

## 2.4A COMPARISON CHART

Group	Definition
Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The community or whole body of Christ's faithful baptised people collectively</li> <li>• All who are spiritually united to Christ as 'Head of the Church'</li> <li>• The largest individual bodies of organized religion (in terms of membership)</li> <li>• The religious mainstream: the Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church</li> </ul>
Denominations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Originate as a Christian movement or sect and classified as a Christian body</li> <li>• Christian religious bodies agreeing with the essential beliefs of Christianity but maintaining their separate group stance for relatively minor issues, e.g. on all other matters of doctrine, interpretation, traditions, or the special emphasis placed on certain beliefs.</li> <li>• Accept relatively modest changes to doctrine and practice and tolerate sometimes considerable theological diversity and dispute.</li> <li>• Clusters of separate congregations which have united due to their agreement on certain issues and perhaps due to their disagreement with the viewpoints of other churches or denominations.</li> <li>• Examples include Anglican, Calvinist, Presbyterian</li> </ul>
Sects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Groups which have divided from a larger body, denomination or movement -- generally over minor differences in doctrine and/or practice -- but whose teachings and practices are generally not considered unorthodox, heretical or cultic (sociologically and/or theologically).</li> <li>• Some do descend into heretical teachings and/or unorthodox practices.</li> <li>• Often place unusual, dogmatic emphasis on one or two doctrines or practices. Such an approach usually leads to the division from the main body in the first place.</li> <li>• Come from one of the established churches</li> <li>• Tend to be revivalist, enthusiastic and fundamentalist</li> <li>• Examples include Methodist and Quakers from Anglicanism, Congregationalism from Calvinism, Pentecostalism from Lutheranism</li> </ul>
Cults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A group, sect or organization whose central teachings and/or practices claim to be biblical, but in fact are not</li> <li>• Groups, organizations or churches whose statements of faith may sound orthodox, but who add deviant, unorthodox, and heretical teachings to the extent that essential Christian beliefs are negated</li> <li>• Groups claiming to be Christian that take up a particular doctrinal system taught by an individual leader, group of leaders, or organization, and which denies one or more of the central doctrines of Christianity.</li> <li>• Often considered deviant by society</li> <li>• tend to be individualistic</li> <li>• sometimes emphasise the final authority of the individual</li> <li>• are often considered to be heretical, dangerous or demonic</li> <li>• require members to fulfil certain, usually strict, criteria</li> <li>• have a strong sense of self-identity and clear distinctions between insiders and outsiders</li> <li>• usually have an exclusivist theology</li> <li>• claim to be the sole possessor of religious truth</li> <li>• show authoritarian leadership patterns, often with a charismatic leader or group of leaders</li> <li>• have loyalty and commitment mechanisms, including various sanctions for deviating members</li> <li>• are in conflict with the essential teachings of the movement the group compares itself to.</li> <li>• are major deviations from orthodox Christianity</li> <li>• prominent cults are Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Science, Mormons, Unitarian, and Spiritualism.</li> <li>• can be destructive; use extreme, unethical techniques of manipulation and control</li> </ul>