

Chapter 1

Topic 6 Organisations, movements and members

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Activity: Discussion

Types of religious organisations

Learning objectives

At the end of this activity you should be able to:

- Identify key features of different types of religious organisation using specific examples.
- Evaluate the usefulness of typologies of religious organisations.

A. Use pages 47-49 of your textbook to define the following:

1. Sect
2. Church
3. Denomination
4. Cult

B. As a class, divide into 5 groups. Each group will research one of the following religious organisations:

1. Methodism
2. Unification Church (Moonies)
3. Christian Science
4. Scientology
5. Catholicism

C. Use the definitions you have taken from pages 47-49 of your textbook, the relevant Wikipedia site below and any others you can find. You need to find the following information about your group's religious organisation (questions 1-5 below):

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Methodism>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unification_Church_of_the_United_States

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_Science

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scientology>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholicism>

1. How many followers does your group's religious organisation have?
2. Do their beliefs dominate in any particular countries? If so, where?
3. How does your group's religious organisation view society: positively or negatively?
4. Does your group's religious organisation have a particular leader with special knowledge?
5. Does your group's religious organisation claim a monopoly of truth?

D. Prepare a short presentation for the rest of the class on the following questions:

1. Of the four types of religious organisation (church, sect, cult and denomination), which does your organisation come closest to? Explain your reasons.
2. Are there any ways in which it resembles any of the other three types?

E. After listening to each presentation, as a class discuss whether you agree with the classification of the religious organisation given in the presentation.