Religious organisations and characteristics

**Church** –
Monopoly view of the truth.
Open to all, formal rituals to enter e.g. christenings.
Formal hierarchy, accept norms and values of wider society.
Linked to other major institutions like education.
Do not force people to attend but encourage it, restrained forms of worship.
Examples: Roman catholic church, Church of England.

**Denomination** –
Only want members who believe in their new interpretations, M/c and W/c.
A sect that has calmed down to become an institutionalised body.
No longer claim monopoly of truth.
Tolerant of wider society and require a lower level of commitment.
Value individual differences and different interpretations of sacred texts.
Examples: Methodists, Shaktism, Baptists, Sufism.

**Sect** –
Small and organised group of very committed members.
Highly critical of society and other religions.
Claim monopoly of truth.
Set up in protest of what the church has become.
Led by a charismatic leader, no formal hierarchy.
Examples: People’s temple, Nations of Islam, Amish, Branch Davidians.

**Cults** –
A less coherent religious organisation, fluid membership and open to all.
Headed by a charismatic leader like sects (words used interchangeably in the media).
People become so involved that real life is ignored, not highly demanding otherwise.
‘Cultish behaviour’ is usually carried out privately and informally in the home.
Examples: Mindfulness, Transcendental meditation.

**New age movement** –
Believe in natural energy, reincarnation, clairvoyance, fate and aliens.