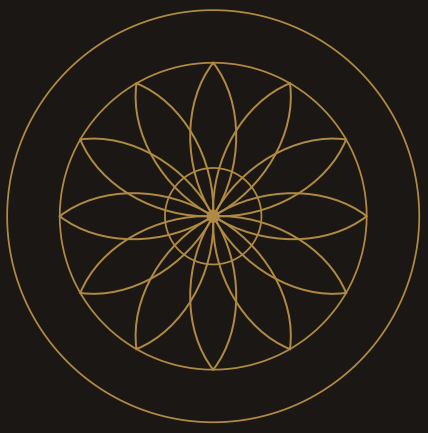


THE SACRED DIVIDE

THE FULL RECORD

Pentecostal & Charismatic

Christianity family

HONOR THE FAITH · NAME THE MACHINERY

TEXT CHECKED 2026-10-03

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Before you begin

This is the record of Pentecostal & Charismatic in *The Sacred Divide*. It has 27 sections, the same 27 used for every tradition, so that any section can be set beside the same section for another. Every fact is sourced.

Before each section, a short note says what the section is built to show, so you know what you are looking at before you read the detail.

After each section, a note headed *Why this matters to you* points at the part of the section most likely to touch an ordinary reader: a member, a donor, a parent, a voter, someone thinking about leaving, or someone outside forming an opinion. It usually ends with a question. The questions are not traps. They are the ones a careful reader would ask anyway.

The hard questions in section 23 are set out one at a time: the question, why it is asked, and an example already documented in this record.

Where a note states a fact, the fact comes from this record's own tables and cited sources or, in a few places, from a well-known research finding named in the text. Corrections are logged, with their dates, in the last section, *What changed on this page*.

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How to read this

Every religion in The Sacred Divide is laid out the same way, in the same 27 sections, so that any section can be compared across religions. This file examines institutions, offices, money and power. It does not judge anyone's faith or the truth of any belief.

EVIDENCE GRADES

Each of the 30 techniques carries a grade for how it is established in this tradition.

- **CODIFIED** Written policy, published rule, contractual requirement, or a procedure the institution has confirmed in its own documents. The strongest grade and the hardest to deny.
- **DOCUMENTED** Established by court judgment, government inquiry, regulatory action, or financial filing. Not the institution's own words, but a body with subpoena power.
- **TAUGHT** Repeated leadership instruction from platform, publication, or curriculum, without a formal rule. Deniable as emphasis rather than policy.
- **CULTURAL** Community enforcement the institution neither mandates nor prevents. Real in effect, unattributable by design — the highest-deniability grade. A volume graded mostly Cultural has not been cleared of anything: it means the page names no document that makes the institution responsible. Cultural does not mean minor, and it is not a finding of absence.

- CONTESTED Occurs in some parts of the tradition and is actively opposed in others. Generalizing this grade across a whole tradition is a misuse of it.
- REFORMED Documented historically and materially changed since — policy withdrawn, practice ended, or independent oversight accepted. Recorded because omitting it would be dishonest.
- UNGRADED Present in the source material without a grade assigned yet. Read as an unverified pattern claim, not as a finding.

RECEIPTS

Bracketed labels such as [OFFICIAL POLICY] name the kind of source a claim rests on.

- **Official policy.** The institution's own written rule: handbook, canon, policy letter, catechism, trust deed, temple recommend question. The strongest evidence available, because it cannot be attributed to a rogue individual.
- **Court record.** Judgments, convictions, filings, and testimony given under oath. Adversarially tested, which is more than most religious claims about themselves have been.
- **Government inquiry.** Royal commissions, grand juries, parliamentary and state investigations with subpoena power. Where these exist they are usually the best record of what an institution did rather than said.
- **Regulatory action.** Findings and penalties from bodies like the SEC or consumer-protection regulators. Narrow in scope, unusually precise in what they establish.
- **Financial record.** Filings, audited statements, tax returns, disclosed compensation, property transactions. Frequently the only place an institution tells the truth about its priorities.

- **Leadership statement.** Recorded sermons, conference addresses, published letters. The institution in its own voice, to its own people, on the record.
- **Independent investigation.** Reports commissioned by the institution but conducted externally. Weaker than a court and far stronger than a press release — and notable when the institution publishes them in full.
- **Academic source.** Peer-reviewed history, sociology, and demography. Best for context, structure, and scale; weaker for specific institutional conduct.
- **Former member testimony.** Firsthand accounts from people who were inside. Indispensable and interested at once — graded as testimony, never presented as documentary proof.
- **Pattern observed.** A recurring configuration with no single document behind it. Labeled as an observation rather than a finding, and the weakest claim type in this codex.

METHOD

- Separation of targets. This codex analyzes institutional control patterns, never the worth of believers or the truth of beliefs. Theology is out of scope; behavior, money, and power are in scope.
- Pattern over anecdote. A tactic is attributed to a tradition's high-control expressions only where the mechanism recurs — one bad congregation proves nothing; the same architecture in a hundred proves the architecture.
- Evidence weighting. Every factual claim carries a bracketed source-type label and should carry a grade (A–D). Claims marked SOURCE NEEDED or PATTERN OBSERVED are analysis, not established fact, and must not be published as fact.
- Steelman rule. Every tactic section presents the institution's strongest defense before countering it. If the defense cannot be stated in a form its adherents would recognize, the counter is not yet earned.

- Asymmetry honesty. Similar tactic does not mean identical severity. A shunning policy that costs your entire family is not the same as a community that cools toward doubters, and the codex must never flatten that difference.
- The mirror rule. Any framework this powerful can itself be misused — to smear traditions, flatter one's own, or manufacture grievance. The self-audit and language guardrails apply to this project as much as to any institution it examines.

CITATIONS

A small raised number in the text links to the matching item in this religion's Sources, near the end. Every source was checked, and the date of the last check is shown at the top.

01 At a glance

BEFORE YOU READ

The whole page on one screen: how big Pentecostal & Charismatic is, who sits at the top, how that person is chosen and whether anyone can remove them, where the money comes from, and what leaving costs. The disclosure scorecard underneath asks six yes-or-no questions any charity or public company would be expected to answer. Every later section expands one of these rows.

SIZE	Pew counted 584 million Pentecostal and charismatic Christians in 2011, about a quarter of the world's Christians [14], when classical Pentecostals (members of the denominations that grew out of the early-twentieth-century revivals, such as the Assemblies of God), charismatics inside other denominations (Catholics and mainline Protestants who adopt Pentecostal practice), and independent neo-charismatic churches (independent churches with Pentecostal practice and no Pentecostal denomination) are counted together. That count includes charismatic Catholics, so it is not a subset of Protestantism, and it is the fastest-growing part of Christianity. ACADEMIC SOURCE
WHO'S IN CHARGE	In the founder's ministry, the dominant form worldwide, the founder is in charge personally. Enoch Adeboye leads Nigeria's Redeemed Christian Church of God and David Oyedepo leads Living Faith Church Worldwide; Edir Macedo leads Brazil's Universal Church of the Kingdom of God and also owns the Record television network.

CHOSEN BY	Founders appoint themselves, and growth is taken as their validation.
REMOVABLE BY	Nobody can remove them. No public record identifies any body with the power to remove any of them.
MONEY IN ONE LINE	This is the tradition where the codex's financial chapter is not an inference. The teaching states the mechanism out loud: money given to the ministry is a seed, and the seed produces a harvest. Giving is not framed as duty, gratitude, or solidarity. It is framed as an investment with a promised return, delivered by God, brokered by the ministry.
LEAVING IN ONE LINE	Leaving is legally free and socially expensive, and the expense is concentrated in exactly the places where the movement is strongest: immigrant communities, diaspora congregations, and towns where the church is also the school, the clinic, the credit network, and the employer.
THE UNANSWERED QUESTION	A US Senate committee asked six ministries for basic financial information and closed its inquiry three years later without full answers and without penalties. If the seed produces the harvest, what exactly is the difficulty in publishing the accounts?
EVIDENCE	Three of the 30 techniques are sourced to a named document. The grades are Documented 2, Taught 10 and Cultural 18.
FAMILY	Christianity — christianity, catholicism, eastern-orthodoxy, oriental-orthodoxy, anglicanism, protestant-evangelical, pentecostal-charismatic, plymouth-brethren
LAST CHECKED	2026-10-03

Disclosure scorecard

ACCOUNTS	PAY	SAFEGUARDING	EXTERNAL FIRST	REMOVAL	REPLY
PARTIAL	NO	NO	NO	PARTIAL	NO

Y Yes — established from a public source · **P** Partial — true of some parts of the tradition, or true in some jurisdictions · **N** No — not established from any public source · **?** Not assessable — no institutional apex exists to assess

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

The glance table's answer to who chooses the top office is "Founders appoint themselves, and growth is taken as their validation", and to who can remove its holder, "Nobody can remove them. No public record identifies any body with the power to remove any of them". Read that as though it described the board of a pension fund holding your savings. Would you accept the arrangement there? The scorecard finds no public evidence of leaders' pay, a public safeguarding policy, allegations going to police first or on-the-record replies. Each "No" is something the institution could publish tomorrow. Ask yourself why it hasn't.

02 A day inside

BEFORE YOU READ

One ordinary day, told from inside. The person is a composite built from documented patterns, not a real individual. The point is to make the structure visible at human scale: phrases like "removal mechanism" or "giving record" are easy to read past, but a Tuesday organized around them is not.

Ngozi · A Tuesday in March · Lagos, Nigeria

The vigil ended at 4 a.m. and she is at the shop by seven, because the anointing (the Holy Spirit's power, felt as resting on a person or a service) does not excuse the rent. Her church is not a small thing. It has a university she cannot afford to send her daughter to, a generator that runs when the national grid does not, and a founder whose private jet is a matter of public record and public pride.

She sowed (gave as a seed offering, expecting a return) forty thousand naira in February. It was the money for Chidi's school fees. The prophet had said that whoever sows into this altar in this season will not see lack this year, and she had felt the word land in her chest the way you feel a doctor's hand find the exact place that hurts. She gave it. Chidi is at home this term.

Her sister asks about the school fees and Ngozi says God is faithful, and means it, and also notices that she has changed the subject. She has begun to notice when she changes the subject. She has not told anyone she has begun to notice.

At the midweek service the pastor teaches that the harvest is delayed by the seeds we hold back, and she does the arithmetic that everyone in the row is doing and nobody in the row will say: if the harvest comes, the seed worked; if it does not, the seed was too small or the faith was. There is no result that the teaching cannot absorb. She has never heard anyone ask what would happen if a promise could not fail.

The church fed two hundred families in the flood and hers was one of them. Nobody handed out a form. Nobody asked whether they tithed (gave a tenth of their income to the church). That was real, and she will not have it explained away, and she has noticed that it is the first thing she says when anyone questions the church, and that it is being used to answer a question about money that it does not actually answer.

At night she reads that a commission in another country found that some churches were selling anointed water and that the courts got involved. She thinks about the small bottle in her cupboard that cost two thousand naira. She thinks about how she would explain that to Chidi. Then she prays, honestly, and the prayer is honest, and the shop opens at seven again.

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Did any moment in that day feel familiar: a cost nobody questions, a door nobody can see how to open? The section of this page that explains that moment is the one to read first. If nothing felt familiar, ask whether that's because it isn't your life, or because the patterns have become normal to you.

03 The forefront

BEFORE YOU READ

The page's thesis in one place. First, the single question the documented record could not answer. Then the widest gap between what the institution says and what the record shows, one cost of leaving set beside how it is officially denied, and the strongest objection to this whole page, answered rather than dismissed.

> If you were filled with the Spirit in a room full of people singing, that happened. Nobody reading this can take it from you, and nothing below tries. What follows is about a specific financial instrument — the one that asks you to give money you do not have as an act of faith, and then explains your continuing poverty as a defect in your faith rather than a defect in the promise.

THE UNANSWERED QUESTION

A US Senate committee asked six ministries for basic financial information and closed its inquiry three years later without full answers and without penalties. If the seed produces the harvest, what exactly is the difficulty in publishing the accounts?

The widest gap between word and record

THEY SAY	THE RECORD SHOWS	RECEIPT
We do not preach prosperity. We preach the whole counsel of God.	The offering appeal, the partnership tiers, and the seed-faith teaching are recorded, broadcast, and archived by the ministry itself.	LEADERSHIP STATEMENT

One cost of leaving, beside its denial

COST	DOCUMENTED?	DETAIL	THE OFFICIAL DENIAL
Financial position	Yes	Years of seed, first fruits (a special offering, often a full month's income, given at the start of the year), and building-fund giving leave the giver with no equity, no refund, and no accounting.	"Giving was always voluntary and between the giver and God."

The strongest objection, answered

The objection. You are describing a handful of American televangelists and smearing hundreds of millions of people, most of them poor, most of them in churches that have never asked anyone for a seed.

What is true in it. That objection is largely correct and this page concedes it in full. Most Pentecostal congregations on earth are small, poor, locally led, and run by pastors who are not paid enough. The movement's founding was genuinely radical, its relief work is enormous and real, and the empires are a minority of the churches even though they are a majority of the broadcast.

The answer. And the instrument is still the instrument. The material here does not come from hostile outsiders: it comes from a US Senate committee's own published review, a South African state human-rights commission, a Korean criminal court and Brazilian prosecutors, and the ministries' own recorded and sold appeals. The honest position is that the majority of this movement is not the subject of this page and is also the group most damaged by what the page documents — which is exactly why its own pastors are the most credible people to fix it.

Sources for this section: [8]

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Try answering the unanswered question yourself: *A US Senate committee asked six ministries for basic financial information and closed its inquiry three years later without full answers and without penalties. If the seed produces the harvest, what exactly is the difficulty in publishing the accounts?* If you can't, who could, and would asking them be welcome? How an institution reacts to a fair question often tells you more than the answer does.

04 What healthy looks like here

BEFORE YOU READ

What genuinely works in Pentecostal & Charismatic, stated first and separately from any critique. That is a standing rule of this book: no tradition is reduced to its worst documented moments. Anything criticized later is measured against the best of what is described here.

> Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity is the world's fastest-growing religious movement. Pew counted about 584 million people in 2011 across classical Pentecostal denominations, independent charismatic churches, and prosperity ministries

> (ministries that teach that faith and giving are rewarded with health and wealth), and it is defined by direct experience of the Holy Spirit, healing, prophecy, and speaking in tongues (speech in a language the speaker does not know, understood as prayer given by the Spirit).

- A healthy church publishes annual accounts, independently audited, and gives them to members without being asked. A minority of Pentecostal churches do this, and it is the single clearest marker on this page.
- Offerings are taken without appeals that promise a specific return, and without anyone being called forward by amount.
- The congregation owns its own building, on a title deed the members can read.
- Healing prayer is offered alongside medicine, and pastors ask whether you have seen a doctor and mean it.
- The pastor holds a denominational credential that a real body can revoke, and the church has a safeguarding policy with an external reporting route.
- The pastor can be told no by a board they did not appoint, and has been, in living memory.
- These markers exist inside the movement. The Assemblies of God elects its General Superintendent and has revoked the credentials of its most famous preachers: it defrocked Jim Bakker in 1987 and dismissed Jimmy Swaggart in 1988 [12]. Hillsong Church London, a registered charity in the United Kingdom, files public accounts with the Charity Commission [20].

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

A bias check before the critique. People tend to read criticism of their own group as an attack and criticism of other groups as simply true. Social psychologists call this in-group bias; it shows up even when the groups are assigned at random (Tajfel's "minimal group" experiments, 1971). If you belong here, did this section feel fair? If you don't, did anything in it surprise you? The surprise is a rough measure of what you had assumed.

05 History

BEFORE YOU READ

A dated timeline and a few moments where the direction changed. Dates matter because they show that most rules had a beginning. A rule that began in a particular year, for a particular reason, is a rule that can be examined, and sometimes retired.

Pentecostalism began in the first decade of the twentieth century as a movement of the powerless. The Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles from 1906 was led by William J. Seymour, the son of formerly enslaved parents, in a building on a dirt street, and it was interracial at a moment when almost nothing in American life was. That is the movement's founding fact and it is a genuinely radical one: the Spirit was said to fall on anyone,

without seminary, ordination, license, or white skin. The prosperity gospel that now dominates the movement's global broadcast face is a later graft — traceable through E. W. Kenyon's writings into Kenneth Hagin's Word of Faith teaching (the teaching that believers can claim health and wealth through faith spoken aloud) in the 1960s and 70s, then into the healing-revival and television economies, and finally into the megachurch empires of Lagos, São Paulo, Seoul, and Manila. The distance between Seymour's dirt street and a founder's private jet is the whole subject of this page.

Timeline

HISTORY AT A GLANCE



Numbered markers match the timeline below; spacing is proportional to the years.

1

1901–1906

Charles Parham's Topeka school; then the Azusa Street revival under William J. Seymour, interracial and lay-led

Authority located in personal experience rather than office — genuinely democratic, and structurally unaccountable from the first day, because an experience cannot be audited.

2 1914

The Assemblies of God organizes in Hot Springs, Arkansas — the movement's first large denominational structure

The moment part of the movement chose accountable structure. The Assemblies of God still elects its General Superintendent, which is why its record differs from the empires'.

3 1940S–1950S

The healing revival economy: tent crusades, radio, and the first mass mail-order ministries

The offering becomes a broadcast instrument. Giving is decoupled from a congregation that can see the books.

4 1960S–1970S

Kenneth Hagin systematizes Word of Faith teaching, drawing on E. W. Kenyon; 'seed faith' enters mass circulation through Oral Roberts

The theological engine is installed: giving is reframed from duty into investment, with a guaranteed return. A promise that cannot fail is a promise that cannot be audited.

5 1987–1989

The collapse of PTL (Praise The Lord, Jim Bakker's television ministry); Jim Bakker convicted in 1989 on fraud and conspiracy charges over lifetime-partnership lodging sold many times over

The first proof that the instrument was legally actionable — and that it took a federal prosecution, not a church body, to establish it.

COURT RECORD

6 1980S–2000S

Explosive growth outside the West: the Redeemed Christian Church of God and Living Faith in Nigeria, the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God in Brazil, Yoido Full Gospel in Seoul

The movement's centre of gravity leaves America. So does most Western scrutiny of it.

7 2007–2011

US Senate Finance Committee inquiry under Senator Charles Grassley into six large media ministries; the 2011 review closes without penalties, and several ministries decline to provide full information

The clearest demonstration in this codex of the church financial exemption in operation: a US Senate committee asked, and did not use its power to compel; staff said the committee lacked the time and resources to enforce subpoenas [31]. GOVERNMENT REPORT

8 2014

Cho Yong-gi, founder of Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul — for decades the largest congregation on earth — is convicted of breach of trust involving church funds and given a suspended sentence

A founder convicted in a criminal court while the church continued. The conviction came from the state; the congregation was not the mechanism. COURT RECORD

9 2014

A guesthouse of the Synagogue Church of All Nations collapses in Lagos, killing more than a hundred people, most of them foreign pilgrims

A mass-casualty event inside the pilgrimage economy, and a coroner's process that ran into obstruction. GOVERNMENT REPORT

10 2017

South Africa's CRL Rights Commission (the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities) publishes its report on the commercialisation of religion, documenting the sale of anointed products and 'miracle' practices, and recommending a peer-review licensing system

A state human-rights commission naming the instrument in public and proposing regulation — and the proposal being fought by churches across the spectrum, including ones with no stake in the abuses. GOVERNMENT REPORT

11 2022–2023

Brian Houston resigns as global senior pastor of Hillsong amid the church's own disclosures; in 2023 an Australian court acquits him of concealing his father's child sexual abuse

Both halves belong on the record: a resignation forced by disclosure, and an acquittal on the criminal charge. The codex reports outcomes, not the ones it would prefer. COURT RECORD

12 2024

A BBC Africa Eye investigation publishes extensive former-member testimony concerning the late T. B. Joshua and the Synagogue Church of All Nations

The founder had died in 2021 with no institutional process ever having examined him. The examination arrived three years late and from a newsroom. INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

Moments in the room

APRIL 1906 — A DIRT STREET, AND A MOVEMENT NOBODY AUTHORISED

William J. Seymour, the son of formerly enslaved parents and blind in one eye, preached at 312 Azusa Street to a congregation that was Black, white, Latino, and Asian together, in a city and a decade where that was rare and widely mocked. There was no seminary, no denomination, no license.

Why it matters. The movement's founding principle, that the Spirit falls on anyone and bypasses every gatekeeper, was genuinely liberating and is structurally identical to the mechanism that now protects founders from review. The one principle has had consequences across two centuries.

OCTOBER 1989 — LIFETIME PARTNERSHIPS, SOLD MANY TIMES OVER

Jim Bakker was convicted on fraud and conspiracy charges over PTL lodging partnerships sold far in excess of the accommodation that existed. The case was built by prosecutors after reporters at the Charlotte Observer kept publishing against a readership that was also the donor base.

Why it matters. It was the first proof that the instrument was legally actionable, and that it took a federal prosecution to establish it, because no church body had acted on the partnerships themselves. The Assemblies of God had defrocked him two years earlier, over sexual misconduct rather than the scheme [1].

2017 — A STATE COMMISSION PRICES THE ANOINTING

South Africa's CRL Rights Commission documented the sale of anointed oil, water, and stickers, and 'miracle' practices performed on congregants, and recommended a peer-review licensing system for religious practitioners. Churches across the spectrum — including many with no stake in the abuses — fought the recommendation.

Why it matters. It was the moment the commercialisation was named in a state document. The united opposition to regulation, from churches doing nothing wrong, is the most useful part of the story: the exemption is defended collectively even by those who do not need it.

Sources for this section: 3 4 5 6 7 12 13 15 16

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Pick one rule that shapes your week and look for it on the timeline. If it has a start date, it was decided by people at a particular moment, for reasons of that moment. Were you taught it as timeless? What would it mean for you if it turned out to be younger than your grandparents' grandparents?

06 Branches & variants

BEFORE YOU READ

Pentecostal & Charismatic is not one bloc. This section maps the main branches and variants, so that nothing documented about one community is read as true of all of them.

The movement divides into the classical denominations (Assemblies of God, Church of God in Christ, Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee)), the charismatic renewal inside Catholic and mainline churches, and the neo-charismatic independent sector, which is the largest and least structured and is where the prosperity megachurches sit.

Sources for this section: [15]

BRANCH	EXAMPLE	WHERE AUTHORITY SITS
Classical Pentecostal	Assemblies of God (organized at Hot Springs, Arkansas, 1914); Church of God in Christ; Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee) [15]	Authority sits with elected leaders and credentialing bodies that can revoke a minister's credentials, and have done so [1 2].
Foursquare and other founder-denominations	The Foursquare Church, founded by Aimee Semple McPherson (incorporated 1927) [15]	Authority rested first on the founder's constitution and later on a board.

Charismatic renewal	Charismatic groups inside Catholic and mainline churches	Authority sits in the host church's own structure.
Word of Faith and prosperity ministries	The line from E. W. Kenyon to Kenneth Hagin; Oral Roberts's "seed faith" [16]	Authority sits with the founder, often with a board the founder chose.
Global megachurch networks	Redeemed Christian Church of God and Living Faith (Nigeria); the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (Brazil); Hillsong (Australia) [17] [18]	Authority sits with a founder or founding family, and in Brazil the founder also owns a national TV network [17].

Pew counted about **584 million** Pentecostal and charismatic Christians in 2011 [14].

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

If you know one community of Pentecostal & Charismatic, you know one community. Most bad generalizations about a religion, and most unfair defenses of it, come from treating one branch as the whole. Which branch is the one you picture when you hear the name? Is that picture yours, or one you were given by news coverage or by the community itself?

07 Structure

BEFORE YOU READ

The organizational chart: how many people and institutions there are, where authority sits, who holds the top office, and who holds what beneath it. The question to keep in mind is simple: if the person at the top got something badly wrong, what written procedure exists to correct or remove them?

Size and shape

Adherents	Pew counted 584 million Pentecostal and charismatic Christians in 2011, about a quarter of the world's Christians [14], when classical Pentecostals, charismatics inside other denominations, and independent neo-charismatic churches are counted together. That count includes charismatic Catholics, so it is not a subset of Protestantism, and it is the fastest-growing part of Christianity. ACADEMIC SOURCE
Regions	The largest populations are in Brazil, Nigeria, the United States, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Philippines, Kenya, Ghana, South Korea, Guatemala, and Indonesia, and the movement has a rapidly growing presence across Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa.
Trend	The movement is growing fast in the Global South and among immigrant communities in the West. The independent sector grows fastest of all, which means the fastest-growing part of the movement is the part with the least external accountability.

Participation	Attendance is unusually high relative to nominal identification — this is a movement of participants rather than census Christians. That is a genuine strength, and it also means the population under actual institutional authority is far larger here than the headline numbers suggest elsewhere in this codex.

Authority

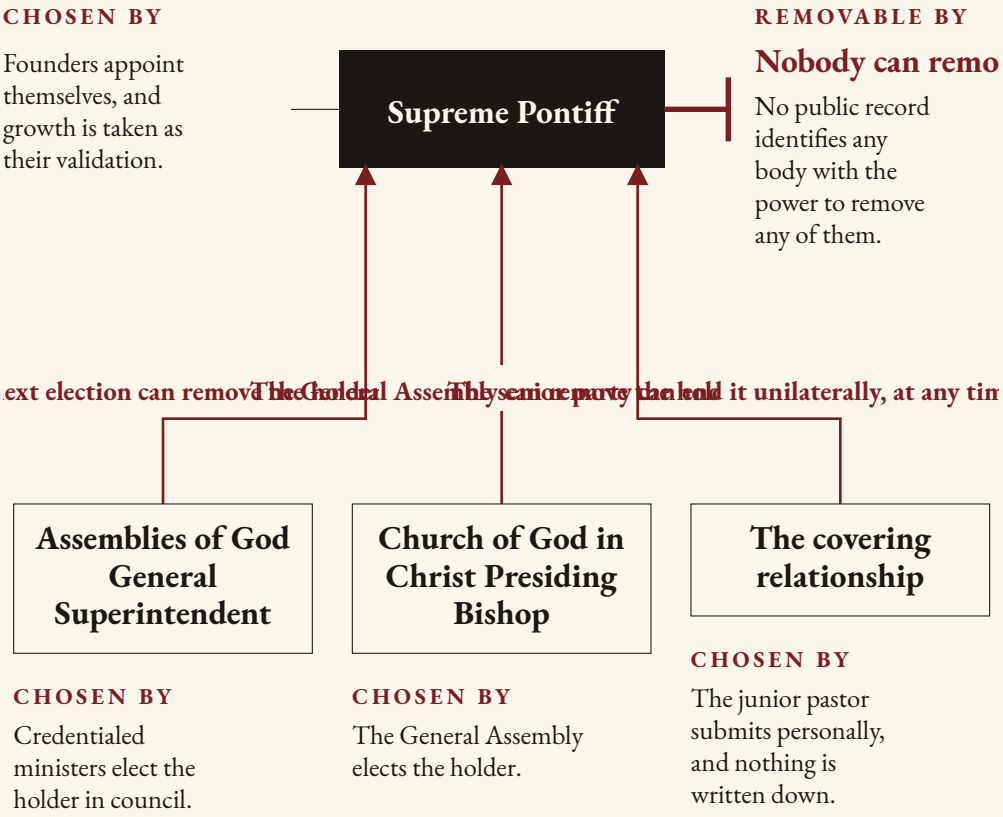
- There is no apex. This is the purest case in the codex of authority that is charismatic rather than institutional: a founder's authority rests on demonstrated anointing — prophecy, healing, growth — and there is no office above the founder to test the demonstration.
- Classical denominations are the exception and deserve to be named as one: the Assemblies of God elects its General Superintendent, and the Church of God in Christ elects its Presiding Bishop. Both hold real elections and revoke credentials — the Assemblies of God defrocked Jim Bakker in 1987 and Jimmy Swaggart in 1988. The independent megachurch sector has neither.
- In practice authority flows through 'spiritual covering' or 'spiritual fatherhood' — a personal submission relationship between a junior pastor and a senior one, unwritten, unenforceable, and terminable only by the senior party. It is the movement's real org chart and it appears in no constitution.

The top of the chain

> There is no apex, and that is not an accident of history — it is the movement's founding principle

> operating exactly as designed. Authority rests on demonstrated anointing, and no office exists to test a demonstration.

WHERE THE ARROWS END



Each arrow points to whoever can remove the office below it. From the table that follows.

OFFICE (continued)	WHO SITS IN IT NOW	CHOSEN BY	REMOVABLE BY
The founder's ministry — the dominant form worldwide	The founder holds it personally. Enoch Adeboye leads Nigeria's Redeemed Christian Church of God and David Oyedepo leads Living Faith Church Worldwide; Edir Macedo leads Brazil's Universal Church of the Kingdom of God and also owns the Record television network.	Founders appoint themselves, and growth is taken as their validation.	Nobody can remove them. No public record identifies any body with the power to remove any of them.
Assemblies of God General Superintendent	Doug Clay holds this elected office, which is held on renewable terms by vote of the General Council. He was re-elected in August 2025 [36].	Credentialed ministers elect the holder in council.	The next election can remove the holder. It is a genuine mechanism, genuinely used, and the reason the classical denominations belong in a different row from the empires.
Church of God in Christ Presiding Bishop	J. Drew Sheard holds this elected office of the largest historically Black Pentecostal denomination. The General Assembly re-elected him on 12 November 2024 for a four-year term [37].	The General Assembly elects the holder.	The General Assembly can remove the holder.
The covering relationship	A senior pastor holds authority over a junior one. It is the movement's real org chart and appears in no constitution anywhere.	The junior pastor submits personally, and nothing is written down.	The senior party can end it unilaterally, at any time and for any reason.

Where the law reached instead	The law reached the movement through a US federal conviction of a broadcast ministry founder in 1989, a breach-of-trust conviction of a Seoul megachurch founder in 2014, and a South African state commission report in 2017.	—	Criminal courts and state commissions acted every single time, and never an internal body of an independent ministry.

THE TELL

Ask a prosperity congregation who can remove their founder and the sentence has no object. Then note that the same question asked of the Assemblies of God has a real answer, in the same movement, under the same theology. The difference is a constitution, and it is the only variable that changed.

Who holds what

ENTITY	TYPE	HOLDER	HOLDS	WHY IT MATTERS TO YOU	RECEIPT
The founder's ministry	Private empire	The founder holds it, and increasingly the founder's family by succession.	It controls doctrine, all appointments, all property, and the offering.	It decides whether your giving is called faith or unbelief.	LEADERSHIP STATEMENT
Assemblies of God General Superintendent	Elected office	The holder is elected by the General Council and re-elected periodically.	It controls denominational doctrine and credentialing.	It decides whether your pastor keeps their credential.	OFFICIAL POLICY · AG constitution and bylaws

Church of God in Christ Presiding Bishop	Elected office	The holder is elected by the General Assembly.	The office leads the largest historically Black Pentecostal denomination.	It controls ordination and appointment.	OFFICIAL POLICY
The media arm	Broadcast and publishing	The ministry or the founder's family owns it; in Brazil, the Universal Church's founder Edir Macedo owns Record TV, a national network.	It controls the audience, the appeal, and the narrative about the ministry.	It shapes what you hear about your own church.	INVESTIGATIVE REPORT
The 'covering' relationship	Unwritten authority	A senior pastor holds it over a junior one.	It controls a junior pastor's legitimacy, network, and platform.	It decides whether your pastor can afford to disagree.	PATTERN OBSERVED
The prophetic office	Personal claim	Individual prophets, apostles, and 'men of God' (a title for founders and senior leaders) claim it.	It claims directive authority over members' finances, marriages, and business decisions.	It takes over decisions you would otherwise make yourself.	FORMER MEMBER TESTIMONY
The building fund	Perpetual campaign	The ministry board, typically appointed by the founder, holds it.	It collects special offerings above the tithe, often multiple times a year.	It lays claim to your discretionary income, permanently.	FINANCIAL RECORD

Succession watch

OFFICE	NOW	MECHANISM	PREDICTION	WHAT WOULD FALSIFY IT
The prosperity megachurch founders	Several major Nigerian and Brazilian founders are now in their seventies and eighties. The one Korean case on this page ran differently: Cho Yong-gi, who died in 2021, stepped down in 2008 and appointed Lee Young-hoon as his successor [35]. The sources this page uses do not say whether Lee is related to him or how members took part, so the case is recorded here and not counted as a test of the prediction.	Nothing is written; in practice, succession runs through the family.	The codex predicts succession to spouses and sons in the majority of cases, with no congregational vote anywhere, and property and media assets remaining in family ownership through the transfer.	A single major independent ministry transferring to a non-family successor chosen by a body the members elected would falsify it.

Sources for this section: 1 2 3 5 14 17 18

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

In most of this movement, the org chart is one person: the founder. The glance table says no public record identifies any body that can remove the founders it names. Below them, authority runs through "spiritual covering", a personal relationship between a junior pastor and a senior one that is written down nowhere. If your pastor is "covered" by someone, can you name who? And what would you do if the covering failed?

08 Law & state here

BEFORE YOU READ

What states actually do. That includes how they fund, protect, regulate or enforce the tradition, and which outside body, if any, can compel an answer from it. For most readers, this is where the institution meets their own passport.

COUNTRY	WHAT THE LAW DOES	WHAT HAPPENED
United States	Churches file no public return; the Senate's inquiry into six media ministries (2007–2011) closed without penalties [4]	Jim Bakker's fraud conviction came through the criminal courts, not church regulation [3]

United Kingdom	Churches that are charities file public accounts; the Charity Commission can appoint an interim manager [9]	It did so at Kingsway International Christian Centre in 2014, during an inquiry that ran from 2011 to 2016 [9]
Australia	The charity regulator, the ACNC (Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission), can accept compliance agreements [10]	Hillsong entered agreements and an undertaking in December 2024 [10]
South Korea	Breach of trust and tax evasion are criminal offences for pastors as for anyone [5]	The founder of the world's largest congregation was convicted in 2014 [5]
Nigeria	Section 839 of the 2020 companies law lets the state suspend trustees of charitable bodies, including churches [11]	The Christian Association of Nigeria opposed it [11]
South Africa	A constitutional commission investigated the "commercialisation of religion" in 2017 [7]	Its licensing recommendation was resisted by churches [7]
Brazil	Prosecutors can charge church leaders [8]	São Paulo charges against Edir Macedo (2009) expired without a verdict [8]

Who can compel an answer

Several bodies can compel an answer: charity regulators where the ministry is registered (the UK Charity Commission and Australia's ACNC have both acted); consumer-protection and advertising-standards bodies on health and financial claims; state attorneys general in the US; and in South Africa the CRL Rights Commission, which has already published on precisely this. For the classical denominations there is also an internal route that genuinely works: the credentialing body can revoke a credential, and does.

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Your protection depends almost entirely on where your church is registered. In the UK a church that is a charity files public accounts, and the Charity Commission once appointed an interim manager to work alongside the trustees of a London Pentecostal church. In the US a church files no public financial return. In Brazil, charges against one of the movement's most powerful founders expired without a verdict. Which country's rules does your church actually answer to? Do you know where it is registered?

09 Money

BEFORE YOU READ

Where the money comes from, how each flow is justified, how it can be used to control, and who benefits. Read it the way you would read any organization you give to: what is disclosed, what is not, and who decides.

Where it comes from

- This is the tradition where the codex's financial chapter is not an inference. The teaching states the mechanism out loud: money given to the ministry is a seed, and the seed produces a harvest. Giving is not framed as duty, gratitude, or solidarity. It is framed as an investment with a promised return, delivered by God, brokered by the ministry.
- The instrument's defining property is that it cannot fail. If the harvest arrives, the seed worked. If it does not, the seed was too small, the faith was weak, or the timing is God's. There is no observable outcome that counts against the promise — which is the exact definition of an unfalsifiable financial claim, and in any other sector it would be a regulated one.
- Layered above the tithe are first fruits (often a full month's income in January), prophetic and 'covenant' offerings, building funds, seed offerings taken during the sermon that teaches seed offerings, and, in the documented worst cases, the sale of anointed oil, water, stickers, and bracelets.
- The scale is enormous and largely unexamined. In the United States churches file no public Form 990 (the annual return other US charities must make public). In Nigeria and Brazil, the largest ministries own universities and broadcast networks. The Senate Finance Committee inquiry of 2007–2011 remains the most serious attempt at scrutiny anywhere, and it ended without penalties and without full disclosure.

GOVERNMENT REPORT

Follow the money

FLOW	STATED PURPOSE	HOW IT CONTROLS	WHO BENEFITS
Seed faith / sowing	A step of faith that unlocks God's promised return	Very high — an unfalsifiable promise attached to a cash transfer, taught by the beneficiary	The ministry benefits immediately and unconditionally; the giver benefits conditionally and unverifiably.
First fruits	Honouring God with the first and best of the year	High — frequently taught as a full month's income, at the moment of least slack	The ministry's annual budget benefits.
Prophetic / covenant offering	Aligning with a specific prophetic word for a season	Very high — the amount is often specified by the person receiving it	The prophet's ministry benefits.
Perpetual building fund	Land, auditoriums, universities, broadcast capacity	Medium to high — real assets, held in the ministry's or founder's name, rarely the congregation's	The ministry benefits, and so does any family that inherits it.
Anointed products	Physical points of contact for faith — oil, water, cloths, bracelets	Very high — documented by a state commission as commercialisation of religion; a priced spiritual good sold to the desperate	The seller benefits. GOVERNMENT REPORT · CRL Rights Commission

Conference and partnership programmes	Access to teaching, impartation (the passing on of a spiritual gift, often by the laying on of hands), and the founder's covering	Medium — a subscription relationship dressed as spiritual sonship	The ministry and its speaker circuit benefit.

WHERE THE MONEY GOES, AND WHAT IT HOLDS

Seed faith / sowing

STATED PURPOSE
A step of faith that unlocks God's promised return

HOW IT CONTROLS
Very high — an unfalsifiable promise attached to a cash transfer, taught by the beneficiary

→ The ministry benefits immediately and unconditionally; the giver benefits conditionally and unverifiably.

First fruits

STATED PURPOSE
Honouring God with the first and best of the year

HOW IT CONTROLS
High — frequently taught as a full month's income, at the moment of least slack

→ The ministry's annual budget benefits.

Prophetic / covenant offering

STATED PURPOSE
Aligning with a specific prophetic word for a season

HOW IT CONTROLS
Very high — the amount is often specified by the person receiving it

→ The prophet's ministry benefits.

Perpetual building fund

STATED PURPOSE
Land, auditoriums, universities, broadcast capacity

HOW IT CONTROLS
Medium to high — real assets, held in the ministry's or founder's name, rarely the congregation's

→ The ministry benefits, and so does any family that inherits it.

Anointed products	**STATED PURPOSE** Physical points of contact for faith — oil, water, cloths, bracelets **HOW IT CONTROLS** Very high — documented by a state commission as commercialisation of religion; a priced spiritual good sold to the desperate	→	The seller benefits. · CRL Rights Commission
Conference and partnership programmes	**STATED PURPOSE** Access to teaching, impartation (the passing on of a spiritual gift, often by the laying on of hands), and the founder's covering **HOW IT CONTROLS** Medium — a subscription relationship dressed as spiritual sonship	→	The ministry and its speaker circuit benefit.

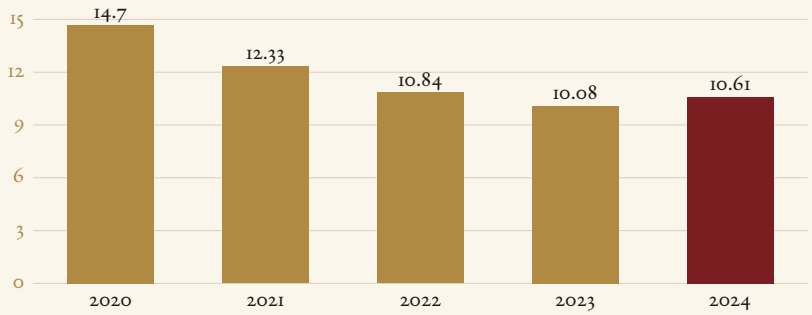
Not to scale. The table gives one figure, the German church tax of €6.75bn in 2025; the other flows are shown without amounts.

Sources for this section: [4]

Giving is not framed as duty, gratitude, or solidarity.

Money in numbers

HILLSONG CHURCH LONDON: INCOME



£ million, years to 31 December — Public because the UK charity files accounts; income fell by about a third from 2020 to 2023. [20]

- **Hillsong Church London, 2024:** Donations made up £9.26m of its £10.61m income [20].

- **Kingsway International Christian Centre (UK), year to March 2025:** Income was £6.47m, of which £5.96m came from donations, and spending was £6.76m [21].
- **PTL "lifetime partnerships":** They were the scheme behind Jim Bakker's 1989 conviction on 24 counts of fraud and conspiracy [3].
- **Yoido Full Gospel Church:** A court found a ₩13.15 billion loss to the church in the breach-of-trust case against its founder [5].

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

This is the page where giving is openly described as an investment: a seed that produces a harvest. The money section points out the problem with that promise: it cannot be proven wrong. If the harvest comes, the seed worked. If it doesn't, the seed was too small or your faith too weak. If you are giving in the hope of a return, ask what would count as evidence that the promise had failed. If nothing could, then you are not making an investment.

10 Genealogy

BEFORE YOU READ

Rules with a history. Each card asks the same three questions: what was this rule originally for, has that reason expired, and who benefits from the rule continuing anyway?

SEED FAITH

Origin. It was systematized in the mid-twentieth-century healing-revival economy and spread through Word of Faith teaching drawn from E. W. Kenyon and Kenneth Hagin.

What it was for. It let poor congregations with no endowment, no denominational subsidy, and no bank access fund tent meetings and radio time out of pocket. Sacrificial giving built something the givers could stand inside the following week.

Why that reason expired. The ministries are no longer poor and the giver can no longer see what was built. When the founder's assets are private and the congregation's returns are unverifiable, sacrificial giving stops being solidarity and becomes a transfer.

Who benefits now. Ministry owners and their families benefit. The instrument is at its most aggressive in the poorest congregations, because unfalsifiable promises are most persuasive where the need is greatest.

CHARISMATIC AUTHORITY — THE ANOINTED MAN OF GOD

Origin. It comes from Azusa Street's founding conviction that the Spirit falls on anyone, bypassing seminary, ordination, and racial exclusion.

What it was for. It was a genuine liberation. It put authority in the hands of a Black preacher in 1906 America and of women who could preach when no denomination would ordain them.

Why that reason expired. The same principle that bypasses gatekeeping also bypasses accountability. Authority resting on demonstrated anointing cannot be reviewed, because there is no body competent to review an anointing and no test the anointed will accept.

Who benefits now. Whoever currently holds the platform benefits. The movement's most radical inheritance is now its most effective shield.

SPIRITUAL COVERING

Origin. It comes from the discipleship and shepherding teaching of the 1970s (a movement that placed each believer under a personal pastor's authority), formalised into personal submission relationships between pastors.

What it was for. It provided real pastoral mentorship in a movement with no seminaries, no credentialing, and thousands of young leaders with no one to ask.

Why that reason expired. It became a franchise structure without a franchise agreement. A junior pastor's legitimacy depends on a senior pastor's continued approval, which makes disagreement professionally fatal and is why the movement's middle tier is so quiet.

Who benefits now. Senior pastors benefit; their networks function as unregistered denominations with all of the authority and none of the constitutions.

THE PERPETUAL BUILDING FUND

Origin. It began with congregations genuinely constructing their first permanent buildings after decades in rented halls and storefronts.

What it was for. It paid for a visible, finite, shared project: you gave, the wall went up, you sat in it.

Why that reason expired. The campaign never ends and the asset is rarely the congregation's. Where title sits with the ministry or the founder's family, a lifetime of building-fund giving produces an estate the givers do not own.

Who benefits now. The entity on the title deed benefits. Ask who that is; the question is answerable in a public land registry in most countries.

Sources for this section: [16]

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

The expired-reason test works on any rule. Take one you follow or enforce, name what it was originally for, and ask whether that reason still exists. If it doesn't, and the rule survives anyway, the section's last question is the one that matters to you: who benefits from it continuing?

11 Reach

BEFORE YOU READ

How far the institution's authority extends into three private areas: what members may read and hear, how children are raised and schooled, and decisions about their own bodies.

Information

- The movement's largest ministries own their own media — networks, publishing houses, streaming platforms, magazines. In Brazil, the Universal Church's founder owns a national broadcast network. A member's information about their own church is frequently produced by their own church.
- Prophetic authority extends to information itself: a word from the pulpit that critics are sent by the enemy is not framed as an opinion about journalism but as revelation about journalists.
- The independent sector has no denominational press office, no archive, no minutes, and no institutional memory — so a founder's account of the founder's history is often the only account that exists.
- Testimony culture is genuinely powerful and structurally one-sided: the healed testify publicly, the unhealed leave quietly, and the resulting evidence base is a survivorship record presented as a success rate.

Children

- Children in prosperity congregations absorb the arithmetic early: the family's poverty is a spiritual diagnosis. That is a heavy thing to teach a child about their own parents.
- School fees are one of the most commonly documented casualties of seed-faith giving, which means the instrument's cost frequently lands

on a specific child's education. FORMER MEMBER TESTIMONY

- Deliverance practices (prayer to drive out evil spirits) applied to children — for disobedience, illness, or in the documented worst cases accusations of witchcraft — have produced criminal prosecutions and are the subject of standing UNICEF and NGO campaigns in several countries; UNICEF's study of children accused of witchcraft in Africa documents the practice [19]. GOVERNMENT REPORT
- Where the church runs the school and charges the fees, the same institution receiving the family's offerings decides the child's academic future.

Bodies

- The movement ordained women decades before most denominations would, and that is a real and under-credited fact: Aimee Semple McPherson founded a denomination in 1927.
- The megachurch empires have largely reversed the inheritance. Founders' wives hold enormous informal power and almost never the office; succession runs to sons.
- Deliverance ministry is disproportionately applied to women's bodies and behaviour — barrenness, singleness, illness, and 'spiritual husbands' (spirits believed to marry women in dreams and block marriage) are recurring themes in documented testimony. INVESTIGATIVE REPORT
- The vulnerability is structural rather than doctrinal: a private prophetic relationship between a powerful man and a person in crisis, with no chaperone requirement, no records, and no complaints process.

Sources for this section: 15 17 19

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

If you are a parent, this is the section about your children: what they may read, what they are taught about their bodies, and who else has a say in their schooling. Ask what your child would need to do at sixteen to hear the strongest case against what they were taught. Would they be allowed? Would they know it existed?

The movement's largest ministries own their own media — networks, publishing houses, streaming platforms, magazines.



12

The 30 techniques

How the thirty techniques are established here

2	10	18
DOCUMENTED	TAUGHT	CULTURAL

STAGE 1 Idealize	1 Love Bombing CULTURAL	2 Weaponized Generosity CULTURAL					
STAGE 2 Hook	3 Future Faking TAUGHT	4 Hoovering CULTURAL					
STAGE 3 Devalue	5 Devaluation TAUGHT	6 Gaslighting CULTURAL	7 Double Bind TAUGHT				
STAGE 4 Confuse	8 Intermittent Reinforcement CULTURAL	9 Moving the Goalposts TAUGHT	10 Strategic Ambiguity TAUGHT	11 Projection CULTURAL			
	12 DARVO TAUGHT	13 Normalization / Desensitization DOCUMENTED					
STAGE 5 Isolate	14 Isolation CULTURAL	15 Triangulation CULTURAL					

STAGE 6 Extract	16 Flying Monkeys CULTURAL	17 Smear Campaign CULTURAL	18 Silent Treatment / Stonewalling DOCUMENTED	19 Manufactured Consent CULTURAL
	20 Trauma Bonding TAUGHT	21 Learned Helplessness CULTURAL	22 Benevolent Control TAUGHT	23 Infantilization CULTURAL
	24 Identity Erosion CULTURAL	25 Spiritual Bypassing CULTURAL	26 Financial Control TAUGHT	
STAGE 7 Discard	27 Manufactured Crisis TAUGHT	28 Discard CULTURAL		
STAGE 8 Replace	29 Replacement CULTURAL	30 Plausible Deniability CULTURAL		

Thirty named techniques from domestic-abuse and social-psychology research, applied to institutions, in the eight stages of the cycle.

BEFORE YOU READ

A fixed checklist of thirty influence and control patterns from research on coercive control and social psychology, applied here to institutions rather than to individual people. Every entry carries an evidence grade. The grade matters more than the name of the technique: Codified or Documented means there is a paper trail; Contested means the claim is disputed.

Thirty named techniques from domestic-abuse and social-psychology research, applied to institutions, in the eight stages of the cycle. Each carries an evidence grade for this tradition.

Stage 1 · Idealize

You arrive with a need and are met with more warmth than you have had in years.

A welcome that is genuinely overwhelming — you are prayed over by name on your first visit, given a ride, fed, called sister or brother, and told the Lord brought you here for such a time as this. In the diaspora congregations it is also a landing pad: paperwork help, job leads, a room.

What it asks of you: The warmth was real and it was also the church's front door, run on the church's schedule, in the church's language, before a single figure about money was mentioned.

1 · Love Bombing

Overwhelming affection on arrival to create emotional dependency before terms are revealed.

How it shows here

- First-visit prayer by name, a ride home, a meal, and an immediate invitation into a department — in diaspora congregations often paperwork help, job leads, and a place to stay.
- You are told the Lord brought you here for such a time as this, before anyone has learned what you do for a living.
- Departments compete to absorb new arrivals; within a month your entire week has church in it.

The strongest defense. This is simply hospitality, and in communities the state has abandoned it is often the only hospitality available.

The counter. The hospitality is real and this codex has said so. The test is what was disclosed alongside it: were the giving expectations, the offering structure, and the ownership of the building mentioned before or after you were emotionally invested? Warmth is not the finding. The sequence is.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL Welcome intensity is congregational culture, not denominational policy, in a movement with no denominational structure to issue one.

2 · Weaponized Generosity

Giving help that installs unspoken obligation.

How it shows here

- Flood relief, school fees paid, funerals covered, rent bridged — genuine and enormous, and frequently better than the state provides.
- The help is recalled from the pulpit during offering appeals.
- Recipients of help are cited by name in fundraising for the ministry that helped them.

The strongest defense. We help people because that is what the gospel requires, and we do not apologise for telling the story.

The counter. Then apply the one test that separates charity from leverage: is the help ever withdrawn, or its withdrawal implied, when someone stops giving or starts asking? And is the help recorded in a ledger that anyone can read? Charity that survives both questions is charity.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL Charitable giving is genuine and its deployment in appeals is a recorded pattern rather than a written rule.

Stage 2 · Hook

You are given a future that cannot be verified, and a rope for whenever you drift toward the door.

A prophetic word spoken over you about your future — a business, a husband, a breakthrough this year — and a first invitation to sow into it. The word cannot be checked and the sowing is immediate; that order is not accidental.

What it asks of you: You were handed an unverifiable future and asked to pay toward it in the same service. Note which one had a deadline.

3 · Future Faking

Promising a future that keeps you invested but never has to arrive.

How it shows here

- A specific prophetic word: this year is your year, the business will open, the child will come, the visa will be granted.
- Breakthrough is always one season, one seed, or one conference away.
- Prophecies that miss are not counted, revisited, or corrected — and there is no register of them.

The strongest defense. We speak what the Lord gives us, and God's timing is not ours.

The counter. Then keep the register. Write the prophecies down with dates and check them in a year — the practice scripture itself prescribes for testing a prophet. A prophetic office that will not keep score is not exercising faith; it is avoiding measurement.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> TAUGHT Prophetic promise of specific outcomes is preached, recorded, and sold by the ministries themselves.

4 · Hoovering

Pulling someone back after they've started to leave, through guilt, love, or fear.

How it shows here

- Members who drift are called back with a new word, a special service, or the promise that their breakthrough was scheduled for this month.
- Anniversary services and 'covenant month' campaigns time the retrieval to the calendar.
- The pastor's personal call to a lapsing giver arrives faster than to a lapsing attender.

The strongest defense. Pastoral follow-up is care, not pressure.

The counter. Check who gets followed up and how fast. If the outreach correlates with giving rather than with need, it is a collections process wearing pastoral language.

EVIDENCE GRADE

CULTURAL Retrieval practice varies by ministry and is not codified anywhere.

Stage 3 · Devalue

You are taught that you are broken, that your perception is unreliable, and that both exits from the trap lead back inside.

The delay is diagnosed: there is a spirit of poverty, a generational curse, an unbroken covenant, or a seed you held back. Your circumstances become evidence about your faith rather than about your circumstances.

What it asks of you: Your material situation was reframed as a spiritual verdict on you. That reframing has a beneficiary, and it is not you.

5 · Devaluation

Reducing your sense of worth so you become dependent on the institution for identity.

How it shows here

- Poverty, illness, singleness, and childlessness are diagnosed as spiritual conditions — a spirit of poverty, a generational curse, an unbroken covenant.

- The diagnosis is delivered publicly from the pulpit and privately in prophetic counselling.
- The remedy is always an act performed through the ministry.

The strongest defense. We take spiritual realities seriously; that is what a spirit-filled church is.

The counter. Notice the closed circuit: the person who diagnoses the condition also sells the cure and also defines whether the cure worked. In any other sector that arrangement is regulated. Ask what outcome would count as the remedy having failed.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> TAUGHT Spiritual diagnosis of poverty and illness is explicit pulpit teaching on published recordings.

6 · Gaslighting

Making you doubt your own experience so you trust the institution's interpretation instead.

How it shows here

- A member points out that the promised harvest did not come and is told they misheard the word, or that it was conditional, or that it has already arrived in a form they failed to recognise.
- Recordings of appeals exist and are still described as misrepresentation when quoted back.
- Members are told the church never taught what the church's own broadcasts show it teaching.

The strongest defense. Words spoken in a service are being taken out of context by people with an agenda.

The counter. The context is the recording, and the ministry sells it. Play the full appeal. If the full version is worse than the excerpt, the objection was never about context.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL Denial of recorded appeals is a documented pattern in testimony rather than a written policy.

7 · Double Bind

A trap where both options lead to compliance. No exit serves you.

How it shows here

- Give beyond your means and you are commended for faith; give within them and you are quietly marked as holding back.
- Question the teaching and you demonstrate the unbelief the teaching predicted.
- Accept the diagnosis and you accept the cure; reject it and you confirm it.

The strongest defense. Nobody is forced to give anything.

The counter. Force is not the mechanism and never was. The mechanism is that both available answers are read as evidence for the same conclusion. Ask what a person could do that would be read as legitimate caution rather than as unbelief. If there is no such action, that is the double bind, named.

EVIDENCE GRADE

TAUGHT The giving/faith bind is stated openly in seed-faith teaching.

Stage 4 · Confuse

The rewards become unpredictable, the standard keeps moving, the answers stop meaning anything, and the accusation gets turned around.

Prophecies that half-land are celebrated and the misses are not counted. The teaching moves — the harvest is coming, the harvest is delayed, the harvest was the peace you feel. Ask a direct question about money and receive an answer about faith.

What it asks of you: You cannot audit a promise that redefines its own success condition after the fact. That is not a failure of your understanding; it is a property of the promise.

8 · Intermittent Reinforcement

Unpredictable reward that creates addictive emotional dependency.

How it shows here

- One prophecy lands spectacularly among dozens that do not, and the one is retold for years.

- Healing testimonies are broadcast; the unhealed are not followed up.
- Occasional dramatic answered prayer sustains giving through long unrewarded stretches.

The strongest defense. We testify to what God has done. Should we hide His works?

The counter. Publish the denominator. Testimony without a denominator is a survivorship record presented as a success rate — and the ministry knows the denominator, because it collects the prayer requests.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL Selective testimony without follow-up is standard broadcast practice across the sector, not a written rule or a taught doctrine.

9 · Moving the Goalposts

The standard of success keeps shifting so you can never arrive.

How it shows here

- The seed was too small; then the timing was wrong; then the harvest was spiritual rather than material.
- Each unmet promise generates a new condition that was never stated in advance.
- The standard for 'enough faith' is set after the outcome is known.

The strongest defense. Spiritual principles are not vending machines.

The counter. Agreed — which is precisely why they should not be preached as ones. The appeal promised a return. If the promise is not a promise, the appeal should stop making it, and the recordings should be withdrawn.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> TAUGHT Post-hoc conditions on the promise are explicit in the teaching itself.

10 · Strategic Ambiguity

Language that sounds profound but means nothing specific — functioning as a shutdown to real questions.

How it shows here

- 'Sow a significant seed' — significant is never defined, so members compete upward.
- 'God is speaking about a specific number' announced without saying whose number or on what basis.
- Partnership tiers imply access without specifying what access.

The strongest defense. We do not dictate amounts; that is between the giver and God.

The counter. Then remove the tiers and stop calling givers forward by amount. Ambiguity that reliably resolves upward is not humility about amounts; it is a pricing strategy.

EVIDENCE GRADE

TAUGHT Undefined 'significant seed' language is preached and recorded.

11 · Projection

Accusing the outside world of the exact thing the institution practices.

How it shows here

- Members who ask about finances are described as having a spirit of greed or a poverty mentality.
- Critics are said to be motivated by money, by ministries whose founders own jets.
- Those who leave are said to have loved money more than God.

The strongest defense. We address the spiritual roots of what people bring.

The counter. Note the direction of the accusation. The person asking to see the accounts is charged with the sin of the person refusing to show them. Ask who in this exchange has the financial interest.

EVIDENCE GRADE

CULTURAL Attribution of greed to questioners is a pattern in testimony.

12 · DARVO

Deny the wrongdoing. Attack the person who raised it. Reverse victim and offender.

How it shows here

- A journalist or commission publishes findings; the ministry becomes the persecuted party and the members become the aggrieved defenders.
- A member harmed by the giving teaching is recast as an attacker of the man of God.
- 'Touch not mine anointed' (Psalm 105:15, preached as a ban on criticising leaders) is preached in the same service as the denial.

The strongest defense. The church is under genuine attack in many places, and that is not imaginary.

The counter. It is not imaginary, and this codex records real persecution where it exists. But a South African state human-rights commission, a US Senate committee, and a Korean criminal court and Brazilian prosecutors are not persecution. Answer the finding, not the messenger.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> TAUGHT 'Touch not mine anointed' and persecution framing are explicit pulpit teaching.

13 · Normalization / Desensitization

Practices that would seem extreme to an outsider feel normal to insiders because they were installed before critical evaluation developed.

How it shows here

- Closing the doors during the offering; calling givers forward by amount; separate lines for tiers of giving.
- First-fruits appeals for a full month's income delivered as routine January practice.
- Priced anointed products sold at the back of the auditorium as ordinary retail.

The strongest defense. Every church takes an offering.

The counter. Every church does. Not every church closes the doors, calls the amounts aloud, or sells oil. The sale of oil and water was documented by a state commission [7], and the door-closing and calling givers by amount appear in former-member testimony (section 14) — and the reason each felt normal is that it arrived one step at a time.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> **DOCUMENTED** The sale of anointed products is documented in a state human-rights commission's report [7]. Door-closing during offerings and calling givers by amount are recorded in former-member testimony, not in any written rule. *(sourced)*

Stage 5 · Isolate

Your world narrows until every voice you hear is inside the system, and everything you came for now runs through a middleman.

Old friends are 'not going where you're going.' Family who question the giving are operating in unbelief. Your covering must approve major decisions. Where the church is also the visa sponsor, the employer, and the entire diaspora network, the narrowing is structural rather than instructed.

What it asks of you: The people most likely to notice the arithmetic have been sorted out of your life, one plausible sentence at a time.

14 · Isolation

Shrinking your world until the only voices you hear are inside the system.

How it shows here

- Friends outside are 'not going where you're going'; family who question the giving are in unbelief.
- Major life decisions require the covering's approval.

- In diaspora congregations the church is the housing network, the job network, the legal advice, and the entire social world.

The strongest defense. We encourage godly counsel and warn against negative influences.

The counter. The tell is who gets filtered. If the people removed from your life are consistently the ones who noticed the arithmetic, that is not spiritual protection — it is protection of the arithmetic.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL Separation from questioning family and friends is taught informally and varies by ministry.

15 · Triangulation

Inserting intermediaries between you and the thing you came for, so the institution is always in the middle.

How it shows here

- Public comparison of givers: whoever sows at this level, come forward.
- Testimonies deployed to shame the room's giving.
- Pastors compared against one another by growth and offering totals within a covering network.

The strongest defense. We celebrate faith and provoke one another to good works.

The counter. Celebration does not require the amounts to be audible. Ask why the comparison is always financial and always public, and who benefits from a room that is competing.

EVIDENCE GRADE

CULTURAL Public comparison of givers by amount is an observable practice that varies by ministry, not a written rule.

Stage 6 · Extract

Now the harvest: your labor, your money, your identity, your silence, your children's schooling, your capacity to trust yourself.

Seed offerings, first fruits, prophetic offerings, building funds, partnership tiers, conference fees, and — in the documented worst cases — priced anointed oil and water. Plus unpaid labour: ushering, choir, media, cleaning, and full-time volunteering for the ministry that owns the building.

What it asks of you: Every mechanism in this stage is preached out loud and recorded by the ministry itself. This is the least deniable extraction in the codex.

16 · Flying Monkeys

The community enforces the institution's norms without being asked — mobilized by culture, not memos.

How it shows here

- Members enforce the giving culture on one another — the row notices who did not go forward.
- Small-group leaders report on members' participation.
- Family members pressure relatives to sow for the family's breakthrough.

The strongest defense. That is community accountability, not enforcement.

The counter. Accountability runs toward the powerful. This runs downward and financial. Ask when a small-group leader last reported upward about the ministry's conduct rather than a member's giving.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL Peer enforcement of giving culture is a pattern rather than a policy.

17 · Smear Campaign

Rewriting your character after departure to protect the institution from the implications of your leaving.

How it shows here

- Departing members are named from the pulpit as offended, backslidden (fallen away from faith), or under attack.
- Former staff are characterised to the congregation without a right of reply.
- Critics are described as agents of the enemy in services that are recorded and sold.

The strongest defense. We warn the flock about genuine spiritual danger.

The counter. Then give the named person a right of reply in the same room, and put it on the same recording. A warning that only ever runs one way, with no reply, is a reputation sanction with a theological label.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL Pulpit naming of departed members is recorded in testimony and in broadcasts.

18 · Silent Treatment / Stonewalling

Refusing to engage with legitimate questions in order to maintain control.

How it shows here

- Direct questions about accounts, ownership, or compensation are met with silence, deflection, or a change of topic.
- Requests for written answers go unanswered indefinitely.
- The Senate Finance Committee inquiry itself closed without full information from several ministries.

The strongest defense. Financial matters are handled by the board and are not congregational business.

The counter. Then the board should publish, as most registered charities in most jurisdictions must. Note that a US Senate committee asked and did not get full answers from four of the six ministries [31] — which tells you the silence is a policy, not an oversight.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> **DOCUMENTED** Non-disclosure to a US Senate committee is documented in the committee's published review of the six ministries [4] [31]. *(sourced)*

19 · Manufactured Consent

Creating the appearance of choice when the conditions of choice were shaped before you could evaluate them.

How it shows here

- Amens and applause during appeals are cued and choreographed.
- 'The whole church is in agreement about this building' announced without any vote having occurred.
- Congregational consent is performed publicly and never recorded.

The strongest defense. Our people are genuinely enthusiastic; you can hear it.

The counter. Enthusiasm is real. Consent is a different thing and leaves minutes. Ask when the congregation last voted on anything binding, and where the record is.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL Performed consent without votes is a structural feature of founder-owned ministries.

20 · Trauma Bonding

The wound and the bandage come from the same hand.

How it shows here

- The ministry that diagnoses your spiritual condition is the ministry that relieves it — fear and comfort from one hand, weekly.

- Crisis prayer at the moment of greatest distress, followed by an appeal.
- Deliverance sessions that produce intense distress followed by intense relief inside the same room.

The strongest defense. We minister to people in real pain and we see real deliverance.

The counter. The relief is real, which is exactly what makes the cycle strong. The question is structural: does the same party benefit from both the fear and the relief? Where it does, the bond formed is not evidence that the diagnosis was true.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> TAUGHT Diagnosis-and-relief from one source is the explicit structure of deliverance ministry.

21 · Learned Helplessness

Teaching you that your own judgment is unreliable until you stop trusting it entirely.

How it shows here

- After repeated unrewarded giving, members conclude the fault is permanently theirs.
- Members stop making financial decisions without prophetic clearance.
- The belief settles that nothing works outside the covering.

The strongest defense. We teach dependence on God, not on us.

The counter. Then the dependence should not route through a person. Ask what decision a mature member is expected to make without clearance. If the honest answer is none, the teaching is not about God.

EVIDENCE GRADE

CULTURAL Learned dependence emerges from practice rather than instruction.

22 · Benevolent Control

Control wrapped in the language of care, so that resisting the control feels like rejecting the love.

How it shows here

- Prophetic direction over marriage, business, migration, and medical decisions, framed entirely as care.
- 'I am your spiritual father' used to settle disagreements a father would not be entitled to settle.
- Members' major decisions routed through a man with a financial interest in their compliance.

The strongest defense. A shepherd cares for the whole life of the sheep.

The counter. Care that cannot be declined without penalty is not care. Ask what happens socially and financially to the member who politely says no to the direction. That answer is the whole measurement.

EVIDENCE GRADE

TAUGHT Spiritual fatherhood and covering are taught explicitly across the sector.

23 · Infantilization

Positioning the adult believer as permanently childlike and dependent on institutional authority.

How it shows here

- Adult members addressed as spiritual children indefinitely, with no path to adult standing.
- 'You are not mature enough to understand the ministry's finances.'
- Long-serving members still requiring permission for ordinary decisions.

The strongest defense. Spiritual maturity genuinely takes time.

The counter. Then describe the finish line. A discipleship structure with no graduation is not developmental; it is permanent minority status, and it is administratively convenient.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL Indefinite spiritual minority status is a pattern in covering relationships.

24 · Identity Erosion

Gradually replacing your identity with a role the institution provides, until you can't separate who you are from where you belong.

How it shows here

- Members are renamed, reassigned, and rebuilt around ministry roles until the church calendar is the identity.
- Testimony scripts standardise how members narrate their own lives.
- Pre-church history is reframed wholesale as bondage.

The strongest defense. Conversion genuinely changes people, and we do not apologise for that.

The counter. It does. The test is whether anything survives it that the institution does not control — friendships, opinions, savings, a Saturday. If nothing does, that is not transformation; it is absorption.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL Identity absorption follows from total schedule capture rather than doctrine.

25 · Spiritual Bypassing

Using spiritual language to avoid engaging with real pain, real questions, and real accountability.

How it shows here

- Grief, depression, and abuse are answered with deliverance rather than with medicine, therapy, or the police.
- 'Let go and let God' applied to a woman describing violence at home.
- Medical treatment framed as a failure to stand in faith.

The strongest defense. Prayer and medicine are not opposed; we pray for people who also see doctors.

The counter. Where that is genuinely true it is excellent, and this codex says so. The documented harm is the specific case where prayer replaces the doctor, the therapist, or the police. Ask what this church's written practice is when someone discloses violence — and whether it exists in writing at all.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL Deliverance offered in place of medical and psychological care is recorded in testimony; no ministry's written practice is cited for it.

26 · Financial Control

Extracting money through spiritual obligation while offering no transparency about where it goes.

How it shows here

- Seed faith, first fruits, prophetic offerings, perpetual building funds, partnership tiers, priced anointed products.
- Documented cases of members giving school fees, rent, and medical money as seed.
- Ownership of buildings, media, and businesses held by founders and their families.

The strongest defense. Giving is a spiritual discipline, freely chosen, and it built everything you see.

The counter. It built it, and the title deed says who owns it — a public document in most countries. Ask for the audited accounts and the land registry entry. Both requests are ordinary in any other organisation that asks the poor for money.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> TAUGHT Seed faith, first fruits and partnership tiers are taught in the ministries' own materials. The sale of anointed products is documented separately in a state commission's report [7]. *(sourced)*

Stage 7 · Discard

You become expensive — too many questions, too much independence — and the urgency ramps up until you are removed.

You run out of money, or you ask about the accounts, or the promised harvest is conspicuously absent. The attention withdraws quietly. Someone says you have a spirit of offence. Nobody calls.

What it asks of you: You did not become less valuable as a person. You became less useful as a giver, and the two were being measured with the same instrument.

27 · Manufactured Crisis

Creating urgency to suppress critical thinking and generate loyalty.

How it shows here

- Recurring emergencies with deadlines — the property will be lost, the broadcast will go dark, the window closes Sunday.
- Prophetic warnings of national or personal calamity, resolved by an offering.
- Crises announced from the pulpit and never reconciled afterwards.

The strongest defense. Ministry genuinely has real deadlines and real bills.

The counter. Real bills have invoices. Ask for the invoice, and ask what happened to last year's emergency — whether the building was in fact lost, and if not, where that money went.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> TAUGHT Deadline-driven emergency appeals are recorded and broadcast.

28 · Discard

Removing members who become too costly — too many questions, too much independence, too visible a contradiction.

How it shows here

- Members who run out of money stop being contacted.
- Staff who question finances are dismissed with confidentiality agreements.
- Those who ask for the accounts are described as having a spirit of offence and quietly dropped.

The strongest defense. People leave churches for all sorts of personal reasons.

The counter. Then the pattern should be random with respect to money and questions. It is not. Ask whether anyone has ever been dropped for asking a question that turned out to be correct.

EVIDENCE GRADE

CULTURAL Quiet withdrawal of attention from non-givers is a testimony pattern.

Stage 8 · Replace

Your seat is filled before the door shuts, and nobody is responsible for any of it because the authority was attributed to God.

New converts fill the row within a month. Your testimony stays on the website. Nobody is responsible for your absence because nobody was formally responsible for your presence.

What it asks of you: There was never a membership roll to leave. That absence is not informality; it is the deniability, built in.

29 · Replacement

Your seat is filled before the door closes behind you.

How it shows here

- New converts fill the row within weeks; the departed member's testimony stays on the website.
- Volunteer roles refill immediately; nobody announces the departure.

- The absence is never named from the front.

The strongest defense. Churches are living bodies; people come and go.

The counter. They do. The tell is that nobody is responsible for a departure — because nobody was formally responsible for the arrival. Ask whether there is a membership roll at all.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL Replacement without acknowledgement follows from the absence of membership rolls.

30 · Plausible Deniability

The institution is never responsible, because the authority is attributed to God — who isn't available for cross-examination.

How it shows here

- No membership roll, no minutes, no constitution, no register of prophecies, no published accounts.
- Prophetic direction given privately and deniable as personal opinion.
- 'Voluntary' framing on every mechanism, in an environment where refusal has social and spiritual cost.

The strongest defense. We are a church, not a corporation, and we operate on trust.

The counter. Trust is not the opposite of records; it is what records make possible. This tradition's deniability is unusually low on the money teaching, because the ministries record and sell the appeals themselves — and unusually high on everything conducted privately. Both facts belong in the same sentence.

EVIDENCE GRADE

CULTURAL The absence of rolls, minutes and constitutions in much of the independent sector is a structural feature of founder-owned ministries, not a written rule.

Sources for this section: 4 7 31

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Count grades, not names. A long list of Contested entries says something very different from a short list of Codified ones. A bias to watch for in yourself: people rate the same pressure as "normal" when their own group applies it and as "manipulation" when another group does. Before you judge an entry, try imagining it applied by a group you distrust. Does it look different?

13

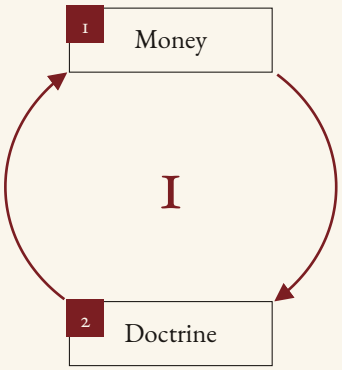
The loops

BEFORE YOU READ

How the techniques connect into cycles. A single practice can look harmless on its own. The loops show how one step feeds the next, so that, for example, a newcomer's welcome turns into an obligation.

> The seven loops below show how the practices connect, so that each step makes the next one easier and the last step feeds the first. The loops are analysis built from findings recorded elsewhere on this page PATTERN OBSERVED; each step names the section or technique where its fact is recorded.

1 · Money to Doctrine to Money



Growth funds broadcast capacity, and broadcast capacity produces more growth. In Brazil, where the Universal Church's founder owns a national television network, the loop is visible.

How it runs.

1. The ministry teaches that money given to it is a seed that produces a harvest (sections 1 and 9).
2. The seed offering is taken during the sermon that teaches seed offerings, and the teaching is recorded and broadcast (section 9; technique 3).
3. Offerings, first fruits, building funds and partnership tiers flow to a ministry that publishes no accounts (section 9; technique 26).

4. The money buys media. The largest ministries own networks, publishing houses and streaming platforms, and in Brazil the Universal Church's founder, Edir Macedo, owns Record TV (sections 7 and 11).

5. The broadcasts carry the appeal to a larger audience, and the giving grows (sections 9 and 11).

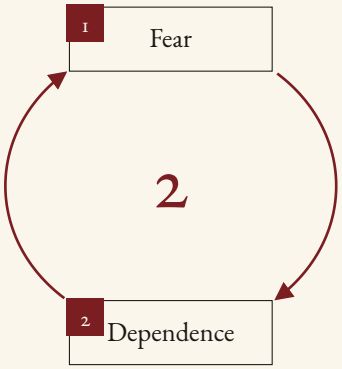
Techniques that feed it. 3 · Future Faking, 10 · Strategic Ambiguity, 26 · Financial Control, 27 · Manufactured Crisis.

Why it closes. The doctrine and the collection are the same act. The sermon that teaches seed faith ends in the seed offering, and the offering pays for the platform that preaches the next sermon. A member's information about the church is frequently produced by the church (section 11), so the loop also controls what the giver hears about it.

Where it could be broken, and by whom. It weakens wherever the money becomes visible. Churches registered as charities in the United Kingdom file public accounts, as Hillsong Church London does (section 9), and section 20 names audited accounts, including founder compensation and title deeds, as the change that would revise this page's central financial findings. A member can ask for the accounts before giving (section 23). This paragraph is analysis, not a documented finding.

An example from this page. Section 14 records that the offering appeal, the partnership tiers and the seed-faith teaching are recorded, broadcast and archived by the ministries themselves.

2 · Fear to Dependence to Fear



Every unanswered prayer is absorbed as insufficient seed or insufficient faith, so the teaching's failures are converted into evidence for more of the teaching.

How it runs.

1. Poverty, illness, singleness and childlessness are diagnosed as spiritual conditions: a spirit of poverty, a generational curse, an unbroken covenant (technique 5).
2. The remedy is always an act performed through the ministry, a seed offering or a deliverance session (techniques 5 and 20).
3. Relief comes sometimes. One prophecy lands among dozens that do not, and the one is retold for years (technique 8).
4. When the harvest does not come, the seed was too small, the timing was wrong or the faith was weak (section 9; technique 9).
5. The failure becomes a new diagnosis, and the member returns to the first step with less money (techniques 7 and 21).

Techniques that feed it. 5 · Devaluation, 8 · Intermittent Reinforcement, 9 · Moving the Goalposts, 20 · Trauma Bonding, 21 · Learned Helplessness.

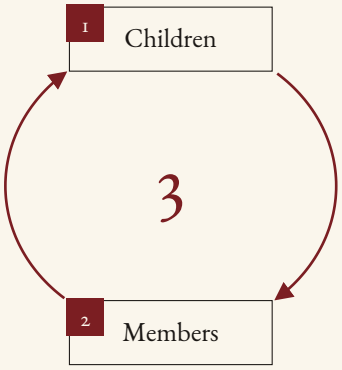
Why it closes. The same party diagnoses the condition, sells the cure and defines whether the cure worked (technique 5). No outcome counts against the promise (section 9), so every outcome returns the member to the ministry.

Where it could be broken, and by whom. It weakens where the promise is tested. Section 20 names a register of prophecies with dates and outcomes as a change that would revise this page, and technique 8 asks the ministry to publish how many prayer requests went unanswered. A member can ask what

evidence would show the teaching to be false (section 23, question 4). This paragraph is analysis, not a documented finding.

An example from this page. In section 2, Ngozi sows the money for Chidi's school fees on a prophet's promise, and the pastor then teaches that the harvest is delayed by the seeds held back.

3 · Children to Members to Children



Children in prosperity congregations learn early that the family's poverty is a spiritual diagnosis, their school fees become seed, and the church that receives the offerings often runs the school that decides their future.

How it runs.

1. Children absorb the arithmetic early: the family's poverty is taught as a spiritual diagnosis (section 11).
2. School fees are one of the most commonly documented casualties of seed-faith giving (sections 11 and 16).
3. Where the church runs the school and charges the fees, the institution receiving the family's offerings decides the child's academic future (section 11).
4. Deliverance is applied to children for disobedience or illness, and in the worst documented cases to children accused of witchcraft (section 11).
5. As adults, members are still addressed as spiritual children, with no path to adult standing (technique 23).

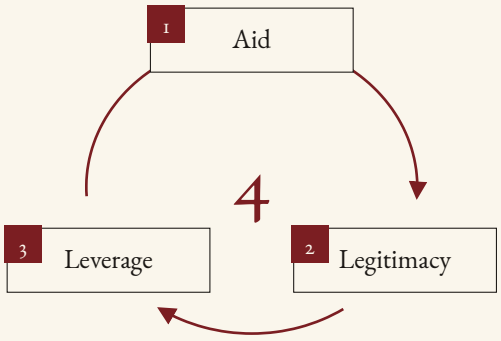
Techniques that feed it. 5 · Devaluation, 26 · Financial Control, 23 · Infantilization, 24 · Identity Erosion.

Why it closes. The same institution teaches the child what poverty means, takes the family's offerings and, where it runs the school, charges the fees. The child is formed inside the arithmetic before the child can test it, and the adult is still treated as a child (technique 23).

Where it could be broken, and by whom. It weakens where a family's giving is kept apart from its children's schooling, and where the school is not run by the church that receives the offerings. Deliverance applied to children has already produced criminal prosecutions in several countries (section 11), so the police and child-protection services are one route. This paragraph is analysis, not a documented finding.

An example from this page. In section 2, the forty thousand naira Ngozi sowed was the money for Chidi's school fees, and Chidi is at home this term.

4 · Aid to Legitimacy to Leverage to Aid



The relief work is genuine and enormous, and it is deployed to answer questions about the accounts that it does not actually answer. Congregations of millions are traded for political access, and political access is what keeps the financial exemption intact.

How it runs.

1. The relief work is enormous and often better than the state's: flood relief, food programmes, addiction recovery and schools (section 16; technique 2).
2. That record produces standing (section 16).
3. Standing produces political access. Politicians in several countries trade access and favourable regulation for the endorsement of congregations numbering in the millions (section 16).

4. Political access produces regulatory protection (section 16). The Christian Association of Nigeria opposed the 2020 power to suspend trustees, and churches in South Africa resisted the CRL Rights Commission's licensing proposal (section 8).

5. The accounts stay closed, the offerings continue, and the help is recalled from the pulpit during the next offering appeal (sections 9 and 16; technique 2).

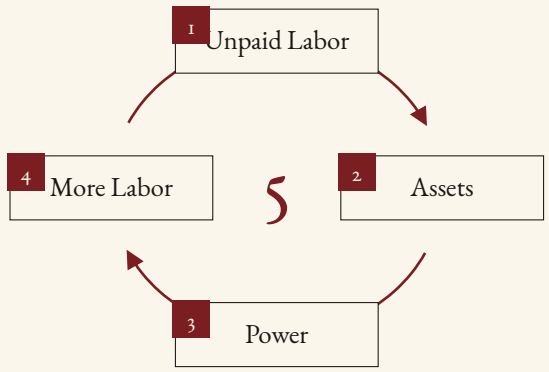
Techniques that feed it. 2 · Weaponized Generosity, 22 · Benevolent Control, 26 · Financial Control, 30 · Plausible Deniability.

Why it closes. Section 16 states the chain in order: the record produces standing, standing produces political access, political access produces regulatory protection, and regulatory protection keeps the accounts closed. The relief is real, which is why it works as an answer to a question it does not address.

Where it could be broken, and by whom. It weakens where regulators act regardless of standing. The UK Charity Commission appointed an interim manager at Kingsway International Christian Centre, and Australia's ACNC accepted compliance agreements from Hillsong (section 8). It also weakens where the help is recorded in a ledger anyone can read, the test technique 2 sets. This paragraph is analysis, not a documented finding.

An example from this page. In section 2, the church fed two hundred families in the flood, and Ngozi notices that this is the first thing she says when anyone questions the church, used to answer a question about money that it does not answer.

5 · Unpaid Labor to Assets to Power to More Labor



Members give unpaid labour and building-fund money, the buildings are titled to the ministry or the founder's family, and the asset base carries the next campaign.

How it runs.

1. Members give unpaid labour: ushering, choir, media, cleaning and full-time volunteering for the ministry that owns the building (section 12, stage 6).
2. They also give to the building fund, in special offerings above the tithe, often several times a year (sections 7 and 9).
3. The title sits with the ministry or the founder's family, rarely with the congregation (sections 9 and 10).
4. Ownership of the buildings, media and businesses stays with founders and their families, and increasingly passes to them by succession (sections 7 and 16).
5. The campaign never ends, and the next project is built with the same labour and the same giving (section 10).

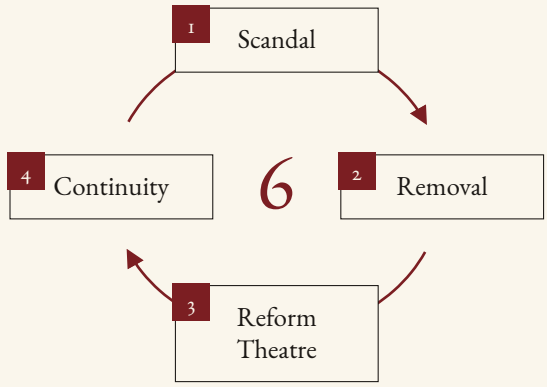
Techniques that feed it. 19 · Manufactured Consent, 24 · Identity Erosion, 26 · Financial Control, 29 · Replacement.

Why it closes. The people who give the labour and the money hold no office that controls what they built. The whole church is announced to be in agreement about the building without any vote (technique 19), and a lifetime of building-fund giving produces an estate the givers do not own (section 10).

Where it could be broken, and by whom. It weakens where the congregation owns its building on a title deed the members can read, the marker section 4 sets for a healthy church. Land registries are public in most countries, so any member can check whose name is on the deed (section 23, question 1). This paragraph is analysis, not a documented finding.

An example from this page. Section 15 records that a person who leaves after a decade of seed-faith giving leaves with the giving gone and no equity in the building.

6 · Scandal to Removal to Reform Theatre to Continuity



Junior pastors under covering cannot criticise senior ones without losing their platform, so the people best placed to reform the movement are the people least able to speak.

How it runs.

1. A scandal surfaces, almost always from outside: a prosecution, a Senate inquiry, a state commission, a criminal court or a newsroom (sections 5 and 14).
2. Where there is a denomination, it can act. The Assemblies of God defrocked Jim Bakker in 1987 and dismissed Jimmy Swaggart in 1988 (section 19).
3. In the independent sector no internal body acts. The founder of Yoido Full Gospel Church was convicted in 2014 and the church continued; T. B. Joshua died in 2021 with no institutional process ever having examined him (sections 5 and 20).
4. Where reform is announced, it is partial. Hillsong commissioned governance reviews and set board term limits, and the founder-era questions have not all been answered publicly (section 20).

5. The people best placed to press for more are junior pastors, and their legitimacy depends on a senior pastor's continued approval (sections 10 and 16).

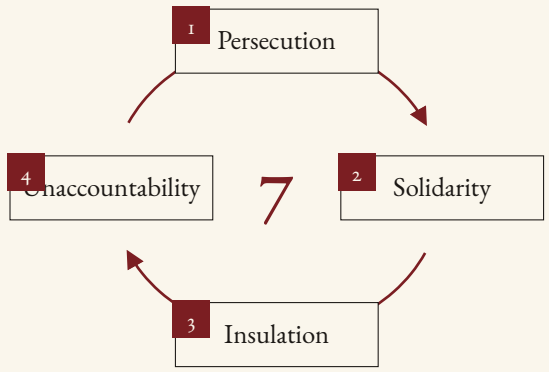
Techniques that feed it. 12 · DARVO, 18 · Silent Treatment / Stonewalling, 29 · Replacement, 30 · Plausible Deniability.

Why it closes. The independent sector has no apex and no removal mechanism, so there is no office that could be found to have failed (section 15). The middle tier that could force change is held in place by the covering relationship, which makes disagreement professionally fatal (section 10).

Where it could be broken, and by whom. Section 14 names the difference as a constitution: in the classical denominations an elected superintendent or presiding bishop can be voted out, and a credential can be revoked. Section 18 names the credentialing officer who could refuse to renew a credential while a safeguarding complaint is unresolved. This paragraph is analysis, not a documented finding.

An example from this page. Cho Yong-gi was convicted in 2014 of breach of trust causing Yoido Full Gospel Church a loss of ₩13.15 billion. He received a suspended sentence, and the church continued (sections 19 and 20).

7 · Persecution to Solidarity to Insulation to Unaccountability



Criticism is preached as demonic attack, which converts a Senate inquiry, a state commission, and a criminal court into confirmation that the ministry is doing something right.

How it runs.

1. The church is under genuine attack in many places, and this page records real persecution where it exists (technique 12).
2. A journalist or commission publishes findings, and the ministry becomes the persecuted party (technique 12).
3. 'Touch not mine anointed' is preached in the same service as the denial, and critics are described as agents of the enemy (techniques 12 and 17).
4. Members become the aggrieved defenders, and those who ask about the accounts are said to have a spirit of greed (techniques 11 and 12).
5. The finding goes unanswered, and the next one is received the same way (section 14).

Techniques that feed it. 12 · DARVO, 11 · Projection, 16 · Flying Monkeys, 17 · Smear Campaign.

Why it closes. The more outside bodies examine a ministry, the more the examination can be read as proof of attack. The sources section 14 lists become confirmation rather than evidence.

Where it could be broken, and by whom. It weakens when members read the findings as a public record rather than an attack; section 3 notes that the material comes from state bodies and from the ministries' own recorded appeals. It also weakens when the movement's own pastors, whom section 3 calls the most credible people to fix it, answer the finding rather than the messenger. This paragraph is analysis, not a documented finding.

An example from this page. Section 14 sets the pulpit line "These are attacks from the enemy" beside the sources this page relies on: a US Senate committee, a South African state human-rights commission, a Korean criminal court and Brazilian prosecutors, and the ministries' own broadcasts.

Sources for this section: [17]

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

The loops explain why good people stay in arrangements they would never sign up for from scratch. The more you have already put in, the harder it is to walk away. Researchers call this the sunk-cost effect (Arkes & Blumer, 1985), and it works on time, money and relationships alike. Ask yourself: if you were starting today, knowing what you know, would you join?

The seven loops below show how the practices connect, so that each step makes the next one easier and the last step feeds the first.

14 Say versus do

BEFORE YOU READ

Direct, checkable comparisons: a public statement on one side, the documented record on the other, and the receipt that links them. This is the most falsifiable section on the page, because each row either matches its source or it doesn't.

What they say, what the record shows

THEY SAY	THE RECORD SHOWS	RECEIPT
We do not preach prosperity. We preach the whole counsel of God.	The offering appeal, the partnership tiers, and the seed-faith teaching are recorded, broadcast, and archived by the ministry itself.	LEADERSHIP STATEMENT
Giving is entirely voluntary.	Documented practice includes calling givers forward by amount, closing doors during offerings, and teaching that withheld seed is the cause of a delayed harvest.	FORMER MEMBER TESTIMONY

We are fully transparent with our finances.	Six major US media ministries were asked by a Senate committee for basic financial information; the inquiry closed in 2011 without full disclosure and without penalties.	GOVERNMENT REPORT
The man of God is not accountable to man.	It is stated openly from pulpits, and it is the most honest sentence in this section, because it names the accountability structure exactly.	LEADERSHIP STATEMENT
These are attacks from the enemy.	The sources include a US Senate committee, a South African state human-rights commission, a Korean criminal court and Brazilian prosecutors, and the ministries' own broadcasts.	COURT RECORD / GOVERNMENT REPORT

Accountability or theatre?

Last time the chair ran. It has run repeatedly, and almost always from outside: the PTL prosecution, the Senate inquiry, the CRL report, the Seoul breach-of-trust conviction, the Hillsong disclosures. In the independent sector, no internal body has ever run it on a founder.

Who holds the chair now. Nobody holds it in most of the movement. In the classical denominations an elected superintendent or presiding bishop holds it and can genuinely be voted out, which is why this page treats those bodies separately.

Prediction. The next scandal in the independent sector will be handled the way the last ones were: a statement about attack from the enemy, no external review, and no change of ownership. In the classical denominations, expect a credential revocation and a published process — the difference between the two is a constitution.

In the independent sector, no internal body has ever run it on a founder.

Words used here

TERM	WHAT IT MEANS INSIDE	WHAT IT DOES	SAID PLAINLY
Seed / sowing / first fruits	It means money given in faith, in expectation of a return.	It converts a transfer into an investment with a promised yield. The teaching is unfalsifiable by design — a delayed harvest means the seed was too small.	'Give money you do not have; if nothing happens, that is about your faith.'
Spiritual father / covering	It means the senior pastor to whom a junior pastor submits.	It is the movement's actual org chart, present in no constitution. It makes a junior pastor's entire livelihood contingent on never disagreeing.	'Your career depends on one man's continued approval and there is nothing in writing.'

A word for you	It means a personal prophecy about your future.	It delivers an unverifiable claim about your life, frequently followed in the same service by an appeal. Note which of the two carries a deadline.	'Here is a promise you cannot check. The invoice is immediate.'
Spirit of poverty	It means a malign spiritual cause for material hardship.	It diagnoses a person's economic situation as a spiritual verdict on them, and the remedy is always purchased through the ministry.	'You are poor for spiritual reasons and I sell the cure.'
Man of God	It means the founder or senior leader.	It places a person in a category that makes ordinary questions feel profane. Frequently paired with an open statement that he is accountable to God rather than to anyone present.	'He is not answerable to you.'

Sources for this section: [4] [8]

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Test one row yourself. Pick a "they say" line you have actually heard said in person, then read the receipt. If the record matches the statement, this page is wrong about that row, and you should tell us. If it doesn't, what does it mean that you had never seen the receipt?

15 Cost & cover

BEFORE YOU READ

What leaving actually costs here, in family, work, housing, money and legal status, and how each of those costs is officially denied. Where the cost is low, the page says so plainly.

What leaving costs

- Leaving is legally free and socially expensive, and the expense is concentrated in exactly the places where the movement is strongest: immigrant communities, diaspora congregations, and towns where the church is also the school, the clinic, the credit network, and the employer.
- The specific exit tax here is financial and irreversible. A person who leaves after a decade of seed-faith giving leaves with the giving gone, no equity in the building, and frequently no savings — and the teaching that explained the giving also explains the loss as their own failure of faith.
- The most common documented exit is not a departure but a slow, unannounced fade — because there is no membership roll to resign from and no one to tell.

The ledger of exit

COST	DOCUMENTED?	DETAIL	THE OFFICIAL DENIAL
Financial position	Yes	Years of seed, first fruits, and building-fund giving leave the giver with no equity, no refund, and no accounting.	"Giving was always voluntary and between the giver and God."
Community and network	Yes	In diaspora and immigrant congregations the church is the entire social and professional network	"Nobody is stopping anyone from leaving."
Employment	Sometimes	Church-owned businesses, schools, and media employ members; leaving the church can mean leaving the payroll	"Employment decisions are separate from spiritual matters."
Spiritual standing	Yes	Members are taught that leaving the covering removes protection and invites calamity.	"We simply teach biblical accountability."
Family	Sometimes	The cost falls where a spouse or parent remains and the leaver is framed as backslidden or under attack.	"Families handle these matters privately."
Reputation	Yes	Leavers are named from the pulpit, and critics are framed as agents of the enemy.	"We pray for those who leave."

How the cost is denied

CHANNEL	LEVEL	NOTE
Explicit policy	Low	The seed-faith teaching is preached, recorded, published, and sold by the ministries themselves. This is one of the least deniable financial mechanisms in the entire codex.
Financial control	Low	Partnership tiers, first-fruits appeals, and priced anointed products are documented by a state commission and by the ministries' own materials.
Leadership accountability	Very high	With no apex and no removal mechanism in the independent sector, there is no office that could be found to have failed.
Prophetic direction of members' lives	High	It is private, unrecorded, and deniable as personal counsel, which is exactly the pattern the codex flags.
Deliverance practice	High	It is framed as pastoral ministry, and harms surface only when they reach a criminal court.
Succession and ownership	Low	Land registries and corporate filings are public in most jurisdictions. Ownership is checkable, and that is the section's most useful sentence.
Media control	Low	Network ownership is a matter of public corporate record.
Treatment of critics	Medium	Pulpit denunciation is public; the professional consequences for junior pastors are not.

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Leaving is legally free and socially expensive, and the cost is highest where the movement is strongest: immigrant and diaspora communities, and towns where the church is also the school, the clinic and the lender.

A person who leaves after years of seed-faith giving leaves with nothing back. If you are a newcomer who found your first friends in a church like this, it is worth knowing now who else you could call.

16 The ledger

BEFORE YOU READ

The balance sheet. It shows who benefits, who pays, and what leverage flows back to the institution in return for what it gives.

Who benefits

- Founders and their families benefit. They own the ministries, the property, the media, and increasingly the succession.
- The conference and speaker circuit benefits. It is a genuine international economy in which platform access is traded between

ministries.

- The ministries' commercial arms benefit. The universities, broadcasters, and publishers are capitalised by offerings and owned privately.
- Politicians in several countries benefit, trading access and favourable regulation for the endorsement of congregations numbering in the millions.

Money out, leverage back

- The relief work is enormous and frequently better than the state's — flood relief, food programmes, addiction recovery, and schools that function where public ones do not. In parts of Africa and Latin America the church is the only institution that shows up.
- That record produces standing, standing produces political access, political access produces regulatory protection, and regulatory protection is what keeps the accounts closed. The chain is the point, and it runs in that order.
- The hospitals and schools are also revenue businesses charging fees to the same population that funds them through offerings.

Who pays

- The poorest members pay the most, because unfalsifiable financial promises extract the most where the need is greatest and the alternative

is nothing.

- Children pay when their school fees become seed.
- The sick pay where healing teaching delays medical treatment, the most severe documented harm on this page.
- Junior pastors pay. Their entire professional existence depends on a covering relationship they cannot afford to question.
- Honest Pentecostal pastors, the large majority, pay with reputations spent by the empires' conduct, and they are the movement's most credible reformers.

Sources for this section: [10]

They own the ministries, the property, the media, and increasingly the succession.

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Find yourself in this table. Are you among those who benefit, those who pay, or both? Most readers are both. The question is whether the exchange was ever explained to you in these terms, and whether you would agree to it if it had been.

17 Who gets hurt most

BEFORE YOU READ

Where the weight lands hardest, and what it compounds with: poverty, childhood, gender, a lack of civil alternatives. This is the human stakes stated plainly.

Where the weight lands

The costs in section 15 do not fall evenly. They fall hardest on people with the least room to refuse and the fewest places to go outside the church. The table names who carries the most, how, and what makes it worse. Two instances are on the record elsewhere on this page: school fees given as seed (section 11), and a Hillsong College student indecently assaulted by a staff member, who pleaded guilty in 2020 (section 19) [22].

WHO	HOW	WHAT IT COMPOUNDS WITH
Members in acute financial distress	They are targeted by the appeals with the highest promised return and the shortest promised timeline.	The harm compounds where there is no state safety net and the church is the only available lender.
The seriously ill	They receive faith-healing teaching that frames continued medication as unbelief.	It compounds where the church clinic and the church teaching share a building.
Women in prophetic counselling	They receive private, unrecorded direction over marriage, fertility, and money.	It compounds where the counsellor is the founder and there is no complaints process.
Junior and associate pastors	Their career, credential, and platform are all held by one senior man.	It compounds where the covering relationship is also the visa sponsor or the employer.
Diaspora and immigrant congregations	The church is the whole social, legal, and employment network in a new country.	It compounds where language and immigration status limit every alternative.

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

The table's first two rows are people at their most vulnerable. Members in financial crisis receive the appeals with the biggest promised returns and the shortest timelines. The seriously ill are taught that staying on medication is unbelief. If someone you love has stopped a treatment because of a prophecy, this section is about them. Would you know how to talk with them about it without pushing them further in?

18 The middle tiers

BEFORE YOU READ

The people in the middle: local clergy, teachers, officials and volunteers who apply rules they did not write. The section exists so that an institution is not collapsed into a monolith, and so that people in the middle can see their own position in it.

Most of a ministry's work is done below the founder, by people who see how the money moves without deciding where it goes. The table sets out what each group does, what it sees, what it is asked to do and what it could refuse. In the classical denominations the credentialing officers hold one of the few real levers: the Assemblies of God used its credentialing process against Jim Bakker in 1987 and Jimmy Swaggart in 1988 [12].

ROLE	DOES	SEES	IS ASKED TO	COULD REFUSE
Associate and junior pastors	Preach, run departments, and do the pastoral work the founder does not	The offering counts, the appeal scripts, and the gap between the promise and the congregation's actual finances	Take the seed offering and teach the sowing message in the founder's absence	Make an offering appeal that promises a specific financial return
Ushers and the counting team	Collect, count, and bank every offering	Exactly who gives what, and exactly where it goes afterwards	Close the doors during the offering, and call givers forward by amount	Close the doors, and keep the count off the record
Church administrators and finance officers	Run the accounts, the payroll, and the property register	Whose name is on the title deed	Keep ministry and personal accounts helpfully blurred	Sign anything that mixes the founder's estate with the congregation's giving
Media and production teams	Film, edit, and broadcast the services and the appeals	Which testimonies were cut, and which appeals were re-recorded	Edit the healing testimonies and drop the follow-ups	Publish a healing testimony without the follow-up they know exists
Denominational credentialing officers	Grant and renew ministerial credentials in the classical denominations	Which complaints came in and what was done with them	Let credential renewals pass quietly	Renew a credential where a safeguarding complaint is unresolved, one of the few real levers in this tradition

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

If you are a local leader, a teacher or a volunteer, this section is about you. It is not an accusation: most of the people who carry out a rule did not write it. But the middle tier is also where a rule is most often quietly softened, or quietly enforced. Which do you do, and what would happen to you if you chose differently?

19 Documented cases

BEFORE YOU READ

Named, dated, sourced incidents: court records, government inquiries, regulators' findings and on-the-record reporting. Read the outcome lines in particular. They show what actually changed, if anything.

Defrocked, then convicted (United States, 1987–1989)

WHEN: 1987–1989

WHAT: The Assemblies of God defrocked Jim Bakker in May 1987 [1]. In October 1989 he was convicted on all 24 counts of fraud and conspiracy over the PTL ministry's

"lifetime partnerships" [3]. The same denomination dismissed Jimmy Swaggart in 1988 [2].

RECORD: UPI, 6 May 1987 and 5 October 1989 [13]; *Christianity Today*, May 1988 [2]

OUTCOME: It is the rare case of a denomination's own removal mechanism being used, against two of its most famous preachers [12].

TACTICS: 26 · Financial Control, 3 · Future Faking

GRADE: DOCUMENTED

The world's largest congregation and its founder (South Korea, 2014)

WHEN: 2014

WHAT: Cho Yong-gi, founder of Yoido Full Gospel Church, was convicted of breach of trust and tax evasion causing the church a loss of ₩13.15 billion [5].

RECORD: *Korea Times*, 20 February 2014 [5]

OUTCOME: He was sentenced to three years' imprisonment, suspended for five, and fined ₩5 billion [5].

TACTICS: 26 · Financial Control, 30 · Plausible Deniability

GRADE: DOCUMENTED

The guesthouse collapse (Nigeria, 2014)

WHEN: 2014

WHAT: A guesthouse at T. B. Joshua's Synagogue Church of All Nations in Lagos collapsed on 12 September 2014, killing 116 people, most of them South African

pilgrims. A coroner found criminal negligence; Joshua was the only summoned witness who refused to testify [6].

RECORD: *Vanguard*, July 2015 [6]; BBC Africa Eye, *Disciples* (2024) [13]

OUTCOME: Joshua died in 2021; the BBC later documented abuse allegations from more than 30 former members [13].

TACTICS: 30 · Plausible Deniability, 18 · Silent Treatment / Stonewalling, 12 · DARVO

GRADE: DOCUMENTED

A regulator steps in at a church (United Kingdom, 2011–2016)

WHEN: 2011–2016

WHAT: A Charity Commission inquiry into Kingsway International Christian Centre, a London Pentecostal church, found mismanagement in the administration of the charity after £5 million of its funds was invested by a former trustee [9].

RECORD: Charity Commission inquiry report, 14 December 2016 [9]

OUTCOME: The Commission appointed an interim manager on 31 January 2014. The manager worked alongside the trustees until 14 May 2015, and the trustees kept running the church's religious activities [9].

TACTICS: 26 · Financial Control

GRADE: DOCUMENTED

A student's lawsuit (Australia, 2020 onward)

WHEN: 2020 onward

WHAT: Anna Crenshaw, a student at Hillsong College, was indecently assaulted by a Hillsong staff member, who pleaded guilty in January 2020; no conviction was recorded. She sued two Hillsong entities and the man in the NSW Supreme Court in 2022 [22].

RECORD: Hillsong Church statement, 3 May 2024 [22]; Roys Report, May 2024 [32]; The Other Cheek, 6 July 2024 [33]

OUTCOME: An in-principle settlement reached as the April 2024 trial opened fell through in May 2024, when she refused a non-disclosure clause [32]. Her claim against the staff member settled in July 2024. Her claim against Hillsong continued, with trial listed for February 2025; its final outcome is not recorded on this page [33]. Hillsong said it "has never disputed the assault occurred" [22].

TACTICS: 30 · Plausible Deniability

GRADE: DOCUMENTED

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

These are not hypotheticals. Five documented cases on this page rest on a named record. The most common reaction to documented cases is "that was them, not us." Before settling on that, read the outcome lines. Did anything change in the structure that allowed each case to happen, or did one person leave while the structure stayed?

20 Precedent

BEFORE YOU READ

What has already been broken once, somewhere, and what would count as real change here. It is a benchmark, not a prediction.

It has been broken before

WHAT	WHO	WHEN	WHAT IT COST
The PTL prosecution and conviction	Federal prosecutors, after journalists at the Charlotte Observer refused to drop the story	1987–1989	The reporting cost the paper years of hostility from readers who were also donors
The Senate Finance Committee inquiry into six media ministries	Senator Charles Grassley's staff, acting on donor complaints	2007–2011	It ended without penalties and without full disclosure — the honest lesson is that asking was not enough, and the exemption held
The CRL Rights Commission report on the commercialisation of religion	A South African state human-rights commission, after members brought evidence	2017	Its licensing recommendation was fought by churches across the spectrum and largely not implemented

The criminal conviction of a founding megachurch pastor for breach of trust in Seoul	South Korean prosecutors and courts	2014	The founder received a suspended sentence and the church continued; no internal body had acted in the decades before. COURT RECORD
Denominational safeguarding reforms and credential revocations in the classical Pentecostal denominations	Elected denominational bodies under member pressure	2000s onward	The reforms were slow, partial, and confined to the part of the movement that actually has a constitution, which is the finding.

Promises on the record

COMMITMENT	MADE	STATUS	NOTE
Hillsong — independent review and governance reform	2022 onward	Partial	Hillsong commissioned two governance reviews by a former ACNC assistant commissioner, set board term limits and a 40% women target, and entered compliance agreements with the ACNC in December 2024. The founder-era questions the reviews were asked to answer have not all been answered publicly.Sources: the Hillsong Australia board report of December 2022 [34] and Hillsong's statement on the ACNC [10].

What would change this page

Any of the major prosperity ministries publishing audited accounts including founder compensation and the title deeds of its properties — voluntarily, without a subpoena — would revise this page's central financial findings at the root. A register of prophecies with dates and outcomes would revise the rest.

Sources for this section: 3 5 10 34

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Some rows here record a change that has already happened somewhere; others name what would count as change here. When you are told something "can't change", it is fair to ask: can't, or won't? And who decided?

21 Voices from inside

BEFORE YOU READ

People from inside Pentecostal & Charismatic who raised the hard question publicly, often at real cost. They answer the objection that criticism only ever comes from outsiders.

- **Costi Hinn.** The nephew of the faith-healer Benny Hinn, he worked his uncle's crusades, left the prosperity movement, and wrote *God, Greed, and the (Prosperity) Gospel* (2019) [23] [24].
- **Anna Crenshaw.** She was a student at Hillsong College when a Hillsong staff member indecently assaulted her; he pleaded guilty in 2020. In 2022 she took Hillsong to court over its handling of the assault [22]. A settlement in principle in April 2024 fell through over a non-disclosure clause, and her claim against Hillsong continued after her claim against the staff member settled in July 2024 [32] [33].
- **The former disciples of T. B. Joshua.** More than 30 of them described abuse at the Synagogue Church of All Nations to BBC Africa Eye in 2024 [13].
- **The Assemblies of God presbyters of 1987–88.** These elected officials, who oversee the denomination's ministers, used their own credentialing process against the movement's biggest stars [12].

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Were these people traitors, or the most loyal members their tradition had? Most were treated as the first at the time, and some are honored as the second now. If someone in your community raised one of these questions tomorrow, how would they be treated, and by you?

22 Regional variants

BEFORE YOU READ

The same tradition under different governments. What a member can say, leave, marry or inherit depends heavily on the state, and these cards show how differently it plays out.

Nigeria

APEX: The apex is a set of founder-owned empires: the Redeemed Christian Church of God under Enoch Adeboye and Living Faith Church Worldwide under David Oyedepo.

LAW: Churches register with the Corporate Affairs Commission, and a 2020 provision of CAMA (the Companies and Allied Matters Act) on regulating religious NGOs' governance was fought hard by churches.

DOCUMENTED: The record covers university ownership by ministries whose congregations cannot afford the fees, the 2014 Synagogue Church of All Nations guesthouse collapse and the obstructed coroner's process, and the 2024 BBC Africa Eye investigation.

EXIT: The cost of leaving is very high. The church is frequently the social network, the credit system, the school and the employer, in a country with a thin state safety net.

REGULATOR: The Corporate Affairs Commission regulates registration, the courts hear cases, and the Financial Reporting Council oversees governance where applicable.

TELL: It is the clearest example anywhere of what the seed-faith instrument does where the state provides least. The mechanism is strongest exactly where the need is greatest.

Brazil

APEX: The apex is the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God under Edir Macedo, who also owns Record TV, along with the Assembleia de Deus (Assemblies of God) networks.

LAW: Religious organisations are largely tax-exempt; prosecutors have brought cases concerning church finances. Media ownership is separately regulated.

DOCUMENTED: The record covers prosecutions and investigations concerning church finances, and a large evangelical caucus in the national congress with documented legislative influence.

EXIT: The cost of leaving is high in the peripheries, where the church is the functioning institution.

REGULATOR: The Ministério Público (public prosecutors) is the effective route here, and the Receita Federal (the federal tax authority) handles tax.

TELL: A tradition that owns a national television network is not a church with a media ministry. It is a media company with a congregation, and it should be examined as both.

South Africa

APEX: Authority is divided between independent prophetic ministries and established denominations.

LAW: The CRL Rights Commission is a constitutional body with investigative powers. Its 2017 report on the commercialisation of religion recommended a peer-review licensing system.

DOCUMENTED: The CRL report documented the sale of anointed products and 'miracle' practices. Its licensing recommendation was fought by churches across the spectrum, including many with no stake in the abuses.

EXIT: The cost of leaving is high in townships and informal settlements, where the church is the primary institution.

REGULATOR: The CRL Rights Commission is the only body of its kind in this volume, and it takes complaints from the public.

TELL: It is the one jurisdiction where a constitutional body named the instrument in a public document. The united church opposition to regulation is the most instructive part of the story.

Sources for this section: 6 7 8 11 17

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

This page covers Nigeria, Brazil and South Africa. Your country changes what this tradition can do to you, and what you can do about it. If you live somewhere not listed, ask which of these cards your country most resembles. If you are a voter, note that each of these arrangements was chosen by a government.

23 The questions

BEFORE YOU READ

The six questions the documented record could not resolve. Each is set out below: why it is being asked, and a concrete example already on this page that it points back to.

QUESTION 1 OF 6

Whose name is on the title deed of this building? Land registries are public in most countries and the answer takes ten minutes to check.

WHY THIS IS ASKED

Who legally owns the building is a fact that anyone can check in a public land registry. The question turns a vague worry about "who benefits" into ten minutes of research.

EXAMPLE ALREADY ON THIS PAGE

The healthy section lists a congregation that owns its own building, on a title deed the members can read, as a sign of a healthy church. Its absence is what the question tests.

QUESTION 2 OF 6

May I see the audited accounts for last year, including the founder's total compensation and any related-party transactions?

WHY THIS IS ASKED

An audit with related-party transactions is the standard any other charity meets. The question asks for exactly that standard, nothing more.

EXAMPLE ALREADY ON THIS PAGE

The glance table's unanswered question records that a US Senate committee asked six ministries for basic financial information and closed three years later without full answers or penalties.

QUESTION 3 OF 6

What happens to my giving record if I stop giving — and who can see it?

WHY THIS IS ASKED

If giving is voluntary, it should not be recorded in a way that affects your standing. The question asks what the record is for.

EXAMPLE ALREADY ON THIS PAGE

The say-do table records documented practices that include calling givers forward by amount and closing the doors during offerings.

QUESTION 4 OF 6

Has anyone here ever taught that a delayed harvest is caused by insufficient seed? If so, what

evidence would show that teaching to be false?

WHY THIS IS ASKED

This is the unfalsifiability problem from the money section, put as a question. A teaching that explains every failed promise as the believer's fault cannot be shown to be false by any outcome.

EXAMPLE ALREADY ON THIS PAGE

The say-do table sets "Giving is entirely voluntary" beside former-member testimony that withheld seed is taught as the cause of a delayed harvest.

QUESTION 5 OF 6

Who can remove the senior pastor, by what written process, and when was that process last used anywhere in this network?

WHY THIS IS ASKED

Classical Pentecostal denominations prove that removal procedures can exist in this movement. The question asks whether your network has one, and when it was last used.

EXAMPLE ALREADY ON THIS PAGE

The structure section records that the Assemblies of God defrocked Jim Bakker in 1987 and Jimmy Swaggart in 1988, and says that independent founder-led ministries have no equivalent.

QUESTION 6 OF 6

If someone reports abuse by a leader, does that report go to the police first, or to the covering pastor first? Is that written down?

WHY THIS IS ASKED

Whether a report goes to the police or to a "covering" pastor first decides whether an allegation is investigated or managed. The question asks for the rule in writing.

EXAMPLE ALREADY ON THIS PAGE

The cases section records that a Hillsong College student was indecently assaulted by a staff member who pleaded guilty in 2020. She later sued two Hillsong entities (Australia, 2020–2024).

In closing

The Spirit you felt in that room is not the subject of this page, and no part of it has argued that your experience was manufactured. The movement that produced it began among the poorest people in America and gave authority to a Black preacher in 1906 when no institution in the country would. That inheritance is real and it belongs to you.

What this page argues is narrower and harder: that a specific financial instrument was grafted onto that inheritance in the middle of the last century, that it is taught out loud on recordings the ministries themselves sell, that it cannot fail by design, and that the people it extracts most from are the people with the least. A Senate committee, a state human-rights commission, and courts and prosecutors on four continents have all touched it. Not one internal body has ever acted on the instrument itself.

You do not have to leave to test any of this. The title deed is public. The accounts either exist or they do not. Ask for them once, calmly, and watch what happens to the temperature of the room — because in a healthy church that question is answered with a document, and nobody's face changes.

Sources for this section: [9] [10]

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Choose one question and ask it this month, out loud, to a real person who could answer it. Then write down what happened. Were you answered, redirected, or told that asking was the problem? Whichever it was, the response is information.

May I see the audited accounts for last year, including the founder's total compensation and any related-party transactions?

24 Leaving safely here

BEFORE YOU READ

Practical, non-theological guidance for someone who needs to step back or step away safely. It is a safety document, not an argument.

Practical guidance, not legal advice.

1. **Stop the pledges first.** Cancel recurring "seed", partnership and building-fund payments in writing and through your bank.
2. **Your health decisions are yours.** No healing promise replaces a doctor; tell your doctor what you were told.

3. **If you work for the church,** get your employment terms in writing before you announce anything.
4. **If a church is a UK charity,** you can report concerns to the Charity Commission [9]; in Australia, the ACNC [10].
5. **If you were abused,** go to the police first, not the pastor.
6. **Find support** [25] [26] [27].

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Even if this section is not for you, it may be for someone you know. Most people who leave a high-demand community say that the first person who listened without trying to argue them back mattered more than anything else. Could that person be you?

If you work for the church, get your employment terms in writing before you announce anything.

25 Where to get help

BEFORE YOU READ

Organizations that can help, each checked directly against its own site, with the date of the check. Nothing here is endorsed beyond that check.

Checked 2026-09-27.

ORGANIZATION	FOR	WHERE	CONTACT
Recovering from Religion	People questioning or leaving faith	US, Canada and online	**(844) 368-2848** [25]

Faith to Faithless	People leaving high-control religion	UK	**0800 448 0748** (freephone; Monday 10:00–13:00, Wednesday 10:00–13:00, Thursday 16:00–19:00 UK time) [26]
ICSA	Former members of high-control groups; families	International	Via website [27]
NAPAC	Adult survivors of childhood abuse	UK	**0808 801 0331** [28]
Childhelp	Child abuse	US	**1-800-422-4453** [29]
RAINN	Sexual assault	US	**1-800-656-4673** [30]

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Save one contact now, before anyone needs it: **Recovering from Religion** (people questioning or leaving faith; US, Canada and online). People in crisis rarely have the energy to research options. Having a name ready is one of the most useful things you can do for someone else.



26

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BEFORE YOU READ

Every numbered citation on this page, with a named, checkable source. Spot-check a few before trusting the rest; that is the honest way to read any page in this book, including this one.

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WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Don't take this page's word for anything either. People tend to believe a claim more the more often they have heard it, whether or not it is true; this is the "illusory truth effect" (Hasher, Goldstein & Toppino, 1977). Spot-check three citations at random. If any fails, tell us, and it will be corrected and logged.

27 What changed on this page

BEFORE YOU READ

A dated log of what changed on this page: corrections, additions and new sources. Changes are logged in public rather than made quietly.

- **2026-10-03:** Corrected the length of the Senate inquiry to three years, the status of Anna Crenshaw's case against Hillsong, and the dates and findings of the Charity Commission's action at Kingsway International Christian Centre. Rewrote claims that no internal body had ever acted, since the Assemblies of God removed Jim Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart. Corrected the size of the movement against Pew's count, the disclosure scorecard, the ages of the founders, and seven technique grades; removed the claim that a state commission documented door-closing and calling givers by amount, and the unsourced banks and airlines; named the current Assemblies of God and Church of God in Christ leaders; linked the South African commission's report; and added seven sources.
- **2026-09-27:** Added Branches, Law & state, Money in numbers (Hillsong London accounts 2020–2024), five documented cases, Voices from inside, Leaving safely and Where to get help.

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

This page keeps a public log of its own changes, mistakes included. Does the institution you belong to, give to, or were raised in keep one like it? If not, how would you know what it got wrong, and when?

Colophon

Set in EB Garamond (SIL Open Font License), regular, italic and bold, with true small capitals and old-style figures in text and lining tabular figures in tables. Laid out with Paged.js in Chromium from the same Markdown that feeds the website. US Letter, single-sided, tagged for accessibility and checked against PDF/UA-1 with veraPDF. Built 2026-10-27. Text checked 2026-10-03.

Palette: ink, oxblood, gold, cream, rule. Seven type sizes. Rules of 0.4 pt and 2 pt only.