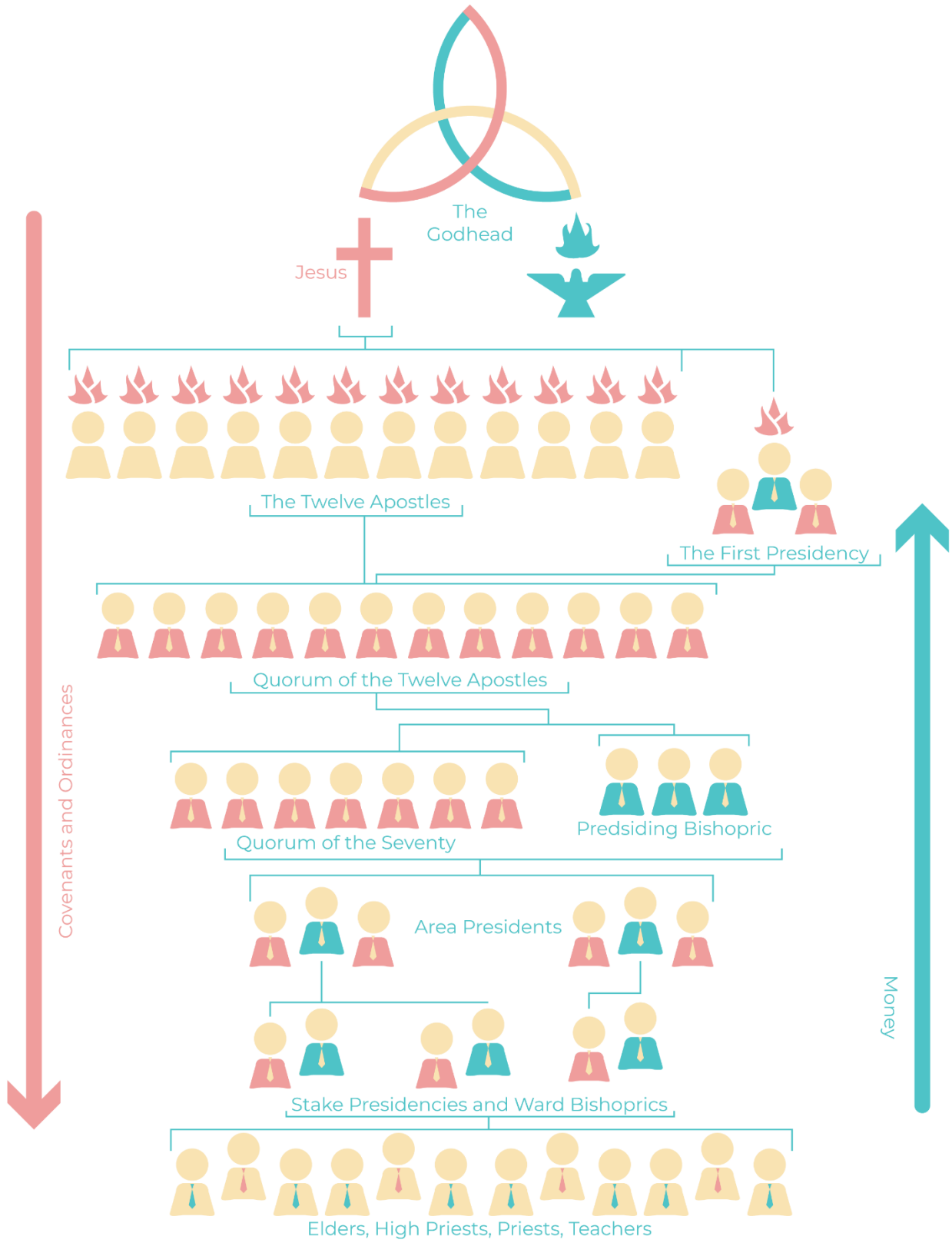
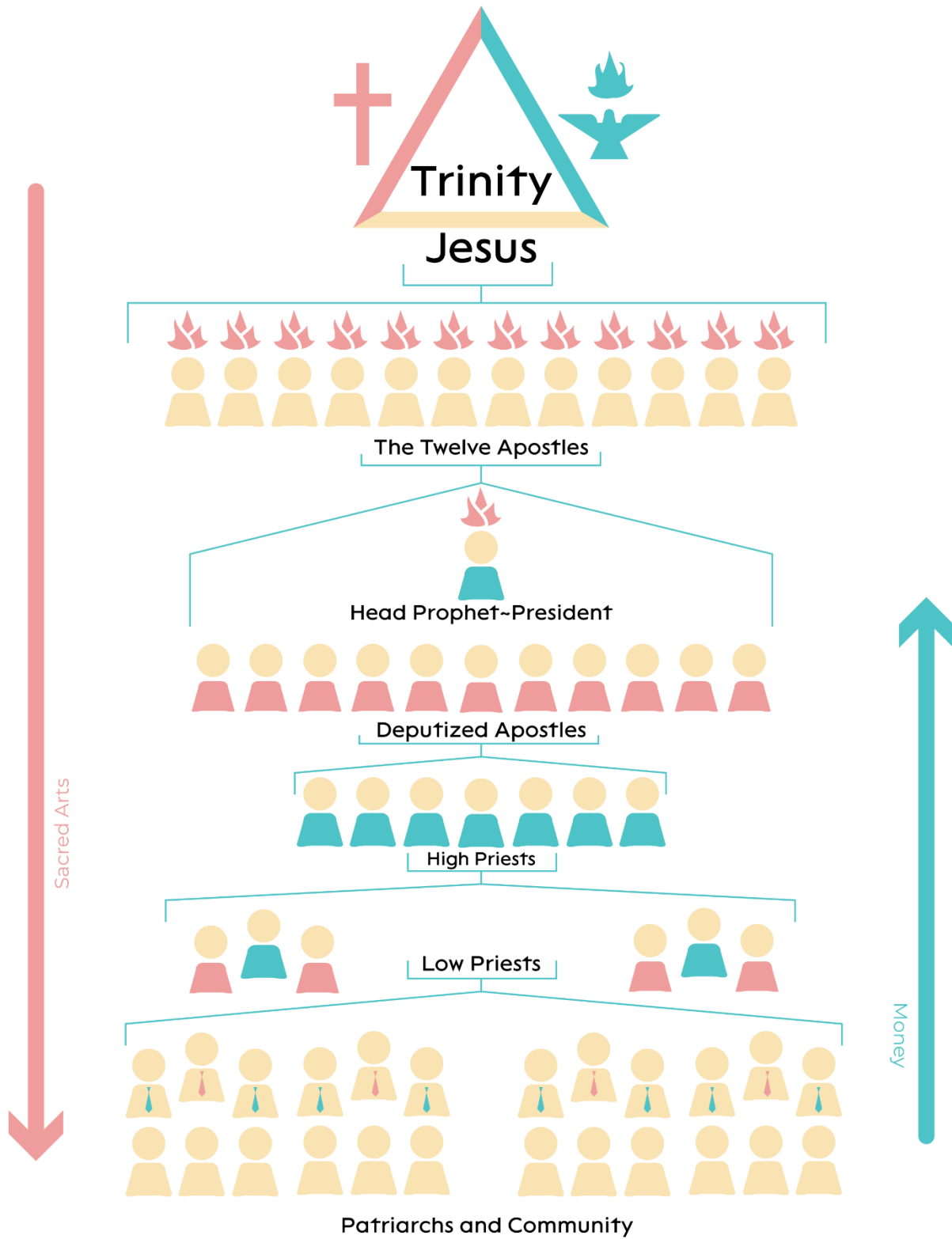


Figure 3 Abstracted Christianity



Sources:

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops:

Beliefs and Teachings, usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/index.cfm.

Official Website of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints:

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“Doctrine and Covenants 107.” *Doctrine and Covenants 107*, www.lds.org/scriptures/dc-testament/dc/107.5,8,12,15,17-18,20,24,26,32,36-37?lang=eng&clang=eng#p4.