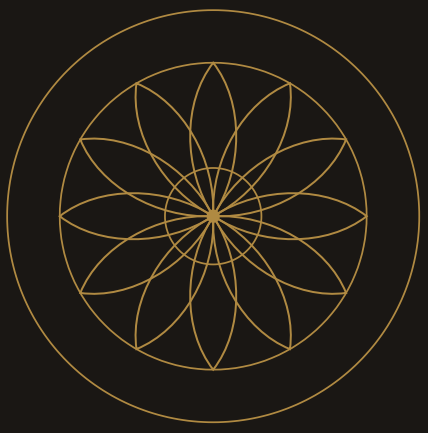


THE SACRED DIVIDE

THE FULL RECORD

Plymouth Brethren Christian Church (Exclusive Brethren)

Christianity family

HONOR THE FAITH · NAME THE MACHINERY

TEXT CHECKED 2026-10-03

Before you begin

This is the record of Plymouth Brethren Christian Church (Exclusive Brethren) 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 Plymouth Brethren Christian Church (Exclusive Brethren) 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	The church has more than 50,000 members [1].
WHO'S IN CHARGE	Bruce D. Hales has been the worldwide leader since 2002 [1].
CHOSEN BY	Recognition within the fellowship (succeeded his father) [1].
REMOVABLE BY	No procedure.
MONEY IN ONE LINE	A network of about 3,000 member businesses centered on UBT (Universal Business Team, a member-business services firm), with combined turnover the church's own material puts at about A$22 billion a year [5].
LEAVING IN ONE LINE	Being "withdrawn from" (excommunicated) means separation from family who stay; one former member told the ABC (the Australian Broadcasting Corporation), "I have no contact with my mum" [5].

THE UNANSWERED QUESTION	May a withdrawn parent eat with their children?
FAMILY	Christianity — christianity, catholicism, eastern-orthodoxy, oriental-orthodoxy, anglicanism, protestant-evangelical, pentecostal-charismatic, plymouth-brethren
EVIDENCE	Ten of the 30 techniques are Documented and seven are Taught. The grades are Cultural 13, Documented 10 and Taught 7.
LAST CHECKED	2026-10-03

Disclosure scorecard

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

Accounts: local UK meeting-hall trusts file public accounts, e.g. Preston Down Trust [16]

Safeguarding: a policy exists and was strengthened on the Charity Commission's advice; its text is not published [17]

Reply: answered some questions on the record in 2025; declined others, citing legal proceedings [18]

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

The glance table's answer to who chooses the top office is "Recognition within the fellowship (succeeded his father)", and to who can remove its holder, "No procedure". 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, allegations going to police first or a written removal procedure. 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.

- **name:** Ruth
- **when:** A Tuesday in term
- **where:** A town in New South Wales

1. The early meeting is at six. Ruth has been to thousands of them. She knows every hymn number by heart.
2. At work, in her father's firm, the business-services consultant visits. Her father is careful with him in a way she has only ever seen him be careful with one other person.
3. At lunch she drives past the house where her brother lives now. He was withdrawn from last year. She does not slow down.
4. Her nephew, the brother's son, is at her table tonight, because he stayed.
5. At dinner nobody mentions his father.
6. After the dishes she sits in the car in the driveway and reads the last message her brother sent, three months ago, and does not reply, and has not decided whether that is obedience or cowardice.

Ruth is a composite drawn from documented patterns. No real person is depicted.

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.

> You may have grown up in the warmest, most organized family life you have ever seen, and eaten every meal of your life with people who share your faith. This page is about the rule that decides who may sit at that table, and what happens to a mother or father when they are no longer allowed to.

THE UNANSWERED QUESTION

May a withdrawn parent eat with their children?

The strongest objection, answered

- *Attack:* "Anti-religious media bias against a peaceful minority."
- *Concede:* The fellowship is peaceful, charitable [4] and, in England, met the regulator's conditions [2].
- *Answer:* Family separation is attested by former members across countries [5]. A charity regulator found public benefit unproven before the changes [2]. The 2004 electoral material was examined by an electoral commission, which found the spending disclosed in a third-party return [8].

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Try answering the unanswered question yourself: *May a withdrawn parent eat with their children?* 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 Plymouth Brethren Christian Church (Exclusive Brethren), 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.

> The church has more than 50,000 members, mainly in Australia, New Zealand, the UK and the Americas [1]. It is a conservative Protestant fellowship descended from the 19th-century Brethren movement, known for its doctrine of separation from evil (2 Timothy 2), which governs whom members may eat with and befriend, its strong family and business life, its own schools (OneSchool Global), and its disaster-relief catering charity (the Rapid Relief Team) [4].

- Members have strong families, practice mutual aid and give generous disaster relief [4].
- Members run competent businesses that also employ outsiders; the church's own account, relayed by Wikipedia, is about 56,000 non-member staff [1].

- In England the church accepted a deed of variation (a legal amendment to its trust deeds) committing its trusts to public benefit, including public access to worship [2].
- Its UK meeting-hall trusts and its UK school charity file public accounts [10] [16].
- Some families stay in contact with relatives who have left, and the church says it issues no formal guidance on how families should respond [4].

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.

The Brethren movement began in Dublin and Plymouth in the 1820s–30s and split into Open and Exclusive branches in 1848. Among the Exclusives, a line of leaders centralized authority and intensified separation, especially under James Taylor Jr. (leader to 1970) [6]. The leader's conduct in Aberdeen in July 1970, and the movement's refusal to investigate it, caused the largest schism in its history; in Scotland only about 200 of 3,000 members stayed with the leader [6 19]. Bruce D. Hales, a Sydney businessman, has led since 2002, succeeding his father [1].

Timeline

DATE	EVENT	READING
1820s–30s	The Brethren movement begins.	It is a lay, anti-clerical renewal.

1848	The movement splits into Open and Exclusive branches.	Separation becomes the defining doctrine.
1959–70	Separation is intensified under James Taylor Jr. [6]	Meals, associations and professions are restricted.
Jul 1970	The "Aberdeen incident" takes place, and many members leave; in Scotland only about 200 of 3,000 stay with the leader [6] [19].	The leader's authority is protected by a refusal to investigate.
2002	Bruce D. Hales becomes leader [1].	He holds the top office today.
2004	The Australian Electoral Commission examines seven pamphlets and ads linked to the Brethren [8].	Material linked to a church whose members do not vote appears in an election.
Jun–Aug 2026	The parliament's electoral matters committee names the church a "significant third party" in the 2025 Australian federal election and hears from its director on 21 August; he denies the allegations [22].	The question raised in 2004 returns.
2005	Election pamphlets attacking Labour and the Greens are distributed in New Zealand without disclosed origin [3].	The pattern is repeated across borders.
2012–14	The Charity Commission refuses (2012), then registers (2014), the Preston Down Trust [2].	A regulator extracts public-benefit commitments.
Mar 2024	The ATO (Australian Taxation Office) raids UBT-associated businesses [9].	The business hub comes under tax scrutiny.
Sep 2025	Four Corners, the ABC's investigative program, broadcasts "Big Brethren", on the business network, political influence and threats against former members [5].	A national broadcaster investigates the church.

Moments in the room

YEAR	TITLE	WHAT HAPPENED	WHY IT MATTERS
1848	The split	Separation becomes doctrine.	It is the founding choice.
1970	Aberdeen	Many members leave over the leader's conduct; in Scotland about 200 of 3,000 stay with him [6] [19].	The leader is protected; the members leave.
2014	The regulator	A regulator extracts public-benefit changes [2].	The state's leverage is charitable status.

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

Plymouth Brethren Christian Church (Exclusive Brethren) 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 Exclusive branch led by Bruce D. Hales is the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church (PBCC). Other Exclusive groups formed in the 1970 split [6]. The Open Brethren are a separate movement and are not the subject of this page.

BRANCH	WHERE	WHAT DIFFERS ON THIS PAGE'S QUESTIONS
Plymouth Brethren Christian Church (Hales)	It is present in Australia, New Zealand, the UK and the Americas and has more than 50,000 members [1].	It has had one worldwide leader since 2002, and it practices separation, "shutting up" (temporary suspension) and "withdrawal" (excommunication) [14].
Other Exclusive groups	They are small fellowships formed in the 1970 split [6].	Many people left over the leader's conduct in Aberdeen and the refusal to investigate it [6].
Open Brethren	Worldwide	It has been a separate, congregational movement since 1848 and is not the subject of this page.

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

If you know one community of Plymouth Brethren Christian Church (Exclusive Brethren), 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:** The church has more than 50,000 members [1].

- **regions:** Members live in the UK, Australia, New Zealand, the US and Canada, with smaller communities elsewhere [1].
- **branches:** The PBCC is the Exclusive branch led by Hales; other Exclusive groups date from the 1970 split [6]; the Open Brethren are a separate movement.
- **trend:** Membership is stable through births, and conversion is low.
- **participation:** Participation is near-total. Members attend multiple meetings a week, and life is arranged around the fellowship.

Authority

- A single worldwide leader, called within the fellowship the "Man of God" [1][5], whose ministry (his teaching) is authoritative.
- Local assemblies (congregations) are under adult men, who are called "priests", and discipline is carried out locally [4].
- Senior figures act in the leader's interest. In a 2025 recording obtained by the ABC, a senior leader told a member under interrogation, "We're here to protect the Lord's interest and Mr Hales' interest" [5].

The top of the chain

> A movement that began as anti-clerical now has one "Man of God".

OFFICE	WHO SITS IN IT NOW	CHOSEN BY	REMOVABLE BY
Worldwide leader	Bruce D. Hales, since 2002 [1]	He was recognized within the fellowship, succeeding his father [1]	No procedure exists

Who holds what

ENTITY	TYPE	HOLDER	HOLDS	SECTOR	RECEIPT
The leader ("Man of God")	Spiritual apex	Bruce D. Hales, since 2002 [1]	Authoritative ministry	Every assembly	INVESTIGATIVE REPORT [1 5]
UBT	Business services	Network	About 3,000 connected companies [5]	Your livelihood	INVESTIGATIVE REPORT
OneSchool Global	Schools	Registered charities [7]	Education	Your children's schooling	REGULATORY FILING
Gospel-hall trusts (charitable trusts that own the meeting halls)	Property	Trustees	Meeting rooms [2]	—	REGULATORY FILING

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

This movement began as a protest against clergy standing between people and God. Today it has one worldwide leader, called the "Man of God," since 2002, succeeding his father, and the structure table records that no procedure exists for removing him.

In a 2025 recording, a senior figure told a member under questioning that they were there to protect "the Lord's interest and Mr Hales' interest." If you are a member, when did those two interests become one?

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
England & Wales	Charities must show public benefit [2]	The Charity Commission refused the Preston Down Trust in 2012, then registered it in 2014 after the trust committed to public benefit, including public access to worship [2]

Australia — elections	Campaign material must be authorized [8]	The Electoral Commission examined seven pamphlets and ads linked to the Brethren in 2004 and found the spending disclosed in a third-party return, with no outstanding obligation [8]
Australia — tax	The Taxation Office can raid and audit [9]	It raided businesses associated with the church's business-services firm on 19 March 2024 [9] [20]
Australia — schools	OneSchool Global's entities are registered charities and receive public funds [7]	In 2024 a senator asked the National Audit Office to review those funds; it declined to include the audit in its 2024–25 work program [7] [21]
New Zealand	Electoral law governs campaign material [3].	Pamphlets attacking Labour and the Greens were distributed in 2005 without disclosed origin [3]

Who can compel an answer

Charity regulators [2], electoral commissions [8], tax authorities [9] and national audit offices [7] can compel an answer.

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

The Brethren do not vote, yet election authorities in Australia (2004) and New Zealand (2005) examined campaign material linked to members. If you are a voter in either country, members of a church that abstains from voting have tried to shape your election. In England, a charity regulator once refused a Brethren trust registration because it had not shown public benefit. Does a group that separates from the world owe the world transparency when it seeks the world's tax status?

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

- **A business network.** The ABC's Four Corners (2025) described an internationally connected network of about 3,000 companies centered on UBT (Universal Business Team), a member-business services firm. The church's own material has put combined member-business turnover at about A$22 billion a year [5].
- **Australian Taxation Office raid.** The ATO raided businesses associated with UBT on 19 March 2024 [9] [20].
- **Charitable status.** Gospel-hall trusts hold meeting property. In England, the Charity Commission refused the Preston Down Trust registration in June 2012 for insufficient public benefit, then registered it in January 2014 after the trust adopted a deed of variation [2].

- **Schools.** OneSchool Global runs schools for members' children; its Australian entities are registered charities [7]. In July 2024 a senator asked the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) to review the public funds allocated to OneSchool Global; in August 2024 the Acting Auditor-General declined to include the audit in the 2024–25 work program [7 21].
- **Relief.** The Rapid Relief Team is a visible public-good arm [4].

Follow the money

FLOW	STATED PURPOSE	HOW IT CONTROLS	WHO BENEFITS
UBT and the business network	Its stated purpose is business support.	It connects about 3,000 companies [5] and provides employment inside the fellowship.	The network's leadership benefits.
Gospel-hall trusts	They hold property for worship.	The property is charity-registered and held under deeds [2].	The fellowship benefits.
OneSchool Global	Its stated purpose is education.	Children are schooled inside the fellowship, and an audit of its public funds was requested in 2024 and declined [7 21].	The fellowship benefits.
Campaign material	No purpose is stated.	It seeks influence on elections [3 8].	The fellowship's policy interests benefit.

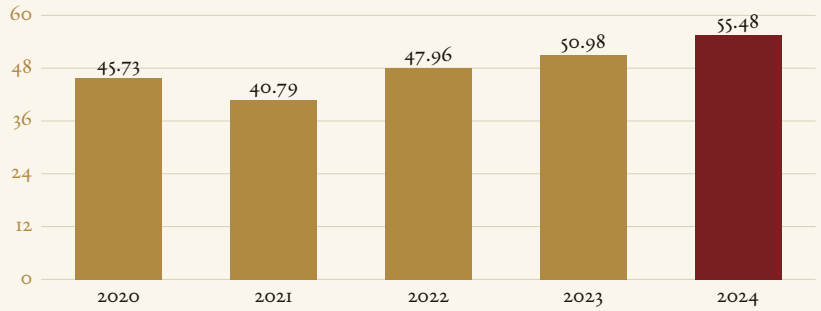
WHERE THE MONEY GOES, AND WHAT IT HOLDS

UBT and the business network	**STATED PURPOSE** Its stated purpose is business support. **HOW IT CONTROLS** It connects about 3,000 companies 5 and provides employment inside the fellowship.	The network's leadership benefits.
Gospel-hall trusts	**STATED PURPOSE** They hold property for worship. **HOW IT CONTROLS** The property is charity-registered and held under deeds 2 .	The fellowship benefits.
OneSchool Global	**STATED PURPOSE** Its stated purpose is education. **HOW IT CONTROLS** Children are schooled inside the fellowship, and an audit of its public funds was requested in 2024 and declined 7 21 .	The fellowship benefits.
Campaign material	**STATED PURPOSE** No purpose is stated. **HOW IT CONTROLS** It seeks influence on elections 3 8 .	The fellowship's policy interests 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.

Money in numbers

ONESCHOOL GLOBAL UK: INCOME



£ million, years to 31 December — The church's UK school network files public accounts because it is a registered charity; most of its income is donations. [10]

- **OneSchool Global UK, 2024:** £41.51m of its £55.48m income came from donations, and £367,350 from government grants [10].
- **Business network:** About 3,000 companies surround the business-services firm UBT, and the church's own material has put member-business turnover at about A$22 billion a year [5].
- **Meeting halls** are held in gospel-hall trusts [2].

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

The glance table records a fact most people have never heard. Members' businesses form a network of about 3,000 companies centered on one services firm, with combined turnover the church's own material puts at around A$22 billion a year.

The Australian Taxation Office raided businesses associated with it in 2024. If you are a customer, a supplier or an employee of a Brethren-owned business, you are part of this economy. Did you know it existed?

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?

1. **Separation from evil** - *Origin:* The rule comes from 2 Timothy 2 and 19th-century Brethren ecclesiology (teaching on the nature of the church), and it was intensified from 1959 [6]. - *Then:* It protected the purity of the fellowship. - *Expired?* Applied to one's own withdrawn children, it becomes family separation [5]. - *Benefits now:* The rule sustains the fellowship's cohesion and the cost of leaving it.

2. **A single worldwide leader** - *Origin:* Authority was centralized in the 20th century under the Taylors and is now held by the Hales family [16]. - *Then:* It secured unity. - *Expired?* An anti-clerical movement ended with one authority figure. In 1970 his protection was chosen over investigating him [6]. - *Benefits now:* The leadership benefits.

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

- Historically, members had no television, radio or unrestricted internet. Technology is now permitted through approved devices and software, according to former members. FORMER MEMBER TESTIMONY
- University attendance was historically discouraged, and education is kept in-house through OneSchool Global [4][7].

Children

- Children are educated in church-run schools (OneSchool Global) [7].
- Children of a withdrawn parent may be separated from that parent. One former member told the ABC he left five children behind [5].

Bodies

- Men lead; women wear head coverings in meetings and do not speak in them [4]. OFFICIAL POLICY

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?

Historically, members had no television, radio or unrestricted internet.



12

The 30 techniques

How the thirty techniques are established here

10	7	13
DOCUMENTED	TAUGHT	CULTURAL

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

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

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.

Members are born into a total, loving community.

What it asks of you: The love is real. Is it conditional?

1 · Love Bombing

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

How it shows here

- Most members are born in, and there are few converts.

The strongest defense. We are family.

The counter. The belonging is never offered as a choice.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL Membership by birth is how the fellowship grows in practice; there is no recruitment drive to grade.

2 · Weaponized Generosity

Giving help that installs unspoken obligation.

How it shows here

- The business network provides help and employment [5].

The strongest defense. Brethren help each other.

The counter. Help that ends with withdrawal is a leash.

EVIDENCE GRADE

DOCUMENTED ABC reporting records the help and employment that run through the business network [5].

Stage 2 · Hook

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

Salvation is found within the fellowship.

What it asks of you: Is everything outside defilement?

3 · Future Faking

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

How it shows here

- Salvation is promised inside the fellowship.

The strongest defense. Faith.

The counter. The promise requires staying.

EVIDENCE GRADE

TAUGHT Salvation inside the fellowship is the church's teaching.

4 · Hoovering

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

How it shows here

- Those who leave are pressed to repent and return.

The strongest defense. We want them back.

The counter. They are taken back only on the institution's terms.

EVIDENCE GRADE

CULTURAL Pressure on leavers to repent is reported by former members.

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.

Worldliness is treated as defilement [4].

What it asks of you: Who defines the world?

5 · Devaluation

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

How it shows here

- Worldliness is treated as defilement [4].

The strongest defense. Holiness.

The counter. It is a holiness that makes your mother unclean.

EVIDENCE GRADE

TAUGHT The church's own pages teach separation from worldly defilement [4].

6 · Gaslighting

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

How it shows here

- The church says "we do not prevent former members from contacting their families" [5], and testimony says otherwise [5].

The strongest defense. Individual choices.

The counter. The choices all point one way.

EVIDENCE GRADE

DOCUMENTED The church's statement and the contrary testimony are both on record [5].

7 · Double Bind

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

How it shows here

- Members are told to love their family and to separate from them.

The strongest defense. Separation is love.

The counter. It is a love that cannot share a meal.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> TAUGHT Separation from family who are outside is the church's teaching.

Stage 4 · Confuse

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

Separation is framed as love.

What it asks of you: Is it love if it requires not eating with your mother?

8 · Intermittent Reinforcement

Unpredictable reward that creates addictive emotional dependency.

How it shows here

- Loyalty is rewarded with standing and business favor [5].

The strongest defense. Rewarding faithfulness.

The counter. Favor works as a loyalty test.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL Standing and business favour for the loyal is reported by former members [5].

9 · Moving the Goalposts

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

How it shows here

- Technology rules changed from prohibition to approved systems, according to former members.

The strongest defense. Adapting to the times.

The counter. Who decides, and why?

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL The changes rest on former members' accounts.

10 · Strategic Ambiguity

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

How it shows here

- The church calls itself "apolitical," yet members produced election material [38].

The strongest defense. Members acted privately.

The counter. The same election work appeared in two countries [38], which is hard to call private.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> **DOCUMENTED** The church's self-description and the members' election material are on the record [38].

11 · Projection

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

How it shows here

- Critics are cast as persecutors.

The strongest defense. Media bias.

The counter. Answer the testimony.

EVIDENCE GRADE

CULTURAL Casting critics as persecutors is a pattern in the church's responses.

12 · DARVO

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

How it shows here

- A member was interrogated over an alleged hack while leaders claimed to protect "the Lord's interest" [5].

The strongest defense. Protecting the church.

The counter. The recording speaks.

EVIDENCE GRADE

DOCUMENTED ABC reporting records the interrogation and the leaders' words [5].

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

- Separation begins at birth [4].

The strongest defense. Our way of life.

The counter. Children didn't choose it.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> TAUGHT Separation from birth is the church's teaching [4].

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.

Meals, schools, technology and work all stay inside [4][5].

What it asks of you: Where is outside?

14 · Isolation

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

How it shows here

- Meals, media and schools are kept inside [47].

The strongest defense. Holiness.

The counter. It is a world with no outside.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> DOCUMENTED The church's own pages and the national audit office record the separate meals, media and schools [47].

15 · Triangulation

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

How it shows here

- Family, priests and employers are aligned.

The strongest defense. Everyone cares.

The counter. Everyone in the triangle is inside.

EVIDENCE GRADE

CULTURAL The alignment of family, leaders and employers is reported practice.

Stage 6 · Extract

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

The fellowship takes time, business networks and loyalty [5].

What it asks of you: The network spans about 3,000 companies [5].

16 · Flying Monkeys

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

How it shows here

- Families enforce separation [5].

The strongest defense. Individual conscience.

The counter. It is a conscience that always matches the rule.

EVIDENCE GRADE

DOCUMENTED ABC reporting records families enforcing separation [5].

17 · Smear Campaign

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

How it shows here

- Former members are investigated and pressured; the ABC reported surveillance by private investigators, with phone records [5].

The strongest defense. Protecting privacy and property.

The counter. Private investigators are not pastoral care.

EVIDENCE GRADE

DOCUMENTED ABC reporting records the investigations, the private investigators and the phone records [5].

18 · Silent Treatment / Stonewalling

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

How it shows here

- In 1970 the leader was not investigated [6].

The strongest defense. God's judgment, not ours.

The counter. It became the members' judgment; many left.

EVIDENCE GRADE

DOCUMENTED The 1970 events are on the historical record [6].

19 · Manufactured Consent

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

How it shows here

- Members are born into assent.

The strongest defense. They choose to stay.

The counter. The choice to stay is made against losing everyone.

EVIDENCE GRADE

CULTURAL Assent by birth is how membership works in practice.

20 · Trauma Bonding

The wound and the bandage come from the same hand.

How it shows here

- Belonging and fear of withdrawal alternate.

The strongest defense. Discipline restores.

The counter. Restoration comes through the threat of loss.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL The swing between belonging and fear of withdrawal is described by former members.

21 · Learned Helplessness

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

How it shows here

- Every door leads to the same network [5].

The strongest defense. Trust the fellowship.

The counter. The network is the door.

EVIDENCE GRADE

CULTURAL Reporting describes every door leading to the same network [5], but no rule says so.

22 · Benevolent Control

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

How it shows here

- Separation is presented as protection from evil.

The strongest defense. For your good.

The counter. It is protection you cannot refuse.

EVIDENCE GRADE

TAUGHT Separation is taught as protection from evil.

23 · Infantilization

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

How it shows here

- Adults' friendships are governed by the rule of separation [4], and their technology and education are managed, according to former members (section 11).

The strongest defense. Guidance.

The counter. Adults don't need approval to read.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL The rule of separation is the church's teaching [4]; managed technology and education rest on former members.

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

- The self is defined by the fellowship.

The strongest defense. Our identity in Christ.

The counter. If it cannot leave, it was assigned.

EVIDENCE GRADE

TAUGHT The fellowship as the whole self is taught, not written as a rule.

25 · Spiritual Bypassing

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

How it shows here

- Grief over separated families is attributed to God's will.

The strongest defense. Trust the Lord.

The counter. Trust is not reunion.

EVIDENCE GRADE

CULTURAL Attributing grief over separated families to God's will is reported pastoral practice.

26 · Financial Control

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

How it shows here

- Control runs through the business network [5] and UBT [9].

The strongest defense. Separate businesses.

The counter. "The church does not run any businesses." [5].

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> **DOCUMENTED** Reporting records control through the business network and UBT [5 9].

Stage 7 · Discard

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

Members are "withdrawn from" [4 5].

What it asks of you: "I have no contact with my mum." [5].

27 · Manufactured Crisis

Creating urgency to suppress critical thinking and generate loyalty.

How it shows here

- Outside scrutiny is treated as spiritual attack.

The strongest defense. The world hates us.

The counter. The world is asking questions.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL Treating outside scrutiny as spiritual attack is a pattern in the church's messaging.

28 · Discard

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

How it shows here

- The sanction is withdrawal [45].

The strongest defense. Disciplinary, not punitive.

The counter. Ask the children.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> TAUGHT Withdrawal is the church's taught sanction [45].

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.

Family life continues without you.

What it asks of you: The table is reset without your place.

29 · Replacement

Your seat is filled before the door closes behind you.

How it shows here

- Family life continues without the withdrawn.

The strongest defense. The fellowship endures.

The counter. It endures without them.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL Family life continuing without the withdrawn is the ordinary result of the practice.

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

- The church's answer was that Mr Hales "neither authorised nor knew" the interrogation [5].

The strongest defense. Leaders cannot know everything.

The counter. Then publish the rules.

EVIDENCE GRADE

DOCUMENTED The church's answer is on the record [5].

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. The techniques are set out in the table in section 12.

1 · Money



I

Members' businesses, the gospel-hall trusts and the schools all sit inside the same fellowship; the page does not record how money passes between them [257].

How it runs.

1. Members run and work in member businesses; about 3,000 companies are connected around the business-services firm UBT (sections 7 and 9).
2. The church's own material puts combined member-business turnover at about A$22 billion a year (section 9).

3. Meeting halls are held in charity-registered gospel-hall trusts, and the schools are run by registered charities that receive public funds (sections 8 and 9).
4. Leaving can cost a member's job in a member business as well as family and community (section 15).
5. Members stay inside the network, and the businesses and trusts go on sustaining the fellowship (section 16).

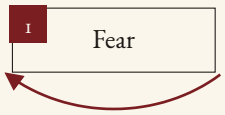
Techniques that feed it. 2 · Weaponized generosity, 8 · Intermittent reinforcement, 21 · Learned helplessness, 26 · Financial control.

Why it closes. Work, property and schooling sit inside the same fellowship, so the income that sustains it depends on members staying, and staying is secured by the risk of losing work together with family (sections 15 and 16). The church's answer is that the businesses are separate (technique 26), and no accounts for the network as a whole are published (section 20).

Where it could be broken, and by whom. It weakens wherever the money becomes visible. The UK meeting-hall trusts and the UK school charity already file public accounts (sections 1 and 9), and section 20 names published business-network accounts as a change that would revise this page. Tax authorities have already examined businesses associated with UBT (section 8). This paragraph is analysis, not a documented finding.

An example from this page. The church's own material puts member-business turnover at about A$22 billion a year, and the Australian Taxation Office raided businesses associated with UBT on 19 March 2024 (section 9).

2 · Fear



2

Members are taught that defilement and judgment lie outside the fellowship.

How it runs.

1. Worldliness is taught as defilement, and separation from evil is the defining doctrine (section 12, stage Devalue; technique 5).
2. Salvation is placed inside the fellowship (technique 3; section 12, stage Hook).
3. Meals, schools, technology and work all stay inside, so members have little direct experience of the outside (technique 14; section 11).
4. Outside scrutiny is treated as spiritual attack (technique 27).
5. Leaving means stepping into what members were taught to fear, and belonging alternates with the fear of withdrawal (technique 20).

Techniques that feed it. 3 · Future faking, 5 · Devaluation, 14 · Isolation, 20 · Trauma bonding, 27 · Manufactured crisis.

Why it closes. The fellowship defines the danger and offers the only protection from it (technique 22). Members' information comes through approved devices and in-house schools (section 11), so the claim about the outside is rarely tested against the outside.

Where it could be broken, and by whom. It weakens where members meet the outside directly. Member businesses already employ outsiders (section 4), children can move to another school (section 24), and former members who speak publicly give an account of life outside (section 21). This paragraph is analysis, not a documented finding.

An example from this page. Section 12 sets the defense "Holiness." beside worldliness taught as defilement, with the counter "Holiness that makes your mother unclean."

3 · Children



3

Children are born into the fellowship and schooled inside it [7].

How it runs.

1. Most members are born in, and there are few converts (technique 1; section 7).
2. Children are educated in OneSchool Global, the church's own schools (section 11).
3. University attendance was historically discouraged, and education is kept in-house (section 11).
4. Separation begins at birth, so children live inside it before they can weigh it (techniques 13 and 19).
5. Those children become the next members, and membership stays stable through births (section 7).

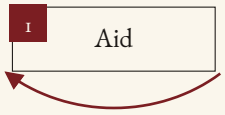
Techniques that feed it. 13 · Normalization, 14 · Isolation, 19 · Manufactured consent, 24 · Identity erosion.

Why it closes. The fellowship's numbers depend on births, and the children born into it are schooled inside it. If a parent is withdrawn from, the child can be separated from that parent (section 11), so a child's family, school and future all sit on the same side of the line.

Where it could be broken, and by whom. It weakens where the schools answer to someone outside the fellowship. OneSchool Global's entities are registered charities that receive public funds, and an audit of those funds was requested from the Australian National Audit Office, which declined it (sections 8 and 9). A parent can move a child to another school (section 24). This paragraph is analysis, not a documented finding.

An example from this page. In section 2, Ruth's nephew is at her table tonight because he stayed, and nobody mentions his father.

4 · Aid



4

The Rapid Relief Team and school funding build legitimacy [47].

How it runs.

1. The Rapid Relief Team provides disaster-relief catering and is the fellowship's visible public-good arm (sections 4 and 9).
2. This page concedes that the fellowship is peaceful and charitable (section 3).
3. Charitable and educational status bring public money and legitimacy (section 16).
4. In England the meeting-hall trust was registered as a charity in 2014 after committing to public benefit (section 8).
5. The standing that relief and charity produce is set against criticism, which is framed as media bias against a peaceful minority (section 3; technique 11).

Techniques that feed it. 2 · Weaponized generosity, 11 · Projection, 22 · Benevolent control.

Why it closes. Relief and schooling support the charitable status, and the charitable status brings the public money and legitimacy that sustain them (section 16). The relief is real, which is why it can stand as an answer to questions about family separation that it does not address (section 3).

Where it could be broken, and by whom. It weakens where regulators attach conditions to the status. The Charity Commission refused registration in 2012 and granted it only after public-benefit commitments (section 8), and those conditions are public (section 22). This paragraph is analysis, not a documented finding.

An example from this page. Section 3 concedes that the fellowship is peaceful and charitable [4], and answers that family separation is attested by former members across countries [5].

5 · Labor



5

Many members work in member businesses, and leaving can cost the job together with family and community [5].

How it runs.

1. Many members work in member businesses (section 24).
2. The business-services firm UBT serves those businesses, and about 3,000 companies are connected to it (section 9).
3. Loyalty is rewarded with standing and business favor (technique 8).
4. Leaving can cost a member's job and entire social world (section 15).
5. The work stays inside the network, and every door leads back to it (technique 21).

Techniques that feed it. 8 · Intermittent reinforcement, 21 · Learned helplessness, 26 · Financial control.

Why it closes. Work, standing and family sit in the same network, so losing one puts the others at risk (section 15). A member who wants to leave has to plan work and money first (section 24), and the plan has to be made from inside the network.

Where it could be broken, and by whom. It weakens where a member's living does not depend on the fellowship. Section 24 advises planning work and money before leaving, and tax authorities have examined businesses associated with UBT (section 8). This paragraph is analysis, not a documented finding.

An example from this page. In section 2, the business-services consultant visits Ruth's father's firm, and her father is careful with him in a way she has only ever seen him be careful with one other person.

6 · Scandal



6

In 1970 the institution protected the leader rather than investigate him [6]. In 2025 it said the leader "neither authorised nor knew" [5].

How it runs.

1. A question reaches the leader: his conduct in Aberdeen in July 1970, or a senior figure's 2025 interrogation of a member in the leader's name (sections 5 and 7).
2. The institution does not examine the leader. In 1970 it refused to investigate, and in 2025 it said Mr Hales "neither authorised nor knew" (techniques 18 and 30).
3. There is no procedure for removing the leader (section 7, The top of the chain).
4. Those who object leave: in 1970 only about 200 of 3,000 Scottish members stayed with the leader (section 5).
5. The leadership continues, and the chair of any accountability process is the worldwide leader himself (section 14).

Techniques that feed it. 12 · DARVO, 18 · Stonewalling, 30 · Plausible deniability.

Why it closes. Any investigation would have to answer to the person it investigates, and there is no procedure to remove him (section 7). Those who object leave, and the objection leaves with them (section 5).

Where it could be broken, and by whom. It weakens where the rules are published and bodies outside the fellowship ask the questions. Technique 30's counter is "Then publish the rules." A national broadcaster, a tax authority and a charity regulator have already examined the fellowship (section 14), and section 23 asks what has changed in how the leader is held to account. This paragraph is analysis, not a documented finding.

An example from this page. In a 2025 recording, a senior leader told a member under interrogation, "We're here to protect the Lord's interest and Mr Hales' interest"; the church's answer was that Mr Hales "neither authorised nor knew" (sections 7 and 15).

7 · Persecution



7

Media investigation is framed as persecution.

How it runs.

1. A national broadcaster investigates, and former members speak on the record (sections 5 and 21).
2. Critics are cast as persecutors, and the charge is media bias (technique 11; section 3).
3. Outside scrutiny is treated as spiritual attack (technique 27).
4. Former members who left or criticized the church have described surveillance by private investigators and threats (section 15; technique 17).
5. Inside, the investigation can be heard as more evidence of hostility; in 2025 the church answered some questions on the record and declined others (section 1, Disclosure scorecard; technique 11).

Techniques that feed it. 11 · Projection, 16 · Flying monkeys, 17 · Smear campaign, 27 · Manufactured crisis.

Why it closes. Each new investigation can be read as more proof that the world is hostile, so the more closely the outside examines the fellowship, the more reason members are given to distrust the outside (technique 27).

Where it could be broken, and by whom. It weakens where the fellowship answers the questions on the record. In 2025 the church answered some questions on the record and declined others, citing legal proceedings (section 1, Disclosure scorecard), and technique 11's counter asks it to answer the testimony. This paragraph is analysis, not a documented finding.

An example from this page. Section 3 sets the objection "Anti-religious media bias against a peaceful minority" beside the answer that family separation is attested by former members across countries [5].

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?

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 vote; we are apolitical."	Members produced election material in Australia (2004) and New Zealand (2005) [3] [8]. In 2026 a parliamentary committee named the church a "significant third party" in the 2025 federal election; the church's director denied the allegations [22].	GOVERNMENT REPORT INVESTIGATIVE REPORT
"We do not prevent former members from contacting their families." [5]	Former members describe total separation [5].	INVESTIGATIVE REPORT
"The church does not run any businesses and does not employ anyone." [5]	Members' businesses form a network of about 3,000 companies centered on UBT [5].	INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

Accountability or theatre?

- **Last ran:** Accountability last ran when a national broadcaster documented the network [5], the tax office raided it [9]. An audit of the

schools was requested in 2024, but the National Audit Office declined it [7] [21].

- **Chair now:** The worldwide leader holds the chair [1].
- **Predict:** Change is likely to come through regulators, courts and tax authorities, and not through doctrine.

Words used here

TERM	INSIDE MEANING	WHAT IT DOES	SAID PLAINLY
"Withdrawn from"	It means excommunicated.	It imposes social and family separation [4].	"We no longer know you."
"Shut up"	It means suspended.	It isolates the member pending review [4].	"Wait alone."
"Separation"	It means holiness.	It governs meals and friendship [4].	"Don't eat with them."

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

- Discipline includes being "shut up" (temporary) and "withdrawn from" (excommunicated). Former members describe total separation from relatives who remain [4][5]. One former member told the ABC: "I have no contact with my siblings, I have no contact with my mum" [5].
- The PBCC denies it: "we do not prevent former members from contacting their families" [5]. It issues no formal guidance on how families should respond, and some families stay in contact [4].
- Leaving can also mean losing employment in member businesses and one's entire social world [5].
- Former members who left or criticized the church have described surveillance by private investigators and threats [5].

The ledger of exit

COST	DOCUMENTED?	DETAIL	THE OFFICIAL DENIAL
Family separation	Yes (testimony, national broadcaster) [5]	Spouses, children and parents are separated.	"We do not prevent former members from contacting their families." [5]
Employment	Yes [5]	A job in a member business can be lost.	—

Community	Yes [5]	The loss of community is total.	—
Intimidation	Reported [5]	Former members report private investigators and threats.	The leader "neither authorised nor knew" [5]

How the cost is denied

CHANNEL	LEVEL	NOTE
Explicit policy	Medium	Separation is public doctrine; family separation is framed as individual choice [4].
Informal enforcement	High	Families carry it [4 5].
Leadership distance	High	Mr Hales "neither authorised nor knew" the interrogation [5].
Doctrinal ambiguity	Low	—
Cultural outsourcing	Low	—
Volunteer enforcement	High	—
Sacred secrecy	High	Discipline is unpublished.
Exit cost denial	High	"We do not prevent … contact." [5]

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

This page's central question is simple: may a withdrawn parent eat with their children? Former members describe total separation from families who stay. One told the ABC, "I have no contact with my siblings, I have no contact with my mum." The church denies preventing contact. If you are inside and someone you love has been withdrawn from, the denial means no rule stops you from calling them. Have you?

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

- The leadership and its ministry network benefit [15].
- The business-services and trust structures benefit [25].

- Parties and candidates benefited from members' campaign material in Australia (2004) and New Zealand (2005) [38].

Money out, leverage back

- The business network makes exit a financial event [5].
- Charitable and educational status bring public money and legitimacy [27].

Who pays

- People who are withdrawn from pay, and so do their children [5].
- Former members who speak publicly pay [5].
- Women pay, because only men speak and lead [4].
- Young people who are kept from university pay [4].

The leadership and its ministry network benefit.

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 who are withdrawn from and lose family and work together, on children who can be separated from a parent, and on women, who are silent in meetings [4][5].

WHO	HOW	COMPOUNDS
The withdrawn	They are separated from family [5].	Loss of employment compounds it [5].
Children	They can be separated from a parent [5].	In-house schooling compounds it [7].
Women	They must be silent in meetings [4].	—

Former members who speak publicly	They report surveillance by private investigators and threats [5].	Separation from family who stay compounds it [5].

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

The table is short and stark: the withdrawn lose their families and often their jobs; children can be separated from a parent; women are silent in meetings. If you are a child of this community reading this at sixteen, know that people who leave are not alone. The help section lists organizations that support people who leave.

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.

Discipline is carried out locally [4]. Local priests, the senior figures who handle disputes, relatives and school staff apply rules they did not write, and each of them could refuse part of what is asked.

ROLE	DOES	SEES	ASKED	COULD REFUSE
Local priests	They carry out discipline.	They see every case.	They are asked to withdraw from members.	They could refuse to withdraw from a member without a hearing.
Senior "priests" handling disputes	They interrogate and warn [5].	They see who is leaving, and why.	They are asked to protect "Mr Hales' interest" [5].	They could refuse to threaten a member.
Relatives	They separate from the withdrawn.	They see the pain.	They are asked to obey.	They could refuse to stop eating with family.
School staff	They teach.	They see the children.	They are asked to keep the world out.	They could refuse to keep the world out.

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.

1. **Charity Commission — Preston Down Trust: refusal (Jun 2012) and registration after deed of variation (Jan 2014)** [2]. REGULATORY FILING
2. **Australian Electoral Commission advice on Brethren-linked 2004 election material** [8]. GOVERNMENT REPORT
3. **New Zealand 2005 election pamphlets** [3]. INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

4. **ATO raid on UBT-associated businesses (19 Mar 2024)** [9].
   INVESTIGATIVE REPORT · no charges known

5. **ANAO audit request: public funds to OneSchool Global (Jul 2024; declined Aug 2024)** [7] [21]. GOVERNMENT REPORT

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	COST
A regulator extracted public-benefit changes [2].	Charity Commission	2014	—
Election material was examined; the AEC found the 2004 spending disclosed [8], and the 2005 New Zealand pamphlets were reported by journalists [3].	Journalists; the Australian Electoral Commission	2004–07	—
Former members' testimony was broadcast nationally [5].	Former members	2025	Threats and surveillance reported [5]

What would change this page

A written guarantee that no member is separated from family, and published accounts for the business network, would change this page.

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 Plymouth Brethren Christian Church (Exclusive Brethren) who raised the hard question publicly, often at real cost. They answer the objection that criticism only ever comes from outsiders.

- **Craig Hoyle.** He is a New Zealand journalist who was "shut up" after coming out to his younger siblings, who were removed from the family home that night; he wrote the memoir *Excommunicated* (2023) [11].
- **The former members who spoke to Four Corners (2025).** One said: "I have no contact with my siblings, I have no contact with my mum" [5].
- **The people who left in 1970.** Many walked out after the Aberdeen incident; in Scotland only about 200 of 3,000 members stayed with the leader [6] [19].
- **The former member who left five children behind.** He told the ABC that he left five children when he left the church [5].

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.

Australia

APEX: Bruce D. Hales leads the church from Sydney [1].

LAW: Electoral, tax and charity law apply [7][8][9].

DOCUMENTED: The record includes the 2004 pamphlets [8], the 2024 tax raid [9] and the 2025 Four Corners investigation [5].

EXIT: Leaving can mean losing family, job and social world together [5].

REGULATOR: The Taxation Office, the Electoral Commission and the ACNC (the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission, the charity regulator) regulate [7][8][9].

TELL: The church's home country is where every regulator in the table has had to look at it.

United Kingdom

APEX: The worldwide leader leads through local assemblies [1].

LAW: Charity law's public-benefit test applies [2].

DOCUMENTED: The record includes the Preston Down Trust decision [2] and OneSchool Global UK's accounts [10].

EXIT: Leaving is legally free, and the social costs are the same as elsewhere [4][5].

REGULATOR: The Charity Commission regulates [2].

TELL: A regulator said no, then yes on conditions, and the conditions are public.

New Zealand

APEX: The worldwide leader leads the church here as elsewhere [1].

LAW: Electoral law applies [3].

DOCUMENTED: The record includes the 2005 election pamphlets [3] and Craig Hoyle's account [11].

EXIT: Leaving is legally free, and support exists [12].

REGULATOR: Electoral law regulates campaign material [3].

TELL: Members of a church that does not vote campaigned in a national election.

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

This page covers Australia, the United Kingdom and New Zealand. 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

If a parent is withdrawn from, may their children eat with them?

WHY THIS IS ASKED

A shared meal is the simplest possible test of whether "separation" applies to family. The question asks about one dinner table, not about doctrine.

EXAMPLE ALREADY ON THIS PAGE

The at-a-glance and forefront sections list it as the page's unanswered question: "May a withdrawn parent eat with their children?" The cost section records a former member who told the ABC he had no contact with his siblings or his mother [5].

QUESTION 2 OF 6

Who decides a withdrawal, and can the person reply?

WHY THIS IS ASKED

A disciplinary decision that the accused cannot answer is a verdict without a hearing. The question asks for the procedure, not the outcome.

EXAMPLE ALREADY ON THIS PAGE

The cost section records that discipline includes being "shut up" (temporarily) and "withdrawn from" (excommunicated). The structure section records a 2025 recording of a senior figure telling a member under questioning, "We're here to protect the Lord's interest and Mr Hales' interest" [5].

QUESTION 3 OF 6

Why does a church whose members do not vote produce election material [38], and why did a parliamentary committee in 2026 ask it about the 2025 federal election [22]?

WHY THIS IS ASKED

A church that does not vote but produces election material is making a political choice while claiming to make none. The question asks readers to notice that contradiction.

EXAMPLE ALREADY ON THIS PAGE

The say-do table sets "We do not vote; we are apolitical" beside election material in Australia (2004) and New Zealand (2005) [38].

QUESTION 4 OF 6

Who controls the business network, and why did the tax office raid it [9]?

WHY THIS IS ASKED

A tax raid does not prove wrongdoing, but it shows that the state saw something worth examining. The question asks who controls the network that drew that attention.

EXAMPLE ALREADY ON THIS PAGE

The money section records a network of about 3,000 companies centered on UBT, and an Australian Taxation Office raid on associated businesses on 19 March 2024 [9].

QUESTION 5 OF 6

Why did a charity regulator find public benefit unproven in 2012 [2]?

WHY THIS IS ASKED

"Public benefit" is the test every charity in England must meet. The question asks why this one initially failed it, and what changed so that it passed.

EXAMPLE ALREADY ON THIS PAGE

The law table records that the Charity Commission refused the Preston Down Trust in 2012, then registered it in 2014 after the trust committed to public benefit, including public access to worship [2].

QUESTION 6 OF 6

In 1970 the movement chose not to investigate its leader [6]. What has changed in how the leader is held to account?

WHY THIS IS ASKED

Refusing to investigate a leader protects the leader, not the members. The question asks whether anything has changed since 1970.

EXAMPLE ALREADY ON THIS PAGE

The history section records the "Aberdeen incident" of July 1970, after which many people left over the leader's conduct and the refusal to investigate it; in Scotland only about 200 of 3,000 members stayed with him [6]. The structure table records no procedure for removing the current leader.

In closing

1. Your tradition began as a protest against clergy standing between people and God. A single worldwide leader whose word decides family meals is what it protested.
2. You can keep the Lord's Supper (the communion service) and still set a place for your son.

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.

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. **Expect to be "shut up" or "withdrawn from".** Former members describe total separation from relatives who stay [4][5]; the church says it does not prevent contact [5].

2. **Plan work and money first.** Many members work in member businesses; leaving can cost your job [5].
3. **Children in OneSchool Global** can move to another school; ask your local education authority.
4. **If you are threatened or followed,** report it to the police; former members have described surveillance and threats [5].
5. **Find others who have left.** Craig Hoyle's account and the Olive Leaf Network are starting points [11] [12].

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?

Craig Hoyle's account and the Olive Leaf Network are starting points.

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
Olive Leaf Network	Former members of high-demand religious groups	Australia, New Zealand, international	Via website [12]

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) [13]
ICSA	Former members of high-control groups; families	International	Via website [14]
Recovering from Religion	People questioning or leaving faith	US, Canada and online	**(844) 368-2848** [15]

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Save one contact now, before anyone needs it: **Olive Leaf Network** (former members of high-demand religious groups; Australia, New Zealand, international). 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

Sources

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.

1. Plymouth Brethren Christian Church (official), "Bruce D. Hales (1953–)." https://www.plymouthbrethrenchristianchurch.org/resource/bruce-d-hales/ — and Wikipedia, "Plymouth Brethren Christian Church" (reference summary) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plymouth_Brethren_Christian_Church — leader since 2002 (church biography page). The "over 50,000" membership figure is the church's own, as relayed by Wikipedia's summary; the biography page itself states no membership figure.
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3. NZ Herald, "Brethren's exclusive patrons." https://www.nzherald.co.nz/world/brethrens-exclusive-patrons/VASC2K7RLUV4HUJYLPYWFV2ABI/ — and Lineham, "Why the New Zealand Plymouth Brethren Intervened in...," *The Journal of CESNUR* 5(2), 2021. https://cesnur.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/tjoc_5_2_4_lineham.pdf
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8. Australian Electoral Commission, "Exclusive Brethren" (compliance advice). https://www.aec.gov.au/parties_and_representatives/compliance/AEC_Advice/exclusive.htm

9. inkl / Crikey-syndicated report, "Accounting firm controlled by Exclusive Brethren church to close after extraordinary ATO raid" (Mar 2024). https://www.inkl.com/news/accounting-firm-controlled-by-exclusive-brethren-church-to-close-after-extraordinary-ato-raid — syndicated from Crikey.

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18. Plymouth Brethren Christian Church, *Response to Four Corners questions* (September 2025). https://www.plymouthbrethrenchristianchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/plymouth-brethren-christian-church-statement.pdf

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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 a quotation about the church's businesses to the church's own words and moved the sentence about contact with families to the report that carries it. Added that the National Audit Office declined the request to audit OneSchool Global, that the Electoral Commission found the 2004 spending disclosed, and the 2026 parliamentary hearing on the 2025 federal election. Removed a figure for how many people left in 1970 that no source supports. Regraded four techniques, added an Evidence summary, and corrected the membership note, the list of countries and some wording.
- **2026-09-27:** Added Branches, Law & state, Money in numbers (OneSchool Global UK accounts 2020–2024), Voices from inside, three regional cards, Leaving safely and Where to get help.
- **2026-09-29:** Disclosure scorecard added: accounts, safeguarding and on-the-record replies are rated from the charity register, the Charity Commission's 2017 case report and the church's own 2025 response [16] [17] [18]; leaders' pay, police-first reporting and a removal procedure are not established from any public source.

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.