PERFECT
CHILDREN

*Growing Up on
the Religious Fringe*

Amanda van Eck Duymaer van Twist

Perfect Children

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Acknowledgments

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Introduction

WHAT HAPPENS TO THE CHILDREN?

OFTEN, THOSE WHO travel outside the mainstream and into a fringe religion, or a "cult," are assumed to have proverbially lost their minds—perhaps even been victims of brainwashing by an unscrupulous but powerful leader. As an outsider, observing the dynamics between new religions and their critics, I always marveled at the accusations of brainwashing being bandied about, with the concept of normality narrowed and stretched accordingly to include the accuser but never the accused. Those who turn their backs on what they consider a society-gone-wrong, on the other hand, often view those who populate the mainstream world as brainwashed by the ruling elite, and are proud of their own revolutionary lifestyles. On either side, these are adults who choose particular lives (albeit sometimes with unforeseen elements and consequences).

But what happens to those who are born into such fringe or even revolutionary lifestyles? They haven't chosen this life; will they grow up to wear it with pride and weather the criticism? Will they carry the same stigma? Will they be brainwashed? Can children be brainwashed, or are they just socialized in a different culture? For previous research I interviewed second-generation members of the Family International (formerly the Children of God), a radical millenarian group, and asked them about the end times. I was fascinated to find out that although the children had, by and large, learned the same teachings as their parents, they tended to push the date of the end time back a bit to make time for things they wanted to experience first. This interested me and I embarked on further research to delve into what happens to those who have been raised with strong beliefs that are considered unusual, radical, or even ridiculous by the mainstream.

In order to do this I had to explore the radical fringes of religion, specifically groups that had a generation of their own children whom they

had shielded in some way from the outside world and raised within their worldview. Hence I chose to focus on controversial new religions that had a strong communal element to them and that had raised a new generation of young members.

I will describe the groups and their histories, beliefs, and practices, as well as their pedagogical choices, in chapter 1. Since such religious groups, although considered on the fringe of society, are still very much part of it, I also looked at the reaction of society (civil and statutory), as this affects the groups and the individuals in them.

This book is the result of an exploration and analysis of the variables involved in the socialization of children in sectarian communities, and the interplay between the changing constituents involved: that is, between children, sects, and society (the state and civil society). Part of the analysis is also an exploration of which aspects of the socialization have been considered to be "successful," and which have "failed," and according to whom, as well as discussion of whether these are realistic concepts. The groups that I have focused on are the Bruderhof, the Church of Scientology, the Family International, the Unification Church, and the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (also known as the Hare Krishnas). These are the specific groups considered in detail in chapter 1.

I relied on a variety of resources for the research, ranging from face-to-face interviews with former as well as current second-generation members, (foster) parents, and teachers, in some cases written communication when distance precluded a meeting, participant observation, analysis of online discussion forums for former members of certain sectarian groups, and attendance at relevant conferences. I interviewed thirty second-generation former members and current members, teachers, and (foster) parents, as well as nine children and teenagers (between the ages of seven and sixteen) between 1997 and 2006.[1] Furthermore, I have also used case notes of seventeen inquiries to Inform from former members of religious groups (all but one fit my definition of sectarian). Inform is an independent charity founded in 1988 with the support of the British Home Office and the mainstream churches to obtain and make available objective and up-to-date information about new religious movements, also known as sects or cults.[2] It has an inquiry line and receives questions from a variety of individuals and public and private institutions. Many of the inquirers are former members of religious groups; some have been born and raised in these groups. I have included these cases because they have been a part of my general learning and the formation of this research—I

have been working for Inform since 1998 and was the staff member who dealt with most of these cases.

The young former members in my research were raised in a subculture different from the rest of the surrounding society. Some stayed within it, considering it better than what was on offer outside. Others left and suffered some sort of crisis as a result of their mixed identity, occasionally being geographically diasporic following the missionary work of their parents, usually being cognitively different from children who had a sectarian upbringing and education. A further similarity is the stigmatization suffered by those who left who were negatively labeled by their parents and community (for not "fitting in"), and who feel stigmatized by others around them (again, for not "fitting in"). Having left, they straddled both worlds, much of their identity based in one while attempting to fit in the other, which often left them feeling like "misfits."

Segregated Socialization

Sectarian upbringing by its very definition begets segregated socialization. The young members are raised in a particular subculture, and those who choose to leave frequently have difficulty adjusting to the norms, values, and culture outside. But it is important to keep in mind that sects, and the childhoods of those in sects, are not static. There is an inevitable process of change and adaptation in a quest to manufacture the perfect environment conducive to the aims of the community.[3] The birth of a second generation puts pressure on existing practices, dynamics, and resources. The sect may have to adjust practices to comply with standards set by the wider society. All this challenges the "group" as defined by Mary Douglas (1970), changing the balance between social boundaries and internal hierarchy simultaneously. Some sects initiate changes to try to keep the status quo despite challenges from outside and within. In others this change is an effort to adapt to changing circumstances, to go with the flow as it were and sacrifice some previous priorities in favor of a new priority—be it the well-being of the children, reduced tension with the wider society, or both. Change toward adaptation is usually in response to outside scrutiny, inside disagreement, or disputes regarding controversial missions, practices, or revolutions that are frequently experimental and short-lived, and to demands by the maturing members of the second generation.

I relied on Brian Wilson's concept of sects, defined as being in opposition to society, as setting themselves apart as a result of a divergent faith.

In Wilson's words, sects are "a self-consciously and deliberately separated religious minority which espouses a faith divergent from that of other religious bodies....[The term] is employed to encompass also those minority movements sometimes referred to as 'cults' or as 'new religious movements'. Each sect is, in greater or lesser degree, unique" (1990: 47). Chapter 1 introduces the concept of sectarianism in more detail, as well as the groups that I focus on and their key beliefs about the new generation within their fold. I purposefully use the term "sect," as Wilson did, to denote specific group dynamics. Sects arise out of opposition, and are in tension with their surroundings. This is not necessarily, or definitionally, an aspect of all new religious movements (NRMs).[4] Sects, on the other hand, have moved from being in opposition to "church" to being in opposition to "society"—hence less combatants in religious issues than deviant and abnormal religious threats to conventional, generally a-religious social practice. "Sects thus become an issue of social rather than of explicitly religious concern," Wilson asserts (1990: 47). Sects challenge the ethos and practice of other religious bodies and of society. They are often contrary and radical, yet have to find ways of existing in the society they oppose. Over time they find ways of doing this, and the sects will choose and adjust their relationships with other groups, organizations, institutions, and currents of ideas in society according to their own beliefs and practices. James Beckford (1985) has outlined such strategies, which he refers to as "modes of insertion," a term that describes the ways in which members are individually and collectively related to other groups and social processes. Of course Eileen Barker's work on NRMs and the "cult scene" has also been a significant influence, and I refer to much of this throughout—and discuss all these ideas in more detail in chapter 1.

Change, as I mentioned before, is another important variable—nothing stays the same. I discuss the important changes that affected the groups and their children in chapter 2. Over time the attitudes vis-à-vis "the outside" change, along with the structure and makeup of the sects. The birth of a second generation forces certain adjustments. However, although change is inevitable, the ways in which each group changes is different. Furthermore, it is dependent on events particular to each group. In some cases the state intervened in order to safeguard the rights and well-being of the minors—for whom it has a responsibility. Although parents have the right to raise their children within their religious beliefs, the children have rights as well, and the two sets of rights are occasionally in an imperfect balance. The point at which a state intervenes is influenced by a soci-

ety's history of diversity and attitude to minority religions.[5] In chapter 3 I discuss, at length, the interactions and dynamics between the group then known as the Children of God, the members' children, and the authorities in charge of child welfare. It is an important part of the group's history that gravely affected many of its children.

What Happened?

Chapter 4 centers around a discussion of what happened once the children grew up to make their own choices. Had they been socialized into the groups in which they grew up, or were there acts of rebellion? As always, this depends. As discussed in chapter 3, change is a process, which means that the first cohort of young members usually has a significantly different childhood from that of those members' younger siblings. The first cohort's members, in a sense, "break in" their parents, the leaders, and the structure and initiate the modifications and pave the way for their younger siblings. This work they do has often given them a reputation, a label, or even a stigma, ranging from "goodies" and "rebels" to "baddies." Throughout chapters 4–6 I discuss these labels within the context of the life stories of some young people who left and some who stayed.

Rebels and baddies will have challenged the boundaries—often before leaving. This, however, puts a wedge between the first and later cohorts, as they have had different childhoods and different experiences as young adults. The first cohort of children may have had more tumultuous childhoods as a result of trial and error and a process of adaptation by the group to those children's presence and the resulting new responsibilities. Also, leaving for them has often been more of a challenge, as the sect had not faced this issue before, hence there may have been less support and understanding. Chapter 6 concentrates on the young members who left and the struggles they faced.

The later cohorts typically left under different circumstances; the sect adapted and became more experienced in this respect. It may have established new levels of membership for those young members who did not want to be governed by the same rules as their parents were, or who wanted to work outside yet still have contact within. Or there may be ways in which the members can gradually leave, adjusting to outside while receiving support from inside.[6] This affected the labeling; in some cases there was more room for rebels among later cohorts. This issue of stigma is important, and it is discussed throughout the later chapters of the book.

The labels given to the young members within the group have become internalized over time, and those who left felt stigmatized "outside" as well—they carry these stigmas with them.

Support

The process of leaving has been a different experience for the young members depending on which cohort they belonged to within the history of their group. This is discussed in chapters 6 and 7. The first cohort of leavers within the second generation often chartered their own passage; they became their own "agents" on a do-it-yourself basis. Later cohorts frequently had the opportunity of choosing an agent within the self-help movement created outside who could help them through the status passage (discussed later). Furthermore, the first cohorts often received little material or structural support from the group, whereas the latter cohorts were more likely to. Specialized support outside has, so far, been mostly organized by those who have had previous experience with the groups—be it as former members or relatives of members. In many cases, this self-help support came with theological, doctrinal, and moral criticism toward the communities of their childhood. The young former members often joined the opposition to the groups that they had been exiled from, by whom they were stigmatized. The opposition (social networks, often online), aside from providing support, often had a secondary role of providing a new socialization, providing a different worldview and explanations to ultimate questions.

These self-help groups are significant. The young people were often fearful of the world they were entering, and it is helpful for them to join a group where they are recognized, where the people understand who they are, where they are coming from, and what they have gone through—a group where they do not have to explain themselves.[7] Yet connecting themselves to such groups (by communicating with the group, joining the network, attending meetings) often alienates them from their relatives and others in the sects in which they were raised. The dualistic world of "us" versus "them" that is part of the sectarian stance does not often tolerate contact with those who have gone to "them." The young former members going outside and joining other subcultures, and creating their own, has changed the outside. Hence, for the later cohorts who leave, the world outside is a slightly different place.

Former members have created their own self-help groups outside because they experienced a lack of support useful to their situation when

they left. As one young former member commented when calling Inform, there is support for parents who have difficult children, there is support for gay people who are not understood by their parents—why is there no support for people like her whose parents do not accept their child for who she is?[8] (She had rung a few help lines for children and young people, but had found them neither knowledgeable nor helpful for her particular situation, and there was no particular ex-member support for young people leaving her particular group.) She argued she was suffering from religious intolerance from her parents and religious leaders, because they did not accept her desire to leave the religion, and were pressuring her to stay. She felt there was nobody to turn to for help and support. Existing secular and religious support was not desirable to people like her, who believed the majority of counselors lack understanding about the particular worldview, language, and cognitive framework of young ex-members. Also, the young ex-members often worry that they may be ridiculed for what they realize, by then, to be unconventional worries and fears ("will I get it wrong?"; "what if they were right and the world is going to end?").

Counselors may be unaware of the special institutional, social, interpersonal, emotional, and spiritual dynamics that may be the norm in particular sects but unusual in the wider society. And if a young former member has difficulty formulating her or his concerns and troubles, then this may be a significant challenge to counselors who are not familiar with the language and conceptual world the young former member has come from.[9] It is exactly for this reason that the self-help groups are attractive and helpful. These are organizations and individuals who offer more specialized support to those leaving sects, and who "understand." They have the motivation to establish support organizations to help young former members like the one described above (and often also to keep them going on a shoestring budget). But this help frequently comes with a bias. This bias has a significant polarizing effect in the general cult scene, and on interfaith relations within the diversity of culture, as the discourse widens the gap between sects and their critics rather than create a bridge toward communication and possibly understanding (if not reconciliation). Such reconciliation, at the moment, appears to be a far-fetched ideal. The different cohorts of children were, in some cases, divided as well. The first cohort frequently had to choose more starkly between either relations with the group or relations with other former members—jumping, in a sense, from one community to another. The later cohorts had the opportunity of using first cohort leavers as agents to help them adjust to the outside. Yet

this wasn't always an easy choice. The later cohorts tended to have better relations with the parents and the group, but often at the cost of relations with their elder siblings, whom they saw as being against the group and the parents and as being potentially disruptive to their own bridge with the community. Hence, for the later cohorts, using a first-cohort leaver as agent could have too high a price.

Consequently a complicated map of allegiances and divisions has been established. Independent and secular organizations, which aim to chart a middle way in this complicated map, occasionally even mediating between different factions, struggle to get the funding to undertake the work they deem necessary. In this polarized debate between sects and their critics, independent organizations are frequently challenged and regarded with suspicion by those who take an ideological position on either one side or the other. The religious diversity found in many Western societies is hardly one of peaceful coexistence as yet. Although I have chosen to concentrate, in this book, on sectarian groups with problematic pasts, it is important to point out that not all minority religions are in tension with their surroundings. But it is equally important to note that sectarianism continues to exist, with a continuous stream of new minority groups that disagree with the status quo. In this environment, people occasionally struggle to build a bridge between absolutist subcultures that, rather than representing hybridized cosmopolitanism, represent clashing parochialisms. It is important to research the ways in which such environments can affect the children raised and socialized in them.

Sects and Their Children

FOR THIS CHILD SHALL SHINE AMONGST MEN,
for he is a prince to be called a prince amongst men. And he
shall stand before his people and his God to deliver them out
of great sorrow and bondage. For he is to become a prince
that shall become a prince amongst men to become a standard
bearer before God

—BERG 1977b

Davidito was born in 1975 to Maria. As the first child born to the leadership of the Family, following a special ministry, he was to be the harbinger of the end, a soldier for Christ. He along with his younger sister Techi, inspired a series of publications, including the *Davidito Letters*, later compiled into *The Story of Davidito*, and the *Techi's Battles and Victories* series.

Other children within the movement followed intently the stories about the trials and tribulations of Davidito and Techi, the future royalty in the Kingdom of God.

I

Sects, Children, and Society

THE SECTARIAN GROUPS I focus on throughout this book are placed within the wider context of sectarianism and introduced below. But it is important to keep in mind that, although I discuss aspects of sectarianism as a context, the particular groups I discuss in detail are not necessarily general examples of sectarianism. I focus on these groups in particular because they are or were communal or provide communal living for a portion of their membership, have special child-rearing philosophies and facilities, and at some point in their history experienced an occurrence (a particular teaching, practice, or a coming together of events), short-lived or prolonged, that affected a generation of children in a significant way. Furthermore, although I discuss some aspects the groups have in common with other contemporary and historical sectarian groups and with each other (e.g., structure, leadership), I do not provide a clear and clean comparison between the groups, as their histories have not run parallel in a way to make such a comparison useful or meaningful. I focus on the events and processes that affected the children, and analyze and discuss these, in five groups that were sectarian and radical.

Sects and Society

The ways in which a sect fits within the surrounding society often depends on its priorities, how members think these can be attained, and how they relate to the rest of society. Concurrently, society's perception of the sect will relegate it to a position within society that reflects the extent to which the group is accepted by its surrounding population—be it uncontroversial and integrated or derided and marginalized. James Beckford (1985: 85), when analyzing the controversies surrounding new religious movements, asked: "How are NRMs inserted into their societies?" and analyzed their social relationships in order to build up a picture of their "modes of insertion." An NRM's mode of insertion into society highlights ways in which members of

NRMs are individually and collectively related to other people, groups, institutions, and social processes (85). Beckford here distinguishes between an internal and an external axis—the former refers to relations within an NRM and the latter refers to relations between the NRM members and "outside" people, institutions, and social processes. The focus on social relationships allows for a variety and range of modes of interactions with outsiders—individuals and institutions. Hence a group could have an isolated core of members who keep to themselves while also having missionaries and businesses that interact daily with the outside world. Beckford's framework combines social and ideological aspects, with the social elements standing out. Previous work on the topic has concentrated on ideological aspects, and how these have influenced social behavior.[1] Indeed, beliefs are important, and certain salvation beliefs can set a group of people apart from the rest—the elect, such as the 144,000 (Revelation 7:3–8, 14:1, 14:3)—those who are enlightened versus those who are not, those who are free from *maya* (illusion that stands in the way of one perceiving "reality") as opposed to those who live in illusion and indulge in "sense gratification." Salvation beliefs can range from physical or mental healing to elaborate prospects of the transmigration of the soul, or reincarnation. The common denominator is always the promise of present reassurance in the face of malevolent or troublesome phenomena or events (Wilson 1990). Salvation beliefs can be strong motivators for behavior and practice. Conditions for the attainment of salvation imply a range of "restrictions" in the form of taboos and injunctions for everyday life, as well as a range of "additions" in the form of tasks and responsibilities. Such laws to live by can make for unusual daily routines, as is visibly obvious in communities such as the Amish or ultra-Orthodox Jews; these communities are considered marginal at best.

Religious and cultural diversity makes concepts such as "mainstream," "normative," and "marginal" somewhat problematic. Of course everybody, to some extent, lives his or her life by rejecting some ideas and practices while choosing others. Furthermore, in a globalized world the possibilities are ever growing, and the concepts of mainstream and marginal, or "normal" and "abnormal," keep expanding. Everyone has a concept of a "mainstream,", yet all these mainstreams do not perfectly overlap as one singular reality. Despite this, there is a generalized, or imagined, concept of mainstream ("the norm") and of religious groups that are in tension with this mainstream ("abnormal"), as well as being communities of like-minded people who pick and choose ideas from the cultic milieu while discounting the ideas prevalent in the mainstream (and who are often labeled as living "alter-

native lifestyles"). One can identify groups of people who turn their backs on the lifestyle enjoyed by their parents in order to embrace another—be it an invented, reinvented, or imported lifestyle or a syncretistic amalgamation. Of course norms are continually shifting as well. Vegetarianism and saris and dhotis (Indian clothing) are not traditionally part of Western society, yet today being a vegetarian and wearing clothing similar to saris or dhotis does not mean one is a follower of Vishnu or any other of the Hindu gods. Meanwhile, groups like the Amish and the Exclusive Brethren are the West's cultural and religious creations, yet joining them now would be far from a mainstream activity. Some of their salvation beliefs and practices have resulted in them having little interaction with those who are not part of their community—they are considered to be, as they consider themselves to be, different from the norm. This marginal position comes with distinctions between "them" and "us," and social boundaries protecting the chosen from the likes of "them" and their ideas and practices—considered to be depraved or otherwise immoral.

Protecting the flock from negative influences, and creating an environment conducive to the beliefs and practices necessary for salvation, tends to become an important priority for sectarian groups. Consequently, the modes of insertion in society are purposefully limited. Or, as Kai Erikson argued in *Wayward Puritans*, such communities are "boundary maintaining" in the sense that they place symbolic parentheses around their members: "When one describes any system as boundary maintaining, one is saying that it controls the fluctuation of its constituent parts so that the whole retains a limited range of activity, a given pattern of constancy and stability, within the larger environment" (1966: 10). A short synopsis of five of the main sectarian groups discussed throughout this book follows, and it will serve as an introduction to illustrations and examples throughout the following chapters.

The Bruderhof

The Bruderhof is a collection of pacifist communities following Anabaptist precepts that at several points in their early history sought to be associated with the Hutterites. In 1990 some Hutterite congregations excommunicated the Bruderhof for what they perceived as doctrinal deviations, and eventually the Bruderhof broke the remaining ties with the Hutterite tradition. The Bruderhof, which means "community of brothers," consists of over twenty-six hundred members, living in over twenty communal settlements ranging

from self-contained villages to, in a more recent development, some smaller households in urban areas.[2] Eberhard Arnold (1883–1935) founded the Bruderhof in the 1920s in Germany, and the group has "hofs" (communities) in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. Upon joining, members hand over their belongings to the community, after which they are meant to reject what community members consider the divisiveness of private property and power. One of the main rules in place to help maintain the brotherly communal atmosphere is the "law of Sannerz," named after the first community. The spirit of the "law" is that disputes or disagreements are settled between individuals, face to face, without the mediation of third parties. This discourages talking about third parties behind their backs, gossip, and other behavior seen to be out of step with the "spirit of love":

> There is no law but that of love. Love means having joy in others. Then what does being annoyed with them mean? Words of love convey the joy we have in the presence of brothers and sisters. By the same token it is out of the question to speak about a Bruderhof member in a spirit of irritation or vexation. There must never be talk, either in open remarks or by insinuation, against a brother or sister, against their individual characteristics—under no circumstances behind the person's back. Talking in one's own family is no exception. (Oved 1996: 25)

The Sermon on the Mount serves as the biblical foundation for the Bruderhof communities. The members become radical disciples of Jesus after adult baptism, and lead a life of pacifism. Conduct is strictly regulated; transgressions are handled with public confession and repentance of sin, and sometimes exclusion of the sinner from the day-to-day life in the community, until she or he has found "the path" again.

Being a pacifist community, the Bruderhof left prewar Germany for England, which the members later left for Paraguay, where they created three separate communities at a settlement they called "Primavera." There the members formed a self-sufficient commune, isolated from the Spanish-speaking Paraguayan population. After the war, members established communities outside Paraguay. But even in English-speaking countries, the communities were relatively isolated from the rest of society. The hofs were intentional communities, created out of a desire to live according to Christian and humanistic ideals. However, the 1960s saw a crisis (referred to as the "Great Crisis") within the Bruderhof.[3] The crisis was due mainly

to a schism in the leadership between Hans Zumpe (Eberhard Arnold's son-in-law) and the European leaders, on one side, and the Arnolds (Eberhard Arnold's sons) in the United States. The American leaders accused the communities in Paraguay of being "cold-hearted" and of having moved away from the Hutterite ideals they held at the time. The "cold-hearted" were the people who had joined because of a shared humanist ideology, and who sought social and economic relations with the wider community. The "warm-hearted," on the other hand, had joined as a result of their belief in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, and favored a closed community in order to focus on this devotion.[4] Hence they favored self-sustaining communities. There was a feeling, among the Arnold followers, that the movement had moved away from what were perceived as the "warm-hearted" days in Sannerz, and the original leadership under Arnold) toward a more liberal and ideological stance (which was perceived as legalistic rather than spiritual) under the Zumpe leadership. Under these circumstances the communities in Paraguay were dissolved, as were several other hofs (in England and North America), and over six hundred people left or were expelled. The "warm-hearted" devotion won over the more liberal ideals, and the Bruderhof became a closed Christian community with like-minded "brethren."

In the West, the Bruderhof have never been considered as unfamiliar and exotic as some of the foreign sects that arrived in the West around the same time. The members and their traditional ways—sober and traditional dress, manual agricultural and artisan labor, and communal sharing of goods—were generally seen as quaint and romantic.[5] Their sectarian stance toward society was intensified and highlighted only once exiles from the Great Crisis started voicing their discontent.[6]

The Church of Scientology

In 1950, the publication of *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health,* written by Lafayette Ron Hubbard (1911–1986), introduced new ideas regarding the human mind and the goal of "Man"; the book gained a certain level of popularity. Four years later, a religious organization was established around the themes of Dianetics, called Scientology. The aims of Scientology are to solve the problems perceived to be affecting society, such as crime, drugs, and illiteracy. The essential tenets of Scientology are that people are immortal spiritual beings, whose experience extends well beyond a single lifetime, and whose capabilities are unlimited—even if

not presently realized.[7] The spiritual being is called a "Thetan," which is believed to be basically good and seeking to survive. But the Thetan is impeded. People, according to Scientology, lack self-awareness, and have come to believe that they are their bodies, rather than their Thetans. This is a result of the mind, which, according to Scientology, is an accumulation of "mental image pictures" (what we often think of as memory) from current and previous lives. But the mind can have a confining effect. The mind consists of the analytical mind and the reactive mind. The former is the rational, conscious, and aware mind that thinks, observes data, remembers these data, and resolves problems (Jentzsch 1994: 60). The latter is the accumulation of negative images and experiences, which have a harmful effect. Some of these negative experiences are recorded unconsciously; they are stored not as memories, but as "engrams." Engrams are thought to have mass, and act as blockages in the mind. The reactive mind is unconscious, and not normally under our volitional control. But Scientologists believe that Hubbard found the key to unlock this reactive mind, and a method to learn to control its allegedly debilitating effects. Members and clients are meant to become aware of their reactive mind through auditing, a form of cocounseling (Scientologists stress that it is a system through which someone is allowed to find his or her own answers, without outside suggestions or solutions), aided by an "electropsychometer" (e-meter). This meter measures changes in energy flow. The goal of auditing is to erase the engrams from the reactive mind and re-store them as standard memories in the analytical mind. Once this goal has been realized an individual is "clear," and may proceed through training to become an "operating Thetan," not burdened by the alleged restrictive forces of the reactive mind. The doctrine focuses on the human mind, what impedes it, and what would reportedly set it free. This route to freedom, to the state of clearness and through the operating Thetan levels, is called the Bridge.[8]

Aside from helping people cross the Bridge to "total freedom," Scientology aims to heal what it perceives as the ills of society. Hence the organization consists of many affiliated organizations that target society's perceived problem areas, such as Narconon (drug rehabilitation), Criminon (crime rehabilitation), and Applied Scholastics International (improving education through the application of Hubbard's "study technology"), all governed by the Association for Better Living and Education International. These organizations rely heavily on the book *The Way to Happiness* by Hubbard. Other social reform programs include the Citizens' Commission on Human Rights, which aims to expose what Scientologists consider psychiatric

abuse, and the National Commission on Law Enforcement and Social Justice, which aims to clean government files of false reports. Since 1981 all of the churches and organizations of Scientology have been brought together under the Church of Scientology International.[9]

The size of membership of the Church of Scientology is difficult to establish. There are clients who take courses now and then, more dedicated adherents, staff, and full-time members who have devoted their lives to Scientology and signed a contract extending well beyond their biological life span—a billion-year contract.[10] The latter are members of the Sea Org, an elite group of people who live communally and regard Scientology as the main priority in their lives. Sea Org members have to step down once they have children, but can rejoin when their children are ten and have agreed to join as well, as "little cadets."[11] These cadets are then schooled—in England this happens at the Little Cadet School, at the Saint Hill community where they also live. There is also a cadet school at Scientology's US headquarters in Florida. In 2009 Scientology claimed to have 10 million followers worldwide and 120,000 in the United Kingdom—these numbers are likely to be exaggerated.[12] Scientology has centers throughout the world.

Scientology teachings include aspects typically associated with religion, psychology, philosophy, and science, yet the organization is not fully recognized and accepted by any of these disciplines. This is partly because Scientology defies easy categorization—it charges money for services other religions might offer free of charge, and it is structured (and operates) bureaucratically.[13] It has been accused of swindling and brainwashing followers, and the movement in return has harassed its critics.[14] Scientology strongly adheres to a set of values that has been formalized into an ethics policy to which followers adhere.[15] The purpose of adhering to ethics is to ensure continued survival across the dimensions of self, ranging from the self to the family unit and groups, mankind to all living things, the universe, and infinity.[16] The follower is encouraged to maximize chances of survival by bettering understanding of and accomplishments within these areas of the self—which will consequently enable better understanding of the "tech" (the learning tools). A follower who fails to achieve this is "out ethics," and should be reported to a senior member for further training to again achieve the position of being "in ethics." The areas of "self" recognized by Scientologists include dynamics that are generally considered to be outside the self, such as social groups, all living things, and the physical universe. Hence, followers' path to betterment extends beyond the organization,